

Chasing Sunflowers: Personal Firsthand Observations of the Student Occupation of the Legislative Yuan and Popular Protests in Taiwan, 18 March – 10 April 2014

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Introduction

Sometime around 7:00 pm on the evening of Tuesday 18 March 2014, a group of several hundred Taiwanese students, civic group members, activists, and other protestors stormed through the outer gates and walls of the Legislative Yuan (Taiwan's legislature) in Taipei, forced their way through police cordons into the buildings of the legislature's compound, and finally broke into the Legislative Chamber itself.² They

¹ "Taiwanese" are defined in this article simply as people who live in Taiwan and are its citizens. (Technically, for now they are still citizens of the defunct Republic of China, Chiang Kai-shek's brutal and dictatorial, one-party KMT state in China that began imposing itself on Taiwan in late 1945 and fled there as a refugee regime in 1949 after losing a civil war with the Chinese communists.) This article does not use the ethnonym "Taiwanese" in the now-ossified and crudely tribalistic and divisive sense that previously distinguished "Taiwanese" (native born islanders of partial or predominant Chinese ancestry) from "Hakka" or "Hakkanese" (native born islanders with different Chinese ancestry than the majority of the island's native-born population), "mainlanders" (*waishengren*; Chinese refugees who came to Taiwan in the mid to late 1940s and the children born to them on the island), aboriginals (the original inhabitants or first nations of the island who have no Chinese ancestry), and recent immigrants who have become citizens. Complicating this picture to some extent is the considerable number of native-born Taiwanese citizens who self-identify ethnically as both Taiwanese and Chinese, while a small number of children and grandchildren born to post-1945 Chinese refugees and later immigrants still persist in identifying themselves as Chinese only.

² I here record my thanks to Patrick Dunne of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary for his technical assistance.

quickly barricaded themselves in the chamber where Taiwan's laws are made by piling up the legislators' swiveled chairs in front of all entrances to the chamber and binding them together with ropes into large clumpy bulwarks. Police forces unsuccessfully attempted on several occasions to push their way through these barriers. Several hundred protestors (mostly young students) occupied the chamber overnight, and the police tried several other tactics to oust them, including shutting off the building's water, switching off its electricity, turning off its air conditioning, and locking its washrooms (restrooms). Aware of public opinion strongly against harshly treating the students, the police soon backed off and restored the utilities. Within 24 hours the occupation grew into massive street rallies in support of the students, and these in turn grew into the Sunflower Movement, so named after a supportive florist who handed out a thousand or more sunflowers to protesters outside the Legislative Yuan. The sunflower quickly came to symbolize the hopes of the protestors for openness, as to sunlight, in contrast to the perceived dark backroom legerdemain of the ruling KMT (Kuomintang; Chinese Nationalist) government, which had a majority in the legislature and struck many people in Taiwan as preferring to operate out of public view and beyond opposition party scrutiny.

The protestors who occupied the Legislative Yuan were an angry but not particularly violent group. Lin Fei-fan, a veteran of several earlier protest rallies and a graduate student in political science at National University, emerged as an important leader among them, as also did Chen Wei-ting (a Hakka from Miaoli), a sociology major at National Tsing Hua University who had been active in social movements since his late teens. The protestors were students and other significant segments of Taiwan's civil society who were angry over the KMT legislative majority's ramming through, without an item-by-item review, of the controversial Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement between Taiwan and China, an agreement they feared would cripple the services sector of Taiwan's economy and lead to significant Chinese control over the island's media. But more generally, ever since the KMT government signed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with China in 2010, there had been growing anxiety on the island over the stakes of doing more and more business with the colossus across the Taiwan Strait. Would economic integration lead to political annexation? Was the KMT

government and its majority in the Legislative Yuan preparing to sell Taiwan down the river to China?

Depending on one's perspective and ideology, the Sunflower Movement could be seen as evidence either of an immature democracy or a maturing one. I regarded (and still regard) it as the latter, but the level of democratic maturity is by no means the most important metric for evaluating it. Throughout the entire movement the Taiwanese public did display conspicuous maturity and remarkable civility; not one shot was fired and not one fatality occurred. There was some police brutality during the movement, but as deplorable and ugly as that was, the singular fact remains that the students who occupied the Legislative Yuan eventually left under their own volition unharmed, unarrested, and unprosecuted. When seen in comparative perspective, this is truly remarkable. One shudders to imagine, for instance, what would happen in Canada or especially the United States if a group of several hundred protesters broke through security, occupied Parliament or the Capitol, barricaded themselves inside, and resisted police attempts to remove them. Yet in the remarkable place and culture that is Taiwan today, the storming and three-week occupation of the national parliament was tolerated by the government and celebrated by a significant portion of the public, and the subsequent demonstrations were mere carnivals in comparison with demonstrations and protest marches in certain other countries. In Taiwan, the government did not overreact and the people did not revolt. "You are a lovable people" (*nimen shi yige ke'ai de minzu*), I told groups of protesting students on many occasions over the course of the Sunflower Movement.

What follows in this article is not, and does not pretend to be, a penetrating political, economic, and social analysis of the Sunflower Movement. Although I do offer some assessment of the causes and course of the movement, this is first and foremost a personal and sympathetic worm's-eye account of some of what I saw and heard among students and protesting supporters in Taiwan between 18 March 2014 and 10 April 2014.

Economic integration and political subjugation

The economic dimensions of the protestors' anger and fear are easy enough to grasp: Real estate prices in Taipei are skyrocketing (perhaps because of ever-increasing Chinese housing purchases) and are already far beyond the reach of the typical young Taiwanese college student today, who can look forward after graduation with a baccalaureate degree to a monthly salary averaging around \$30,000 NT (approximately \$985 USD). Even with two spouses working full time, they'll never have it as good as their parents' generation did. Nowadays in Taiwan the rich get richer while the poor get poorer; wealthy Chinese are bidding up the Taipei real estate market and living the life of Riley. And to make things worse, poor Chinese who labour for a mere pittance will be coming and taking over all the service sector jobs in Taiwan. Rich Chinese are driving housing prices up, poor Chinese will drive wages down, and the Taiwanese middle class will be squeezed to death in this Chinese vise grip. What in the world is the rising generation in Taiwan to do? All President Ma Ying-jeou can tell them is that they ought to go abroad or to China to seek their fortunes, and that's just not good enough; Taiwan is their homeland, the place they want to stay and live their lives.

Compounding these economic anxieties synergistically are political fears of an impending political (and possibly military) takeover of the island by China. The students and protestors consistently maintained that economics and politics were inseparable, and they felt in their bones that the way things were going then, China would eventually integrate Taiwan economically and subjugate it politically.

It is important to note that not everyone in Taiwan is opposed to a political union with China. A fairly significant minority of people in Taiwan identify with China and favour the "Blue" position, which is that the political union should and will happen; it is only a matter of time, or the right time. The "Green" position, on the other hand, holds that Taiwan should maintain its current separation and *de facto* independence from China or even formally declare it. Careful and credible public opinion polling research jointly conducted in Taiwan by National Chengchi University, National Sun Yat-sen University, National Chung Cheng University, and several private sector firms has clearly indicated over the past decade that a very large majority of the people of Taiwan

are highly ambivalent about unification with China, now or ever. In December 2013 the statistical breakdown on various political stances regarding the question was as follows:

Maintain status quo for now and decide later	33.7%
Maintain status quo forever	24.1%
Maintain status quo with hope for eventual independence	18.5%
Maintain status quo with hope for eventual unification	8.3%
Immediately declare independence	7.0%
Immediately unify	2.3%

Over the past decade these stances have remained fairly stable, but with a net increase from 16.4 percent favouring forever maintaining the status quo in 2002 to 24.1 percent in December 2013, and a slight net decrease from 34.9 percent favouring maintaining the status quo for now and deciding later in 2002 to 33.7 percent in December 2013.³

Student protests in East Asia: Precedents and traditions

It is now generally known among observant consumers of international news that students in several East Asian societies can and do often get away with action and expression that no other segments of the populations could. This is not due to sentimental mollicoddling, nostalgic maundering about lost youth, or naive indulgence of callow indiscretion and excess, but rather to deeply held cultural convictions that young students are the "pure current" of society -- the up-and-coming generation, the not-yet soulless and cynical future leaders and elites of the nation whose ideals and hopes remain intact and uncrushed by the contingencies, corruptions, and compromises of the so-called "real world" that the generations above them are running and ruining.⁴

³ These percentages total 93.9 percent, with the remaining 6.1% of respondents apparently mugwumps with no opinions. See <http://sweetformosan.pixnet.net/album/photo/101154816-%E6%B0%91%E7%9C%BE%E5%B0%8D%E7%B5%B1%E4%B8%80%E3%80%81%E7%8D%A8%E7%AB%8B%E6%88%96%E7%B6%AD%E6%8C%81%E7%8F%BE%E7%8B%80%E7%9A%84%E7%9C%8B%E6%B3%95-%E6%8A%98%E7%B7%9A%E5%9C%96.j> (Accessed 22 September 2014.)

⁴ This idealized (or at least hopeful) view of the rising generation of students probably goes all the way back to the Confucian *Analects* 9:23 (Zi Han): "These latest generations are awesome! How do we know that those who follow us won't be our equals?" (My translation)

Modern Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans are acutely aware of the seminal and indispensable roles that generations of restless and idealistic students and youth have played in shaping the historical destinies of their countries. In Japan, a key three dozen or so twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings upended, reinvented, and modernized their country into a major world power over the course of the Meiji Restoration during the late nineteenth century. Angrily protesting and editorial-writing students (along with their professors who egged them on) changed the course of Chinese history during the May Fourth era (ca. 1918-1924) and laid the foundations for modernity (first Marxist and then otherwise) in modern China. Among them was a hot-headed young library assistant at Peking University with an almost impenetrable Hu'nan accent named Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung).

Protesting students had been leaven for positive change before, and maybe, the Taiwanese public seems largely to have thought in March 2014, the Sunflowers and their generation just might have it right this time and surprise their elders by accomplishing what most everyone else now thinks impossible. Nobody, least of all the Kuomintang government, dared significantly badmouth or mistreat them, especially now in the early twenty-first century, with the whole world's conventional and social media watching.

Eyewitness

I was in Taiwan during the first two key weeks of the Sunflower Movement and was an eyewitness at the Legislative Yuan of its most intense and defining days. Once the movement broke out, I was acutely aware that I was probably about to witness a key student protest and movement in modern East Asian history. I watched it develop and unfold in admiration and awe. From January through April of 2014 I was in Taiwan at the Academia Sinica's Institute of Taiwan History, where I was doing research and writing on Taiwan's period of "White Terror," or the Nationalist Chinese government's brutal and paranoid executions and imprisonments of non-violent dissident intellectuals on the island from 1947 through 1986. Prior to the student storming and occupation of the Legislative Yuan on the night of 18 March 2014, I had gone to the offices of an opposition party legislator there on two separate occasions to gather

information on how the KMT government was scheming to sanitise or downplay historical coverage of the White Terror in Taiwan's high school history textbooks.

Over the course of the movement I watched, talked, asked questions, followed along with the crowds when they marched, and took lots of photographs, but I didn't actually participate in the protests; I carried no placards and had no contacts or discussions with Taiwanese news media. I didn't feel, as a non-resident foreigner, that I had any right to so; I was a short-term visitor to the island from a comfortable and fully free and democratic way of life in Canada (with no threats to Canadian freedom and democracy on the horizon). If, however, I had been a long-term resident of Taiwan, living and working there and paying taxes, I would have protested with gusto and abandon, backward and racist objections to me doing so notwithstanding.

The Legislative Yuan

What Taiwan calls the "Legislative Yuan" is one of five branches (*yuan* in Chinese) of government originally envisioned by Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China (1911-1949): Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Control (government accountability), and Examination (for civil service positions). It exists vestigially in Taiwan today (along with the other four *yuan*) as one of the oddments of the Republic of China's machinery of state that Chiang Kai-shek's KMT regime imposed on Taiwan in the late 1940s. Originally composed mostly of mainland Chinese who nominally represented all of China, it eventually evolved into what it is today: Taiwan's unicameral legislature.

It now almost seems, in hindsight, that I was destined to spend a good deal of time at the Legislative Yuan during my months in Taiwan in early 2014. On a previous trip to Taiwan in 2013 I had purchased a White Terror memoir by Yan Shihong with the somewhat mysterious and intriguing title #3 East Qingdao Road (*Qingdao Donglu san hao*), which was the address of a prison for political dissidents in Taiwan during the early years of the Terror. It was only on my first trip to the Legislative Yuan on Saturday 22 February 2014 that I saw that #3 Qingdao East Road was right there at the Yuan! The old and paranoid KMT regime of Chiang Kai-shek apparently wanted to keep its enemies very close at hand. (The prison was eventually torn down and is now the site of

a nondescript block of housing units and first-floor businesses.) The occasion there at a building in the Legislative Yuan on 22 February was the visit of a fact-finding mission by legislative assistants to four members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the United States House of Representatives (Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, Rep. Kerry Bentivolio of Michigan, Rep. Matt Salmon of Arizona, and Rep. Joe Barton of Texas). Their purpose was to learn what members of the American expatriate community in Taiwan thought about issues pertaining to the island. About a hundred people attended the meeting, among them many Green-leaning Taiwanese bigwigs and American expatriate sympathizers.

The meeting was a cordial and convivial one, with several impassioned pleas for the fact-finding mission to impress upon the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee the importance and imperiled status of Taiwan's genuinely free and democratic society. One of Taiwan's most astute and prolific English-language bloggers was there and spoke his peace, telling the mission among many other things that Taiwan was a gentle society and that protests on the island were by and large fairly sedate affairs that resembled carnivals or street parties more than anything else. I added my own two cents' worth and, when the meeting was over, went out on the streets with Linda Arrigo to the site of #3 Qingdao East Road in order to satisfy my historical curiosity. While going there we ran into Chia Tekkham, an old friend of Linda's and a legal advisor to Legislator Chou Ni-an, an opposition party member of the Legislative Yuan. (Chou Ni-an was busily on her way to a meeting along with Chia Tekkham at the time, so we only spoke briefly.) We exchanged business cards, and soon I was in regular touch with them concerning the KMT's scheme to alter the content of Taiwan's high school textbooks by toning down the coverage of the Massacre of February 28, 1947 and the White Terror. (One proposed change was for "misuse of political power" to replace "White Terror.")

An island of protests

While I was in Taiwan in January through April of this year I was thrilled and honoured to have, once again, the enthusiastic guidance and encouragement of the incomparable and indefatigable Linda Gail Arrigo (艾琳達), an American human rights

activist who grew up in Taiwan during the 1960s and knows virtually everything and everyone there is to know about the history of Taiwan's democratisation and resistance to Kuomintang tyranny and misgovernment. She was deeply and directly involved in the Formosa Incident (also known as the Kaohsiung Incident) in Kaohsiung on Human Rights Day, 10 December 1979. Her husband Shih Ming-teh, a Taiwanese and one of the major principals in the incident, was arrested a few weeks later, and she herself was deported from the island by James Soong (Song Chuyu), then the head of Taiwan's Government Information Office, one of the KMT's chief information and news censorship arms. (In communicating with the foreign media about the deportation in 1981, Soong said that Arrigo reminded him of the Belarusian Mikhail Borodin (1884-1951), a prominent Comintern agent who had been active in the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and China during the early decades of the twentieth century.)

Arrigo stayed away from Taiwan for the 1980s and earned her PhD in sociology at SUNY Binghamton, writing a dissertation on land tenure and rents in China during the 1930s. The Kuomintang hated her dearly during the 1980s and frequently did news broadcasts about her role in causing trouble in Taiwan, but in the 1990s, after the death of President Chiang Ching-kuo (Chiang Kai-shek's son) in 1988 and the subsequent launch of the island's democratization process, she was allowed to return to Taiwan and has lived there for most of the time ever since. She is widely known, loved, and respected across the island, and going anywhere with her is like being in the company of a rock star. (At more than one social gathering or organisational meeting I introduced myself as "Linda Arrigo's accessory.") She is no longer visibly recognisable in Taiwan, but as soon as she identifies herself, faces smile, heads nod in recognition, doors open, and conversation and thanks ensue for her dogged dedication to Taiwan's democratisation.

Linda was an invaluable guide to the people and places I should know about in connection with my research on the White Terror. She often accompanied me on my research trips and referred me to other knowledgeable scholars and activists. While I worked with her I began to understand that she is really more of an activist for human rights in Taiwan than for its independence per se, although she certainly supports and affirms the right of the Taiwanese people to determine their political destiny. She was

seldom if ever critical of the PRC and told me that the CCP was right to fight and resist Chiang Kai-shek in mainland China from the 1920s through the 1940s.

Linda let me know when and where the protests in Taiwan were, and it was through her suggestions and connections that I got a glimpse into Taiwan's protest culture. I observed several protests, including some relatively minor ones over the pending sanitisation of the coverage of the White Terror in high school history textbooks. I also spent all of Friday 28 February (a national holiday commemorating the start of a period in 1947 when tens of thousands of Taiwanese people, many of them prominent intellectuals and political leaders, were butchered by Chiang Kai-shek's ragamuffin KMT troops) at the Legislative Yuan and, later, at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial, bizarrely and incongruously still standing at what is now called "Liberty Square." The Square was a lively scene of political banners, makeshift bookstalls, and onlookers simply taking it all in. At the bookstalls I met two professors who were later to emerge as important behind-the-scenes advisors to the protesting students who stormed and occupied the Legislative Yuan.

One big protest I got to see was against nuclear power. It was held on Saturday 8 March 2014, and I followed the protestors from the main gate of National Taiwan University on Roosevelt Street to Ketagalan Boulevard (known during the White Terror as Jieshou Boulevard, or "Long Live Chiang Kai-shek Boulevard") opposite the ornate Presidential Palace. I took photographs, asked questions, and heard slogans, including "I am human, and I oppose nukes!," "No more Fukushimas," and clever and untranslatable puns such as "Taiwan is not suitable for nuclear power" (台灣不適核) and "Why not get rid of Taiwan's nukes?" (台灣有核不可). I listened to the anti-nuke speeches, which were then followed by theatrical and musical performances. (Protests in Taiwan wouldn't be Taiwanese protests without these.) I saw a few "F the government!" and "civil revolt" (both in English) T-shirts and Guy Fawkes masks, and at first these made me a little apprehensive. But the crowds were in good humour and maintained exemplary order. I saw all of the police in riot gear and the steel and barbwire barriers around the Presidential Palace, and I remember snorting to myself about how silly and unnecessary all of this was in a civilised and gentle place like Taiwan. I bought some goodies and a "no more Fukushimas" banner and had a fun and

relaxing time. (Great blue heavens above, how I loved and continue to love these people.)



Makeshift bookstalls at the main gate of Liberty Square.



Close-up of the bookstalls, many of which sold anti-KMT and pro-Taiwan independence materials.



Political T-shirt.



Political T-shirt.



The next February 28 incident was the Tiananmen Square Massacre.



[Taiwan independence groups face crowds watching Liberty Square's flag lowering ceremony. There was no trouble between them at all.](#)



The March 8 anti-nuke protest march starts at the main gate of National Taiwan University on Roosevelt Road



The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has long opposed nukes.



[Anti-nuke demonstration at the main gate of National Taiwan University.](#)



“We want no nukes”



[The anti-nuke protest march sets out from the main gate of Taida.](#)



Civic revolt!



F the government.



["Completely do away with nukes." The anti-nuke march stops in front of the Presidential Palace in Taipei.](#)

To the people of Taiwan

And indeed, on that day I knew I was indeed hopelessly besotted with Taiwan, so much so that by the next day I had written up what could only be called a *billet doux* to its people. It was quite a personal expression of my affections for the place, and after I wrote it I never submitted it for publication or sent it to anyone; it was enough to get my lilted feelings out of my system. Several months hence (fall 2014) I now include it here because I find, upon rereading it, that it captures and conveys my intellectual and emotional reconnection with Taiwan at the time.

A billet doux to the people of Taiwan

9 March 2014

We first met when I came here in 1980 as a young man of nineteen. For two years I lived in Chu-nan 竹南, Chung-hsing New Village 中興新村, Yang-mei 楊梅, Chang-hua 彰化, and Tou-liu 斗六. By mid 1982 I was thoroughly smitten with you and still am to this day.

I wanted to get to know you better, so in 1984 and 1985 I studied Chinese intensively at the Stanford Center on the Taida campus. As an undergraduate I used copies of archival documents I got at the National Taiwan Museum to write my senior thesis on the Lin Shuangwen 林爽文 uprising here in the late eighteenth century.

Those were the last few years of the White Terror. I got here seven months after the Lin family murders, and I was here when rogue elements of the Kuomintang security apparatus murdered Chen Wencheng 陳文成 in 1981 in Taipei and Henry Liu 劉宜良 in Daly City, California in 1984.

So I was doing Taiwan history before Taiwan history was cool. You were my first love, and I regret not staying with you. I intended to originally,

but when I got to graduate school Yü Ying-shih advised me not to study Taiwan history any more. So I went away for a time.

But when I saw you again in 2000 and again in 2006, you had grown up so beautifully that I knew I would someday have to come back to you. Sometime between 1985 and 2000 you democratized and freed yourself. You even learned how to line up for busses and trains, not to honk the horns of your car indiscriminately, and not to hawk up phlegm and spit on the streets. What a study in contrasts you are with your awkward and uncouth cousins across the Strait!

And what a difference those fifteen years have made! I wish I could have been with you through that wonderful, tumultuous, transformative time. If I could somehow live my life over again I would stay on with you through these years, mostly watching you grow but also standing by your side if and when you wanted me to.

That was then, but I am here now. I am coming back to you, my first love, and will stay with you for the rest of my career.

I have a lot to catch up on, but we can do that together. I am currently looking at the published memoirs of brave political dissidents who sat in Kuomintang prisons for years during your long White Terror nightmare.

The obtuseness and cluelessness of some of your Blue malcontents appall me. There is, unfortunately, a very small minority of perhaps two or three percent among you for whom their self-designated nationality as Chinese is massively more important than the freedom, democracy, and human rights you have fought so hard to win and enjoy.

They think, I have learned in talking with them, that you are now "excessively free" (濫自由) and actually need to be stripped of some of your freedoms. For them, the Chinese (among whom they include all of you) need a quasi-despot to rule and control them; otherwise "the Chinese will do whatever they want." They hope Taiwan will eventually have a "semi-authoritarian government" along the lines of what Hong Kong or Singapore have.

You may or not be better than the people of Hong Kong or Singapore, but you are certainly freer than them, so take heart in this and be proud. And if anyone from any political party ever tries to take away from you even

one of your hard-earned freedoms, get out there on the streets and raise hell! Wake the dead! Let the tyrants know how a free people responds when its liberties are threatened.

You are a lovable and gentle people, and I know you'll conduct yourselves well on the streets. Your protests and marches are festivals, carnivals, and concerts all rolled into one. I watched you all day on February 28 in front of the Ministry of Education and at Liberty Square. I saw the flag lowering ceremony there towards the end of the day, and how facing just opposite it were dozens of banner-carrying, song-singing advocates of Taiwan independence. I even saw one pathetic little yellow propaganda truck driving around outside the square carrying the flag of the People's Republic of China and using loudspeakers to blare out some syrupy pro-PRC number. And in all this, exactly nothing happened -- no public incidents or government interference. How amazing and inspiring you are!

You are a lovable and gentle people. I watched and followed you as you marched in protest on March 8, 2014 from the main gate at Taida to Ketagalan (sp?) Boulevard in protest against the Fourth Nuclear Plant (something I remember you worrying about in the mid 1980s).⁵ I saw the police with riot shields and the steel and barbwire barriers around the Presidential Office, all of it unnecessary because you weren't there to cause trouble, but to make your voices heard.

I also watched and walked with you at the Lantern Festival in Chung-hsing New Village in February and saw no problems there at all, despite your massive numbers winding through the small streets of my favourite Taiwan community.

You are a lovable and gentle people. The process of your democratisation certainly had its murders and raucous spectacles, but it was still nowhere near as violent and pugnacious as in a certain East Asian country now also free and democratic.

You're also a smart people -- too smart to fall for the irrational, off-the-charts crazy hatred and demonisation of Japan and the Japanese that the

⁵ On these protests, see <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2014/03/09/2003585210/2> (Accessed 28 September 2014.)

ruling class of a certain East Asian country stirs up in order to deflect the attention of its people away from their enormous domestic problems and towards a foreign boogeyman.

My best regards and affections to you. I am thrilled and honoured to have known you for these thirty-four years and am happy and content to return to you. I hope you'll take me back.

In boundless affection,

楓邦隱士

18 March 2014: The storm begins

A little more than a week later, however, excitement was to displace my romantic Taiwan reverie. I was at the Legislative Yuan on the very afternoon of 18 March 2014, waiting for an aide to come to the waiting room (*huike shi*) on Zhongshan South Road and escort me to a legislator's office on Qingdao East Road, where I would discuss Taiwan high school history textbook revision issues. I saw that several dozen unarmed police officers had gathered in the room, apparently in anticipation of some sort of protest activity that might occur later that evening. I distinctly remember being somewhat amused at this police presence because it struck me as unnecessary, and also because the police looked like a typical bunch of Taiwanese kids bowing their heads and noodling away on their smartphones. Not quite knowing how they might react if I took pictures of them, I summoned up a bit of courage and did so openly. (In the event, none of them did anything in response.)

I don't remember how, on 18 March 2014, I first learned of the student occupation of the Legislative Yuan, but it was after I had just returned from there to my apartment at the Academia Sinica. I posted my picture of the smart-phone-noodling police on Facebook and then, within an hour or so, learned about the storming and occupation! Very surprised, excited, and worried, I dropped everything and rushed back to the Legislative Yuan -- bus 212 from Nan'gang to the Kunyang metro station, the Blue Line to the main Taipei metro station, exit # 8 out onto Zhongxiao West Road

Section 1, past my favourite sweetcake (*tianbing*) stall, underground again across the intersection where Zhongshan South Road becomes Zhongshan North Road, past the Control Yuan, and finally back to the Legislative Yuan.

The atmosphere there was electric. This was the start of something historically important, I sensed, and so for the next two weeks I completely set aside my research and writing on the White Terror and concentrated, day and night, on the historically important movement unfolding before my own eyes and ears. I would witness it, struggle to make sense of it, ask lots of questions, and create my own primary historical materials. I could hardly believe my luck.

The Legislative Yuan and its immediate environs on Qingdao East Road, Zhongshan South Road, and Ji'nan Road were alive with heady and milling excitement. People were pacing about excitedly, looking around as if their heads were on swivels, and gathering into small but growing gaggles. That very night, from the pedestrian bridge over Qingdao East Road that connects the Legislative Yuan buildings with the offices of legislators, I began taking photographs and videos of the gathering protests and speaking in Chinese with protesting students. For the next few days and nights I walked the streets around the Legislative Yuan, talking with people and taking photographs and videos. I also sent in several reports, photographs, and videos of the protest scenes to an electronic Taiwan discussion group⁶ on the Internet. A leading member of the group expressed significant thanks for my comments and photographs and told me that several of them had been forwarded to contacts at the State Department.

My emails and photographs to the Taiwan discussion group from my smartphone on the night of 18 March 2014 reflect my wonderment, my delighted and astonished amazement, that this was all happening. Electronic traffic was so dense in the immediate vicinity of the Legislative Yuan that I had to walk past the Control Yuan next door, cross Zhongxiao East Road, and walk another block or so northward along Zhongshan North Road, beyond the Executive Yuan, to get my iPhone dispatches out. I was by no means the only one taking photographs and videos of the protests and attempting to send them off; it seemed that everyone in Taipei was out with their

⁶ In this article I will quote from my electronic dispatches to the group, but not anyone else's.

smartphones, punctuating the night with small electronic screen lights like fireflies against a night sky in the countryside. Friendly and helpful police officers advised me and many other smart phone votarients about where we should go to achieve the wireless electronic connections for our cell phones we all so anxiously wanted. The police were not present at the protests to thwart them, but to ensure that order was maintained and things did not get out of hand. The crowds clearly understood this and grasped intuitively that many, if not an outright majority, of the police actually supported and agreed with what they were doing.

I am on site at the LY and will be here all day and late into the night. I would not miss this for the world. (Tuesday 18 March, 9:25 pm)

Right at 青島東路3號 [#3 Qingdao East Road] of White Terror [significance], there are a thousand people shouting "國家有難" [the nation is imperiled]." (Tuesday 18 March 2014, 9:37 pm)

Chasing Sunflowers

The next morning (Wednesday 19 March 2014), after reports had come out the previous night that the students occupying the Legislative Chamber were critically short of drinking water and had no blankets for sleeping, I bagged up a new blanket and all the bottled water I had in my Academia Sinica apartment and headed out for the Legislative Yuan. There I donated them to a student support group with a pavilion tent set up in the middle of Ji'nan Street, but I needn't have bothered: The Taiwanese public had already come through magnificently for the students, with hundreds of cases of bottled water stacked up at the tent for their use. By noon that day there were also large stockpiles of dry food, toiletry items, and other supplies and necessities for the students.

That day Wu'er Kaixi and Wang Dan, exiled student leaders in China during the Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989, made the news when they spoke encouragingly with the students occupying the Legislative Yuan. I spoke with Linda Arrigo and fully expected that she would become heavily involved in all of this, but she startled me by declaring that this was "not her struggle anymore" and that a new generation had now taken up the causes she held so dear. To me she seemed not bitter, but content and satisfied to watch the majesty of the movement unfold.

民視新聞 on TV is reporting that Wang Dan and Wu'er Kaixi have made statements supporting the students.

Linda Arrigo is not going to get involved with this, she told me.
(Wednesday 19 March 2014, 11:49 a.m.)

I spent the afternoon and evening at the Legislative Yuan, first in the office of Legislator Chou Ni-an and then at the protests with a young graduate student in economics who was cutting his classes that day just to be there at the Legislative Yuan and take it all in. He spoke with me at length about why the Trade Services Agreement would not be good for Taiwan economically, but what I remember most from him was his insistence that economics and politics are inextricable and that the agreement would be just one more step towards China's eventual political annexation of the island. When I asked him if he wanted to see Taiwan become the "Taiwan Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China," he replied emphatically that he did not.

I sent off several emails to an electronic Taiwan discussion group on this very eventful and exciting day, and with each passing hour I was astonished that the protest movement was still going on and was growing:

I am at the LY in the office of TSU lawmaker Chou Ni-an. Her assistant Chia Tekkham... has given me a lowdown of what has happened since last night. He has now been here for over 24 hours without sleep, and so has Chou Ni-an herself.

The students broke into the legislative conclave around 9:30 last night. The police tried to break through at 10:00 pm but failed. One police officer was hurt and is now in hospital. At 3:00 a.m. there was another police attempt on the conclave, but it was also blocked. The third police attempt came at 5:30 but also failed. At 6:30 a.m. on the fourth attempt, Chou put herself between the police and the students, as did other lawmakers, and the fourth attempt also failed. Chou has not slept for over 24 hours.

The students in the conclave [legislative chamber] are OK. They have enough to eat and drink, and there is also some bedding that people have donated. There is one restroom for men and one for women, and they worked and had running water until at least 1:00 a.m. last night. He is not sure about now.

Chou Ni-an and other lawmakers are able to give donated daily necessities to the students. Only lawmakers are allowed to enter the conclave. Chou and other lawmakers are trying to ensure that water, electricity, and air conditioning are available for the students in the conclave.

Chia Tekkham is across from me at the table now and has fallen asleep. I won't interrupt him. He has been trying to contact Linda Arrigo but has so far been unsuccessful.

I had to walk three blocks away in order to send this. Signals weak near the centre of the situation. (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 2:26 p.m.)

3:15 pm and it is still going on. The students have all they need as far as good, bedding, and sanitary items are concerned. The people of Taiwan have donated more than the students need. Air conditioning was restored one hour or so ago.

The entrance to the Legislative Yuan on Zhongshan South Road has cops with shields, but the courtyard is open and hundreds of people are milling about in it. There is a mood that is neither festive nor wrathful at the moment.

I admire these brave young people so much. The old despot Chiang Kai-shek once said that the times test the youth and the youth create the times 時代考驗青年, 青年創造時. Maybe he was right, but certainly not in the way he thought! (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 3:25 p.m.)

6:00 pm on 19 March 2014 and it is still happening. Crowds gradually gathering on three sides of LY: Chi-nan Road 濟南路, Zhongshan South Road 中山南路, and Ching-Tao East Road 青島東路. Mood is generally calm, including police. The word on the streets is that the police won't try anything until the wee hours. (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 6:04 p.m.)

7:30 pm in Taipei, and it is still happening. A growing crowd of what is now more than 3000 is gathering at the intersection of Ching-Tao Tung-Lu and Chen-Chiang Road 鎮江路. I took this picture from the pedestrian bridge over Ching-Tao East. (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 7:52 p.m.)

The gathering crowd at Ching-Tao and Chen-Chiang, ca. 7:15 pm (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 7:59 p.m.)

8:30 pm and it is still going, and growing. Two lanes of Zhongshan South are now closed to vehicles, as is all of Ching-Tao East now. Cars are honking their horns in support. The crowd at Ching-Tao East and Chen-Chiang is around 10,000, and at Chi-nan it is around 7,000.

The prevailing mood is not giddy, but controlled and restrained. Everyone is being very nice to the police, but what will happen if they try something against the students inside? (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 9:12 p.m.)

There are now reports that the air conditioning has been switched off in the building and that medical personnel are on hand. (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 9:21 p.m.)

Busses full of cops are arriving. Some of them have long bamboo batons visible in the windows. Oh scat. Awl he [Will they] really try something?! (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 9:36 p.m.)

11:00 pm, 19 March 2014, and it is still happening. I don't yet know what's going on inside because I can neither receive nor send anything near the LY. There is a mood of measured, good-natured resignation among the crowd, but no real despair or outward displays of anger (yet). One young man asked me if I thought there was any hope for Taiwan, but he was not despairing.

My batteries are running low -- both in my phone and in me. I hate to leave these people. I'll be watching TV when I get back to my place.

The attached is the crowd at Ching-Tao East at 10:55 pm or so. (Wednesday 19 March 2014, 11:11 p.m.)

On Thursday 20 March 2014 Wang Jin-pyng, President of the Legislative Yuan, announced that he would not use force to expel the students from the Legislative Chamber. This was both a relief and an encouragement to the Taiwanese public, and that night they came out on the streets around the Legislative Yuan in large numbers. That evening I spoke with large numbers of thirty-somethings through seventy-somethings who had taken to the streets around the Legislative Yuan in support of the students. They largely had the same concerns as the students but definitely struck me as being more agitated and animated than even the students were, and they seemed positively giddy with excitement that the students had finally taken dramatic action

against the people and institutions who seemed to them only too eager to sell Taiwan out to China at the earliest opportunity. One crusty and feisty old gal I spoke with castigated the incompetence and corruption of KMT government personnel and called them "human scum." She had nothing but contempt and scorn for the government and person of President Ma Ying-jeou, whom she said was captivated and manipulated by King Pu-tsung, his handsome and homosexual paramour, *éminence grise*, and former ambassador to the United States. (In 2014 the public in Taiwan did indeed hold Ma Ying-jeou in particularly low esteem, calling him "President Nine Percent" for his abysmally low approval ratings and widely ridiculing him for his ignorance and isolation from things mainstream Taiwanese, including his apparent belief that deer velvet, an important natural ingredient in some varieties of traditional Chinese medicine, grows in the ears rather than on the horns of the island's sika deer.)



Police officers in the waiting room of the Legislative Room, noodling away on their smartphones.



Protesters in front of the Legislative Yuan, 18 March 2014, a few hours before it was stormed and occupied.



["People climbing all over the Legislative Yuan."](#)



From the bridge over Qingdao East Road. Media vehicles have arrived.



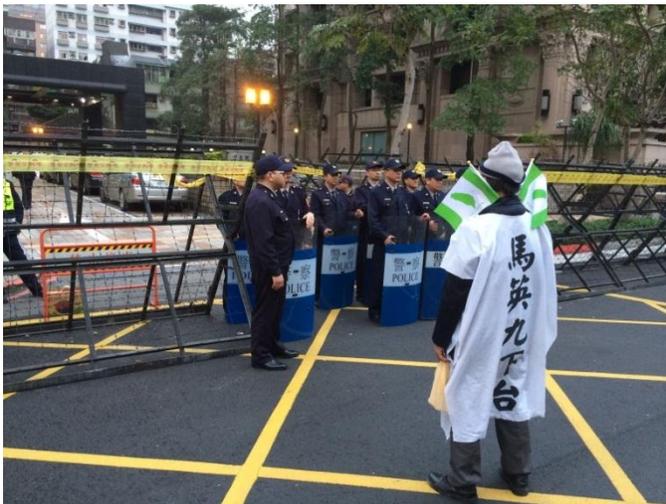
[Protest street concert on Ji'nan Road.](#)



Water and other supplies for the students, donated by the Taiwanese public.



[Getting an opportunity to speak his mind.](#)



A pro-independence Green activist giving the police the what-for.



From the bridge over Qingdao East Road at night.



Candlelight vigil for Taiwan.

On Friday 21 March 2014 I watched from stairs of the pedestrian bridge over Qingdao East Road (access to the bridge itself was locked) in unabated amazement as

people climbed all over the white building of the Legislative Chamber at will. I stared and took photographs and videos of several men as they neatly stenciled and spray-painted a political apothegm on the white outside wall of the Legislative Chamber building: "When despotism becomes a fact, revolution is a duty." Early that evening another astonishing sign went up over the main entrance to the Legislative Yuan compound on Zhongshan South Road. This one consisted of six black Chinese characters on yellow background that meant essentially "The Legislature Where Chinese Parties are Selling Out Taiwan" or, more literally, perhaps "Chinese Parties' Sell Taiwan Legislature (*Zhongguo dang mai Tai Yuan*). I was on Ji'nan Road when I heard reports that these six characters had gone up, but I wouldn't believe them until I saw them for myself. And lo, there they were! I found this breathtaking and marveled again at how brave these people are and how far Taiwan had come since the White Terror. I told any young person who would listen that if something like this happened in the 1950s through the 1970s, military police would simply have quickly surrounded the place and sprayed it with machine guns. I took dozens of pictures of the six yellow and black placards that made up the new sign. I also found it somewhat amusing that the KMT police had apparently decided that they had to hold the roof of the building while conceding the rest of it to the protesting masses. I sent in pictures and messages of it all to the Taiwan discussion group:

There are tens of thousands of people at the LY today. There were more by noon today than there were at 11:00 pm two days ago. Check out the stenciled "When despotism becomes a fact, revolution is a duty" in the attached picture, right on the building.

The mood seems a bit angrier than it was on the 19th but is still very much controlled. The students are packing up garbage, guiding the throngs to walk in lines, and in general being very civil. Quite hardly the "rioters" 暴民 that the reptilian blue media report. (Friday 21 March 2014, 5:15 p.m.)

This just went up about an hour ago. On the main entrance to the Legislative Yuan on Zhongshan South Road. (Friday 21 March 2014, 5:55 p.m.)

There were at least several hundred police officers at the Legislative Yuan that night, and large and ominous-looking black busses, some from jurisdictions quite

distant from Taipei, kept bringing more in. Each officer carried a large black bag, helmet, shield, and long truncheon or baton. I never saw any firearms, but one police officer I asked said that firearms were available rearward if they were ever needed. The unloading and unloading of these busses apparently spooked quite a few people, and before long a friend of mine in central Taiwan texted me with a rumour that the police were moving in from the busses in large numbers to quell the protests. He asked me to investigate this, and what I found was that there were indeed long lines of police officers going from and to the black busses. These, however, were no cause for alarm because they were simply shift changes. I watched in awe on Ji'nan Road as the protesting crowds parted like the Red Sea, allowed the lines of police officers to go by, and applauded them and cheered them on, saying things like "Uncle Policeman, you're working hard."

On Saturday 22 March 2014 I took it relatively easy. I was beginning to find the pace and intensity of the movement (or at least my drive to observe it) fatiguing, and I was suffering from something of a sleep deficit. There were rumours going around that the KMT government might try clearing the Legislative Yuan that night or next, probably during the wee hours. From my apartment I emailed three professors at the Academia Sinica with whom I had been working with on the White Terror, and who were now deeply involved in the Sunflower Movement, if they had any idea if this could be true. I wince when I read this email now; I was essentially asking them to predict the future, and they were quite likely even more exhausted than I was.)

Dear Professors,

I was at the Legislative Yuan on March 18. I was there in the afternoon to speak with an assistant to TSU legislator Chou Ni-an about the pending revisions in high school civics and history texts about the White Terror. I had no idea then about what would happen that night.

I spent all day (11:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.) on both Wednesday 19 March and Friday 21 March watching the protests there, talking to people and taking hundreds of pictures and also several brief video clips.

Some people in the crowd told me that if Ma tries anything against the students, it might very early Monday morning, from around 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. Do you have any idea how likely this is? If you think it is likely, I will want to be there.

Could you let me know, so that I can plan my sleeping and working schedule for tomorrow?

Regards,

David (Saturday 22 March 2014, 5:53 p.m.)

I stayed in that night and looked at media coverage of the movement, both Taiwanese and international. There was some dismay on the electronic Taiwan discussion group about the relative lack of international media coverage of the event. I managed to find a few items:

There does seem to be some fairly decent coverage in Le Monde, although some of it is behind a paywall (but I got a quick peak at the one below before the paywall went up, and it contained several paragraphs):

http://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2014/03/22/a-taipei-les-etudiants-occupent-le-parlement-au-nom-de-la-democratie_4387720_3210.html

This one does not seem to have a paywall but is mostly unremarkable:

http://www.lemonde.fr/asiе-pacifique/article/2014/03/20/a-taipei-l-accord-de-libre-echange-sino-taiwanais-provoque-la-colere-des-etudiants_4386792_3216.html

(Saturday 22 March 2014, 10:48 p.m.)

I then wrote a note to myself and never sent it to anybody, but I include it here because it reflects my continuing surprise and admiration of the movement for its peaceful and orderly nature:

I must agree that police in Canada do seem to be more brutal than in Taiwan. I don't think APEC Vancouver style tactics would go over well with the Taiwanese public at all.

The Calgary Herald (!) at least had a photo spread and some captioning:

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/touch/story.html?id=9635674>

But this doesn't do justice to the peaceful character of the protest here in Taiwan. Indeed, do imagine Parliament Hill or Capitol Hill being stormed by a few hundred students and then surrounded by tens of thousands of supporters. What would happen?

When I first heard of the students' action at the LY, I thought to myself, "Oh, scat, that's wild. Really wild." But what happened next? Essentially nothing! It has become a street party, an outdoor concert. Lots and lots of people came, but (so far at least -- and here's hoping) the police did not attack and the people did not riot. Anybody who has looked at the crowds from the pedestrian bridge over Ching-Tao East knows that the people could storm the place at will.

Storm a parliament, then have a carnival and invite everyone, including the police. The people here go out of their way to be courteous and respectful of the police. When shift changes come, they part for the police like the Red Sea. Check out the attached video clip of this I took last night.

These are a lovable people! I think it's due to more than their leaders and police. It's almost enough to make me believe in ethnic character (minzokusei / minzuxing) once again, the way I did as a [teenager]. (Saturday 22 March 2014, 11:19 p.m.)

It was probably good that I rested up on Saturday, because on the evening of Sunday 23 March 2014 things became much more serious and tense.

Enter Ying-shih Yü

But earlier on that fateful day, the protest movement received an enormous shot in the arm when Professor Ying-shih Yü, who over his distinguished career has been an accomplished, influential, and tenured scholar of Chinese intellectual history at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, publicly came out in support of it in a brief and

impassioned statement. (In 2006 Yü was named, along with John Hope Franklin, the world-renowned historian of slavery and racial equality in America, a co-recipient of the prestigious John W. Kluge Prize for the Study of Humanity, widely regarded as the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in the humanities and social sciences.) Nobody in Taiwan could ignore his statement, least of all the Kuomintang, which for the past few decades had upheld and honoured him as Taiwan's top public intellectual. In Taiwan on 23 March 2014 the influential newspaper *Apple Daily* published the following account of Yü's statement in its original Chinese, which I now offer here in translation.

Apple Daily

23 March 2014

Affirming Civil Protests

Ying-shih Yü: A Movement that Heightens Democracy

Regarding the anti-trade pact masses who have occupied the Legislative Yuan, historiographical titan and Academia Sinica Academician Ying-shih Yü has today published an article entitled "Taiwan's Civil Protests and the Future Prospects for Democracy" in which he argues that the current civil protests constitute a movement that protests and heightens Taiwan's democratic system, one that is equally important to both the people and the government. Yü also reminds us that the Chinese communists have always employed all manner of trickery in their scheming to destroy Taiwan's democracy and that the people and government of Taiwan both need to increase their vigilance. Democracy is the greatest guarantee of Taiwan's security.

With the help of National Taiwan University professor Liu Ching-I, Ying-shih Yü has placed his article "Taiwan's Civil Protests and Future Prospects for Democracy" on Facebook, the text of which is as below:

Taiwan's Civil Protests and the Future Prospects for Democracy

Ying-shih Yü

Over the past few days I have repeatedly watched many scenes on CNN, BBC, Japan's NHK, and several major American television stations of the

mass Taiwanese university student occupation and peaceful sit-in and protest at the Legislative Yuan. For many years I have not seen such extensive global media attention paid to Taiwan. Today (20 March 2014) I read Austin Ramzy's clear report "Trade Deal Spurs Protest in Taiwan" in the *New York Times*, along with his large photographs. It was not until after I had read his report that I knew that the protests had their origin in the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement that the government of Taiwan had concluded with the Chinese communists. The protesting masses do not trust this "agreement" and believe that it will certainly do long-term harm to Taiwan's economy. They are therefore demanding that the "agreement" be subjected to item-by-item scrutiny in the national legislature. But because the Kuomintang has an absolute majority of seats in the national legislature, the government seems to have hoped that the entire agreement could be quickly approved in the national legislature and would not need to go through the paperwork of item-by-item voting. According to the *New York Times*, public opinion in Taiwan indicates that 44.5% oppose this "agreement," 32.8% support it, and 22.9% have no opinion. Most noteworthy, however, is that 73.6% say they support conducting an item-by-item review of this "agreement."

Further, according to a report by the journalist Chen Peimin in Hong Kong's *Apple Daily* entitled "Looking at Taiwan from Hong Kong" (20 March 2014), students occupying the Legislative Yuan are being supported in their actions by tens of thousands of people outside the legislature, including lawyers, doctors, and other specialists who have come forward as volunteers to help them. University administrations have also expressed respect for the students' actions, and professors have been even more open in their support. Especially impressive is the posting of a police officer on Facebook: "Beneath our uniforms, each of us has their own opinion, and I oppose perfunctory behaviour in a crisis. All of you have come to the Legislative Yuan to struggle for democracy, and we have come in front of the Legislative Yuan to protect the rule of law. We are not enemies, but comrades in arms who are facing each other." These words prove that Taiwan's democratic style has already developed to a high level.

In order to be clear on the true nature of the current protests, I have spoken on the telephone with highly trusted friends in Taipei. They have

unanimously told me that the current protests are a civil movement from start to finish, with young students as its main force, and absolutely must not be misconstrued as manipulative actions by political opposition parties. An enlightened friend pointed out to me that the protesting masses have refused the requests of political parties to participate in their movement.

The *New York Times* has also drawn a clear line of demarcation between the protesting masses and the opposition parties, separately narrating the activities of the two and not mixing them up together. The newspaper quotes the words of a young female hospital worker: "Right now we are probably a bit late, but if it weren't for this type of activity, we could not make the government heed the voice of the people." Her words reflect a true democratic consciousness that absolutely could not have been made use of by any partisan group under false pretenses.

Behind the entire protest movement we see clearly the extreme distrust that the citizens of Taiwan, and especially the youth, have for the totalitarian government across the Taiwan Strait. For the last six or seven years the Chinese communists have been making use of economics to firmly encase Taiwan so that when Taiwan has no means of support without the mainland, the chance and opportunity for "unification" will have arrived. But the citizens now participating in protests have seen through this camouflage for the political influence of economics. The *New York Times* says that the protesting masses oppose the "Trade Services Agreement" because they deeply fear it will give Beijing too much economic influence. They have obviously seen clearly that this type of economic influence is, in actuality, the embodiment of political influence.

The current protests are a movement to protect and heighten Taiwan's democratic system, and they are equally important to the people and the government. The people can certainly solidify their civil rights through this movement, and the government can also improve its democratic quality through "hearing the voice of the people." That Taiwan has permanently settled on democracy is already an unalterable fact. Under a democratic system there will often be discrepancies and controversies between the people and the government, but because under such a system there is no more space for the existence of undemocratic, non-democratic, or anti-democratic governments, it is impossible for outright hostile antagonism to exist between them.

The Chinese communists have constantly been resorting to all manner of trickery and subterfuge to destroy Taiwan's democracy, and both the people and government of Taiwan need to be on the highest levels of vigilance. Democracy is the greatest guarantor of Taiwan's security.

Ying-shih Yü, 21 March 2014

This statement from Professor Yü was important for me personally as well. I took encouragement from his endorsement of the movement and posted it on Facebook that day. My posting was brief and to the point, and it earned me a few friend requests from Taiwanese scholars and writers.

I have the utmost admiration and respect for Prof. Yu. I took more classes from him than from anyone else in graduate school, including my advisor. It seems to me that his view of what is going on in Taiwan right now is likely correct.

The reaction among deep Blue netizens to Ying-shih Yü's statement was immediate and strident. Given that Professor Yü (a student of Ch'ien Mu, a longtime intellectual favourite of the KMT and *bête noire* to the DPP) had for so long been Taiwan's preeminent public intellectual and had strongly self-identified as a Chinese, they could hardly dismiss him as a doddering old fool. Their only recourse was to the rhetorical tactics of partisan politics in imperial China: There was no question about the goodness of the emperor, but His Majesty could be deceived by mendacious ministers and conniving courtiers.

Below I translate one such Blue response:

Most of what the media sees is hoax.

This so-called student movement was instigated by a group of independence-minded scholars and carried out by professional students. Of course, the results were successful beyond their expectations.

First off, I will say I don't want unification and don't want independence. I just want to live out my days.

What Professor Yü has seen is nothing more than deceit perpetuated by naive media. It is false appearances.

Think about it. If you want to do an item-by-item review, first you need to stand guard at the gate and not allow certain specific points that would permit the Chinese communists to break their way in. Second, you calculate and compare profits and benefits. If you don't want the Chinese communists to break their way in, then just reject it. Why review it? If you choose instead to calculate and compare profit and benefits, you approve it if the Chinese communists agree to give you more. That is waiting to sell at the highest price, isn't it?

Isn't the answer clear? Some people didn't want it at all in the first place but felt like using deceitful and feigned calculation and comparison [of profit and benefits], but [then] every last one of them boycotted [the process] out of discontent. Another group, on the other hand, demanded that there be more profit and benefits. These two types [of groups] were both deceivers.

In this [student movement] the scholar-instigators behind the scenes are the first type [of deceivers], and the Democratic Progressive Party is the second type.

I hold that the agreement should not be signed, because Taiwan's true crisis lies in [potential] internal strife between the people. (Ideological struggle is possibly also [a] false [appearance].) This and only this is the true Achilles heel for the [potential] sinking of Taiwan.

The spectre of inter-ethnic strife the author floated in the antepenultimate sentence was a crudely reductionist red herring as far as the Sunflower Movement was concerned. Indeed, "The Sunflower Movement was unique in its ability to cut across demographics, ethnic cleavages and ideological dispositions with its carefully tuned civic message."⁷ Over all the days and hours I spent talking with people supporting the Sunflower Movement, I heard very little that could be construed as inter-ethnic animosity. The author of this posting was majoring in a minor. (S)he myopically

⁷ Lorand C. Laskai, "The Transformation of Taiwan's Sunflower Movement: Nearly a month after it began, the movement has evolved in some interesting ways," *The Diplomat*, 5 May 2014; <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/the-transformation-of-taiwans-sunflower-movement/> (Accessed 6 October 2014.)

focused on specific negotiations for one particular pact and could not or would not see that the Sunflower Movement was much bigger, and about much more, than the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement. A more important issue than either the procedural minutiae of legislation or the identities and affiliations of those occupying the Legislative Yuan was, of course, the widespread public response in favour of the occupation. The author did not or would not reflect on *why* the actions at the Legislative Yuan were "successful beyond their expectations." The answer lay neither in the tactics of the instigators in particular nor in the Democratic Progressive Party in general, but in Taiwanese society, which was a powder keg of resentment and anxiety over the economic and political stakes of economic agreements the KMT government had been concluding with China. The nature and origins of the fateful spark were not nearly as important as the massive detonation it produced.

At 4:00 p.m. on 21 April 2014 I also sent an email of my take on the situation in Taiwan to several of my Chinese studies colleagues at the University of Calgary:

Hello everyone,

There are new people in your numbers. I can't wait to meet with you when I get home to Calgary.

I am in Taipei doing research on Taiwan's White Terror imprisonments. My future book will be called *White Terror, Dark Prison* 白恐黑牢. But I have been out of the library and out on the streets for the last few days because of what is happening at the Legislative Yuan. It is more important than many people in the Western media think it is. This is a critically important historical moment, and I have the good fortune to be right here in the middle of it. I walk around on the streets asking questions, listening to answers, and taking pictures.

I still do not quite know what to make of all this, but I have the utmost respect and admiration for Yu Ying-shih. In graduate school I took more classes from him than from anyone else, including my advisor. I think it is quite notable and important that Yu has come out in support of the protests at the Legislative Yuan:

<http://www.appledaily.com.tw/realtimenews/article/new/20140323/365329/>

I attach a few pictures I have taken. I have many hundreds of them.

Best to you all,

David

P.S. It is entirely peaceful here. Taiwan protests are like street parties, carnivals, and outdoor concerts. The police haven't attacked, and the people have not rioted. (Sunday 23 March 2014, 4:02 p.m.)



Doctors and medical students
on hand for the protesters,
Qingdao East Road.



[From the stairway of the bridge over Qingdao East Road.](#)



“When despotism becomes a fact, revolution is a duty.”



“The Chinese Parties’ Sell-out-Taiwan Legislature.”



“I am a citizen, not a rioter.”



[Police Officers changing shift \(1\).](#)



[Police Officers changing shift \(2\).](#)



“The officials have forced the people into revolt.”



Guy Fawkes masks.



“Bring the Republic of China regime to an end.”

Storming the Executive Yuan!

But that very night, as luck or fate would have it, a mass incident occurred that did seem to me to resemble a riot. (Still, Taiwanese riots are relatively sedate affairs in comparison with those in certain other East Asian countries.) Angered by Premier Jiang Yi-huah's statement on 22 March that the Executive Yuan (the executive branch of Taiwan's government) still intended to push the trade pact through the legislature, along with President Ma's statement the next day that he intended to see the pact through to ratification, a group of more militant students stormed and occupied the Executive Yuan around 7:30 pm that night. This was a breathtaking new development.

Soon after I sent of the above email to my colleagues I received a breathless and excited text from a sharp and clear-eyed friend in central Taiwan that a group of students had gone out from the Legislative Yuan and stormed and occupied the government's cabinet offices at the Executive Yuan. He wanted to know if this was true, and I expressed my doubts about it but decided to go see for myself. This would be very big news if true, so I ventured out from my apartment for the second time that day and made my way through the night and back downtown. When I had crossed under Zhongshan North Road and emerged on its eastern side I saw immediately that the reports were indeed true! Police and crowds were everywhere, but the police had not yet regrouped and taken action. The crowds of students and their supporters had torn

down and dismantled the steel and barbwire barriers the police had erected around the Executive Yuan, and many of the barriers left standing were now more or less being used by the crowds as bleachers to stand on and get a better view of the action inside the Executive Yuan compound.

Around the Executive Yuan you could have cut the tension and apprehension in the air with a knife. There was no more carnival atmosphere here; storming and occupying the government's cabinet offices was a very serious matter indeed, and everyone seemed to know it. After I had gingerly stepped over the crushed and trampled barriers (now covered with a few layers of cardboard to make them more passable) that had once blocked the entrance to the Executive Yuan compound and courtyard on Zhongxiao East Road, I asked a student if she thought the government would have the police clear the Executive Yuan by force. Her answer was straightforward and chilling: "*Here?* Yes, they will."

I texted my friend in Taichung about the situation, and by now he was giving me minute-by-minute text updates on the macro level of the developing story, including the movements of the police and the announcements of the Kuomintang government. (He was watching television reports, something I could not do from my fluid and worm's-eye position on the ground. I very much appreciated his updates.) He texted me and told me to be very careful, advising me to seal up my electronics in a plastic bag and prepare to be hosed by water cannon. I soon heeded his warnings to "get out of there!" and left the compound. My legs and knees were both very sore at the time, so I decided to make myself scarce as expeditiously as my knees were able to take me away from the compound.

But I didn't want to leave the scene entirely. I crossed back over Zhongshan North Road and climbed up to the pedestrian bridge that crosses over Zhongxiao West Road, and from what I felt was my relatively safe and elevated vantage point there I continued to watch the scene at the Executive Yuan unfold. Several people had a similar idea, and I began talking with some of them. One particularly interesting middle-aged artist and Marxist revolutionary type with long hair spoke with me in very fluent English (he had lived in California for a decade), and he shook his head in dismay as he watched the crowd from the bridge. The reasons for his dismay were startling but on

the mark: "Just look at them. They don't really know what they're doing. They're not ready to bleed."

He was right; the scene at the Executive Yuan was no longer a carnival, but it was nowhere near a revolution. It was simply a riot. A female student standing on the bridge who had supported and participated in the protests at the Legislative Yuan a few days earlier told me the movement had now "changed in its nature" (*bianzhi*) because the action at the Executive Yuan resembled a riot. "The masses will not support them in this," she said of the roiling scene there.

We all knew that police action would come soon. I stayed on the bridge until it was time to make the last metro back home at the Academia Sinica in Nan'gang. I was very reluctant to leave, but I wasn't sure that my tired and aching knees would make it to the break of day. When I got back to my apartment I turned the TV on and watched the story through to its brutal but undeadly end, finally drifting off into an uneasy sleep on the couch at dawn.

My dispatches to the electronic Taiwan discussion group on that fateful night of 23-24 March 2014 were mostly sent from my apartment; the scene at the Executive Yuan and its environs was much too tense and fluid for me to compose emails. On this night, for the first and only time during the Sunflower Movement, I felt both fear and tremendous admiration for the brave students who had resolved to remain at the EY, come what may.

Students have broken into the courtyard of EY. I am taking pictures. For the first time, I feel a little scared. (Sunday 23 March 2014, 8:34 p.m.)

There are several students with bloodied heads. They are on Taiwan TV. Some of the riot police look like transformers from a bad Japanese monster movie. Some of them are being very brutal. (Monday 24 March 2014, 2:14 a.m.)

This is just sick and wrong because the students aren't resisting. (Monday 24 March 2014, 3:12 a.m.)

Jiang ordered the action against the EY. Does that mean the LY will be untouched? (Monday 23 March 2014, 3:29 a.m.)

A goal of the police seems to be to clear everything before dawn. I hope that doesn't happen. I hope what they're doing sees the broad light of day.

Some of the students are really being manhandled, which is unnecessary because they are totally passive dead weight. (Monday 24 March 2014, 5:06 a.m.)

Madame Legislator Chou Ni-an

When I awakened close to noon I watched television news on the riot police actions and video footage of it on the Internet. One story about a brave opposition party legislator caught my eye in particular, and I told the Taiwan discussion group that I knew who it was:

The woman in the yellow vest in this video is TSU lawmaker Chou Ni-an 周倪安, or at least someone in a vest with her name. Chou has been in the thick of this situation from the beginning. She is one committed human being. It looks like she is hauled away towards the end of this clip. (Monday 24 March 2014, 11:53 a.m.)

I will tell her story here. During those wee hours of 24 March 2014, an elite squadron of the Kuomintang government's riot police, whose goony paramilitary get-up and Kevlar armour suits made them look like a black-coloured cross between the Michelin Man and the Pillsbury Doughboy, made their way through the outdoor walls of the Executive Yuan compound and began arresting students. The students, who had obviously had some training or instruction in passive resistance and civil disobedience, linked their elbows together and had to be pried apart one by one. Once separated, some students went completely limp and had to be carried off, while others seem to have lost their nerve and stood up and walked away when the police signaled for them to do so. There is abundant footage all over the Internet of the riot police treating the students (including many female students) with unnecessary roughness in these arrests and removals. One principled and courageous opposition party legislator, Madame Legislator Chou Ni-an, put on a bright fluorescent yellow-green vest clearly indicating her name and status as a legislator and then inserted herself between the students and the riot police, trying to restrain the latter from manhandling the former. She succeeded at this for a time, but eventually the riot police deemed her presence inconvenient and

bodily dragged her off behind the riot police lines. Once out of public view, riot squad police beat her senseless in the head. They split open one of her eye sockets (she almost lost her vision), covered her head with bruises and contusions, and then left her lying completely unconscious on the ground. A few female police officers then her off to one side and saw to it that she was taken to hospital for treatment.⁸

Her legislative aide texted me that evening (March 24) about what had happened to Chou, and I was so moved and distressed that I dropped everything and went to the National Taiwan University Hospital on Zhongshan South Road to visit her. I bought flowers in a little shop on the lower floor of the hospital for her, and when I saw her in her hospital bed with her bruised and battered face and a bleary and distant look in her eyes, I could not help being emotional. With my voice shaking in indignation, I said to her, "The riot police are even worse than organized crime figures. Not even criminal gangsters will beat women up." ("鎮暴警察連黑道都不如，黑道流氓都不打女人.") Chou said she would be OK in a few days and right back at it, continuing the struggle for Taiwan. And indeed she was; around two weeks later I was visiting her and her aide in her office once again, where we continued our discussion of how the KMT government was trying to bowdlerise the coverage of the February 28th Incident and the White Terror period in high school history textbooks. (By this time it all had, of course, assumed a new topicality and urgency.)

Madame Legislator Chou Ni-an 女義士周倪安立委 assumed great risk to her safety and person over the night of 23-24 March 2014, knowing neither how much professionalism and restraint the Kuomintang riot police would display nor how much brutality they were capable of. Her love and concern for Taiwan and for the protesting students led her to set aside any consideration of her own personal safety and welfare. Because she put herself last in this way, she has ended up being first, first in the eyes

⁸ Footage and a Taiwan television news broadcast of the incident can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAGTjYKIKGk&app=desktop>. (Accessed 27 September 2014.) Footage of this scene was provided to Taiwan's television media outlets by several of the hundreds of Taiwanese onlookers who recorded it on their smartphones. A longer raw video in good focus can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Xs8efrxaB6A (Accessed 27 September 2014.) In this video the crowds are shouting "The police are beating people!" and "send the trade services agreement back!"

and hearts of the Taiwanese public and the protesting students. Her actions remind me of one of my favourite passages in the *Daodejing*:

Hence the sage	是以聖人
Becomes first by putting herself last,	後其身而身先
Preserves her person by disregarding her person	外其身而身存

I gave Madame Legislator Chou a nickname, and she seems to have liked it: Mother Chou, as in the Mother Jones of the Sunflower Movement. For the rest of my days as a university history professor I will cover her heroic actions in my discussions of Taiwan history, whether in the lecture hall or with individual students, and anyone else who will listen for that matter. I am tempted to say that Taiwan needs more people like her, but perhaps that is not so; she and only a few more inspiring, brave, and determined leaders like her are all Taiwan needs to secure a free and democratic future.



[Storming the Executive Yuan.](#)



Standing on the barricades for a better view of the storming of the Executive Yuan.



[Storming the Executive Yuan](#)



[From the bridge over Zhongxiao West Road](#)



[Executive Yuan, Control Yuan, and Legislative \(from left to right\)](#)



[Riot police arriving on the scene of the Executive Yuan](#)



Taiwan does not want to be another Hong Kong.



Contempt for President Ma Ying-jeou.



"If you don't do politics, politics will do you."



"Under our police uniforms, we are all Taiwanese."



Police officers in riot gear outside the Executive Yuan.

The movement continues

The dramatic police action at the Executive Yuan did not slow or distract the Sunflowers. They seem to have conceded the point that the move on the EY was foolish, but they did not allow this to derail their movement. Because there were no deaths in the clearing of the Executive Yuan, some Sunflower supporters even found some humour in the entire incident. One EY bureaucrat had complained to the media that in addition to breaking into his office and rifling through his desk, protestors had eaten his Suncakes (*Taiyang bing*, a Taiwanese pastry dessert delicacy). The next day members of the public sent over 150 boxes of Suncakes as gifts to the pouting official so that he would feel better, and the news and social media had a field day with this. Soon there were several clever and hilarious parodies on Youtube, based on the famous Hitler bunker rant scene in the movie *Downfall*, on YouTube of the government's reaction to the storming of the Legislative Yuan, and for a while they went viral.⁹

Ma Ying-jeou's government, for its part, decided for its own good that it would not become flush with victory and clear the Legislative Yuan as well. The next day, Tuesday 25 March 2014, the Taiwan discussion group was full of excited commentary and exchange about the Executive Yuan action. I include here my own postings to the group.

I believe it was [name deleted] who said occupying the EY [Executive Yuan] was a mistake and would end badly. He was correct. On Sunday evening when it happened a lot of people in the crowd seemed apprehensive, and everyone I talked to thought a strong response would come soon. One student viewing the occupation of the EY from a distance said the movement had now "changed nature" (*bianzhi*) and now more closely resembled a riot. She said it would not garner the public support and sympathy that the LY [Legislative Yuan] action had. I think she was right.

The searing images on TV of gratuitous police brutality will probably keep the PR damage to the movement under control and also prevent similar unwise actions by protestors.

⁹ See, for example, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZEJFMRrvls> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9J5zGFd4IVQ> (Accessed 7 October 2014.)

The bit about more police being injured than students is pure KMT moonshine. The goons in the black padded transformer suits were unnecessarily brutal. They even gave TSU female legislator Chou Ni-an a concussion and fractured her eye socket. (I visited her at the NTU Hospital last night, and she will be OK. She is a real fighter, in a NON-violent way. I think she is the Mother Jones of the Sunflower Movement.) (Tuesday 25 March 2014, 8:28 p.m.)

There is also some coverage of the LY situation on a popular video sharing website in Japan:

<http://live.nicovideo.jp/watch/lv173117558?ref=top&zroute=index>

The comments section seems lively but goes by very quickly. (Wednesday 26 March 2014, 12:55 a.m.)

Visiting the occupied Legislative Yuan

Throughout the first week of the Sunflower Movement, I thought it a great pity that Linda Arrigo did not participate in it. I thought she would have been a rousingly good speaker outside the Legislative Yuan and she would have instant name recognition and thunderous applause. I wondered if she was actually more or less giving up on the cause for Taiwan. I needn't have worried, however; a few days later someone finally succeeded, thank goodness, in drawing her into the movement, and after that I got to go to some interesting meetings. From Linda I learned of a key gathering of social and political activists at a residence very close to the Legislative Yuan. On Thursday 27 March 2014 I went to it and heard Olin Erik Wright, an American Marxist sociologist, speak in English (he had an interpreter) to a delighted and captivated audience of perhaps forty or fifty people. It seemed to me that Wright was both encouraging and praising the Sunflower Movement and sounding some notes of caution about not being too optimistic or expecting too much from it. He noted that historically, many failed protest movements have still led eventually to desired social and political change. I also thought to myself how utterly unthinkable such a politicised and manifestly anti-capitalist gathering would have been during the bad old days of the White Terror. (There would have been arrests, sham trials, life imprisonments, and summary executions.)

A few hours later that day, in the afternoon, I had my crowning experience of the Sunflower Movement when, through Linda's introduction and recommendation, an opposition party legislator escorted me through the heavy police cordons and into the Legislative Chamber. There I spent four or five hours talking with students and listening to their frustrations, hopes, and fears about the present and future of Taiwan. They saw very little reason to hope for a better economic future for their island through increasing economic integration with China, and they had strong misgivings about the incipient political ramifications of such integration. In contemplating their futures, they wanted by and large to remain in Taiwan and not need to go abroad in search of a decent living for themselves and their families. They seemed gratified that the international community and media were finally paying some attention to the plight of their homeland. They were not very worried about how their occupation of the Legislative Yuan would end, although they had differing opinions about the wisdom of the brief and abortive occupation of the Executive Yuan. I saw Lin Fei-fan but did not attempt to go up and talk to him because I thought he had better and more important things to do than talk with one more curious foreigner.

A remarkable sense of community and camaraderie prevailed in the chamber, and the mood was calm and determined. The students had more than enough to satisfy their basic material needs. The Kuomintang government did not jam cell phones or Internet connections, so contact with the outside world was uninterrupted. Generous and supportive Taipei businesses saw to it that the students always had plenty of free food and drink, usually bottled water and boxed lunches (*biandang*) consisting of rice, vegetables, boiled eggs, and pork or chicken. (They gave me my own boxed lunch, and it was delicious.) Their bedding was Spartan but adequate, consisting mostly of new sleeping bags and camping mattresses donated by local businesses. By my reckoning there were around three sleeping bags per student available in the chamber, many of them remaining stockpiled and unopened.

They had adequate access to washrooms, although shower and laundry facilities were virtually non-existent. (They made do with lots of packaged wet napkins and plentifully available changes of new underwear.) Feminine hygiene products were always available. The chamber smelled less like a locker room than I had anticipated. Ventilation was supplied by large electric fans and a large orange plastic tube running

out through an upper window. A system of garbage removal teams was in place to keep the chamber reasonably clean and tidy.

A large corps of volunteer physicians and nurses looked after the health of the students, not just in the legislative chamber but out on the grounds of the Legislative Yuan as well. There were very few if any private rooms for examination sessions, but the volunteers and students created what minimal visual privacy they could.

Volunteer professional psychologists were on hand to talk with the students about stress, homesickness, anxiety, the around-the-clock open communal living situation, lack of privacy, strained personal relationships, Internet and social media addiction, and so on.

Only one thing troubled me about the entire student occupation of the Legislative Chamber: the pasting of placards directly on the large portrait of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, widely regarded throughout Asia and beyond as the father of modern China and the founder of the Republic of China. I'm not exactly sure why, but this just hit me straight in the guts as plain wrong; placing placards on his portrait seemed thoughtless and unnecessarily disrespectful. I know what the students were thinking: Sun Yat-sen was Chinese and therefore has nothing to do with modern Taiwan. But even if they regarded Dr. Sun as a foreigner, could they not still have respected him as a very important historical leader of a major Asian country? Certainly he was a better man and leader than Chiang Kai-shek ever was. Would they have offered similar indignities to portraits of Kim Dae-jung or Franklin D. Roosevelt? I actually asked this question to two or three students in the Legislative Chamber, and they saw my point but did not seem to think it was very important.



"If we don't stand up today, tomorrow we won't be able to stand at all."



Olin Erik Wright gives a lecture to an enthusiastic audience.



The student-occupied Legislative Yuan.



The student-occupied Legislative Yuan.



Abundant supplies for the students occupying the Legislative Yuan.



"I will not be servile." A pun on the service pact.



[My first look inside the student-occupied Legislative Yuan](#)



[Another long look at the student-occupied Legislative Yuan. Note the makeshift barriers at the end of the clip.](#)

Final rally

The final massive rally and protest march of the Sunflower Movement was held between the Legislative Yuan and Ketagalan Boulevard (opposite the Presidential Palace) on Sunday 30 March 2014. The movement's leaders estimated the crowd at around 500,000, while the police put it around 116,000. (I do not know the reasons for the large disparity between the two estimates.) At the rally student leader Lin Fei-fan urged people to keep up the pressure on the government and to remain in contact with one another. (He even asked people to get the contact information of those around them, whether they knew each other or not.) I watched the rally from my apartment on television instead of attending and observing it in person. The main problem was no longer my knees; by that time a course of good and outstandingly inexpensive physical therapy had helped greatly reduce the pain in them (long live Taiwan's socialized medicine!). I had begun suffering from a certain amount of protest fatigue, but my main concern was my imminent trip on 1 April 2014 to China to give papers at the Ocean University of China in Qingdao on China and the Arctic (another research and writing topic of mine¹⁰) and on Taiwan's White Terror at the Party History Section of the Central Party School in Beijing.¹¹ I had reservations about being in the marching crowds in the

¹⁰ On which see my curriculum vitae at <https://hist.ucalgary.ca/profiles/144-27504/david-wright-cv.pdf>. (Accessed 28 September 2014.)

¹¹ The full official name of the *danwei* (work unit) at the Central Party School (*Zhongyang Dangxiao*) that had invited me is, in English, a real mouthful: "Chinese Communist Party History Teaching and Research Section at the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (中共中央黨校中共黨史教研部). In addition to being affable and reasonable, the Party historians there were, to my surprise, refreshingly and surprisingly open, frank, and non-ideological in their discussions with me about the Communist Party's past mistakes and missteps. At my paper, attended by approximately fifty professors and students, one professor freely observed that there were striking parallels between the White Terror in Taiwan and the roughly contemporaneous "Red Terror" in mainland China.

daytime and possibly having my face broadcast on television all over Taiwan and beyond. Additionally, I had (and still have) few doubts that text messages to and from my iPhone were being monitored by PRC intelligence personnel in China, spies and other assorted unsavoury scoundrels in Taiwan within the Kuomintang state apparatus, and perhaps also by planted PRC within Taiwan itself. I did not want to be spotted and wind up in Beijing to be questioned about all I had done, so I stayed away. I'll probably spend the rest of my life wondering if ducking out of that great and final protest march of around half a million people was the right thing to do.

The White Wolf

I was not in Taiwan for the first six days in April as the Sunflower Movement was gradually winding down. I was in Qingdao and Beijing, where I longed to hear some real news about Taiwan, and I deeply resented the news vacuum and the authoritarian state that had imposed it, realizing once again that I could never stand living there for more than a few weeks at a time at most. After just six days in China, I was already homesick for Taiwan. In China I had been fretting about news reports that one Zhang Anle might take unspecified actions against the occupation of the Legislative Yuan. Zhang Anle (also known as "White Wolf," his underworld moniker) is reputed to be a major organized crime godfather of Chinese origin in Taiwan, and he openly advocates China's annexation of the island.

Zhang had lived in the United States during the 1980s and served a ten-year year sentence there for drug trafficking. After completing his prison term he was deported and returned to Taiwan in 1995, but he left for China the next year and did not return to Taiwan again until June 2013. He was "arrested" him upon his latest return, but he is now a free man who comes and goes as he pleases on the island. (The word is that he is out on bail awaiting trial.) He now runs his own minor political party, the "China Unification Promotion Party." (Little wonder that the people of Taiwan continue to be

deeply resentful and suspicious of the KMT's longstanding collusion and cooperation with Chinese triads and other criminal underworld organizations.¹²⁾

One evening during the early days of Sunflower Movement, a group of thugs rode by the Legislative Yuan on motorcycles (little 125 cc putt-putt scooters, actually) and threw firecrackers into the crowds in a crude attempt to intimidate them, and there was some speculation that they had ties to Taiwan's criminal underworld. Right before I left for China on 1 April, the Taiwanese media were carrying all sorts of reports that Zhang Anle might feel compelled to do something unspecified about the continuing protest movement. Wearing minimalist designer wireframe glasses and an elegantly tailored powder-blue Mao suit, Zhang got himself on Taiwan television in late March 2014 and spoke softly and in an affectedly refined and cultured manner about the occupation of the Legislative Yuan and his views of it. The news media in Taiwan, even the Green media that ought to know better, fawn all over Zhang Anle, and just about everyone in Taiwan finds him intimidating or at least impressive because of the influence and power, real or imagined, of his underworld networks.¹³ In the event, there was no significant trouble in Taiwan, much to the relief of the people of Taiwan. The public had a good feel for how the Ma Ying-jeou would and would not react to aspects of the Sunflower Movement, but could it have predicted how Taiwan's underworld might react?

Dénouement

The Sunflower Movement came to a peaceful end, if not a definitive resolution, on the evening of 10 April when the occupying students voluntarily left the Legislative Chamber and vowed to continue their efforts in Taiwanese society at large. Before vacating they gave the chamber a thorough cleaning. Over the entire Sunflower Movement the Taiwanese television media, of course, had three weeks' worth of field days. After the movement was over it took several more days for the all-Sunflowers-all-the-time media circus to up sticks, pull down their tents, and move on. (Their ardent

¹²On the beginnings of the KMT-triad nexus, see Seagrave 1985 and Chin 2003.

¹³ On the baleful triangle of politics, business, and organized crime in Taiwan, see Chin 2003.

media consumers also had to get over their Sunflower addiction.) I did some of my own afterglow reflection on a restful Saturday 12 April and sent it in to the Taiwan discussion group:

Back in the final years of martial law in the mid-1980s, a crusty old American historian here told me that if Taiwan ever went democratic, its politics would be as busy and chaotic as the traffic in Hsimenting / Ximending. Well, while it might not be quite like that here now, my thoughts as all of this unfolds are... ee ja nai ka? ("Ain't it grand?") The youth here do seem to understand, at long last and thank goodness, that our generation has passed the baton to them and is cheering them on. While a return to old-school KMT authoritarianism seems unlikely, the prospects of indirect control by the KMT's sibling party across the water do weigh on their minds. As old Confucius said, "The rising generation is awesome!" 後生可畏 (Saturday 12 April 2014, 4:21 p.m.)

I spent a fairly good portion of that day watching on television what I had mostly experienced on the streets of Taipei, and I sent in a précis of it to the Taiwan discussion group:

The following is a short digest of some of the print and broadcast media reports in Taiwan today, Saturday 12 April.

Angry students congregated outside the First Police Precinct offices of Taipei's Zhongzheng District last night, demanding the resignation of Precinct Chief Fang Yangning. Fang came out to meet the crowd last night to apologise and offer his resignation. The crowd responded by shouting him down and throwing hell bank note money 冥紙 at him. On Facebook his daughter forcefully stated her support and admiration for her father and bemoaned what she sees as the crowd's bad and insulting treatment of him. Her post has had 170,000 likes.

Meanwhile a group calling itself the White Righteousness Alliance 白色正義聯盟 or White Shirts 白衫軍 has been counter-protesting.

Mayor Hau said this morning that he would not accept Fang's resignation and that the police and the silent majority had at this point had just about enough of the protests.

Meanwhile White Wolf / Zhang Anle has been making comments to the media: The sunflower movement should be called the poppy flower movement -- euphoric for a short time, but to be followed by horrible consequences. This is not democracy but mob rule or a return to primitive society. Ma is weak and incompetent, Hau is opportunistic, and Wang is scheming for power. He (Zhang) is not afraid of offending anyone and thinks the government should use force to restore order. (Saturday 12 April 2014, 8:18 p.m.)

Gradually, the chattering classes returned to the blogosphere, email fora, and social media (largely Facebook) whence they had emerged on 18 March and got back to the quotidian tedium of sardonic commentary on KMT government policy and whinging about international coverage of Taiwan news that did not tally with their own perspectives and ideologies. As of this writing (October 2014), discussion on Sunflowers was still continuing in scholarly and media circles, but not with the same intensity and immediate topicality it had during the Taipei Spring.

Meanings of the Sunflower Movement

The Sunflower Movement was an authentic *cri de coeur* that started with a few hundred brave students and then spread very quickly to a considerable portion of the island's population. The movement was, it seems to me, ultimately more about politics than economics. The sudden and dramatic mass occupation of the island's legislature was not due simply to economic malaise and public disgust with the KMT's business-as-usual majoritarian ramrodding and procedural shenanigans, but to larger anxiety-provoking questions and concerns about Taiwan's political fate. As anyone in Taiwan with a lick of common sense and decency knows very well, Chinese annexation will necessarily entail a massive devolution of freedom and democracy on the island. The overwhelming majority of Taiwanese find China's "one country, two systems" approach to politically controlling Hong Kong utterly unacceptable and unworkable for their island. (Even most Blues envision unification as an eventuality in the distant, unforeseeable future when China will somehow have democratised itself.) They are not about to become heartless, mindless, and soulless Chinese chauvinists who identify

much more with China qua China than with freedom, democracy, human rights, and the dignity of the people of Taiwan.

The Sunflowers were, of course, predominantly Green, and political ideology often more or less predetermined one's stance regarding the movement. Predictably, Greens were generally very enthusiastic about it and Blues decidedly less so. Even before the Sunflower Movement broke out, a deep Blue type pointed at crowded street in Taipei and said to me, "These people have overflowing, indiscriminate, excessive freedom [*lan ziyou*]. The Chinese¹⁴ do not deserve freedom and democracy, and we'll eventually figure out that we need a quasi-authoritarian government like Singapore's to rule over us." Astonishingly, this was apparently neither consciously nor subconsciously self-parodic on his part; he actually seems to have had little if any insight into how much disesteem his comments and attitudes betrayed towards the Chinese and the Taiwanese. It was no surprise to me at all that he later characterised the Sunflower Movement as nothing but "chaos" or "turmoil" (*luan*) and could hardly express enough antipathy toward it. "It is a one-hundred-percent certainty," another hard-line Blue insisted to me in Taiwan in April 2014, "that the United States is the main force behind the Sunflower Student Movement." Why? "It's obvious," he continued, "that America wants to deny China the strategic and naval value of the island of Taiwan." It was the same old yawningly predictably same old: Authoritarian governments and political parties often instinctively blame conniving outside forces for goading their subjects into protest, and older generations often look askance at the younger generation's protest movements.

The Sunflower Movement showed that there is yet hope for Taiwan's youth. Perhaps the young people of Taiwan can, after all, disembarass themselves from their benumbed and cynical resignation to the KMT's imminent sell-out of their island to China. Their movement demonstrates that many of them do care, and passionately, about Taiwan and its future and are willing to stand up bravely for it. Perhaps they are not, by and large, what older generations have often called them: pampered and spoiled brats, soulless automatons, and smartphone addicts who habitually sequester themselves in their bedrooms playing computer games and wiling away the hours on social media. Even though as a historian I deal primarily with the past, I will venture a

¹⁴ Among whom he obviously included all the people of Taiwan.

guess or prediction about the future: In Taiwan, the Sunflower Movement will eventually be seen as the defining moment for the rising generation. The movement certainly elevated the status and renown of its two main leaders, Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting.¹⁵ Might they be Taiwan's future leaders? Many people in Taiwan seem to think so, but to Blue types this possibility seems preposterous.

The movement could also be an important moment for some of China's youth as well. Many mainland Chinese students in Taiwan were deeply impressed with the freedom and openness with which Taiwanese students and their supporters protested and expressed their opinions, with apparently little if any fear that Taiwan's government would harshly crack down on them. Eventually the People's Republic of China made its own ham-fisted attempt at electronic surveillance and intimidation of its citizens in Taiwan by automatically sending text messages to the cell phones of mainland students who got anywhere near the Legislative Yuan on Zhongshan South Road.

The Sunflower Movement reflected and laid bare just how poignantly the politics and economics of modern Taiwan are felt, even among family members and between friends. Many friendships and family relationships were very badly strained by the polarization of opinion in the wake of the movement, and Taiwanese television news programmes did stories on the extensive numbers of "unfriendings" and flame wars on Facebook in March and April. I personally came very close to losing a treasured friendship because my opinions about the movement (which I mostly kept to myself at the time) were not solidly Blue. But even so, Taiwan will maintain and endure; it is not a society that is about to collapse in on itself over its political fate. If such a collapse ever happens, it will be imposed from without rather than produced from within.

The Sunflower Movement has significantly erased the seemingly ineluctable political unification that inheres in increasing economic integration with China. That is, continuing economic integration with China will not, at least in the short and medium

¹⁵ For some portion of the island's population, admiration and enthusiasm for Lin and Fei even seems to have transcended the political, economic, and social and extended into other dimensions; by May 2014 there were Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting dildos on Taiwan's burgeoning sex toy market. See: <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/society/breakingnews/1021463> (accessed 22 September 2014).

runs, spell any significant tendency towards political annexation. Further, the arguments for increased economic integration itself are unconvincing to many if not most of Taiwan's youth today. Despite the economic agreements signed with China lately, the average person's income has not significantly increased. Many Taiwanese see in these agreements only incipient steps towards political integration and not discernible economic benefits for the island.

During the movement and its aftermaths, a hitherto somewhat subdued majority of Taiwanese put both the KMT and their CCP confreres in Beijing on notice that economic enticements will not seduce them into a political death embrace with China. If the Taiwanese people were ever forced into a corner and compelled to choose between freedom and wealth, between being free and being Chinese, the majority of them would, I think, swallow hard and choose freedom. The temptations of wealth will not lead them into servitude. Having had a taste of freedom and democracy, they are not very likely at all to trade their political birthright for a mess of economic pottage.

Strategically, the implications of the Sunflower Movement are fairly clear: Taiwan will not submit to outright Chinese political annexation without a fight, and China will not likely be able to absorb Taiwan as quickly as we once thought or feared it would. Since Taiwan will not accept any political unification with China will entail the loss of even one freedom for the island's people, it is difficult if not impossible to see how the old and discredited (*vide* Hong Kong, October 2014) "one country, two systems" proposal recently reiterated by Xi Jinping will ever be workable. The "Taiwan issue" will probably persevere well into the middle of this century or even beyond. Mao might have been right in 1975 when he speculated to Henry Kissinger that the ultimate settlement of the Taiwan issue might take a hundred years.¹⁶

On 18 September 2014 Ying-shih Yü was once again the recipient of a major academic accolade, this time the Taiwan-based Tang Prize in Sinology,¹⁷ doubtless to the continuing consternation of both the KMT and the CCP. On 22 September 2014, Taiwan's Blue-leaning English-language newspaper *The China Post* published an article

¹⁶ Arthur Waldron, "Nixon and Taiwan in 1972: The Week that Didn't Change the World," in Peter C. Y. Chow, ed., *The "One China" Dilemma* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 170.

¹⁷ On the Tang Prizes, see <http://www.tang-prize.org/ENG/>. (Accessed 23 September 2014.)

on the widespread influence Yü's comments on the Sunflower Student Movement command on the island:

TAIPEI--Chinese-American historian and Tang Prize laureate Yu Ying-shih (余英時) reiterated Saturday his support for Taiwan's Sunflower Student Movement earlier this year, but again stressed the importance of demonstrating peacefully in a democratic society.

"I was very touched by the Sunflower movement a while ago ... the students did not leave the Legislature until they thoroughly cleaned up the place and they left peacefully," the Princeton University emeritus professor said during a talk in Taipei on the importance of cultivating humanistic qualities in the modern society.

"It was a remarkable movement," the 84-year-old China-born scholar said.

The Sunflower movement refers to student-led protests in March and April against the way a trade in services agreement with China had been handled by the administration.

The protesters occupied the parliament for 23 days and stormed into the headquarters of the Cabinet, drawing mixed but mostly sympathetic reactions from the media.

In a press conference a day earlier, Yu, although approving of the student's opposition, stopped short of expressing full support for the demonstrations, saying he is against "violent protests" in a democratic society.

In Saturday's talk, Yu clarified that he had no intentions of "appeasing" people or asking them "not to rebel."

He said citizens in a democratic society should protest and express their dissatisfaction with the government, but in a peaceful way because if all efforts fail, they can still resist the government with their ballots.

Yu, an outspoken critic of the Chinese government, said Taiwan's democratization process has great significance in Chinese history because China's dynastic changes and power shifts have always been compelled by military force.

Taiwan's democracy broke that cycle of violence and counters the saying that Chinese culture is opposed to the idea of democracy, freedom and equality, he said.

Yu is the first winner of the Tang Prize in Sinology. In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Yu is an outspoken supporter of the democracy movement in China and is known to have sheltered young refugees who fled China after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.¹⁸

A day earlier the *Taipei Times*, Taiwan's Green-leaning English-language newspaper, carried a more detailed and circumstantial account of Yu's comments:

Chinese-American historian and Tang Prize laureate Yu Ying-shih (余英時) yesterday reiterated his support for and admiration of Taiwan's Sunflower movement.

"I was very touched by the Sunflower movement a while ago... the students did not leave the legislature until they thoroughly cleaned up the place and they left peacefully," the Princeton University emeritus professor said during a talk in Taipei on the importance of cultivating humanistic qualities in modern society.

"It was a remarkable movement," the 84-year-old China-born academic said.

The Sunflower movement refers to student-led protests in March and April this year against the way a trade in services agreement with China was handled by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government. The protesters occupied the legislature for almost 23 days and at one point stormed the Executive Yuan building, drawing mixed but mostly sympathetic reactions from the media.

In a press conference a day earlier, Yu, although approving of the students' opposition, stopped short of expressing full support for the demonstrations, saying he is against "violent protests" in a democratic society.

In yesterday's speech, Yu said that he had no intentions of "appeasing" people or asking them "not to rebel."

¹⁸ <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2014/09/22/417738/Tang-laureate.htm>
(Accessed 23 September 2014.)

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Taiwan's democracy broke that cycle of violence and counters the saying that Chinese culture is opposed to the ideas of democracy, freedom and equality, he said.

In fact, he said, the first people who brought the idea of democracy to China were academics influenced by Confucianism, such as Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858-1927) and Yan Fu (嚴復, 1854-1921), proving that traditional Chinese thinking was not against democracy.

The concept of democracy also appears in a book by Chinese scholar Huang Zongxi (黃宗羲, 1610-1695), in which Huang condemned autocratic rule and proposed using schools to hold discussions on public affairs, he said.

Yu is the first winner of the Tang Prize in Sinology. In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Yu is an outspoken supporter of the democracy movement in China and is known to have sheltered young refugees who fled China after the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989.¹⁹

When Ying-shih Yü speaks of Taiwan needing to be on its highest level of vigilance, he is speaking not only of 2014, but also 2015 and especially 2016. A newly elected president will replace Ma Ying-jeou in March of 2016, and many people in Taiwan suspect that before that time, Ma will attempt to take more concrete measures to hasten or facilitate eventual unification with China. In Taiwan it is an open secret that President Ma Ying-jeou, or at least his most ardent supporters, fancy him a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize and might actually think he stands a chance of winning one, but only if he can do something that will make Taiwan more open to eventual absorption by China. Taiwan will be less free in any foreseeable unification arrangement with China, and this is why both the people of Taiwan and the free world

¹⁹ <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2014/09/21/2003600203> (Accessed 23 September 2014.)

at large must be on high alert in 2015 and 2016. The freedom, democracy, and security of Taiwan depend on it.

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