

[PAPERBACK: TAIWAN]

Those who helped break the oppressors' back

Many foreigners who came to Taiwan during the Martial Law era fell in love with the place and its people. Some chose to join the struggle for freedom

BY J. MICHAEL COLE
STAFF REPORTER

Ask any Taiwanese born after the 1970s about the White Terror, 228 or the Kaohsiung Incident, and chances are the answers will be less than satisfactory. Ask them what role, if any, their parents played in the *dangwai* — or, conversely, in the repressive Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) apparatus that existed at the time — and more often than not the response will be “I don’t know; we don’t discuss these things with our parents.” Such collective amnesia cannot but have implications for Taiwan. As historian E.H. Carr wrote in *What is History?*, “A society which has lost belief in its capacity to progress in the future will quickly cease to concern itself with its progress in the past.”

For that period, a defining part of Taiwan’s history, is all about progress, with opposition movements slowly beginning to defy, then breaking apart, the system of fear over which dictator Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and later his son, Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), presided. Before the regime collapsed, so pervasive had been the repression of the state against its people that no one would dare discuss the KMT regime’s massacre of thousands of Taiwanese on Feb. 28, 1947, lest informants inform the authorities. As a result, a seminal event in the relationship between Taiwanese and their occupiers was long held in oblivion as part of a denial of history.

Spared the threat of disappearance, imprisonment, torture and execution, many foreigners who came to live and work in Taiwan felt it was their responsibility to do something to help right what they saw as a grave injustice being perpetrated against Taiwanese in the name of “democracy,” all made possible by US support for the Chiang regime. However, at the height of the Cold War, it was rather unfashionable for rights activists to criticize allies of Washington involved in combating communism, and the odds against them were formidable, from a struggle to gain the media’s ear to accusations of being communist sympathizers. Still, for many students, academics, missionaries, journalists and otherwise unemployed activists, the horrors of the KMT and the plight of a people had to be exposed.

A Borrowed Voice is their story. Through narratives, historical documents and analyses from many participants, the book provides a composite picture of the state apparatus, the resistance, and those, like Linda Gail Arrigo and Lynn Miles, who tried to help by bringing that story to the world, all under the watchful eye of the police state and its allies abroad.

The result has a little of a spy novel feel to it, with daring dashes in the night as Arrigo and her husband, *dangwai* leader Shih Ming-teh (施明德), are purchased by police after the Kaohsiung Incident in 1979; underground dissident meetings; proscribed publications and the ever-present fear as one passes through immigration at the airport. The state security apparatus is omnipresent, with the CIA always in the background.

In their struggle to make a difference, activists are sucked into a world of paranoia and self-doubt. It is a world where neighbors spy on neighbors, where one dares not even discuss 228 in a solitary park and where an advocate may just as well be in the pay of the Ministry of Information — or worse, one of the many intelligence agencies that maintained a tight grip on society. As Wendell Karsen, a teacher in Taiwan at the time, writes, the many Garrison Command encampments that peppered the local communities were meant to intimidate Taiwanese first, and defend the nation second.

As many of the authors who contributed to this project argue, the worse consequences for them being caught paled in comparison with the treatment reserved prisoners of conscience and fugitives such as Chen Yu-hsi (陳玉璽), Reverend Kao Chun-ming (高俊明), Chen Chu (陳菊), author Li

Ao (李敖), Peng Ming-min (彭明敏), Shih and many, many others. At worst, exposure meant immediate expulsion, or failure to get a visa renewed, as well as the financial consequences of losing one’s job. Others, like Miles, became so involved with the cause that their marriages suffered. Missionaries from the Presbyterian Church — which was among the first institutions to advocate Taiwanese independence — were also targeted by the authorities and treated to “tea chats” with security officials, with intimidation the ostensible goal.

Two question weave themselves throughout the narratives: Was it worth it, when the blunders

Publication Notes



A BORROWED VOICE:
TAIWAN HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH
INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS, 1960-1980

BY LINDA GAIL ARRIGO
AND LYNN MILES

479 PAGES

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE

of amateurs playing spy could lead to the detention, torture or even execution of the very Taiwanese the expatriates were trying to help — and did it make a difference? The answer to both is almost certainly yes, although as the writers themselves acknowledge, it was Taiwanese themselves, not some foreign power, who in the end dismantled the oppressive regime and cultivated democracy.

Still, the many Americans, Japanese and others who chose not to remain indifferent to the abuse they witnessed in Taiwan share some of the credit, as their exposure of the Chiang regime’s rottenness — especially after US President Jimmy Carter switched recognition to Beijing and put human rights at the core of his foreign policy, at least rhetorically — resulted in pressure on Taipei and the American Institute in Taiwan, which played a role in propping up the regime and whose officials, with some notable exceptions, chose to look the other way when evidence showed that their ally in the battle against communism was repressing an entire people and, by rebound, sully the US’ reputation.

It was Chiang Ching-kuo’s fear of abandonment following Carter’s recognition of the People’s Republic of China that ultimately compelled him to gradually open up the political sphere to opposition parties, which eventually coalesced into the Democratic Progressive Party. Aside from Carter’s policy, it was foreign activists who effectively brought the message home: Open up, or else. It is a message one would hope activists today are bringing to the undemocratic and repressive regimes the US is once again propping up in the name of a cause.

If we believe in the progress of the human race, we cannot afford to forget the past, and *A Borrowed Voice* gives a voice to the many unsung heroes, Taiwanese and foreign, who did their part during a defining period in Taiwan’s history. With its successful transition from a police state to a democracy, Taiwan did not, as one author once put it, reach the end of history. The fight to keep democracy alive is just as hard, just as important, and history is our best guide. *A Borrowed Voice* is part of that history.

Armanti Edwards’ journey from struggling infant to college football star is as fascinating as it is improbable

BY THAYER EVANS
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, GREENWOOD,
SOUTH CAROLINA

The baby came 10 days late, weighed 2.1kg and had to be rushed to a neonatal intensive care unit. But through all the chaos here in this lush upstate town, Freddie Edwards predicted that his boy, born without breath, would someday take the country’s breath away.

He told his girlfriend, the baby’s mother, Deborah Anderson: “That boy is going to make somebody a whole lot of money someday. His name is going to be Money.”

The boy was Armanti Edwards. And although Money never made it on the birth certificate 20 years ago, Edwards has earned the nickname one believer at a time on the football field as the left-handed, dreadlocked starting quarterback at Appalachian State. Last year as a sophomore, he fulfilled his father’s prediction by leading the Mountaineers to an axis-shifting upset of Michigan and to the program’s third consecutive Football Championship Subdivision national championship.

But Freddie Edwards was not around to see it. He has been in prison for two years after being convicted of killing a man over US\$2 in a poker game.

Edwards’ journey from struggling infant to college football star is as fascinating as it has been improbable. He was to take the field yesterday at No. 7 Louisiana State as the first legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate from this level of college football since 1994, when Steve McNair was the quarterback at Alcorn State. He will also be an underdog.

It is a familiar role, though he knows that his father — his biggest believer — will be following the game from South Carolina’s McCormick Correctional Institution.

“He always believed in me,” Edwards said.

Interested in playing quarterback for a major-college program, Edwards received his first recruiting letter from Harvard. He was not interested and promptly threw it away. Only Appalachian State, the Citadel and Elon offered him a scholarship at quarterback, according to his mother.

At South Carolina, coach Steve Spurrier, one of the country’s pre-eminent quarterback gurus, told Edwards and other recruits that none of them would be offered scholarships at the position, Anderson said. That news



A father’s prediction becomes a son’s tribute

from Spurrier. Clemson coach Tommy Bowden did not offer him a scholarship because there were bigger, faster and stronger quarterbacks. “I’d take him in a heartbeat now,” Bowden said in a telephone interview. “I just made a mistake earlier.”

As Edwards was figuring out the recruiting process, he was also dealing with the case against his father.

Freddie Edwards, 60, has not attended one of his son’s games since Armanti was a high school junior. In September 2006, Freddie Edwards was convicted of murder and a weapons charge in the shooting death of a man named George Freeman. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison and given a projected release date of August 2036. He is appealing his case, Anderson said.

According to a police report and a local prosecutor, Freddie Edwards and two other men were playing poker in a building behind his home on July 16, 2005.

During the game, Freddie Edwards made a new rule that if a player folded out of turn, he had to put US\$2 into the pot. That upset one of the men, Freeman, who said he would not abide by the rule. An argument ensued between Freddie Edwards and Freeman.



Armanti Edwards, starting quarterback for Appalachian State University, Edwards has helped his college win two national titles.

PHOTOS BY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Freddie Edwards then went inside his home, emerged carrying a silver revolver with a wooden handle and began chasing Freeman. Freeman fell while fleeing, and Freddie Edwards ran up and shot him once in the head, the third man told the police.

Freddie Edwards provided a different account to the police. He admitted to arguing about the new rule, to retrieving a gun and to chasing Freeman. He told them that Freeman had asked him, “Please don’t shoot me, Freddie.”

He said he told Freeman, “I’m not going to shoot you.” But he told the police that Freeman had grabbed the gun’s barrel and that the weapon had discharged.

Through the years, Freddie Edwards had experienced run-ins with the local authorities,

including a gambling charge, an assault-and-battery case and a weapons charge. But Jerry Peace, chief prosecutor for Greenwood County, said Freddie Edwards was respected in the community.

“Sometimes you prosecute good people who make stupid mistakes,” Peace said.

Armanti Edwards had left his father’s house just before the shooting. Upon hearing of it, he collapsed on the floor and cried, his mother said. Anderson said her son struggled to cope and blamed himself. “He was ready to quit everything,” she said.

He persevered with the help of his coaches. While his father was under house arrest, Edwards passed for more than 2,000 yards, rushed for more than 1,100 yards and accounted for 29 touchdowns his senior year.

At Appalachian State, the Mountaineers opened with a loss at North Carolina State during Edwards’ freshman season. He did not start and played only in

the waning minutes.

Afterward, a police officer escorted Anderson and her daughter under Carter-Finley Stadium, where they informed Edwards that his father had been sentenced to prison.

“He just fell apart again,” Anderson said.

Edwards sat on the team bus and cried. As he did, coach Jerry Moore consoled him and promised to take him to visit his father anytime he wanted.

Edwards has never made such a request, but Moore has been cleared by prison officials to visit Freddie Edwards.

“If he called me at 3 o’clock in the morning and wanted to see his daddy, we’d go,” Moore said. Two weeks after his father was sentenced, Edwards started his first game for Appalachian State. He was responsible for 252 yards of total offense, tossed a touchdown pass and rushed for another in a 41-0 victory. He is now 22-2 as a starter for the Mountaineers.

“Adversity has brought out the very best in him,” Moore said. But Edwards still aches. He dreams about the release of his father, who predicted his stardom so long ago.

“I’m just ready,” he said, “for him to see me in person.”

[PAPERBACK: US]

In search of a lost Shanghai

Wang Anyi’s ‘The Song of Everlasting Sorrow’ aims unambiguously for the status of literature

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

What constitutes a classic? And how do you recognize one? Current orthodoxy holds that

there’s no such thing, only works that contemporary society feels a need for — economic, ideological and so forth. But there’s another view, namely that certain human creations do stand out by reason of their intrinsic qualities, and that these works retain their eminence over the years irrespective of our passing fashions.

Even so, the second of my initial questions remains easier to answer than the first. Some of the key characteristics to watch out for might be breadth of vision and technical sophistication, plus a refusal to buckle under to the demands of easy reading. But it’s not necessarily a characteristic of the finest works that they make no concessions at all to the reader — many of the greatest books go out of their way to lure and trap us with their magic and charisma.

Wang Anyi’s (王安憶) *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* (長恨歌) aims unambiguously for the status of literature from the very beginning, where the spirit of Shanghai is summoned up over some 20 headily evocative pages. This extended eulogy deserves to be printed as a prose-poem in its own right. Surely she can’t keep this up any longer, you think, as one

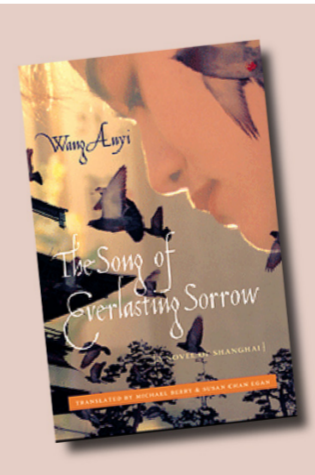
passionate, rapturous groundswell mixing memory and desire follows another. But she can, and does, and on and on she goes, to cumulatively marvelous effect.

Published in Chinese to huge acclaim in 1995, this fine masterpiece has now arrived in an English version. It tells the story of heroine Wang Qiyao (王琦瑤), one embodiment at least of the city’s recent history. She progresses through a series of lovers but fails to establish a permanent relationship with any of them.

First she’s taken up by a photographer, Mr Cheng, and through him wins third place in a beauty contest in 1946. She then becomes the concubine of a powerful entrepreneur called Director Li. After he’s killed in an air crash she moves briefly into the countryside where she meets a poetic but impressionable youth, Deuce. She quickly returns to the big city, however, and, realizing her beauty will one day fade, trains as a nurse.

Next to fall under her spell is Sasha who, with his Russian mother, is “a half-breed child of the revolution.” Then comes Kang Mingxun, the son of a rich factory-owner. By now it’s 1960 and, though famine stalks the land elsewhere in China, Shanghai continues to revel in its egg custard, deep-fried twisted dough sticks and salted pork, and even its flet mignon and pork-chops

Publication Notes



THE SONG OF EVERLASTING SORROW

BY WANG ANYI

440 PAGES

WEATHERHEAD BOOKS

with onions.

Wang gives birth to a daughter, Weiwei, and the story then jumps 15 years to Weiwei’s adolescence. By now Wang has become a symbol of the Shanghai of old, and is appropriately enough courted by a young foggy called Old Color who, though still in his 20s, is an addict of retro fashion of all kinds. Also onto the scene comes one Long Legs, a kind of aristocratic bohemian with a taste for currency exchange on

the black market. As disco begins to dominate the dancehalls, life starts to darken for Wang Qiyao until a final encounter with Long Legs proves more than even she had bargained for.

This is no moralizing tale of the downward progress of a sex-addict, but instead the representation of a kind of modern Everywoman. We are none of us permanent residents in this world, the author implies, but instead are “ephemeral but recurring.” And a life of this kind illustrates that fact far better than a tale of a happy and faithful wife ever could.

The treatment of China’s history is curiously muted, with political developments merely alluded to, and the evolution of everyday life — notably clothes, food and disease — placed center-stage instead. Politics continue to happen, of course, and Mr Cheng commits suicide as a result of the Cultural Revolution and a school friend of Wang’s becomes a cadre. But Shanghai is presented as sailing its own course in spite of everything — not exactly serenely, perhaps, but certainly with a strong sense of its own special qualities and distinction.

The translators, Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan, refer to “the power and beauty of [Wang’s] literary world,” and this readily comes over in their excellent translation. Weatherhead Books is a part of Columbia University Press, but

this novel deserves far more than an academic readership.

Shanghai is presented as a city where people without money or power have little choice, where every day is like Christmas and the partying rarely stops. But as Wang Qiyao tells one of her daughter’s friends, “They may all be clamoring for you today, but in a blink of an eye they’ll be running like startled animals. Women have only so much time to settle down. Those who miss the boat are mostly smart, beautiful girls like you.”

This is a long book, an overview of a huge swathe of social history (from the 1940s to the 1980s) that nonetheless refuses to give up on detail. It consequently has the richness of texture of some of the great 19th century novels, with which it implicitly invites comparison. Everything is marshaled into the one imposing edifice — the historical research, the visits to the locations described, the dispositions of the various characters, and so on. Very hard work combines with unflinching high-spirits, just as a sober view of the consequences of people’s actions manages to hold its own with a genuine sympathy for the author’s many creations.

And this, you’re finally convinced, really is a genuine classic, whatever that disputed term may be taken to mean.