



PATRONS OF THE ART

Four French nationals practice Chinese martial arts under the instruction of a master in Yunlin County on Sunday last week.

PHOTO: LIN KUO-HSIEN, TAIPEI TIMES

## Opinions swirl after ARATS protests

**TALKING HEADS:** Now that clashes between police and protesters have subsided, expatriates are talking about it

BY JENNY W. HSU  
STAFF REPORTER

For days last week, images of furious protesters battling against the police filled the nation's headlines. Police were caught in news footage beating people with wooden clubs and metal shields, while some protesters threw objects such as glass bottles and stones at the police.

The clashes led the government and the opposition party to point fingers at each other, each blaming the other for the chaotic display. The scenes also stirred up strong feelings from the expatriate community from all points of the spectrum.

David Reid, an Australian student studying at National Chengchi University who witnessed the protest on Wednesday, said that

In light of the controversial visit by China's Association for Relations Across the Strait Chairman Chen Yunlin (陳雲林) last week and his meeting with President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and Straits Exchange Foundation Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (江丙坤), the *Taipei Times* asked some members of the expat community to share their thoughts on recent cross-strait developments and the four bilateral deals signed on direct air and sea transports, postal services and food safety



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“It's always good to have negotiations, but we should just wait and see if it is good for Taiwan.”

— Sanza Bulaya, banker, France

the violence that ensued last week gravely affected Taiwan's democracy by “turning the clock back 20 years.”

“By banning the display of the Republic of China flag, the government sent a very clear signal that Taiwan's sovereignty was made subordinate to the People's Republic of China. I think that was the most dangerous thing the government did during the week and this led to the situation where people were very angry. There is no question that Taiwan is in a very dangerous position right now.”

Jacques Stroebel, a teacher from Canada, applauded Taiwanese police for dealing with the protesters in a “very strong but gentle manner.”

“I give my respect to the police.



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“This is a Taiwan domestic issue, but I identify with the Taiwanese ideology. The meeting [between ARATS and SEF] was not insignificant, but it was held too soon without a national consensus. To have such meeting with a prior consensus will only result in what happened in the last few days with all the riots, such as the one around Grand Hotel. You need to have a national consensus but the problem is Taiwan is not unified.”

— James Barras, graduate student, Switzerland

Back home, the police could seriously hurt you for throwing things at them,” he said.

Anti-China rhetoric and scathing criticism against the police and the administration of President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) have been posted on various Web sites and blogs managed by foreigners.

Tim Maddog wrote on his blog: “Martial law is being reintroduced to Taiwan, and the philistine police response to protesters as well as to people simply expressing their feelings is a clear indication of this situation.”

Some said the cops used excessive force on the people, but argued that protesters should also be blamed for the chaos. Others observed that the majority of the protesters were not at all violent and blamed the press for sensationalizing the events. Some others speculated the emotionally charged protests were orchestrated by pan-green politicians for the sole purpose of boosting their own popularity and that of the party.

“Isn't it so obvious? The rallies were full of politicians wearing vests with their names written on them. They are taking advantage of the chaos to have more face time. If the focus was to give the power to the people, commoners should also be allowed to

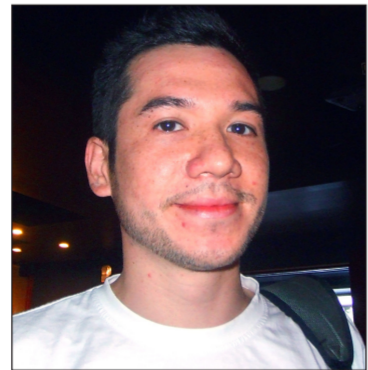


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“If your goal is to improve Taiwan's economy and integrate with the global economy, I think [having closer ties with China is] the right thing to do. It's the only thing to do. If your goal is to retain a sense of independence, then obviously economic integration with China weakens the cause.”

— Kevin Coll, graduate student, New York City

speak their minds on the stage,” said a German professional who refused to go on the record because she feared offending her Democratic Progressive Party coworkers.

One blogger labeled as a “Fried Chicken Parts Vendor” wondered if the people were just “doing this for kicks?”

“There is no reason for all this shit ... I understand people are concerned, but is anyone out of [or inside] Taiwan going to take these people seriously? What's on the news now is insane and it will be on TV in other parts of the world and it will make Taiwan look very bad in the eyes of the world.”



PHOTO: JENNY W. HSU, TAIPEI TIMES

“It's a fine line [in the Taiwan Strait] and [Taiwanese need to deal with it] in a smart way. I am always in favor of more engagement, but it has to be on the right terms [so] that ... Taiwan's ability to continue on a democratic path are safeguarded and ... people [are still] able to hold free and fair elections. Ma Ying-jeou should be given a chance to follow what he feels is right. Maybe people should not be so quick to jump to conclusions, and a certain amount of trust should be given to the president.”

— David Bell, graduate student, Asheville, North Carolina

## POWs honored by long-time resident

Canadian **Michael Hurst**, a long-time resident of Taiwan, has been instrumental in organizing activities that remember the thousands of Allied prisoners of war who were interned in Japanese prison camps in Taiwan during World War II. In 2002, he was made a Member of the British Empire for his efforts. *Taipei Times*' reporter **Richard Hazeldine** sat down with Hurst last week to talk about the POW association he coordinates before this year's 12th annual Remembrance Day

**Taipei Times:** How and why did you get involved with the POW association?

**Michael Hurst:** When I was a little boy I found out that I lost uncles in both the first and second World Wars. Ever since I had always wanted to do something tangible to say thank you to my uncles and the family ... It came to our knowledge in late 1996 following a Remembrance Day service in Taipei about the camp in Jinguashi [金瓜石, in Taipei County] and the copper mine and the prisoners that suffered so terribly down there, and in particular a Canadian doctor, Ben Wheeler, who was the camp doctor and saved the lives of literally hundreds of the men. So I sort of jumped at it in my position of vice president of the Canadian Society and said to the trade office director, “I'll take it to the board as I'd like to do something to say thanks to the veterans.”

So in January 1997 we formed the Kinkaseki [Japanese for Jin-guashi] Memorial Committee with myself and representatives of the Australian, New Zealand and British trade offices. We organized a memorial service in May 1997 to show a film produced in 1980 by Dr Wheeler's daughter called a *War Story* and invited former Jack Edwards, a Taiwan POW who lived in Hong Kong at the time to come over and take us on a tour of the site at Jinguashi.

It was very successful and we thought it would be appropriate to erect a memorial at the gate of the camp. So we reformed the committee and by November 1997 we had the memorial built and had it dedicated later that month. The project generated a lot of interest in the community, but several people involved were leaving their postings or moving on and I thought we “can't just build a memorial without finding survivors and letting them know what's been done in their memory.”

So I reformed what became the Taiwan POW Memorial Society in 1999 ... Ever since it's been like throwing a stone in the pond and the ripples have been coming back. We've had great support from Taiwanese and expats and managed to contact over 300 former Taiwan POWs.

What do I get out of it? Well it's the joy of knowing that you can help these men to know that they're not forgotten and to have the respect and friendship of these heroes is more than reward enough.

**TT:** Can you tell us how many POWs were situated in Taiwan, their nationalities, the number of camps, their locations and what the POWs were doing?

**Hurst:** In Taiwan there were 4,344 POWs the Japanese had listed as resident for some amount of time. We started off with knowledge of maybe three or four camps ... but in all there were 15 camps on the island. There was Jinguashi, or

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— Michael Hurst

Taiwan camp No.1. There was the main camp in Taipei, in Dazhi (大直); a camp in Pingtung (屏東); there was another south of Taichung. Hualien had one; there was a small temporary camp at Yuli (玉里) on the east coast; a camp down at Baihe (白河), south of Chiayi; a camp opened at Muzha, which contained all the very senior officers and governors of all the colonies the Japanese had over-

run. Then later on in 1944 as the Japanese tried to move the POWs out of Taiwan, there were short-term camps at Yuanlin (員林) and Douliou (斗六).

They also moved men into the hills about six miles [9.6km] south of Sin-dian and there was a satellite camp in Waihuanghsi (外雙溪) for two or three months at the end of the war. Taiwan, at that time, had the creme de la creme of the POWs, all the governors of all the conquered territories, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, the Straits Settlements, Guam, the Dutch East Indies; all the highest ranking officers from the Dutch, American, Australian and British armies.

The men worked in mining, sugar cane fields, farming, and other tasks such as digging riverbed flood diversion channel by hand.

There were only two Canadian POWs, two South Africans attached to the British Army. The largest number were British, the second-highest group were Americans, the Dutch had about 137 and the Australians had 59.

People have come to call me the Indiana Jones of Taiwan because I'm always groveling around in prison camps looking for stuff from 65 years ago.

**TT:** You were recently in the UK on a POW-related trip. Can you tell me a little about it?

**Hurst:** A British lady who was here in November last year e-mailed me a couple of months later and said her daughter and she would like to organize a reunion. We spent seven or eight months putting things together and from Sept. 12 to Sept. 15 in Newcastle we had a reunion with 12 POWs and a number of wives and widows and family members ... over 60 people. We hadn't had another all Taiwan reunion since 1999 so it was really good.

I wanted to go and be part of it so I went and then later visited POWs in Scotland and Yorkshire.

Then, during the last week, for a number of months we had been raising money towards a memorial for George Harrison who was a medic in the mine at Kinkaseki. He was a very humble and unassuming man, even though he had been one of the heroes of the camp in saving so many men's lives. But when he died he really never made any provisions for any kind of plaque.

We didn't feel this was right so we raised about \$1,500 pounds and we bought a beautiful teak bench with bronze plaques commemorating George and his wife and all the Taiwan POWs. It was a full and active three weeks of reminiscing with the men, most of who are in their late 80s or 90s.

Some of them are shut-ins, they can't get out to the reunions so I try to focus on those chaps as the ones to see. It was quite emotional because they know as well as I do that this may be the last time we ever actually meet.

**TT:** You were awarded an MBE in 2002. How did that come about?

**Hurst:** A lot a real surprise in May 2002 when the British Trade Office director called me and informed me that the Queen in her Golden Jubilee honors list had decided to bestow the MBE on me for my work with the POWs and for the work we did in promoting reconciliation between the POWs and the [Taiwanese] guards. But mostly the work we've done tell in telling the POWs' stories.

At first I didn't believe it ... I went to Buckingham palace in October, and although all the correspondence said that the Queen would do this and the Queen would do that, when the time came she was actually on a tour of Canada and it was Prince Charles that gave me the MBE. It was a fantastic occasion. I don't do much else with the medal except wear it on Remembrance Day.

It's still hard to believe that [anyone notices] way out here in far off Taiwan. But somebody did I guess.

**TT:** World War II ended more than 60 years ago and the surviving POWs are very old men. Will the services continue after the last of them have passed away?

**Hurst:** We have no plan to stop. Once we got Remembrance Day going after 1996. I pledged that as long as I'm in Taiwan I will do something every year at Jinguashi and have some kind of ceremony, big or small.

In 1999 the question was raised what happens if I did leave Taiwan or something happened to me. So the four trade offices [UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada] formed a Commonwealth Committee and we work together every year to put the program on. I should leave Taiwan then there would be a viable entity to ensure some kind of ceremony goes on.

More details about this year's “Remembrance Weekend” can be found at [www.powtaiwan.org](http://www.powtaiwan.org).



Michael Hurst points to some prisoner-of-war memorabilia during an interview in Taipei on Nov. 4.

PHOTO: RICHARD HAZELDINE, TAIPEI TIMES