

# The Free Spirits vs. The Dictator

Taiwan's long walk to freedom of speech

## Introduction:

As air is to creatures, so is the freedom to human beings. People take liberty for granted and don't even realize its importance. Once taken away, the loss of freedom becomes the most profound suffering for a human being.

The democratic freedom we have been accustomed to did not just form out of nowhere. Taiwan's journey to freedom has gone through several generations of people with different backgrounds, fighting against authoritarianism and striving for the Taiwan we see today.

After decades of fighting for democracy, Taiwan completes the re-election of all Congressional representatives and the first direct presidential election during the 1990s. Since then, Taiwan has experienced three-party rotations. Moreover, Taiwan has been ranked second in Asia by Freedom House 2021 index of freedom; ranked eighth in the "Democracy Index 2021" by the United Kingdom's Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in February of 2022. It is becoming the only country in Asia listed in the top ten democratic nations.

One must understand the past to understand the present and prospects for the future. "Taiwan's Long Walk to Freedom of Speech" exhibits the historical archives from 1945 to the present, with the freedom of speech process in Taiwan as the primary focus.

自由之路



## **Exhibition Sections**

### **Section I:**

#### **The Formation of the oppressed freedom of speech system**

- 1-1 The Political Tutelage System and its remnant
- 1-2 The Period of National Mobilization for the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion and the abnormal regime
- 1-3 Press Ban and the publishing control

### **Section II:**

#### **Taiwan's media catastrophe and the "April 6th Incident", 1945-1949**

- 2-1 The political purge after the 228 Incident
- 2-2 Yang Kui (楊逵) and the April 6th Incident

### **Section III:**

#### **Free China Review (自由中國) and the fights of people from different provincial origins, 1950s**

- 3-1 The ban of newspapers and magazines publications
- 3-2 Lei Chen (雷震) and Free China Review (自由中國)

### **Section IV:**

#### **The fearless people behind the unbreathable freedom of speech suppression during the 1960s**

- 4-1 *Time and Tide* (時與潮) Magazine and *Taiwan Justice Weekly News* (公論報)
- 4-2 Censoring the dissidents
- 4-3 Wei Ting-chao (魏廷朝), Peng Ming-min (彭明敏), Roger Hsieh (謝聰敏) and "the Declaration of Formosan Self-salvation"
- 4-4 The Sedition Case of Bo Yang (柏楊)

### **Section V:**

#### **The Setbacks and breakthroughs from Tang-wai collective movements during the 1970s and 1980s**

- 5-1 Suppression of speech reform
- 5-2 The international rescue of political prisoners in Taiwan
- 5-3 The rise of Tang-wai political movements
- 5-4 Thriving through trauma

### **Section VI:**

#### **The final stage: Confrontations, sacrifice and the struggle for the freedom of speech, 1987 – 1992**

- 6-1 Three bottom lines after lifting the martial law
- 6-2 Nylon Cheng (鄭南榕), who set himself on fire to defend 100% freedom of speech
- 6-3 Reform-minded teams' collaboration and breakthrough

### **Section VII:**

#### **Female figures in the movements of freedom-fighting**

### **Conclusion:**

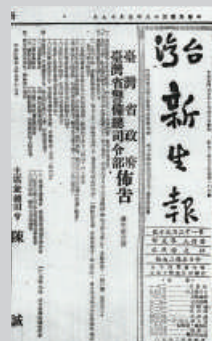
#### **Challenges for the new era**

- Becoming a free country
- Chilling effect and cognitive warfare

## Section I: The Formation of the oppressed freedom of speech system

Freedom of speech plays an imperative and inciteful role in the progression of human rights. Under a dictatorial regime, brainwashing is the most direct way of controlling people.

Information is censored in the media to restrict people from gaining further knowledge and having the ability to think critically.

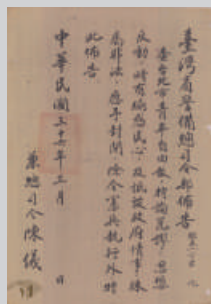
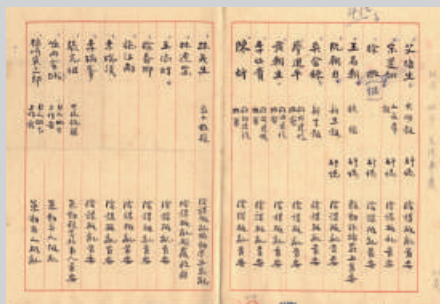


## Section II:

### Taiwan's media catastrophe and the "April 6th Incident", 1945-1949

After WWII, the KMT government, which represented the Allied to take over Taiwan, introduced the "allocation by one political party" system into Taiwan and gradually had a tight grip on the freedom of speech. Especially after the 228 incident in 1947, KMT authorities went to great lengths to shut down newspaper offices and responded to protests through imprisoning, torturing, and executing intellectuals and community leaders.

Soon afterward, the April 6th Incident occurred in the Spring of 1949. Some students of NTU and NTNU were arrested on sedition charges; they were either executed or sentenced to prison. To add insult to injury, the KMT government soon declared martial law (temporary) on May 20th, which further aggravated the freedom of speech.



## Section III: Free China Review (自由中國) and the fights of people from different provincial origins, 1950s

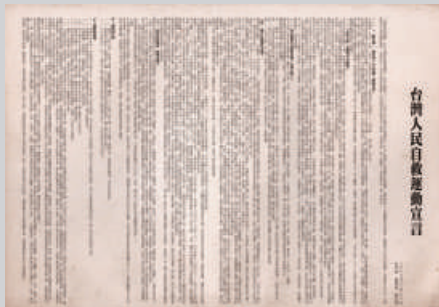
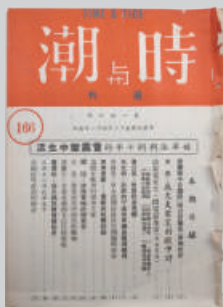
The Korean War, which broke out in June of 1950, contributed to the tactical changes made by the United States toward Asia and ultimately stabilized Kuomintang's (KMT's) regime. KMT didn't return to constitutional order nor abolished those laws infringing the right to freedom of expression and thought and violating the right to personal liberty, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, etc. Laws such as the "Espionage Prevention Act" and the "Traitors Punishment Act" continued to violate human rights further.

Further, the Printing Act was modified twice, promulgating the Enforcement Rules for the Act. All of which thoroughly censored all forms of publications and strengthened the suppression of freedom of speech. With these regulations implemented by the KMT, newspaper bans became common. The KMT authority suppressed newspapers such as the Free China Review issued by Lei Chen as they often published criticism of the current political state and expressed political reform appeals.



#### Section IV: The fearless people behind the unbreathable freedom of speech suppression during the 1960s

Lei Chen, who was in charge of the Free China Review, formed an opposition party with local elites when he could not stop Chiang Kai-Shek from running for his third term of the presidency as it violated the Constitution. Lei was later accused of spreading communist propaganda and hiding communists, and Chiang increased Lei's sentence to 10 years and shut down the Free China Review. Thereafter, further restrictions were implemented on freedom of speech and the formation of parties. Intellectuals were worried about Taiwan's future as people were unaware of their country's state due to censored information in the media. This led to two of Peng Ming-min's (a professor at NTU) students drafting a "Declaration of Formosan Self-Salvation" but ending up being arrested and imprisoned. During this time, the government suppressed speech and ideologies even more.





## Section V: Setbacks and breakthroughs from Tang-wai collective movements during the 1970s and 1980s

The 1970s and 1980s were when the state of international and domestic politics was undergoing complex and rough changes. On October 25th, 1971, the UN General Assembly passed UN Resolution 2758, which stated that the PRC was the only legitimate government of China. PRC replaced the seat that the ROC held in the UN. On April 5th, 1975, Chiang Kai-shek died, and Chiang Ching-kuo took over the presidency soon after. In January 1979, the U.S.A. broke the diplomatic relationship with the Republic of China. Kuomintang (KMT) regime has suffered the most severe diplomatic setback since it retreated to Taiwan.

Under the circumstances, people of Tang-wai (the anti-KMT dissidents) demand significant changes or complete reform to the political systems. Facing the voices striving for democracy and freedom, KMT responded ruthlessly and ultimately led to the Kaohsiung Incident, the Chen Wencheng murder, and the Henry Liu case.



## Section VI: The final stage: Confrontations, sacrifice and the struggle for the freedom of speech, 1987 — 1992

As pressure arose internationally and nationally, Chiang Ching-Kuo enacted the "National Security Act During the Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion" in 1987. Then, he relaxed the government controls on the media and speech by lifting martial law and the press ban.

However, under the strict supervision of the Taiwan Garrison Command, the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion remained effective based jointly on "The Punishment of Rebellion Act" and Article 100 of "The Criminal Code."

In 1989, Nylon Cheng (鄭南榕), who strived for complete freedom of speech, was accused of insurrection for his political stance. From KMT's perspective, his preference for independence was undoubtedly sedition.



An arrest warrant was issued. Nylon Cheng refused to appear in court and used peaceful resistance to defend his claim. He imprisoned himself at the Editor-in-Chief office of Freedom Era Weekly (自由時代) for 71 days. When the police and military officers attempted to break into his office to arrest him on April 7, he set his office on fire and committed suicide by self-immolation. In 1991, President Li Teng-hui (李登輝) announced the end of the Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion. With the abolishment of the "Punishment of Rebellion Act" and the amendment of Article 100 of the "Criminal Code," Taiwan began waddling toward freedom and democracy in 1992. But even so, three acts violating the constitution, e.g., the "National Security Act", "Assembly and Parade Act" and "Civil Associations Act," remained effective and restricted the freedom of speech.

### **Section VII: Female figures in the movements of freedom-fighting**

Under martial law, the authoritarian regime violated many human rights infringements. The spouses and family members of those found guilty were tortured, monitored, discriminated against, or left alone without help. Women and children were living in extreme circumstances with little to no support. Under the circumstances of White Terror, they can only visit their loved ones in prison and cherish the memories they had with them.

### **Conclusion: Challenges for the new era**

After the end of the White Terror, complete Congress's re-election and the direct presidential election allowed Taiwan to become a democratic country in 1996. Since then, Taiwan has been recognized internationally for having high levels of freedom in life and media.

Even so, Taiwan still faces new challenges with the "One China Policy" implemented by the PRC. China still showcases its soft power economically and politically by using Taiwan's freedom of speech to its full advantage, often putting out news to remind the world of its "One China Principle." Moreover, those who do business in China are forced to take a stance and abide by the "One China Policy." Protecting such propaganda and spreading fake news is one of the most pressing issues for Taiwan.





## Information:

### Address

No. 21, Zhongshan S. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.,  
Taipei City 100012, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

### Tel

(02) 2343-1100

### Hours

9:00-18:00 daily

Closed Lunar New Year Eve, Lunar New Year, 228 Peace Memorial Day, annual equipment maintenance, office closures in Taipei City due to natural disasters will be announced later.

### Adviser:



### Organizer:

