

Fred Chin Him-San's story

A personal story of political imprisonment in Jing Mei and Green Island prisons during the White Terror Regime in Taiwan

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Martial law was declared by the Kuomintang regime on 19 May 1949 and went into effect the next day. It was the law until 15 July 1987 – 38 years of rule by White Terror, where people lost their lives and property, and were deprived of their rights and freedom.

During a recent study visit to Human Rights Museums in Taiwan, Amy de Joia, Executive Director of Development and Communications at National Museums Liverpool met Fred who told her his personal story. The meeting encouraged him to write down it down for the first time and what follows is a very personal and emotional account written in English by Fred himself. His account of how he was imprisoned for 12 years (1971-1983) on Green Island prison in Taiwan is deeply moving.

Today Jung Mei and Green Island Prisons form a memorial centre and human rights museum and in 2013 Fred became involved with the museum as a volunteer. He believes it is important to tell his story to the public and teach visitors about human rights and freedom in Taiwan and the world.

My name is Fred Chin Him-San. I was born in Kg Simee, Ipok, Perak, Malaysia on 27 February 1949. I came to Taiwan to further my study in September 1967 when I was 18 years old. My nationality was Malaysian at that time. Now I am a Taiwanese and I'm proud to be a Taiwanese too.

It was over 40 years ago, but it seemed as if it happened just yesterday. My sad story began on 3 March 1971 when I was a university student down south in Tainan studying Chemical Engineering at Cheng Kung University. By the time I was arrested I was 21 and in my second term of my third year.

On the 3 March 1971, on my way home to my rented room, a middle-aged man came up to me and asked me: 'Do you know a student by the name of Chin



Him-San?' I felt shaken by the name of Chin Him-San and for it to be such a coincidence of asking me this question and I answered: 'I am Chin Him-San'. The man then told me 'Oh good. You have a relative, Mr Chai from Malaysia and he said he hasn't time to come down south to see you and he hoped that you can go to Taipei to see him.'

I didn't suspect anything or have any hesitation saying: 'OK. I'll go to Taipei but let me wash up and get some money first. But the man said: 'It's not necessary. You'll be back very soon.' So I got into the car. Once I got into the car, I found the atmosphere was very unusual but could not tell why.

From that time onwards, my life changed and I lost my freedom for 12 full years. I was so badly beaten and tortured and until today I still can't find the actual reason why I was caught, beaten and locked up.

The car drove all the way to Taipei, and after reaching Taipei. I was locked up in a small house for a night. There is no way to find out where I was.

The next day, three men came and started to ask me many funny questions and wanted me to write a self-confession. But everything came so suddenly and I didn't know what I did that needed my 'confession' and, so of course, I didn't know what to write. Then they started to beat me continuously, harder and heavier each time. I wanted to write down anything to stop all the torturing but I did not know any facts - what shall I write?



For a few days, they continued to torture me in different ways. Still I did not know how to fulfil their wishes until one day; a man came to me and told me what to write. He said to me: 'Did you know that

two explosions happened - one in Taipei City Bank and the other in Tainan American News Agency? You write down how you planned to explode the Tainan American News Agency.'

Because I have been to Tainan American News Agency many times and have a pretty good impression of the inner design, I tried to make up a story of how I arranged it, where I put the time bomb etc. but still, they were not satisfied with my story and kept on telling me I didn't tell the truth and of course the torturing never stopped.

Under such high pressure, I was physically worn out and mentally broken-down. I tried to kill myself three times but nothing happened to me. When I thought about my stupid

deeds for trying to kill myself and nothing happened, I took it as a miracle otherwise I would not be telling my story.

After a few further weeks of torturing, one day another man came to see me telling me that someone else had admitted to the explosion case and I would be sent back to university again soon.

But this was not the case. Instead I was sent to another division and I was again badly beaten up to write down another so-called 'self-confession', admitting that I joined the Communist Party in Malaysia and I was sent to Taiwan to overthrow the KMT Government. They used this 'self-confession' to put me in jail for 12 complete years, until in 1983, I was released.



The days passed by so sadly and slowly. Although I was busy working in the kitchen and I did my best to kill my time not to think of anything but there were still gaps and I was so irritated and upset. Recalling the glimpsed and faded out memory, I felt grateful when I saw the face of a kind dog and it's willingness and ability to hear my inner voices again and again. Every time I talked to the dog he was so calm and he just looked at me. In his eyes I seemed to see something and I always had a feeling that he knew what I was trying to tell him. There were times when I was so emotionally uncontrollable and tears would fall down my face. He would cling closer to me and I seemed to see his eyes were wet too. I will never forget him till the end of my days. I have no idea where he is now. I missed him since the day I left him. He is my DOG.

CIA's directions. All the facts can be proven to be untrue through investigation back to Malaysia but they took no notice of this and I had no way to ask for help at that time. So under such harsh conditions, I was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment.

This is my short story.

Timeline

27 February 1949	Born in Malaysia
1966	Completed my high school in Malaysia, Ipoh
1967	Taiwan to attend university
3 March 1971	Arrested and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment
1971-1972	Jin Mei (Chingmei) Martial Law Section and Detention Centre
1972-1981	Green Island (Oasis Villa)
1981-1983	Ren-'ai educational and training centre
3 March 1983	Released. Regained freedom
May 1985	Granted Taiwanese citizenship
1987	Martial Law lifted
1988 (early)	First trip back to Malaysia
1988 (late)	Started my own family and struggling to make ends meet.
2005	Retired
2013	Working as a volunteer to disclose my story to the public

