

# Why the Name of Democracy Memorial Hall Should Not Be Changed Back to Chiang Kai-shek Memorial H

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.  
Friday, 10 July 2009 09:22

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The following letter of April 14, 1947 was written by K.W. Dowie at the request of George William Mackay to Mackay's daughter Margaret in Canada. Mackay (the son of famed missionary George Leslie MacKay) wanted to get out news of what was happening in Taiwan after 2/28. Dowie had been a missionary in Taiwan 1913~1924 and was the architect of Tamsui Middle School; he was visiting Taiwan in the service of the US Navy after World War II. Not wanting to risk censorship Dowie wrote and mailed the letter after he left Taiwan. It is another first hand account of the murders after 2/28 and another reason why the name of Democracy Memorial Hall should never be changed back to Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. The letter follows.

I was in Taipeh a couple of weeks back and met your folks. There was a perfectly justified uprising of the Formosans against Chinese oppression while I was there and mail and communication with the outside world was liable to censorship. The Chinese want only their version of the affair to reach the press. Your folks therefore asked if I would drop you a line giving a review of the goings on. I will try. It's all from memory (scared to make notes in the event of a search) so if I ramble, please excuse.

After the Jap surrender the Formosans genuinely gave the Chinese an enthusiastic welcome and were keen and eager to make a go of things under Chinese Rule. Due to graft cooption etc. the Formosans were soon to be disillusioned and bitterness for the Chinese rulers took the place of the previous enthusiasm. The Chinese made no attempt to develop the island or trade or export or industry or anything at all. Their whole purpose seems to have been to loot. They merely took over the posts and businesses vacated by the Japs and carried on Jap system except that the Jap had method but the Chinese did not. Chinese from the mainland swarmed over the Island to pick up all the choice plums and they got priority while the native citizens were left out in the cold and told to go chase themselves. Time came when feelings ran so high that it only needed a smaller incident to act as a match and the smoldering fires would burst into flame. On February 28 the storm burst.

One of the Chinese Tobacco Monopoly Police clubbed an old widow to death for selling cigarettes at a small stall near the Taipeh Railway Station. A crowd began protesting to the Police and one of them was shot. The crowd then moved (angry but orderly) to Headquarters to protest and more of the crowd were shot. Their feelings then got the upper hand (one cannot blame them) and they yanked Chinese officials from their offices and beat them up. Some of the officials didn't live. The money and cigarettes found in the Tobacco Monopoly Headquarters was taken into the street and burned. (This was their way of indicating that they were not out for loot or individual gain). After these goings on the crowd quietened down somewhat and things most likely would have returned to normal but the following day there was more gunplay by the

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Chinese. Two students asked for information at the Railway Station having planned to go home on holiday as the schools had closed. They were shot dead. A demonstration (orderly) approached the Government Headquarters to protest these outrages and had machine guns turned on them. This proved the last straw and Taipei came completely under Formosan control for the time being.

The day after the machine gunning a representation approached the Governor with a list of demands: That the trigger happy police be relieved of their arms and troops confined to barracks temporarily. That in future Mayors and other aspirants to high public office be voted in by the people and not appointed indiscriminately etc. etc. all of them of a sensible nature and drawn up with a view of benefiting the Island as a whole. The Governor listened to their pleas and asked that a 10 day interval be agreed upon for him to study the list, then a meeting would be held with both parties represented and the matter gone into thoroughly. It was also arranged that the students maintain peace in the city during the interval and that they be armed in order to deal with any bad characters who might take advantage of the disturbed conditions. Unknown to the Formosans he had already or was about to send for more troops from the Mainland. The above arrangements worked successfully and the city resumed its normal routine.

At 10 p.m. on the 8th March (also the 8th day of the 10 agreed upon) rifle and machine gun fire broke out simultaneously in different parts of the city. The troops had arrived and began shooting up anything and anyone. The shooting was quite indiscriminate and without warning. At first it was heavy but later relapsed into intermittent bursts as the prowling troops went in search of human targets. It was kept up for a few days and goodness knows how many deaths there were. I would say that the deaths ran into the thousands. In addition to the shootings lots of citizens were arrested on the most flimsy evidence and I am afraid few of them still live. (to be continued)

Source: [Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)