

Returning salmon or cross-strait sharks?

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟
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The tainted cooking oil scandal caused by Ting Hsin International Group (頂新國際) is perhaps the timeliest “National Day gift” Taiwanese could have given the Republic of China (ROC), this nation that does not seem to quite be a nation.

Newspaper editorials have condemned the Wei (魏) family who run the group as “rich, but cruel.” However, are they the only rich, but cruel family in Taiwan?

Business tycoons have manipulated the nation’s political and business circles in recent years, dominating national policies to profit from the hardworking public. Many of the tycoons belong to cross-strait political and business groups and believe that “merchants have no country,” treating Taiwan as a Chinese province instead of a nation. They usually behave themselves in China, while trying to profit from Taiwan.

Do these businesspeople really have no country? Israeli businesspeople love their nation deeply and businesspeople from the leading sovereign states all have a strong “motherland awareness.” Only Taiwanese businesspeople insist on claiming that “merchants have no country.” Since these businesspeople have no country, they care only about their own interests and attach no importance to Taiwan or Taiwanese.

The Wei family dared to sell cooking oil products made with animal feed oil to Taiwanese because they did not have the nation’s best interests at heart. On Oct. 9, renowned chef Cheng Yen-chi (鄭永奇), known as A-chi Shih (阿基師), angrily questioned whether senior Ting Hsin executive Wei Ying-chun (魏應坤) sleeps well at night. Unfortunately, the answer is likely “yes.”

The government is partially responsible for encouraging the view that “merchants have no country.” It has belittled Taiwan to the status of a Chinese province and dares not directly tell Beijing that Taiwan is an independent and sovereign state. Economically, the government provides preferential treatment to conglomerates that invest in China, encouraging them to make a “salmon run” as the Ministry of Economic Affairs has called it — to return to Taiwan to be listed on the nation’s stock market or to establish operations centers here.

It also proposes policies concerned only with the interests of cross-strait political and business

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groups, while disregarding the life-and-death struggles of Taiwanese. Every economic policy in recent years has been like this, including the cross-strait service trade agreement, the cross-strait trade in goods agreement and the establishment of free economic pilot zones. They have served only to nurture special interest groups.

Last month, President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), Vice President Wu Den-yih (吳登毅) and Premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華) attended a Mid-Autumn Festival celebration hosted by Taiwanese businesspeople with investments in China. Their group seems large enough to intervene in Taiwanese politics. It harms the nation's democracy and the fairness of elections and it will be difficult to remedy. Eventually, such influences could lead to the nation's ruin, as freedom and democracy collapse. This is a much greater threat than tainted oil.

This is why Taiwanese must not overlook the cultural background of businesspeople's misbehavior: Taiwan has not been able to normalize its national status and thus remains a country that does not quite seem to be a country, which has resulted in the public's weak national identity.

Taiwanese must also be more cautious with the potential damage to the nation caused by businesspeople who travel back and forth across the Taiwan Strait, claiming that "merchants have no country."

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Translated by Eddy Chang

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