

Flag affair shows Ko's ideals have been ditched

Written by LIOU JE-WEI 廖正偉

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A day after several Argentine athletes carried Republic of China national flags into the Taipei Municipal Stadium during the closing ceremony of the Taipei Summer Universiade on Wednesday last week, the International University Sports Federation issued a warning to the team.

In response to the incident, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) said in an interview: "First of all I want to inform China that the flag incident had nothing to do with us. It was the Argentine athletes who did it."

What would the Argentine team think about Ko's remarks?

When foreigners do something that could annoy Beijing and is essentially good for Taiwan, why would the mayor of Taipei be so afraid and feel the need to report to China?

Why is Ko so concerned about how China feels?

Since President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) took office last year, Beijing has done everything in its power to force her administration to acknowledge the so-called "1992 consensus" — including ceasing all formal communications and exchanges with the Taiwanese government.

However, on the day of the Universiade opening ceremony, Huang Wentao (黃文濤), head of the Department of Exchange at China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), came to Taiwan with the People's Republic of China's athletes as the team's leader and consultant.

As the highest-ranking official to have visited since Tsai's inauguration, Huang came with a special purpose.

However, his purpose was not to meet with the Tsai administration, but to meet with Ko.

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It is still unknown what Huang and Ko talked about.

Does Ko not owe the residents of Taipei an explanation as to what happened?

It is possible that the talks were directly related to Ko's eagerness to tell China he was not responsible for the flags incident?

That such an important TAO official should skip the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and directly meet with the Taipei City Government should not become the new normal.

Those who find it acceptable should ask themselves if they would be happy if Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) mayors were to do likewise.

As the host of this year's BRICS summit, China last month sent a representative to Kinmen to discuss security cooperation for the event.

Kinmen County Commissioner Chen Fu-hai (陳福海) told the representative that as the matter was outside the local government's jurisdiction, it would discuss it with the central government.

As mayor of Taipei, elected by Taiwanese, Ko should have done the same and made it clear to Huang from the beginning that he should contact the MAC before meeting him to show respect for the nation's political system.

Unfortunately, Ko chose to improve his relationship with China for his own political interests, rather than protect the nation's status.

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In the same interview, Ko described people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait as “one big family.”

Moreover, at both the opening and the closing ceremonies of the Universiade, the audience were banned from carrying flags showing profiles of Taiwan.

A man who waved a flag with the word “Taiwan” on it at the closing ceremony was even carried out of the stadium by a group of military police dressed in black.

Has Ko forgotten the ideals he had when he decided to pursue a career in politics?

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Translated by Tu Yu-an

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