

Dance tour a 'united front' tactic

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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A Chinese dance troupe is to tour Taiwan this month, starting in Kaohsiung, with free performances open to the public. While on the surface it sounds innocuous enough, under scrutiny it reeks of Chinese pro-unification propaganda.

Following a report by the *Liberty Times* (the sister newspaper of the *Taipei Times*), which raised concerns that the shows could be a part of China's "united front" campaign, the government banned the tour group's leader from entering Taiwan. However, the troupe's performers and its entourage were granted visas. While the government might be keen to appear reasonable and evenhanded, there is a strong argument for it pulling the plug on the entire event, given the number of red flags.

First, there is the name of the troupe: China Coal Mine Art Troupe, which suggests it has impeccable communist credentials. Then there is the name of the show itself, which translated into English means "The Love of a Chinese Family, a Celebration of Taiwan" (愛家愛國, 慶祝台灣). However, the official English name on the show's flyer leaves even less to the imagination: "Embrace China."

Second, the show would not visit Taipei. Instead it would only be hosted in Kaohsiung, as well as Miaoli and Hsinchu counties — all three of which are administered by the Beijing-friendly Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). In Hsinchu, the China Youth Corps, an outfit closely affiliated with the KMT, is promoting the event.

Third, the tour is sponsored by the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, which operates under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Work Department.

Additionally, this is not the first time such an event has been held. Two years ago, Beijing used the Sing! China: Shanghai-Taipei Music Festival, hosted by National Taiwan University, to push its unification message. It even made posters that called the school "Taipei City Taiwan University" (台北城市台灣大學). After pro-unification groups attacked protesters, the event was hastily canceled.

Then there is the question of the tour's timing. While being grilled by legislators this week,

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Mainland Affairs Council Minister Chen Ming-tong (陳明通) said that the government would adopt a hands-off approach to the events.

He said that it is important to maintain cultural exchanges between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, but added: "If the group is found to engage in activities that are not in compliance with the purpose of its visit, performances here could be halted."

Given the serious national security threat posed by China's "united front" infiltration tactics, should the government make it this easy for Beijing with presidential and legislative elections just around the corner?

Rather than adopting a "wait and see" approach — akin to closing the barn door after the horse has bolted — the government should switch to an "if in doubt, keep them out" approach.

Given the all-encompassing nature of China's infiltration into Taiwanese society, the cumulative damage of each "cross-strait forum" and "cultural exchange program" adds up to a sum greater than its parts. Therefore, instead of assessing each case in isolation, or waiting for problems to blow up, the government should adopt a holistic approach and snuff out any attempts at incursion from Beijing.

Circumspection and "soft-touch regulation" does not work when the enemy is knocking at the door. The government should stop pussyfooting around and clamp down on China's brazen propaganda.

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