

Wen's Guest Today

Daniel T.C. Liao, Director General of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle
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From Wendy Liu's website: <http://www.wensinterviews.us/WensGuestLiao.html>

As you probably know, October 10th this year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China, the official name of Taiwan. There is no better person to interview for such a historic event than **Daniel T.C. Liao**, Director General of the [Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle](#), also known as TECO



I met Mr. Liao about two years ago at Shoreline Community College. He gave a talk on Taiwan's healthcare system as part of a panel discussion there put on by the school's Global Affairs Center. When a friend introduced me to him, I realized that Mr. Liao was the very first Taiwan official I had ever met. For someone originally from mainland China, that may not have been so unusual. But I am glad that I met him, and have seen him a few more times since.

Mr. Liao is understandably very busy these days. But he was kind enough to have put aside a couple of hours on Oct. 3, after my persistent, month-long request, for me to come to his office to do this interview, as follows, in three parts.

Wen: First of all, Mr. Liao, thank you so much for giving me this interview. It is a very special interview, on two levels. One, October 10th this year is the centennial of the Republic of China, which you represent here in Seattle. Two, you are my first Taiwan official, to have met and to interview. As you know, I am a former citizen of the People's Republic of China. So you and I in fact came from the two different republics of the same China.

Part 1. As a Taiwan individual

Wen: I read that you were born in Taichung, I assume in the mid 1950s. Could you tell me something about Taichung, your hometown?

Mr. Liao: I was born in the mid 50s. I didn't know it too well before 1960s as I was just a toddler. I started my elementary education in the early 1960s and started to pay attention to the environment. Taichung at that time was a peaceful city, one of the 21 at that time. Now there are fewer municipal cities in Taiwan. Taipei was the only city under the direct jurisdiction of the Executive Yuan. All other cities and counties were under then Province of Taiwan. We abolished the name of Taiwan Province afterwards. In the 1960s, Taichung was mostly rural, happy. I had to go to school barefoot, in a happy mood. No suppression. We were getting help from United Nations and aids from the United States of America. Taiwan stopped getting UN aid after 1972.

Between 1960s and 1972, we still got lot of aids. Milk for school children, powder milk, for instance. So when we went to school, we enjoyed a break for milk, say 10-11 o'clock. In big kettles, free milk from UN, and cookies, too. Good old times. Students were happy. We did not know too much about the world politics. Taiwan was just getting to carry out Dr. Sun Yat-sen's principles of democratic way of politics. We started to have village elections, city council elections, not yet central level.

Wen: So you are from Taiwan, what about your parents? Are they native Taiwanese or mainlanders?

Mr. Liao: Very long time ago my ancestors came from South China, maybe three or four hundred years ago, following General Zheng, we call him Koxinga, General Zheng Cheng-kung. Because of his service to save the Ming Dynasty, though he failed, the emperor of the Ming Dynasty gave him the royal last name, Zhu. So he became the general with the royal last time. Maybe at that time, a lot of people in southeast China immigrated to Taiwan, with General Zheng and his army, to develop Taiwan. I believe my ancestors must have come during or immediately after that period, about three or four hundred years ago. So they were Chinese, but also Taiwanese. Correct way to say is Taiwanese from China or Chinese living in Taiwan.

Wen: When I was growing up, Taiwan had a term for the mainland, gong fei, or Communist bandits, which would have included my parents, and Taiwan was preparing to recover or retake the mainland. What was mainland China to you when you were growing up?

Mr. Liao: When I was growing up, when I went to elementary school, junior high school and high school, we were banned from any information from China. You have to imagine, national publicity or propaganda goes either way. China had its propaganda. Taiwan, the Republic of China, at that time, had its way of publicity, telling its people bad things about China. That's because of that period of time, from 1950s to early 1980s when both sides started to come to terms and reconcile. But before that, it was opponent way of thinking, antagonistic. Each side would like to say the worst things about the other side. We were told that people in mainland China, as you were having the Cultural Revolution, basically ate grass and tree bark. Those were funny in retrospect. If you think of history, if you have to believe all books, its better there were no books. If you have to believe all propaganda, there might as well be no propaganda.

During those years, as a child growing up, I kept hearing news from mainland China. We had chance to listen to the radio. I would hear from the radio what's happening there. The music, sounded very militant, revolutionary, especially when you were fighting Soviet Russia, over Zhenbao Dao. What year was that? I was about 12 years old. So my impression about mainland China at that time was what was fed by the government machine. People in China, for instance, during the Cultural Revolution, were in "deep water and fire," and we had to go rescue them. The mainland government told people that Taiwan people had nothing to eat and had to eat banana peels, and you had to liberate Taiwan. It's interesting when you think back. It's all history. That's my impression of mainland China at that time.

Wen: You went to National Cheng Kung University and majored in foreign language. Did you learn foreign language, is it English, because you wanted to work for the Foreign Ministry?

Mr. Liao: More or less so. In high school, I did best in English. I did well in Chinese, too, but not in math. I would never become a natural science major. I started to think maybe I should become a diplomat now I am interested in English. I seemed to have done quite OK and I could listen to American Air Force network in Taiwan. During the Vietnam War, they kept air force in Taiwan, Taipei and Taichung, my hometown. So I listened to the broadcast everyday since elementary school. That helped my English. If I speak without much accent, it's because of American Air Force network. I listened all the time, even when I was sleeping I kept the radio on. Yes I wanted to become a diplomat.

Wen: As someone from Taiwan, do you say you are Taiwanese or Chinese, or Taiwanese Chinese? Is there any "identity crisis" on an individual level as among the Taiwan population?

Mr. Liao: Taiwan is now such a full-fledged democracy. We are proud of that. After all these years, Taiwan has developed into a full democracy. The freedom of expression is so good, freedom of TV and newspapers. They say there are more CNNs in Taiwan than in U.S.A. 24 hour news, just news. Maybe we have ten stations doing that all day long. Some of them represent different ideologies, support different political parties. You can be assured that the 23 million people of Taiwan do not have the same way of thinking at all. We are all split up, political and ideology-wise, identification-wise.

A portion of Taiwanese would insist that they are Taiwanese. If you call them anything else they would be angry. A portion of people of Taiwan, mostly those who came to Taiwan after 1949 would still call themselves Chinese. Those like my ancestors who came much earlier, three and four hundred years ago, still cherish their Chinese heritage, culturally, nothing to do with politics. We don't mind the past dynasties. We don't care about Republic of China in its early years. We are just people from China, culturally and historically Chinese, what we say, what we think, what we do, what we eat are very much Chinese. So be proud of it. If you are not proud of it, be comfortable with it, accept it. There are people who do that call themselves Chinese. Chinese, from Taiwan. Like you say I am Chinese, but I live in Singapore. I am Chinese, but I live in Malaysia. There are a lot of people in Taiwan identify themselves that way. They come to the U.S., oh Chinese, but I am from Taiwan. There is yet another portion of people who insist on calling themselves Chinese. You can't call them Taiwanese. That's what makes Taiwan so likable, free to think, free to identify.

At the end of the day, 90 some percent of people cherish the value of Taiwan. That's developed in the past 60 years. It's a gradual development of merging, assimilation and reconciliation. There may have been a period of fighting with each other, hating each other, not wanting to marry each other. That's all gone. Now 99 percent of the families have inter-marriages between mainlanders and early comers. Personal-wise, I would say I am a Chinese from Taiwan.

Part 2. As a Taiwan diplomat

Wen: I read that you joined the Foreign Ministry in 1982. That was when Mr. Chiang Ching-kuo was still president. How did you feel becoming a diplomat when Taiwan had just lost, in 1979, its biggest diplomatic relationship, that with the United States, to mainland China?

Mr. Liao: When I was in high school, in 1971, we lost our seat in the UN to People's Republic of China. At that time, Chiang Ching-kuo, I think he just became the prime minister of Republic of China. At that time it was still President Chiang Kai-shek, the senior president. So he called to our people and said we should be strong in times of adversity and international change. Don't be scared. Be self-reliant. And be independent. Those slogans were from the old president. Then in 1978, the old president had already passed away. So it was the new president, Chiang Ching-kuo, from prime minister to vice president to president, when we lost the diplomatic tie with the United States. So starting 1979, no diplomatic tie with U.S.A. Most people in the world, including a lot of people in Taiwan, thought Taiwan was going to sink. You don't have support from U.S.A., you are done for. But we didn't.

I was in graduate school, second year. I went to graduate school in 1977. That day when they announced the ending of diplomatic ties, I was in the school library. I am trying to remember how I felt. I felt kind of sad, and helpless. From 1971 to 1978, Taiwan used to have 100 some diplomatic ties and allies. They gradually went away because of our loss of seat to UN. A lot of UN member countries started to say good-bye to Taiwan. So when U.S.A. said good-bye to Taiwan, we only had 50 or 60 some countries recognizing the Republic of China. More than half of the allies had gone away. In that sense, we still have to appreciate the United States for staying with us for so long.

As a young student, I felt a little bit disappointed, a little bit sad, and helpless. I told myself, well, it shouldn't be too different from when we left UN. If we work hard, it should be OK. Right after that, President Chiang Ching-kuo went out with similar slogans, telling people to stay calm, not be fearful of the change of the situation, if you stay together and work hard, you have hopes. He called to his people to be strong. And that worked.

In 1978, we already went through the first wave of the oil crisis, the energy crisis of 1972. During that time, then Prime Minister Chiang Ching-kuo and his government had the vision to still carry on the ten major infrastructure projects. So instead of going down as did many countries with the financial crisis, we took off and created what they referred to as an economic miracle, one of the four Asian tigers, from 1970s and early 1980s. So we were doing quite OK economically. Because of the nice negotiations with the U.S. government, the substantive relationship, economically, culturally, everything except politically, was maintained very well. So everything went on normal except we lost diplomatic ties. So between Republic of China and U.S.A., without formal recognition, nothing else changed.

Wen: I read that you were once deputy chief of the International Organizations Division at the Foreign Ministry and were in charge of Taiwan's bid to join the UN. That had to be one of the biggest and toughest jobs in the world. What did you have to do? What happened to the bid?

Mr. Liao: Since we lost our seat in 1971, in 1972, we lost our membership to almost all UN related special agencies, WHO, World Bank, UPU, etc. We lost a lot of resources. UN used to provide Taiwan with a lot of information, a lot of aid. In 1971, we still had to depend on UN aid. We were not very much developed yet. Economically we were still not doing so well. We lost all those important and useful information, like health, medical and different areas of scientific study. If you are member of UN, you naturally get them. But if you are not, you don't get them.

Or if you get them, you get at a very late date. Like health information, if there were a breakout of an epidemic, all WHO members, who meet all the time, would know, but not Taiwan. We were excluded from obtaining these very important information, in terms of health, weather. You had to buy from U.S.A. and other friendly countries. So we used to pay to buy information, UN related information. That's why Taiwan wanted to go back. We tried to re-join the UN and just become an observer of UN agencies, for a good reason, non-political.

Of course, China, after getting the representation, did not want anybody else to say they represent China. For the Republic of China to re-join UN, we say we wanted to regain the participation opportunity to get first hand information and to be able to make contributions. It was hard. It was a political reality, right? In Taiwanese, we say if you were having a watermelon, you would always want the bigger share. That's the same. Countries in the world know, mainland China, the People's Republic of China, from 1971, was a UN member, had a lot of resources, you can do a lot of business with the 1.1 or 1.2 billion people. You sell a can of Coke to each Chinese, you can make a lot of money. Coca Cola and Pepsi, they believe that. So it was natural for countries to go to mainland China. That's political prowess. When the PRC had that kind of political prowess, it was of course very difficult for the Republic of China, Taiwan, to re-join UN. It was understandable. But you don't stop doing it simply because it is difficult. We never stopped. We used to have to tell the world why we needed to be there. In the beginning, maybe we would say that we wanted to re-join UN as a full member. But gradually when it became more and more difficult, we say well we should be there as an observer, to join the meetings, to hear from member countries the first-hand information of everything. That is only understandable. We are still pursuing that. With the understanding of mainland China, three years ago, thanks to the relaxed relationship between this administration in Taiwan and President Hu Jintao's administration, Taiwan became an observer of the WHA (World Health Assembly).

Wen: Yes. That would be my next question. You were the coordinator of the World Health Organization Special Task Force for Taiwan. What did you do as a coordinator?

Mr. Liao: Foreign Ministry set up a special task force for WHO affairs, for this particular issue, not anything else. We wanted to be an observer at the World Health Assembly. In order to do that, you have a group of people, preparing information, like talking points, that we had to provide to friendly countries. You have to convince them why you want to be an observer. Come up with good arguing points. That was what my task force did. I had to coordinate our interior departments, the health administration and different agencies in Taiwan, and tell them to come to meetings to share information to work together and come up with a good rationale, and for our friendly countries and those who do not have diplomatic ties with Taiwan to understand. Even that was hard. Without the understanding of mainland China, before 2008, it was still hard. No matter how supportive most countries in the world were, no matter how hard Taiwan worked, you are still not there. So the last element was for mainland China to say yes, we would agree with that. So in 2009, when both sides of the Taiwan Strait relaxed, mainland China said OK, we would support you, agree to you that you become an observer of the WHA. Thankfully.

Wen: In 2006, you were appointed ambassador to Tuvalu, a tiny country in the Pacific Ocean. Is there something special about Tuvalu, one of the 23 countries that keep their diplomatic ties with Taiwan, not mainland China? What was like serving there?

Mr. Liao: Actually I enjoyed my two years in Tuvalu. Very very small country of 8 coral atolls in the South Pacific. Two hours north of Fiji if you take a sixty-seater twin-engine plane. Before you land, you don't see their island from your airplane. That's how small they are. Your airplane literally blocks your view of the island. But the people there are so friendly. Polynesians, very beautiful and very nice people, very self-reliant people. They fish. They send young men out to be sailers. They grow a lot of things themselves, coconut, papayas. They are one of the British Commonwealth countries, like many other Polynesian island countries. They get help from Australia, their fellow Commonwealth country, and New Zealand. Those are two biggest sources of supplies. They don't grow meat. They have to import from NZ or Australia, and major vegetables. We helped them grow 20 some kinds of vegetables, out of nowhere from coral sand soil. Our technicians helped to make new soil so they could grow vegetables. Now they grow water melon, corn, pepper, etc.

They are a diplomatic ally with Taiwan. We only have 23. Most of them small countries. Thankfully, we are able to help them with their national development, infrastructure. We would help them with development projects. But in the old days, people would criticize us: Oh, you carry out checkbook diplomacy. Give them couple of millions, that's it. Luckily, after 2008, China and Taiwan agreed, without writing down on paper, in spirit I believe, not to carry on checkbook diplomacy any more, not to win over diplomatic allies of each other's. What we say flexible diplomacy, setting up a buffer zone in terms of diplomacy. If you keep trying to win over each other's camp, you have to prepare a lot of money to serve their need. If they are not happy, they say give money or we would go to the other camp. So you can only give them money. That's why they called it checkbook diplomacy. After President Ma Ying-jeou took power, he promoted no digging walls, no winning over diplomatic allies, let's just do it substantially. Mainland China seems to have agreed to that in spirit. There is no writing. But since 2008, there was no losing diplomatic allies on either side. We are happy with our 23 diplomatic allies. We ask them to come up with substantive projects. If you want to build a fishing boat, we help you build a fishing boat, as the case of Tuvalu. We helped them build a 500-ton fishing boat, using their fishermen, to fish in their fishing territory. So in this case, we are not just giving them fish, we are helping them to fish.

Wen: Starting 2008, you became director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Seattle. Congratulations on the promotion! What are your job responsibilities, or what is your job description?

Mr. Liao: Thank you. In theory, it is not a promotion. You became from an ambassador to director general, which is like a consul general. In reality, it is a promotion, servicing more areas and more people. I will take it as a promotion. Thank you. Here we service the northwest's six American states, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. We have to do in substance whatever a foreign Consulate General does. Whatever a Japanese or Korean Consulate General does here, we have to do, only without the recognition diplomatically. Luckily and thankfully, the United States government has been very generous to Republic of China. We get everything except name recognition. We get diplomatic immunity in a different way. We get a license plate that says foreign organizations. It's not consular corps license plate, but says foreign organizations. Equally good. What's in a name? You get substance. We must say that we do everything a Consulate General does, issuing passport, renewing visa, authenticating documents

to be used in Taiwan. We help to promote good economic, educational and cultural relations with these state governments in the northwest and help take care of the Chinese Taiwanese community of compatriots here. Whenever there is an important delegation, like trade or business, from Taiwan to buy goods from U.S.A., we try to accommodate them.

Part 3. As a Taiwan official on U.S.-China-Taiwan relations

Wen: Representing Taiwan here in the U.S., are you frustrated that U.S.-China relations have become so close, so broad and so important, often described as the most important bilateral relations of the 21st century?

Mr. Liao: Frustrated, no. Why so? Because as a Chinese Taiwanese, I even feel proud of what people of mainland China are doing. For 100 years before 1949, the whole Chinese were suffering because of the international political reality. Through the last part of China's feudal system, the Qing dynasty, people in China in general, including people of Taiwan, were suffering. Taiwan had to be given to Japan, if you consider Taiwan part of the historical, cultural China at all. That's why I am happy for China to at last do well and become the second largest economy in the world, hosting the World Expo, the Olympic game. It should be something to be proud of by all Chinese people in the world, no matter where you are from. China needs to maintain good relationship with all countries in the world, especially big countries, U.S.A., England, and Canada. The better that relationship is, the better it is for everybody, including people of Taiwan. In that case, why would I be frustrated because China is enjoying good relationship with U.S.A., no, not frustrated. In a way, we even feel happy for them, proud for that government able to do well. As to domestic matters, we leave it to the government of China to take care of that. But internationally, if you do well, that's good. In a way, it helps our relationship with U.S.A, too. If the relationship between mainland China and U.S.A. is good, ironically and interestingly, it helps our relationship with U.S.A. because now U.S.A. feels comfortable with mainland China, it is easy to talk, then U.S.A would worry less about Taiwan, and less for Taiwan to complain, to yell and to shout, hey, that bully is still doing bad things to me. Less we say that, less worry will come from U.S.A. It's a good development of the triangular relationship, the more so the better.

Wen: You know that U.S. government agreed with China in 1979 to gradually cease its arms sales to Taiwan. Recently, when another batch of sales of F16 aircraft was in the pipeline, China warned the U.S. not to play with fire. Now the Obama administration announced the new round of sales worth \$ 5.85 billion, including an upgrade of Taiwan's existing F-16 fighter jets, but not new ones. What is your take on that? When do you think these sales would stop?

Mr. Liao: The relationship between mainland China and Taiwan had been, before 2008, as I said, antagonistic, opponent-kind that made everybody nervous. Taiwan's previous administration, as everybody understands, was for an eventual goal that was not welcomed by mainland China. It kind of hindered relationship between U.S.A. and China, because U.S.A. always had to be involved, drawn into the dispute between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. At that time, tension was always there. Taiwan Strait was referred to as a "flash point." Taiwan was also referred to by other countries' leaders, including President George Bush junior, as a "trouble maker." Nobody

liked it. China wasn't happy. U.S. wasn't happy. Taiwan wasn't happy, under that administration, because of how it was being treated. It's history now.

Now into the new administration in 2008, relationship improved. More business and investment were done between Taiwan and mainland China. Both sides were willing to sit down, shelve differences and work for win-win solutions. Six rounds of talks happened, reaching 15 good agreements, all having to do with the wellbeing of the people of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, especially the signing of ECFA, Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, last June. With that, 536 items from Taiwan can now be sold to mainland China at zero customs duty, with 260 some items from mainland China enjoying the same treatment selling to Taiwan. Those are good developments. There are direct flights now, more than 400 flights between Taiwan and China every week. A ticket from Taiwan to China or China to Taiwan is hard to get nowadays. We would want more than 500 flights. But mainland China is so developed now, they can't come up with more routes available. Too congested now between Taiwan and China.

All these good happenings, people of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are getting closer and closer in their daily life, hopefully in their way of thinking. It would take some time. Millions of mainland Chinese tourists come to see the way of life in Taiwan. They must have some kind of feeling, some kind of realization, whether or not they go back to China and ask to do the same right away, we don't know. It will happen gradually. Our mainland Chinese friends come to Taiwan, find it amazing, how can people of Taiwan do this. We now become, if not role model, at least an example, for our friends in mainland China to say, hey, if they can do it, why can't we. It's a good influence.

If all these good developments are happening, let's allow them to continue. But in order for Taiwan to be able to maintain that for the good of everybody, U.S.A. and mainland Chinese friends, it's good to have the status quo to continue. That's what President Ma says, no immediate reunification, let time solve it; no independence of Taiwan, don't worry mainland China; no use of military force against each other. It seems to have been agreed and accepted by the other side. In order to keep this, you need peace through strength. It's very realistic in the world. If you don't prove to the other countries that you are militarily capable to a certain extent, not that you are aggressive that you can take over other countries, or initiate a war against other countries, only that to a certain degree you can defend your country. You defend yourself when somebody wants to bully you. It is very subtle.

What Taiwan wants now is only the capability before anything better happens. We wish the best thing would happen tomorrow. But before that happens for all Chinese people, we have to be able to tell our people: don't worry, this status quo will still be there. We don't make weapons ourselves, we make some basic weapons. When it comes to national defense, we don't have those sophisticated fighter jets, missiles. That's why we have to buy from other countries. U.S. government, remember, when they severed relationship in 1978, and they were bipartisan also, Republicans and Democrats, some of them still felt a little guilty that they had to say good-bye to Taiwan because of the international political reality. They can't help, but they feel guilty. So they say let's set up this domestic law, Taiwan Relations Act, include in the act one article that says United States is obligated to sell Taiwan defensive weapons, just to help Taiwan keep sufficient self-defense capability. That's only reasonable. So whatever is being done now is within that

scope. We don't want to go further. I don't think U.S.A. will allow us to ask for further. I don't think mainland China would allow our purchase of U.S. weapons to go anywhere further that we can attack China. I don't think so.

This current purchase is only reasonable. It's a good compromise in the triangle of U.S.A, mainland China and Taiwan. Everything has to come to a good compromise. So everybody feels a certain degree of comfort. As to when the sales of defensive weapons from U.S.A to Taiwan would stop, let's hope the best things that I mentioned to all Chinese would happen one day, then there will be no need for anybody to buy weapons from anybody else. That would be what Dr. Sun Yat-sun said da tong shi jie, or one world.

Wen: I read the story about this summer's parade in Seattle's Chinatown. Because of the presence of China's consul general from San Francisco, you excused yourself but sent your deputy who then raised a Taiwan flag and infuriated the China consul. So if Taiwan and mainland China could be both at the WHO, why couldn't you and the China consul be both at the parade? Was the flag raising right or wrong, diplomatically speaking?

Mr. Liao: First of all, I did not excuse myself because Consul General Gao Zhansheng was coming to Seattle. I always welcome him. In previous occasions, I was probably the first Taiwanese diplomat in Seattle to have very friendly interaction with mainland Chinese diplomats. When these communities here said good-bye to Gary Locke, who was becoming the secretary of commerce, we had a function at House of Hong. Because of good coordination of communication through friends, not direct communication, we were very comfortable. Vice consul general from San Francisco's PRC consulate general Mr. Lu Wenxiang was there, and I was introduced to him, we friendly shook hands and posed for a picture which was in the Seattle Chinese Post.

So people in the Chinese community in general, I couldn't say everybody, was very happy to see that picture and to see the development there, I was shaking hands with Lu Wenxiang, talking to each other friendly, smiling for the picture. Then came the Sister Cities Reception at City Hall, deputy consul general Lu Wenxiang was there, we talked very friendly, we posed for pictures, me and my wife. Then in Tacoma, for the Tacoma World Council reception, that we go every year. We didn't know that San Francisco office was sending anybody there. So Lu Wenxiang came. I didn't know that until the last moment. I very friendly walked over to him, shook hands with him, took him over to a side of the stage where we would be introduced and we walked up to the stage together. It was very nice. So there was no reason that I would excuse myself when I learned that Consul General Gao Zhansheng was coming. I always tell Lu Wenxiang to give my regards to Consul General Gao Zhansheng: Hey, say hullo to your boss the Consul General, and give my regards to your colleagues. We feel pretty comfortable because of the current friendly improved relationship between Taiwan and mainland China. We diplomats abroad pay attention to that development, not do things that would hinder the good development.

So back to the function in Seattle, the parade. I had scheduled for a vacation long before they invited me, before I knew it was going to be that Saturday. I had planned for a vacation with my wife. So I couldn't go because I promised my wife to go on the vacation. I said well it's OK. But then afterwards, I learned that Consul General Gao Zhansheng was coming, I said I could have

the opportunity to say hullo to him in person. He is such a nice person. He is a scholar. So I regretted for not having the opportunity to meet him at the parade. So I sent my deputy Sam Peng.

Now it so happened, this funny miscommunication. The organizing party should have made it clear to all participants that this was a cultural event, no flag except U.S. flag was to be displayed. U.S.A is such a free country. If you don't say so, Vietnamese display their flag. Mexicans display their flag. Every ethnic group displays their flag. So it is so accepted in U.S.A. society, everybody is free to show their flag. At a MLB game, when Wang Jianmin was pitching, Taiwan flag was displayed and no one complained. When Yao Ming was playing in Huston, there was a big mainland Chinese flag, everybody was happy, nobody felt uncomfortable. Why not in Seattle? The organizing party, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, did not particularly say that nobody should display flags. People took for granted that you could display your flag if you wanted to. It so happened that that day Consul General Gao Zhansheng did not have a flag in his hands for sure. Someone in the street who supported mainland China had a big mainland China flag, supporting Consul General Gao Zhansheng. So when Sam Peng showed up in his car, he said oh people are displaying a mainland China flag, he happened to have been given a small flag by people in the street. He did not bring that flag. He took it, smiled to the crowd, and waved to them, just out of cheerfulness, not with any intention to anger anybody, not with any intention to infuriate Consul General Gao. Allegedly before the parade, they shook hands, Sam Peng gave regards to Consul General Gao.

So please if you have a chance, tell Consul General Gao not to be concerned. This is such a free land that allows to people to show flags, mainland China flag or Taiwan flag. In order for that unhappiness not to happen, the organizing party had to make the rule very clear before everybody came to the parade. If you have a chance, tell Consul General Gao he is a friend and his deputy is my friend. Don't feel bad.

Wen: As someone who worked for Taiwan's status in international organizations, would you please explain when and where these names for Taiwan are used: Taiwan, Republic of China, Taipei China, and Chinese Taipei.

Mr. Liao: It's an awkward situation, but that's what makes Taiwan unique. No country in the world is so unique, not even Palestine, which is not a country in any way. We are unique, 23 countries recognize us. And some don't recognize us. So you are a country, you are not a country. So for countries that recognize you, the 23 countries that have diplomatic ties with you, you are Republic of China. But when it comes to countries that do not recognize us, we are not Republic of China anymore. We are Taiwan. If you go to those countries, or those international organizations that follow the UN rule, naturally you are not supposed to use your official name. So it is awkward. The best name we would like to use is still the Republic of China. It is very different from the People's Republic of China. People can't take one for the other by mistake.

However, because of the international political reality, we cannot use that in many occasions, at many events. We have to find a way for substantive, pragmatic, practical purposes. You can't go without any name. We have to have a name. So priority of using those names depends on, number one, whether you have or not diplomatic ties. If you have, you use Republic of China. If

not, you start to make different degrees of compromise. If this event is of big importance to Taiwan, like WHO, if we don't become a member or observer there, we lose big time, then we say we would make a bit compromise. Then we kind of argue about a name less. So those names go by priorities, degrees of priority. I can't tell you which one we like better, because the best one we want is the Republic of China. Taipei China and Chinese Taipei are used according to priorities. But we don't like it at all.

Wen: Besides the late Chiang Ching-kuo, the three recent presidents you have worked under all had their own theory for mainland China policy: Lee Teng-hui's "Special State-to-State Relations;" Chen Shui-bian's "One Country on Each Side," and now President Ma Ying-jeou's "Special Non-State-to-State Relations." Who is your favorite president in terms of their mainland China policy?

Mr. Liao: How many presidents have we had? President Chiang Kai-shek, President Yan Jiagan, President Chiang Ching-kuo, then the three more recent presidents, six presidents. As you said, recent presidents all have their different way of looking at mainland China and Taiwan relationship. You ask me which is my favorite. There is a reason for Taipei that now we are celebrating the centennial of the founding by Dr. Sun Yat-sen the Republic of China, right. There is a poll in Taipei as to who has the most influence on Taiwan's development in all aspects, interestingly most people still think of Chiang Ching-kuo as the most influential. That's justifiable. He was really a hard-working president, with great visions.

As to the newer three presidents, Mr. Lee Teng-hui, Mr. Chen Shui-bian and the current president Mr. Ma Ying-jeou, they are all outstanding political leaders in Taiwan. Interestingly, they all graduated from the same best university in Taiwan, National Taiwan University. So they are alumnus. All three of them. So for them to have different thinking, different way of looking at relations between China and Taiwan was all because of the historical need of the time. If you are in their time, you would tend to look at the need of the time. For us to look at them now is different. There is a Chinese term that says shi hou kong ming, that you become a wiseman after the event. That is no big deal. You have to be in the event to be smart. So why they under their administration, during their rule of the government, would look at the relationship between China and Taiwan that way, I think, there was a historical significance there. I even think, if we were in their shoes, we probably would have thought the same, because of the need at that time.

Now after to ten, twenty years, you try to look at them and try to argue and criticize, to them it is a little bit unfair. Because they were elected presidents, so the whole country of Taiwan, the whole population, the majority at least, must be agreeable to them. If not, they wouldn't have elected them presidents. So they had to be responsible for what they argued for, no matter what turned out later, to be positive or negative, to be helpful or harmful, to the relationship between the two sides. What I can say is that we live in the present time, as Buddhism says, the past you can't do anything about, the future is yet to come, you can only look at what is present.

For the present, what is best for all Chinese and the world is still what President Ma Ying-jeou said, maintain status quo, allow time to take care of it. What's status quo? Status quo means mainland China keeps booming, keeps doing well, keeps prospering, let Taiwanese help them by doing a lot of business and investment, so China would develop even stronger and faster. They

will send more economic benefits to Taiwan. If we are friends and peaceful, if not, they wouldn't do it. Why not maintain status quo and be friends? After all, we are all relatives. So this status quo of not claiming reunification right away, not claiming independence, not fighting, not using military force, is so far the best possible scenario for the relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait as we live at this moment.

Wen: With the centennial of the 1911 revolution, a number of experts from both mainland and Taiwan wrote about the cooperation between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party in the 1920s and the 1940s and the possibility of a third round cooperation between the two parties. Do you think it would happen, with two parties and a unified China?

Mr. Liao: Ever since the early 20th century, there were two political and ideologically different parties in China, there had been cooperations, despairs, confrontations, conflicts, wars in the process of the past century. Bad things happened between KMT and the Communist Party. That's all history. As I said what is happening now is a certain degree of cooperation really happening between the two parties. Because all the talks cannot happen between the governments. They are not done in the name of the governments because mainland China government does not recognize the government in Taiwan. There is no governmental deal. It's politics. Well, since there are many ways to skin a cat, now we are skinning the cat in a different way, what the parties are doing, wearing white gloves. So Mr. Jiang from Taiwan representing our government, entrusted and authorized by Mr. Ma, wearing this white glove, as chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation. Then Mr. Chen of mainland China, entrusted by President Hu Jintao and his government, wearing a white glove, as chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, they meet, right? This is done very skillfully, very subtly, for the good of everybody, everybody concerned. Talking good deals, good agreements, and it is good development.

As I said, if this good development continues, reaching one after one good agreement to help the wellbeing of the people on both side of the Taiwan Strait and everybody else and all the countries in the world, why don't we allow the good development to continue? But remember, while we are doing this, on the side of mainland China, there is still a little bit of a doubt, so they keep 1400 to 1500 missiles facing Taiwan. And there is a little bit of a doubt from the side of Taiwan, you are going to eat me up eventually, as there are oppositions in Taiwan with concerns, you are going to sell Taiwan to China tomorrow, we are not going to let you do that. But it's a democracy. They are allowed to think what they want, to worry if they want to worry. Hey Ma Ying-jeou, you are going to sell Taiwan right away to China and we are going to pay tax to mainland Chinese government tomorrow? People are so afraid they can think of whatever they think. It's OK, it's a democracy. Mainland China is becoming like that more and more, thanks to the Internet, Facebook, and all these modern technologies to help communication and obtaining information. People in mainland China are becoming more and more aware of what democracy is like, what the best way to get together is like. May not be tomorrow, it will take a while. But if we remain calm, confident, let the good relationship continue, then what you just mentioned, one China or reunification, we don't know when, but never say never.

The 5,000 years of Chinese history was always fen jiu bi he, he jiu bi fen, or long separation leads to unification, long unification leads to separation. Everything is possible. There were

times when the whole China was split into many states, right? The Spring and Autumn Warring States, the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. Now we have only two. At that time, they had ten, or more than ten nations. People at that time must be very worried. I feel for the people of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

Wen: This is almost the last question: Would you please tell my readers what events have you planned for the celebration in Seattle of this special Double Ten, the centennial of the Republic of China?

Mr. Liao: This is 2011. One hundred years ago Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his followers successfully uprooted the last feudal dynasty of China, the Qing dynasty, and established the first ever republic in Asia. Every Chinese was happy and proud of that. As to what developed afterwards, it's history. We can't help that we are now under two governments. Now in Taiwan, we still carry on Dr. Sun Yat-sen's thinking, his ideals, of the way the country should be, the way the government should be, of the people, by the people, for the people, following President Lincoln's political ideals. I think it is a very positive way of treating the people. We are proud we are still doing that in Taiwan. We are not saying hey anybody else should do it, we are happy we are doing it. Luckily, we are recognized and supported by 23 United Nation countries, and in spirit, not in name, by most countries in the world, because of the way we are living free, freedom, democracy, respect to human rights, allowing freedom of speech, you know, all the common values shared by most people in the world. Because of that, we want to continue to celebrate the existence of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Republic of China.

This year is the centennial, so there are more activities. We started from the first day of the year, flag-raising in Chinatown's Hing Hey Park, then a number of activities by different organizations after that, maybe six or seven so far. During this month of October, we did a flag-raising and a small parade within the six blocks of Chinatown, yesterday, October 2. That was lovely. Again, freedom of expression. We didn't mean to offend anybody or say anything beyond our capability or what we are. We are what we are, we don't want to offend any of our friends. So it was just a celebration by ourselves. There were some American friends standing there to observe what we were doing there, very interested. Tonight there is a performing group, young performers, like the Golden Girls instrumental musicians in China, now in Taiwan we have a similar band, playing Chinese huqin and pipa. They have very good showmanship on stage. They are performing at Benaroya Hall, expecting one thousand or more audience, Chinese and mainstream, to help celebrate the centennial. Tomorrow night, at China Harbors, as we do every year, there will be a National Day sit-down banquet, maybe with about 400-500 people. Thursday will be a reception that we do every year, out of the government of the Republic of China, by my office. We will do a reception for our community leaders, mainstream elected officials, government officials, at the Westin Hotel. After that, I think we are almost done this year. But why, October 10 is next Monday, why you stop on Thursday? Because you know what, a lot of people are going to Taipei to celebrate there. This year there are more than 20,000 overseas Chinese going back to Taiwan to help to celebrate.

Wen: So that leads to my very last question or request: I am going to join a tour to Taiwan during the centennial celebration there. What would be your advice for a first timer to Taiwan, especially one originaly from mainland China?

Mr. Liao: First of all, we welcome you, the entire office welcomes you, all island of Taiwan welcomes you. We welcome our Chinese compatriots to visit Taiwan. If you are going to Taiwan at a regular time, I would say you must go to the national palace museum, Taipei 101, take the high-speed train, and see how daily life of the Taiwanese is like. Wander into a department store, a local market place, or into a park in the early morning in Taipei, just like you would do in Beijing or Shanghai, to see what normal people do, doing taiji, dancing, karaoke, see if they are happy. If they are not happy, you can say all your propaganda is bullshit. If you see them very happy, this is the real Taiwan, only because you are free, democratic, you are allowed to do what you want to do, to move around. If not, you would see different faces.

So when you are in Taipei, be free to just follow your will, go into the community. Everything you see would be the real Taiwan. Taiwan people are, European diplomats, diplomats from EU, said, are open-minded, inclusive and welcoming, eager to help you, not eager to get things from you. Americans come back and tell us that your people are eager to help. You don't just ask for directions from them, they take you to the place. All those three good characteristics of the Taiwanese, open-mindedness, inclusiveness and welcoming, a nice hospitable people. You will find out when you are in Taipei. Hardware and good infrastructure like high rises, high-speed trains, you can find them in a lot of countries. But what's more important is the way of thinking, the mind-set, you have to see if people of Taiwan are really comfortable and happy.

Wen: Thank you very much Director General Liao.