

Bush shakes hands with Joseph Wu

BATTLE AGAINST COMMUNISM: Taiwan's top envoy to the US met the US president at a Washington ceremony and received a signed memorial pamphlet

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA, WASHINGTON

US President George W. Bush shook hands and chatted with Representative to the US Joseph Wu on Tuesday while attending the dedication of a memorial to those killed by communist regimes around the world.

Wu was among the roughly 1,000 guests invited to the dedication of the Victims of Communism (VOC) Memorial in Washington.

Bush gave a speech during the ceremony and greeted other guests afterwards.

Wu introduced himself to Bush by saying: "I'm Ambassador Joseph Wu from Taiwan."

Wu also took the opportunity to thank Bush for his support for Taiwan and said Taiwan firmly supports US efforts to spread the ideals of freedom and democracy around the world.

Bush thanked Wu and said: "It's good to see you here," while tapping Wu's chest with his fist.

He then autographed a VOC Memorial dedication pamphlet and gave it to Wu.

Since the US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979,



US President George W. Bush speaks at the dedication of Victims of Communism Memorial in Washington on Tuesday. On stage with him, left to right, are Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation chairman Lee Edwards and US representatives Tom Lantos and Dana Rohrabacher. The Goddess of Democracy is a bronze replica of the figure erected by Chinese students during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Representative to the US Joseph Wu attended the ceremony and met Bush afterward.

Taiwan's representative to the US has had few opportunities to chat or shake hands in public with any sitting US president. Tuesday's brief encounter marked the first face-to-face exchange between Bush and Wu.

The VOC Memorial was more than a decade in the making. The US Congress passed an act in 2003 on the establishment of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation to raise funds to build the monument in memory of the more than 100 million people killed by communist regimes -- from China and Soviet Union to Cambodia and North Korea.

Taiwan donated money to the foundation in the name of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.

When a groundbreaking ceremony was held last September, then-representative to the US David Lee was invited.

Tuesday's dedication ceremony was chaired by Lee Edwards, chairman of the VOC Memorial Foundation; Representative Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; and Representative Dana Rohrabacher.

In his speech, Rohrabacher mentioned former US president Ronald Reagan's speech at the Berlin Wall in which he challenged then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall."

For his part, Bush said it was time to recall the lessons of the Cold War, namely "that freedom is precious and cannot be taken for granted, that evil is real and must be confronted, and that given the chance, men commanded by harsh and hateful ideologies will commit unspeakable crimes and take the lives of millions."

At the center of the memorial is the figure of a woman holding what Bush called a "lamp of liberty."

"She reminds us that when an ideology kills tens of millions of people and still ends up being vanquished, it is contending with a power greater than death," he said.

Noting that the US was obligated to seek justice for victims of communism, Bush said his administration would continue to promote freedom and democracy in the hope that there will be no more victims of communism.

Wu said that Taiwan, like many other countries, has been a victim of communism and now still faces serious military, security and health threats from communist China.

Because of China's obstruction, Wu said, the health of Taiwan's 23 million people is denied the protection of the WHO.

Taiwan is more than willing to contribute to activities honoring memories and educating current and future generations about communism's crimes against humanity, Wu said.



Downer defends visit of Dalai Lama

NO TO INDEPENDENCE: The Australian foreign minister dismissed China's concern, saying Canberra viewed the Dalai Lama as a religious leader -- and not a politician

AFP, SYDNEY

Australia yesterday brushed off threats by China over a visit by the Dalai Lama and called on Beijing to respect Canberra's political system.

China warned on Tuesday that relations between the two countries could be harmed by the Tibetan spiritual leader's 10-day visit and a planned meeting with Australian Prime Minister John Howard.

China is a major trading partner for Australia, with its insatiable demand for energy fueling a mining boom in the nation, but Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the Dalai Lama would never be denied a visa.

"China has a very different political system to Australia's, but I'd ask the Chinese to respect the way our culture and our political system works," he told Sky News TV.

"This is one of the world's great liberal democracies and someone like the Dalai Lama would always be able to come to Australia," he said.

Downer made a point, however, of stressing that the Nobel Peace Prize winner was viewed in Australia as a religious leader, not a politician.

The 71-year-old Dalai Lama has led a Tibetan government-in-exile in India since 1959 after fleeing a failed uprising against Chinese rule.

He is accused by Beijing of being a "splittist" who seeks independence for Tibet, but says he is simply seeking a degree of autonomy for his homeland, which China has ruled since sending in troops to "liberate" the region in 1951.

"Obviously while he's in our country we'll make up our own minds who meets with him but in doing that we greet him as a religious leader," Downer said.

"It has no implications for our views about Chinese sovereignty over Tibet or other political issues." he said.

Australia accepted that Tibet was part of China, he said.

"We obviously want China to adhere to international norms of human rights in Tibet, we want the traditional culture of Tibet to be respected and retained and beyond that I reiterate we are happy for Tibet to be part of China," he said.

Downer said he could "comfort" Beijing with an assurance that the Dalai Lama was not using Australia as a platform to argue for an independent Tibet.

Relations with China were strong and of mutual benefit, he said when asked if the visit would damage ties with Beijing.

"These decisions are a matter for them, but I would have thought it was in both Australia and China's best interest to recognize this visit for what it is -- which is a visit by a religious leader," he said.

Meanwhile, Australian Trade Minister Warren Truss said he was confident the controversy over the visit would not affect negotiations over a free trade agreement with China.

"I'm confident that our relationship is firm and solid and we will be able to negotiate with China to achieve a satisfactory outcome and that these meetings will not be a

permanent impediment," he said.

The Dalai Lama goes on to New Zealand next week, where the government has refused to say whether Prime Minister Helen Clark will meet him.

"I'm still considering next week's diary," Clark told reporters yesterday during a visit to Brisbane in Australia.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters will meet the Dalai Lama next Tuesday in a private capacity rather than as a minister, his spokesman said. The meeting will not be held in Peters' ministerial office.



Congratulations, Costa Rica

We should congratulate the president of Costa Rica that he can tell the difference between China and Taiwan, and distinguish, as our own foreign minister in Taiwan cannot, that Taiwan is not China and does not control the huge territory that is commonly known as China.

Isn't it about time that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dropped the lame devices of the Cold War and the Chiang Kai-shek era and faced reality? The Republic of China (ROC) lost the Chinese civil war. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the government of China, whether we like it or not. All those allies left over from the KMT's World Anti-Communist League have not "betrayed" Taiwan by recognizing the PRC; they are doing Taiwan a good turn by refusing to imbibe the ROC illusion.

Let us hope that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will turn its dollar diplomacy to seeking recognition for Taiwan as Taiwan, rather than squandering it on the defunct illusion of the ROC that actually gives Taiwan a bad name in Central America and the Pacific. Does the ruling administration of the Democratic Progressive Party, which claims to represent "Taiwanese values," have any influence in the policies of the ministry at all? Or does it bow to the pan-blue camp and the "one China" policy of the ministry?

Linda Gail Arrigo

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