

Just two days after the Vatican inked a provisional agreement with Beijing on the appointment of Catholic bishops in China, the Hong Kong government on Monday banned the Hong Kong National Party (HKNP) for national security reasons.

The events are linked by the glaring naivety shown by people, institutions and states when it comes to dealing with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) — from those who thought the 50-year promise contained in the “one country, two systems” principle would actually be adhered to, to those who think that the religious rights of Chinese Catholics would be protected by the Vatican’s pact.

Little is known about the Vatican-Beijing accord beyond that the pope welcomed back into the fold eight bishops who were appointed by the Chinese authorities without pontifical approval — including Anthony Tu Shihua (涂世华), who died in January last year — so it is impossible to analyze its pros and cons or to say what it might mean for Chinese Catholics or the Vatican’s diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

However, naive is the kindest word that can be used to describe Pope Francis’ five-page message on Wednesday to Chinese Catholics.

Francis urged them to love and serve their country, but said that their faith required them to defend their values by offering “a word of criticism ... for the sake of building a society that is more just, humane and respectful of the dignity of each person.”

Offering words of criticism is what got the HKNP into trouble, along with other democracy advocates in the territory who have spoken out against Beijing’s continuous revocation of its promises, such as allowing universal suffrage for the chief executive elections in 2012 and last year.

Words of criticism have never sat well with the CCP, but in recent decades they have landed increasing numbers of Chinese in prison and led to the harassment of their relatives, as well as the deaths of far too many, including Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波), who won the award in part for his “long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.”

Global naivety on China astounding

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Saturday, 29 September 2018 05:49

Liu was not Catholic, but was willing to risk imprisonment to defend his values when he returned to China from the US to support the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and he certainly wanted to build a more just society in China.

It does not even take direct criticism to run afoul of the CCP, as evidenced by the crackdown on underground churches under Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) goal of Sinicizing all religions in China within five years — by which he meant making religions more socialist, not more Chinese.

Just ask Jin Mingri (靳明里), pastor of Beijing's Zion Church, which was razed earlier this month after its leadership refused to allow security cameras in the sanctuary.

As Jin told the Guardian this week: “Before, as long as you didn’t meddle in politics the government left you alone, but now if you don’t push the [Chinese] Communist Party line, if you don’t display your love for the party, you are a target.”

To add insult to injury, Jin received a bill for 1.2 million yuan (US\$174,378) for the costs of the demolition, similar to the government’s long-standing practice of billing families of executed prisoners for the bullets used to kill them.

The Vatican’s efforts to establish formal ties with China date back more than a decade, but intensified after Francis was appointed in March 2013. According to several Catholic publications, the Vatican has long felt that any deal was better than no deal at all.

However, it was just that kind of thinking on the part of then-British prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s government that landed Hong Kongers in the situation they find themselves in today — losing faith in the chance to have any real say over their future.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2018/09/29](#)