

Heralding the tragic demise of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) — which thereafter suffered consecutive electoral routs — the Sunflower movement in 2014 has been like a curse for the party. The curse did not disperse after the change of government; it has continued to haunt the KMT, which has repeatedly evoked the movement to legitimize its own protests, but at the same time doggedly denied the legitimacy of the civic movement.

The KMT on Tuesday coordinated protests inside and outside the Legislative Yuan. Said to be planned by KMT Central Policy Committee chief executive director Alex Tsai (蔡啟芳) and KMT caucus whip Lin Te-fu (林德福), the outside demonstration was — according to the KMT — meant to mimic the Sunflower movement by besieging the Legislative Yuan, and was echoed by KMT lawmakers in the main chamber who blocked Premier Lin Chuan (林錫山) from presenting a report.

The “cooperation” was played out presumably as planned. While KMT politicians “hosted” the protest on a makeshift stage on Qingdao E Road — the gate that Sunflower protesters broke through in 2014 — KMT lawmakers went out to greet the crowd and then demanded police open the gates for the lawmakers.

There is little doubt that what the lawmakers attempted to do was use themselves as a shield for the protesters, which they probably thought was emulating what Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmakers did in 2014, when they acted as “[chamber] door guardians” for protesters after they occupied the main chamber.

The KMT was frank about its role as the initiator of Tuesday’s protest, which they said was for pig farmers and fishermen. The fact that they had no qualms about revealing that they had masterminded the rally and mobilized protesters shows that the KMT still believes the Sunflower movement was planned by the DPP, and the KMT, now in opposition, could emulate it and bring down the DPP government.

However, DPP lawmakers once halfheartedly complained that they were tools in the student-led activism, guarding the doors only after the chamber was securely occupied and being directed by protesters to do this and that. The protesters then deliberately kept politicians at a distance to keep the movement “clean and clear of political forces.”

KMT's U-turn on Sunflower activism

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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When DPP politicians sat in the Executive Yuan compound on the night of the violent eviction on March 23, 2014, they were there as voluntary participants, not organizers.

The stage on Tuesday — which was supposedly set up for speakers to deliver short talks “like how it was done during the Sunflower movement” — was a podium for KMT politicians to take turns to denounce the Cabinet that took office less than two weeks ago and then, ironically, to state that they were not like the DPP because they were not there for political gains. In 2014, the “stage” was a place for academics, civilians, activists and people from all walks of life to present their views.

Tsai answered sarcastic remarks about older people mobilized by the KMT from southern Taiwan needing a rest from the scorching heat, by saying that the KMT could easily muster another 300 or 400 people if needed. If this is how the KMT understands social movements, which have the potential to seriously hurt a party's political life — just as it had been hurt by the Sunflower movement — then no “movement” it “mobilizes” could achieve what the Sunflower movement did.

“Why can't we [storm the legislature] when the Sunflower protesters were allowed to?” was a question obsessing the KMT like a curse.

However, the paradox is that the KMT would never be able to successfully emulate the Sunflower movement if it continues to believe that it was something that was created from the top down.

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