

The DPP must implement the law

Written by Chin Heng-wei 陳恆偉

Wednesday, 13 December 2017 06:55

The Act Governing the Handling of Ill-gotten Properties by Political Parties and Their Affiliate Organizations (黨產條例) and the Act on Promoting Transitional Justice (促轉條例) sounded the death knell for the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). One deprived it of its assets; the other shattered its claim to legitimacy. Having lost its foundation and superstructure, the KMT party-state system is finally falling apart. The question now is how the party is dealing with this change.

On Nov. 24, its 123rd anniversary, the KMT organized a mourning event for the dying party at which five of its former chairpeople — Lien Chan (連戰), Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄), Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱) and Eric Chu (朱立倫) — along with KMT Chairman Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) sang the National Flag Anthem. With their mournful and sorrowful looks, they all looked as if they were singing a funeral dirge.

Given the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) legislative majority, passing these two acts was not difficult; the difficulty is enforcing them and delivering on President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) pledge "to this land and its people."

Transitional justice is far more difficult than handling illegal party assets, and includes many political challenges. The focus now must not be on the empty threats of Wu Den-yih, Lai Shyh-bao (賴士葆) and their ilk, but on whether the DPP will flinch, say one thing and do another, or if it has the courage and ability to follow through.

The transitional justice act has just been passed, but the government is already making blind statements. This is worrying for several reasons.

Veterans Affairs Council Director Lee Shying-jow (李 shining-jow) is openly resisting, saying: "Chiang Kai-shek's (蔣介石) statues, pictures and other commemorative installations at veterans' homes will not be removed as a result of the transitional justice act."

The elimination of authoritarian symbols is already enshrined in law, but Lee is still talking about "the honorable Chiang (蔣)," as if he were publicly trying to undermine the law. Is the DPP's legislation fake?

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Second, will all the 196 Zhongzheng (中正) roads and streets in Taiwan and the 30 schools called Zhongzheng or Jieshou (介石) — both referring to Chiang Kai-shek — have to change their names? Of course they will, that is just following the law.

DPP caucus whip Ker Chien-ming (柯建銘) is interpreting the law to lessen the blow, saying that “the names of roads and schools have existed for decades. They represent this road or that school and have created an emotional bond with local residents and alumni. There is no way they can be changed just like that.”

The transitional justice act clearly specifies that the authoritarian period began in August 1945 and that it will resolve decades of authoritarianism. Should emotional bonds be allowed to override the law?

The authoritarian party-state has ceased to exist and the only thing remaining are its symbols. If the nation cannot rid itself of these symbols, how can it rid itself of the authoritarianism they represent?

Third, some family members of 228 Massacre victims are using the excuse of a waste of public resources to delay the renaming of streets. What are they talking about? If the nation is to implement transitional justice, of course there is a price to be paid. Why else would it be necessary to pass legislation to do so?

Finally, Chiayi Mayor Twu Shiing-jer (吳錫爵), of the DPP, said that the city would not change the name of Zhongzheng Road “for the time being;” Changhua County Commissioner Wei Ming-ku (魏明谷), of the DPP, said that he would “listen to what the public have to say;” and Taoyuan Mayor Cheng Wen-tsang (鄭文堂), also of the DPP, said that the “Cihu Memorial Sculpture Park will not be closed.”

There is a law in place, and city mayors and county commissioners should simply implement it. What is this talk of “not for the time being” and “listening to what the public have to say” and not closing Cihu park? Not making these changes breaks the law and carries a fine, and not only that, city residents can file lawsuits.

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According to the transitional justice act, only the Transitional Justice Promotion Committee (促轉會) can make the decision to preserve historic relics representing injustice, and it is not something that local government heads — in particular members of the DPP — can interfere with at will.

The ill-gotten party asset and the transitional justice acts are key to unlocking the doors of the party-state cesspool.

Since Pandora's box has already been opened, the DPP has no choice but to push forward.

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Translated by Tu Yu-an and Perry Svensson

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2017/12/13](#)