

Taiwan might wake up to red dawn

Written by Chen Wen-pin 陳文彬

Thursday, 04 October 2018 07:03

Taiwanese and foreign media have over the past week been reporting about businessman Wei Ming-jen (魏明仁), and how he bought and moved into Biyun Temple in Changhua County's Ershuei Township (二水), turning it into a "Chinese communism shrine" dedicated to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The matter first came to light during a review of local cultural heritage that this author oversaw as director of the Changhua County Cultural Affairs Bureau, and later caught others' attention.

When I was interviewed by foreign media outlets, such as the New York Times and Voice of America, I told them: "This is not simply a case of fraud, it exemplifies the cross-strait issue that all Taiwanese have to deal with."

Wei, a contractor, conned the nuns at the temple by saying that he would build extensions to the temple for them. During the construction, he continuously increased the cost of the project and, through contracts and legal processes, forced the nuns to produce checks for huge amounts, before finally throwing out the Buddhist statues and the nuns who called the temple home.

This is essentially the same operating procedure — lure, entrap, destroy — that the CCP is employing with its "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

The initiative, launched in 2013, promises to help the countries concerned to undertake public construction projects via assistance, such as financial aid, preferential loans and technological know-how.

However, the countries are forced to take on prodigious debt and, unable to repay the loans, are obliged to allow the Chinese government to take charge of the projects.

For example, several African nations, wanting to mitigate some of their debt, have allowed the

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Chinese government to operate their international airports, and Pakistan accepted a Chinese loan to construct a railway link, agreeing to have the equipment for the first part of the railway produced in factories designated by Beijing.

This has not only meant that the project has progressed at a snail's pace, but it has also caused costs to skyrocket, making it increasingly difficult for Pakistan to repay the loans, to the extent that the ownership of the railway might need to be transferred to China.

According to estimates by foreign media, one-sixth of the countries participating in the initiative have fallen foul of this "debt-trap diplomacy."

The similarities between the "lure, entrap, destroy" con employed by the initiative and what has happened at Biyun Temple is apparent. And yet, the same thing is happening all over Taiwan, but few people are aware of it.

In the run-up to the nine-in-one elections, there have been large numbers of wardens, community development association cadres, and even school teachers and students traveling to China at the invitation of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) candidates and being regaled there.

Some grassroots KMT organizations have been looking to China for funding sources, as the party's assets have been frozen. Naturally, China is happy to pour money into these compliant Taiwanese groups.

This is not merely another way to buy votes; this is a national security issue, with China using capital to control Taiwan's freedom of expression and discourse, and even to attack Taiwanese democracy.

Even more worrying is that many Taiwanese are blissfully unaware of what is going on, and some are even welcoming it.

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Since the temple incident, how many KMT figures have stood on the side of maintaining Taiwan's sovereign interests and issuing a statement criticizing the damage being done to the nation's democracy?

If Taiwanese allow this model to continue unchecked, and allow Chinese capital to permeate the nation at the grassroots level and affect non-discerning, uncritical, compliant Taiwanese, then it will not be long before people see another "Chinese communism shrine" being erected in Taiwan.

These compliant Taiwanese — who live in this nation, but have their loyalties on the other side of the Taiwan Strait — are happy to help China sow fake ideas and fake news in Taiwan, and destabilize its politics, economy and society, and impede the development of its democracy.

The elections will be a fight between the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the CCP. For the DPP, it is to be a battle for Taiwan's soul.

As such, the burden on the DPP's shoulders is heavy. Taiwanese must resist the incursion of the communist wave from the grassroots level and on the level of discourse.

China pretends that it is working for both nations' mutual benefit, but in reality it is working toward annexing Taiwan and, to this end, it is trying to sow division among Taiwanese. The temple incident is China's way of laying siege to the center from the grassroots.

Wei barked communist propaganda at Ershuei Township. People know of him. Where else is the red wave crashing into the grassroots of Taiwanese society?

Taiwanese need to be vigilant about the level of threat from China's "lure, entrap, destroy" approach, and be willing to sacrifice themselves resisting it. If they do not, one morning they will wake up to a red dawn.

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Translated by Paul Cooper

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2018/10/04](#)