

Chen reveals DPP struggles during red shirt campaign

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Former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) revealed in an interview that some pro-independence groups did not like the idea of seeing former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) take over the presidency should he step down at the height of the corruption allegations against him in 2006, adding that his resignation would only have led to the collapse of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

Lu said Chen told the "Formosa Weekly," which she founded, his side of the story regarding the "red shirt campaign" organized by former DPP chairman Shih Ming-teh (謝明哲) to depose Chen in 2006.

Since Chen is in detention, Lu said Chen answered their questions in writing. The material was released yesterday.

The former president said some pro-independence groups or activists told him that they opposed seeing Lu take over the presidency if he were to resign over the corruption scandal.

"It is not a secret that some people at the Taiwan Society complained about her," he said. "When I learned that some people at Taiwan Society wanted vice president Lu to resign before would they allow her to speak at a rally to counter the red shirt army campaign, I felt it wasn't right. I immediately told her never to quit."

Chen said he would never resign under the pressure of the "red shirt army" or the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), which tried to recall him three times.

"Had I resigned, I would not be better off than I am now," he said. "They would not stop the vendetta waged against me but would only strengthen it. At least I finished the two terms in office and was not deposed."

Describing the campaign to depose him as a naked power struggle among the pan-blue camp, pro-unification media and frustrated politicians, Chen said it was a precursor to then-Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) bid to win the presidential election last year.

Chen dismissed allegations that then-premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) tried to force him to step down when pan-blue legislators were organizing their third recall attempt. Chen said he was grateful Su agreed to stay at his post, adding that Su did not pressure him or ask his permission to allow DPP legislators to endorse the recall campaign.

Chen said then-DPP chairman Yu Shyi-kun told him that Su had suggested either he step down if he were found guilty by the district court or if he agreed to let DPP legislators support the recall proposal. Chen said he decided to go for the first suggestion and announced it on Nov. 4.

Chen said he did not find out that it was Yu who made the suggestion until the presidential debate in 2007 and he did not know exactly who suggested it.

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Commenting on his relationship with Shih, Chen said Shih had his eyes set on the post of legislative speaker, but not many DPP legislators supported his bid. Chen said Shih was also interested in the position of chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation, but he did not feel comfortable about giving Shih the position.

Shih yesterday denied he was interested in the position.

Chen said he apologized to his long-time supporters for ethical lapses or any political failing, but that he could never accept the accusation that he was corrupt.

While many DPP members distanced themselves from Chen after he was implicated in corruption charges, Chen said those who distanced themselves from the party would only be doomed in elections.

“Political parties that have faith in themselves and their colleagues don't easily talk about severing ties,” he said. “During the 2012 presidential election, I don't believe any DPP nominee would dare say he or she does not want the vote of A-bian supporters.”

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