

**THE PRC GOVERNMENT FLEXES ITS MUSCLES :
IS IT REALLY WORTH IT ?**

The jingoistic attitude of the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) toward Taiwan is unlikely to sit well with that Communistic country's prospective colleagues in the most important trade '*club*' in the world today: The World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Whether or not the PRC's Premier, Mr Zhu Rong Ji, was justified in voicing his stentorian outbursts of Wednesday, March 15, pales to a level of insignificance when one thinks that he was threatening a shooting war with the Government of Taiwan, a war in which the United States of America would, more than likely, be dragged in due to its pact with Taiwan.

The clear message that the PRC Government was sending to the world was that it was willing to risk all for the sake of national pride -- no matter what was to be the cost in human life.

That the PRC Government has the wherewithal, militarily, to carry out its threats to invade Taiwan, successfully, is unquestioned, but should not one expect a great deal of constraint to be exercised by a country of the size and power of the People's Republic of China?

The fact that the PRC Government is willing to shoot from the hip, as the Americans would say, without looking at the possibilities of killing or injuring innocent people in the process, may well lead to some people in the WTO to consider that the PRC is not yet sufficiently mature to be a player on the world stage.

It is normally held that war is the natural extension to diplomacy for, when all else fails, then proving that might is right is all that is left.

In the case of the PRC and Taiwan, for many a year, the PRC Government has implored the successive Governments of Taiwan to come to the conference table in order to settle differences, going back to 1949.

President Lee Teng Hui has made it clear, over and over again, that Taiwan is capable of governing itself; and he has demanded independence for his people.

The PRC Government has stated its position, over and over again: There can only be one China.

The opinions of the feuding parties appear to be miles and centuries apart, but that does not mean that a political solution cannot be found.

Many years ago, in the 1960s, in fact, the Government of the PRC, the head of which, being the late Comrade Chairman Mao Ze Dong, asked the late Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, the leader of the Kuomintang in Taiwan and the man who created the Taiwan tinderbox, merely to send a delegate to the National People's Congress, annually.

The Generalissimo, of course, could not accede to this request for it would be tantamount to an admission that Beijing was the seat of power for Taiwan.

The Generalissimo had already suffered an ignominious military defeat at the hands of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) under the generalship of Comrade Chairman Mao Ze Dong, ably assisted by Zhou En Lai, causing him to flee to Taiwan with about 2 million of his followers -- and a king's ransom in stolen Chinese treasures. That was back in 1949.

The Generalissimo had been supported with all kinds of armaments and military experts, all supplied by the United States, but it was to no avail against the tenacious and more able foe: The PLA.

Every year on his birthday, until his death in 1975, the Generalissimo vowed to return to China and be victorious in all his military endeavours.

He never returned, and his promises were just that: Empty promises.

It has been said that the Kuomintang, under the leadership of the Generalissimo, was totally corrupt and that things have not changed much since his death.

However, what the Generalissimo did cause Taiwan to be one of the 10 most important and strongest economies of the world; it is, today, one of the 10 leading capital exporters in the world.

For 38 years, until 1987, martial law reigned. In 1991, 43 years of emergency rule ended, abruptly.

This led the population of Taiwan to start to exercise its right to speak out, openly, for, prior to 1987, it was said to be unwise to voice an opinion that was contrary to the opinion of the Kuomintang.

Under President Lee Teng Hui, the people of Taiwan enjoyed a great deal more freedom than ever before.

It could be said that President Lee Teng Hui opened up Pandora's freedom box.

Now that it is open, all the evils of democracy are flying over the 13,969 square miles that represents the island of Taiwan, and the 2 outlying islands of Quemoy and Matsu, polluting the thoughts of the 22 million strong human population.

It is highly unlikely that the population of Taiwan would want to revert to the old ways when Japan occupied the islands between 1895 and 1945 and caused the population to adopt the feudalistic governmental model of old Japan.

It is rare for anybody to call the political 'A' team of the Government of the PRC naïve, but that seems to be the correct adjective to describe last Wednesday's outburst of Premier Zhu Rong Ji with regard to the Taiwan Presidential elections.

Now that the PRC Government's worst fears have materialised, and the President-elect, Mr Chen Shui Ban, has won the day on a ticket, which advocates further democratisation for Taiwan and furthering the cause of independence, the Government of Premier Zhu Rong Ji has to prove whether or not it is sufficiently mature to handle the situation -- even after the veiled threat of war.

The eyes of the world would appear to be watching, and waiting, to see what will materialise, for an unwise, jingoistic move by the Government of the PRC on Taiwan, could set back the PRC's aspirations, to stand shoulder to shoulder with other economic powers, by many years.

It is unlikely that the disapprobation of the world, as was showered down on the PRC on June 3 and June 4, 1989, in what has come to be known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, is worthwhile in the case of Taiwan, and that territory's aspirations to rule itself.

But stranger things have happened, as history has recorded.

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