

OBSERVATION**THE HKSAR: A GOVERNMENT, RULED BY COMPLAINT
-- AND COMPLIANCE TO MOGULS' REQUIREMENTS**

If there ever were a suggestion that the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was not ruled by complaint, then that suggestion has been put to rest -- forever.

Because, over the past month, there has been ample evidence to indicate that, if one has clout, if one has money, if one has connections at the highest levels of Government, the world of the HKSAR may be yours for the taking.

While Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa may be unapproachable to the majority of the Legislative Councillors, especially the Democratic Party trouble-makers, it is well known that if Mogul Li Ka Shing, Mogul Lee Shau Kee, Mogul Peter Woo, Mogul Raymond Kwok or his brother, Mogul Walter Kwok, et sequens, requested an audience, it would be granted, post-haste.

When a band of HKSAR property moguls complained to Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, that the HKSAR Government's plan to provide housing for the less-fortunate sector of society was hurting private enterprise, the good-natured Chief Executive had his minions make a statement, within 24 hours of receiving the complaint, a statement to the effect that the Government flats, slated to be sold, would be leased out instead.

'It is very important to stabilise the property market,' Mr Tung Chee Hwa announced on Wednesday, June 21, to the Legislative Council. 'I don't want to see (property) prices slide further.'

Mr Stanley Ho Hung Sun, Chairman, Hongkong Real Estate Developers' Association, was among the first people to announce that he openly supported the good Chief Executive, who had written directly to Mr Stanley Ho, telling him of the Government's decision to support the real estate industry, that letter, having been hand-delivered within one day of the real-estate bigwigs, voicing their concern over falling property prices.

Up went the share prices of most of the leading, publicly listed property and development companies, the very next day.

And the property moguls continue to applaud the nous and perspicacity of the Chief Executive.

Why not?

And the property moguls all promised to support the nomination of Mr Tung Chee Hwa for a second term in office, in Beijing, the Capital City of the PRC, a place where such support really means something.

One might like to ask, however, for what reason should the Government of the HKSAR consider intervening in market forces, any market forces.

But that is the theme for another report, to be penned much later.

The Civil Service

When it comes to the Civil Service of the HKSAR Government, all 190,000 civil servants that represent The Establish, the Chief Executive is, today, caught up in a little bit of a conundrum because it is difficult to explain

to Beijing, where things are done a little differently to that in the HKSAR, that the HKSAR Civil Service cannot be easily tamed.

Tamed, that is, with or without tanks and the military manoeuvres of the People's Liberation Army, resplendent in green and gold uniforms, prominently marked with red stars, emblazoned on caps, and sporting the latest in machine pistols.

The trouble with the HKSAR Civil Service, of course, is that its members were all trained by the British, whose administration of colonies followed tried-and-true guidelines, proved to be effective and efficient over a long period of time.

Many members of the Civil Service fear that they will lose their jobs as the HKSAR Government continues to privatise certain public services, performed by HKSAR Government departments of today.

Last Sunday's public protests of a representative group of the Civil Service must have been carefully watched by the Authorities, and numerous photographs must have been taken of the protestors; and, no doubt, the ring-leaders have all been identified for future action by the Tung Chee Hwa Administration.

The Civil Service is protesting about, among other things, Mr Tung Chee Hwa's proposed reforms of his servants' conditions of service, with the protestors, delivering a petition to the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan Fang On Sang, bearing some 40,000 signatures.

This is the first time in many a moon that such a thing has happened in the HKSAR.

The protestors, who took part in the rally in Central Hongkong, numbering, it is said, between 10,000 civil servants and 20,000 civil servants, complained about their government, being ruled by complaint, complaints emanating, primarily, from tycoons, controlling big business.

Which is, of course, silly, even though true.

However, one is reminded of the matter of the former Chairman of publicly listed South China Morning Post (Holdings) Ltd (Code: 583), Mr Robert Kuok Hock Nien.

Mr Robert Kuok, reports have it, did not appreciate certain statements of columnists, employed in his newspaper, South China Morning Post, and ordered that the columnists be sacked, or at least, shackled and controlled.

His orders were not carried out, it seems (although one columnist has, since, left Mr Robert Kuok's employ).

This must, rightly, have infuriated Mr Robert Kuok: What is the world coming to when a boss cannot control his employees?

Mr Kuok's demands, from an ethnic, Chinese mogul's point of view, one who loves his country, dearly, are reasonable: A boss should, always, be able to sack or shackle an employee if the boss determines, unilaterally, that the employee's contribution is such as not to benefit, materially, the company that the boss controls, directly or indirectly.

After all, an employee is a servant of a company, while the boss is the master: A master should be able to dismiss a servant at the master's discretion.

The English daily, South China Morning Post, is operated in the same manner as any other private business enterprise, with the Profit and Loss Statement, being the guide to the success or failure of the enterprise.

If the newspaper's editorial contributors are not readily accepted by the reading public, fewer people will read the newspaper; and, it may be assumed, logically, that the editorial content is not conducive to readership.

It follows that, if fewer people read the newspaper, then advertising revenues will fall in due course.

In short, therefore, what Mogul Robert Kuok was trying to accomplish by having the columnists sacked, was to protect his investment in the publicly listed company that owns and operates South China Morning Post.

Mr Robert Kuok knows, better than most, that if the editorial stance of South China Morning Post is such that it continues to attack, either the HKSAR Government or the ultimate power behind the HKSAR '*throne*', the Beijing hierarchy, then readership will fall and advertising revenue will drop -- and all will lose money.

What must be understood, at this point, is that, in the PRC, Singapore and Malaysia, newspapers are operated in a slightly different manner to the way in which they are operated in the HKSAR: They report what they are told to report; they write that which they are told to write.

It is accepted that, in the PRC, the power of the rod rules the homeland.

The quicker, it seems, that the HKSAR realises and accepts this principle, the easier will be the life of the 7 million human inhabitants of the 416 square miles that comprise the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

**Be one with the PRC and HKSAR mogul horde,
Or be branded as Satan's overlord!**

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