

**BEIJING'S CONUNDRUM:  
WHAT TO DO WITH HONGKONG ?  
WHAT TO DO WITH INCOMPETENT TUNG CHEE HWA ?**

The Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) will neither bow nor bend to the People Power Movement of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the PRC because it would set an unfortunate precedent, one which could never be repealed.

And the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, can not, now, resign, become ill, or take a sabbatical, for whatever reason, because that may be interpreted as being tantamount to bowing, or bending, to the demands of the People Power Movement.

Beijing would never permit such an act by one of its politicians, especially one with such a high profile as that of Mr Tung Chee Hwa.

The political scenario of the HKSAR has changed, completely, since July 1, 2003, when some 500,000 HKSAR residents peacefully marched through streets of the territory, demanding, initially, that the National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill (also known as Article 23 of The Basic Law of the HKSAR) not receive its Second and Third Reading in the Legislative Council – which would have passed it into the law books of the territory – and, then, they stepped up their demands of the Tung Chee Hwa Government to speed up universal suffrage.

Then, the final demand: Sack the Chief Executive!

The Second and Third Readings of The Bill would, definitely, have taken place on Wednesday, July 9, had it not been for the resignation of Mr James Tien, on the Sunday of July 5.

Mr James Tien, as far as Beijing is concerned, is an abject traitor.

If there were a way to '*excommunicate*' him from the race of the ethnic Chinese, by now, the wheels of such excommunication would have been turning at high speed.

Mr Tien's resignation from the Executive Council – where he had, formerly, agreed to sit for a period of not less than 5 years – meant that the Tung Chee Hwa Government would not have been able to muster a sufficient number of votes to pass The Bill into law.

Mr Tien, in explaining the reason for his impromptu resignation from the Executive Council, said that, on the one hand, he had a sworn duty to the Liberal Party, of which he is the Chairman, and, on the other hand, he had a duty of fidelity to the Government of Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa.

The conflict of interests was unbearable, he said, leaving him with no choice.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa appointed Mr Tien to his august post on the understanding that, by virtue of his seat on the Executive Council, he would be part of the loyal opposition.

The operative word, here, was '*loyal*'.

As far as Beijing and the Chief Executive of the HKSAR are concerned, Mr Tien has proved to be disloyal.

Henceforth, he is ostracised by Beijing and the HKSAR Government – and he will not, now, be awarded that choice piece of property in the PRC, proper, and he will not be afforded an audience with any of the high-muckety-mucks.

It is well known that Mr Tien flew to Beijing, following the July 1 protests, and it appears that he met with a very cool reception in the Capital City of the PRC.

From Beijing's point of view, Mr Tien had no right or reason to fly to Beijing since his presence was required, urgently, in the HKSAR, standing by the side of his leader: Mr Tung Chee Hwa.

One can imagine that he received somewhat of a harangue from the high and mighty in Beijing.

That would have explained the reason for his sudden resignation on Sunday, July 6: He knew that his trip to Beijing had had the effect of burning all of his political bridges behind him.

Any thoughts that Mr Tien might have had of succeeding Mr Tung Chee Hwa as the Chief Executive of the HKSAR must have been dashed, forever, following his improper and untimely trip to Beijing, one which, clearly, was an unfortunate, spur-of-the-moment decision on his part.

As such, it is clear that Mr Tien is prone to acting, without first considering the consequences of his acts, as far as Beijing is concerned.

Not the best qualifications for a Beijing-appointed politician – in any position.

The July 1 debacle of the HKSAR caused a great deal of embarrassment to Prime Minister/Premier, Mr Wen Jia Bao, who has, only recently, been installed as one of the elite within the Beijing political hierarchy.

Last week, he ordered a delegation to go to the HKSAR in order to assess the situation and to make recommendations as to the best course of action to be taken.

Beijing still considers the HKSAR to be an international show-window, although, it has diminished in importance, somewhat, since July 1, 1997.

Prior to July 1, 1997, about 66 percent of all of the PRC's foreign exchange was channelled through the territory.

Further, the city of Shanghai has undergone a number of important infrastructure changes in the past 5 years, making it another choice, deep-water port from which the PRC exports and imports can be transshipped, replacing much of the facilities of the HKSAR.

The former British Colony of Hongkong, with its One-Country, Two-Systems governmental formula, has to be made to work, from Beijing's point of view, if the PRC, proper, ever expects to bring Taiwan into the PRC fold, as it did with the former Portuguese Colony of Macau, whose sovereignty was assumed by the PRC Government on December 31, 1999, without any major obstacles, political or otherwise.

Beijing selected Mr Tung Chee Hwa to be the First Chief Executive of the HKSAR and, although he may have proved to be far from perfect, he has to be supported, at this stage in the proceedings, come what may.

Beijing has no choice in the matter.

That Mr Tung Chee Hwa has been ineffective in administering the territory is well accepted by Beijing.

In fact, senior cadre have publicly roundly criticised Mr Tung Chee Hwa as being unable to make decisions of pith and moment; and, even after decisions have been made, he appears to be indecisive in carrying out determinations, or, even, delegating responsibility to his underlings to be definitive in their mandates.

There had been, in place, a method by which Mr Tung Chee Hwa was to be replaced, with a couple of exceptional people, having been pinpointed as his potential successors. (Please see [TARGET Intelligence Report, Volume V, Number 127](#), published on July 9, 2003 and [TARGET Intelligence Report, Volume V, Number 33](#), published on February 19, 2003)

With the HKSAR political scene, having changed, those plans have been shelved and Beijing must continue with its hand-picked man even though he may be considered inept and incompetent.

That Mr Tung Chee Hwa is inept and incompetent is incontrovertible – because he was unable to foresee, among other things, the build-up of discontent in the residents of the HKSAR, and, by such a lack of perspicacity, he constructively permitted the events of July 1, 2003.

Whether or not he could have changed the course of those events, is, today, a mute point, because, more pointed is his clear failure to guide, to instruct and to explain matters of governance, satisfactorily, to his people.

Had he accomplished that feat, he would have been able to play down the Article 23 concerns, completely.

When Tiananmen Square was beset by an estimated one million students, during May 4 through to June 3, 1989, the Paramount Leader of the PRC, Mr Deng Xiao Ping, took action to squash the student protests – and, in some cases, the tanks of the People's Liberation Army did squash some of the students on the stroke of midnight of June 3, 1989.

Ironically, Mr Deng Xiao Ping was never blamed for the crushing of the student revolt of 1989: Mr Li Peng, the former PRC Premier, was used as the scapegoat.

In a country of some 1.30 billion people, most of whom are uneducated in the ways of the West, and living in a vast and varied geographic topography, covering about 3.70 million square miles, democracy may not be the best form of government.

Further, only about 20 percent of the entire population of the country is urbanised.

This means that about 260 million people live in major cities of the country, with the vast majority of the population, living in deserts, mountains and plateaus where cadre manage their political education and welfare.

The numbers of people of the country, who have no shoes on their feet, and whose children have never seen a manufactured toy, may astound many people of the West.

Tourists to the PRC, proper, are not shown those areas of the country where poverty is rampant, where the death toll from starvation continues to climb, and where the mortality rate of the newborn is, probably, second to none in the world.

The PRC is having a great deal of trouble in dealing with its own problems, let alone any others – and, now, there is the problem of the HKSAR, with Beijing's man-on-the-spot, proving to be less than capable.

### **A Possible Solution**

Mr Tung Chee Hwa is 67 years old.

At the age of 70 years, he will have to retire, in any event.

The only question is, therefore: What more damage can he do during the remainder of his tenure of office?

And, what damage control can be put in place in order to prevent any recurrence of the protests of July 1, 2003.

For the first, 5-year period of Mr Tung Chee Hwa's tenure of office as Chief Executive, there were relatively few problems in the HKSAR, relative, that is, to the July 1, 2003, protest marches and, in any event, Beijing was not embarrassed by any local problem that occurred.

But, the July 1, 2003, protest marches fast became an international issue: The PRC, proper, was put under the world's microscope.

Beijing was not amused.

Although, it was clear that Mr Tung Chee Hwa was not loved by the 7 million human population of the territory, Beijing did not care since Mr Tung Chee Hwa was not put into a position of power to be loved, but to follow the dictates of the Central Government.

When the last British Governor of Hongkong ruled the Hongkong '*roost*', Mr Chris Patten was not loved by all, also.

But Mr Chris Patten's job was not to be loved or appreciated by the majority of the population, but to perform in accordance with his mandate, handed to him by the then Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Mr John Major.

It could well be stated that Mr Chris Patten was extremely successful in fulfilling his duties to the British Crown.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa, however, has not fulfilled his duties, adequately, for the Beijing '*Crown*', to be sure.

It is possible for Beijing to take a page out of the political books of Great Britain and to establish a committee to investigate the situation in the HKSAR, which is, today, being viewed as a festering pimple on the bottom of the largest country in the world.

The establishment of this committee, with the help of Mr Tung Chee Hwa (it may be said to be his initiative if Beijing determines to give him '*face*'), will take more than a few months to become fully operational.

The committee could comprise HKSAR academics, retired HKSAR High Court judges, prominent HKSAR industrialists as well as a smattering of cadre from PRC, proper, and chaired by a neutral party, such as a senior PRC member of the National People's Congress.

There will have to be, of course, consultations with various HKSAR groups and leading citizens, and, then, there will be the inevitable tome of a report to be tabled and studied, and, then, revised.

The entire process could well take the best part of 3 years.

By the time that implementation of some of the recommendations of this committee are considered, there would have been a change in the political landscape of the HKSAR, again – with Mr Tung Chee Hwa, preparing for his retirement.

This process would enable Beijing to groom Mr Tung Chee Hwa's successor and to prepare for a smooth transition from the Tung Chee Hwa Administration to the next one.

Beijing had prospective HKSAR replacements for Mr Tung Chee Hwa lined up, subject to their acceptance of the post.

However, it is unlikely that anybody would be willing to take up the post of Chief Executive of the HKSAR, at this juncture – because whoever dons the purple of office is bound to fail.

The seat of power of the HKSAR, today, is too hot for most people: Nobody wants to have a hot bottom, even the most ambitious of would-be politicians.

Beijing's prospective replacements had been:

1. Mr Henry Tang Ying Yen, Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology of the HKSAR; and,
2. Dr Arthur Li Kwok Cheung, Secretary for Education and Manpower of the HKSAR.

Whether or not Messrs Henry Tang and Arthur Li would be willing to take up the post in 2007 is undetermined, of course, but, in any event, time and tide wait for no man.

The best that Beijing can do, today, is to put a Band-Aid on the situation in the HKSAR and hope that the political swelling will subside over time.

In the meantime, the one thing that can appease the HKSAR proletariat is to revive the sagging economy, one thing that Mr Tung Chee Hwa has failed to accomplish, at all.

Even a suggestion of an improvement in the economy would, most likely, be a sufficient inducement for many of the people of the territory to shelve their political fervour in favour of enriching themselves.

Questions have been raised as to the reason that there were only about 50,000 people, who took part in the candlelit sit-in, outside the Legislative Council Building of July 9.

The reason for the July 9 turnout to have been only about one tenth of the estimated size of the protest marches of July 1 was that it was a working day for the proletariat, whereas July 1 was the Sixth Anniversary of the assumption of sovereignty of the old Hongkong by the Government of the PRC, which has been designated a public holiday.

Money, always, talks – even in a Communist country.

-- E N D --

***While TARGET makes every attempt to ensure accuracy of all data published, TARGET cannot be held responsible for any errors and/or omissions.***

*If readers feel that they would like to voice their opinions about that which they have read in TARGET, please feel free to e-mail your views to [editor@targetnewspapers.com](mailto:editor@targetnewspapers.com) or [targnews@hkstar.com](mailto:targnews@hkstar.com). TARGET does not guarantee to publish readers' views, but reserves the right so to do subject to the laws of libel.*

