

BEIJING'S FINAL SOLUTION TO ITS POLITICAL 'THORN': HONGKONG

Termed as a *'Duty Visit'* to Beijing, the Capital City of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Chief Executive of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was summoned to give an explanation for his actions, last Saturday ... and to explain his clear lack of action and his inability to employ the correct action in times of need.

In Beijing, Mr Tung Chee Hwa had consultations with the most senior members of the Central Government, including President Hu Jin Tao and Premier Wen Jia Bao.

Thus is the importance that Beijing puts on straightening out the messy situation of the HKSAR.

Officially, President Hu Jin Tao, who is, also, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, said that he was concerned at the recent situation in the HKSAR.

He said:

'Only by maintaining social stability can Hongkong preserve a sound business environment, keep its features as a free port and its status as an international financial, trade and shipping centre, thus creating favourable conditions for economic recovery and further development ...

'Hongkong belongs to China and the people of Hongkong. We are strongly opposed to the attempt of any foreign forces and other forces from outside to interfere in the internal affairs of Hongkong.'

Premier Wen Jia Bao, on the other hand, in his separate, private meeting with Mr Tung Chee Hwa, said very little, little, that is, compared with that which was, officially, reported to have been uttered by President Hu Jin Tao.

Premier Wen Jia Bao, said, inter alia:

'The Central Government will give full support to all things that will benefit the prosperity and stability of Hongkong and be conducive to the common development in Hongkong and the Mainland ...

'The great socialist Motherland will, always, be a strong force, backing the development and progress of Hongkong.'

The HKSAR situation is considered of the utmost importance to the Central Government of the PRC because of what the territory has metamorphosed since 1997: It is, today, a *'window'* to the world's most-populous country, through which the Western World is able to view the workings of the largest Communist country, left in existence.

While other Communist countries have failed and have been overtaken by the march of time, its populations, having rejected Communistic dogma, the PRC has gone from one plateau of financial and economic strength to another – and the momentum continues.

Whereas, North Korea, the second-largest Communist country of the world, today, is mendicant, most of its population, starving, and its government, considered to be a pariah by the Western World, the PRC, in stark contrast, is a model of seeming political stability; it can boast of having created, in the past 3 decades, an economic explosion, probably unparalleled in modern history, making it the fastest-growing economy of the world.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa was known, all along, not to have been much of a diplomat, but he was considered to be, in the eyes of the PRC Governmental hierarchy of 1996 and 1997, the best available choice, all things considered.

He was very respectful of the late Paramount Leader, Mr Deng Xiao Ping, who endorsed his nomination as the First Chief Executive of the HKSAR, which was to be the first, PRC territory to be permitted to have a government that differed from that of the Central Government.

The HKSAR's governmental model, the credit, having been broadly attributed to Mr Deng Xiao Ping, is known, today, as '*One-Country, Two-Systems*'.

It guarantees, for a period of not less than 50 years (starting from July 1, 1997), a high degree of autonomy, with Hongkong people, ruling Hongkong, and with the existing laws, originally promulgated by successive British Administrations, including English Common Law, to be maintained.

It was well known, for months, prior to Mr Tung Chee Hwa's '*election*' in the HKSAR – with the personal supervision of the election by Mr Lu Ping, the former head of the Hongkong and Macau Affairs Office of the Government of the PRC – that he was going to be installed as the First Chief Executive.

But, by accepting the purple of office, he well knew that he would, henceforth, owe full allegiance to the Central Government of the PRC and report, directly, to the Premier and the President, and that, in spite of Mr Tung Chee Hwa, being a capitalist, his duty of fidelity would always be to the cause of Chinese Communism and the dictates and directions of his immediate superiors in Beijing.

But nobody in Beijing could have imagined how much of a muck-up Mr Tung Chee Hwa could make of his HKSAR charge.

When he took up the reins of office from the British Administration on July 1, 1997, the HKSAR had well-oiled, British-styled, Governmental administrative machinery, with its coffers, overflowing with cash.

Sadly for the Government of the PRC, Mr Tung Chee Hwa's 6-year tenure of office has come to be characterised by incompetence, non-action, or the lack of any definitive determination, and the well-oiled Government Administration is pock-marked with the distrust of many, if not most, of its senior officers.

Following the discovery of the gross malfeasance of the former Financial Secretary, Mr Antony Leung, when he took advantage of his privileged position by purchasing a luxury Lexus motor car, just prior to his announcing an increase in First Registration Tax on motor cars, senior officials in Beijing were shocked to learn that Mr Tung's action – was no action, at all!

Not being fully apprised of the situation, however, it was assumed by the PRC's Central Government hierarchy that the HKSAR '*dirt*' would be swept under the HSKAR '*mat*', in the same way that Mr Tung Chee Hwa's initial 1997 promise, contained in his inaugural address to his newly acquired people – that the Government would build accommodation for 85,000 households, per year – had been conveniently shelved.

But, when the matter of Mr Antony Leung was turned over to The Justice Department of the HSKAR, just last week, it was clear that there must be a *prima facie* case for Mr Antony Leung to answer.

This time, the matter could not be filed in a cabinet, along with thousands of other documents, in the hope that it would be lost in a mountain of paperwork.

Mr Leung's resignation, last week, permitted this former, very senior official of the HKSAR Government to try to save face, whereas, it was incumbent on Mr Tung Chee Hwa to take action – in order that the HKSAR Government try to save what was left of its political face.

And throw the malfeasant to the wolves, in the time-honoured tradition and manner of the PRC Government.

Throughout Mr Tung Chee Hwa's tenure of office, there has been considerable dissatisfaction at the way in which he has handled HKSAR affairs.

Senior vocal delegates of the National People's Congress (NPC) have gone on record as stating that Mr Tung Chee Hwa is afraid to make a decision on most things and, for those things on which he does make decisions, he is reluctant to take definitive action and/or to carry out his determinations.

The protest march of July 1, 2003, when an estimated 500,000 HKSAR residents marched through the streets of the territory, has brought the political situation to a new plateau of crisis.

Now, Beijing must take a hand in the matter.

The Solution

Unlike the Governmental Administration of Mr Tung Chee Hwa, the Central Government of the PRC is definitive; and, it can be extremely swift in making determinations.

This was seen, most pointedly, on the stroke of midnight, June 3, 1989, when tanks of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) swept through Tiananmen Square, Beijing, to squash a student protest, said to have been more than one million strong.

With the Paramount Leader of the PRC, Mr Deng Xiao Ping, along with Mr Li Peng, the then Premier of the PRC, a decision was taken to crush the Tiananmen Square protestors ... or face the possibility of having anarchy reign throughout the country.

While the world was morbidly fascinated by the events of the first week of June 1989, there are those political scientists, who maintain that, perhaps, that was the only action left to follow by the 1989 Government of Beijing.

For the 1989 Government of Premier Li Peng to have collapsed, it would have meant political and economic chaos for the largest country in the world.

Since 1989, the lot of the average PRC citizen has improved, immensely, and the present PRC Administration can point to the acts of the 1989 Governmental Regime and state, pragmatically, that it was all for the best, after all.

The logic, today, for the crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest was that the country was not ready for democracy, and that the well-meaning students were being misled by Western influences.

While the PRC Government has determined that it will follow a course of a market-led economy, within a Communistic Governmental framework, it, still, maintains that Universal Suffrage is, if at all, something for future generations to consider: The PRC is too young, politically, to embrace such a complicated consideration.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa has been reminded that that was the guideline, which he has been sworn to follow; he may not deviate from that course, come what may.

While the HKSAR is unlikely, ever, to embrace Communism, to any great extent, as long as its 7 million human population do not '*infect*' the human population of the PRC, proper, with what would be considered radical political ideology, radical, that is, to the teachings of the former and extant leaders of the PRC and to the

modified dialectics of Marxism/Leninism, the PRC enclave may continue with its way of life, which has been promised to remain unchanged for at least 50 years, from July 1, 1997.

The guidelines for the preservation of the HKSAR status quo is contained in The Basic Law of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, sometimes referred to as the Mini-Constitution of the HKSAR.

The sore points of the soon-to-be modified Article 23 of The Basic Law, which has been roundly criticised by its many opponents in the HKSAR, relates to outlawing the publication of what are considered to be '*State Secrets*', those of the HKSAR and/or of the PRC, proper, outlawing criticism of the Central Government of the PRC and/or of its senior officials, suppression of subversive materials, and the proscription of certain groups, determined by Beijing to be evil or destructive to the PRC State (Falun Gong, et al).

This is where the PRC Government draws the line on the free economy of the HKSAR.

The Basic Law makes it mandatory that the promulgation of The National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill – which, in essence, is Article 23 of The Basic Law, with a few more provisions and proscriptions on freedoms – must proceed.

There is no turning back from this determination – the Central Government of the PRC will not permit a retreat.

Beijing could not have imagined that such a fundamental law – in the eyes of Central Government's political hierarchy – could have caused such an uproar in its 416-square-mile enclave.

Further, Beijing could not have imagined that its man-on-the-spot could not have taken action to thwart any discontent over the promulgation of The Bill.

In the 54-year history of the Government of the PRC, there has never been such a stirring of the populace by the enactment of a single law.

From the point of view of the PRC Government, prior to an election, the outcome must be known, well in advance.

Otherwise, what is the rationale in having an election, in the first instance?

Mr Tung Chee Hwa, clearly, has shown that he is incapable of managing the affairs of the HKSAR, adequately, and, as such, swift and definitive actions have to be taken, immediately – by Beijing.

The current thinking in Beijing is that Mr Tung Chee Hwa requires a special assistant to guide him, during his remaining few years as the Chief Executive.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa may not, now, resign from his position because that would be tantamount to surrendering to the political forces that were behind the July 1 protest marches, classified as being a People Power Movement, named after the People Power Movement that ousted President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines from office in 1986 and installed Mrs Corazon Aquino as the successor of the 2-decade-long regime of President Marcos.

One of the many problems, facing the Central Government of the PRC, is that it has not groomed the successor to Mr Tung Chee Hwa.

Mr Tung Chee Hwa was selected some years, prior to July 1, 1997.

He was groomed, indoctrinated into the way of the PRC Government, and, then, was handed one of the most prestigious political posts that a non-politician could ever have dreamed of being handed ... on a golden platter.

But, today, the Central Government of the PRC realises, to its dismay, that Mr Tung Chee Hwa is not up to the task and, to allow him to continue, along similar lines as in the past, could well spell financial ruin for the

HKSAR – and political disaster for Beijing.

To give Mr Tung Chee Hwa further open support and an endorsement of his acts would cause Beijing to be seen as being as incompetent as its HKSAR man.

Beijing cannot be seen to be endorsing the acts of the 500,000 people, who marched through the streets of the HKSAR on July 1, also, so that it is left with the unenviable situation of seeming to be one with Mr Tung Chee Hwa, but, at the same time, restraining him from any further faux pas, either by well-meaning, wrongful acts, or by the lack of any definitive action.

A special assistant to liaise, directly, with Beijing, and to be a conduit through which instructions could, surreptitiously, be relayed, immediately, to the Chief Executive is the temporary solution to the current problem, Beijing has determined.

This special assistant would, in essence, be the de jure head of the HKSAR Governmental pyramid, with Mr Tung Chee Hwa and the Commandant of the PLA, being the next tier of Government.

However, the special assistant must be as invisible as is possible, at this stage in the proceedings.

He will be, as well as a conduit to Beijing, an understudy of Mr Tung Chee Hwa, storing information in order to arm himself with the necessary intelligence to take over the HKSAR Government should must needs be such.

In due course, this assistant will have his own staff, causing to be created what will have the characteristics of a special department of HKSAR Government, but which will, in fact, serve as an early warning system for any potential problems, looming on the political horizon.

In fact, the new office, to be established, soon, in the HKSAR, has the nomenclature: The Office of Political Liaison for the Special Administrative Regions (OPLSAR).

Beijing wants no more surprises, or hundreds of thousands of '*compatriots*', marching through the streets of the HKSAR or any of the country's other provinces and/or possessions.

Another function of this assistant will be to reinvigorate the HKSAR economy, restoring it to its former glory when the 1976 Nobel Prize winning economist, Mr Milton Friedman, labelled British Hongkong as being an example of how a free economy can prosper when the correct governmental infrastructure is in place and when there is a minimum of governmental interference in commerce and industry.

Beijing, also, recognises that the lack of accountability in the HKSAR has permitted the present situation: It was another of the many Tung Chee Hwa faux pas.

At the conclusion of Mr Tung Chee Hwa's tenure of office, his 70th birthday, or a debilitating illness, whichever comes first, the assistant would be able to take over the HKSAR Government, without there being any suggestion of a political hiccup.

Since the assistant would have to be a hand-picked man or woman from Beijing, he/she would not, legally, be an HKSAR resident and, as such, he/she could not be an immediate replacement for Mr Tung Chee Hwa at the next election for the Chief Executive in 2007.

The assistant, therefore, would have one other important duty:

To find an acceptable replacement for Mr Tung Chee Hwa

This Report Is Meant To Be Read In Conjunction With

[TARGET Intelligence Report, Volume V, Number 132,](#)

The First Story, Headlined:

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

(Published On Wednesday, July 16, 2003)

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