

**DÉJÀ VU:
THE PLAY'S THE THING**

Blood was rarely spilt in a political coup de main (surprise attack) in China of centuries past.

Unlike the barbaric Japanese coup d'état (a sudden or illegal change of government), when hired assassins did the bidding of the shogun, leaving a bloody mess of headless corpses, the preferred method of executing a sudden change in the hierarchical structure of lower echelons of government in ancient China was by the use of poisons.

The preferred method of solving political differences, employed in times past, was for those petty officials, in a seemingly never-ending dispute with Authority, to be invited to a feast where a compromise solution was always offered.

If the officials refused the compromise solution, a glass of slow-acting, poisoned wine was poured from an interior, partitioned ewer, in which the left side contained the poisoned wine while the right side contained only the best wine.

At the end of the feast, friendship was shown to the officials by members of the Authority of the day.

The officials, who refused the compromise solution, went home, not knowing that, in time, they would die a slow and painful death, brought about by the poisons that they had imbibed.

For the officials, who agreed with the Authority, they were heaped with rewards and honours for a time ... but they faded away in due course.

The Authority would never trust any official who had gone against lawful Authority.

The Authority, also, would never trust an official who was known to have no backbone and was willing, when under pressure, to kowtow: To bend with the wind as a bamboo refuses to fight a power greater than it.

For the officials, who thought that they had won the day by agreeing to the compromise solution, they found themselves, in time, surreptitiously, sent to Coventry by the Authority – and by their supporters, who had trusted them.

For the officials, who had drunk the wine of compromise, their political careers had come to an abrupt halt.

They forgot that one cannot step into the waters of the same river twice.

Political Change

Throughout China's long history, one thing has always been constant: Political change.

And political change is, always, accompanied by deceit.

The great China deceptions, historically, were designed by men – always men – who had ulterior motives, such

as the climbing illustrious stairs in order to sit near the throne of the Authority of the day.

By this achievement, more wealth could come to them.

If obstacles came into view while trying to achieve this goal, denouncing that power, that was seen as an impediment to climbing the stairs, leading to the Authority's throne, was necessary .

Of late, one may well recall the historical deceptions of centuries past in the Middle Kingdom and note the similarities of the *modi operandi* of yesterday and today although **TARGET** () is certain that the players in the recent history of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) were not aware that they had been merely pawns in this historical chess game.

Act One of the greatest China deceptions of yesteryear had their roots in the key player, scattering germinating seeds, leading to the grand power play.

The aim was, always, simple: Obtain as much power as possible as quickly as possible.

Power to the key player, always meant control, leading to more power, leading to the accumulation of more wealth, resulting in graduating to the position of eminence *grise*, standing behind the curtain, in the back of the Authority.

Few of the greatest China deceptions of centuries past sought to achieve the removal of those politicians of the highest tier, but merely circumventing them so that the key player could achieve his ends, leaving the most-prominent politician to brave the wrath of the Emperor if needs were such.

The method of achieving the goal(s) of the wealthy political player always started off him, trying to guarantee the maintenance of his existing power base so that his wealth would not be diminished by any of his actions or non-actions.

In order to accomplish this, being as close as possible to the Authority of the day was the first hurdle to be vaulted.

When recognised by the Authority, the chances of moving up the political ladder graduated from a possibility to a probability.

With each move of the player, kowtowing was an absolute must, and, with the utmost reverence, kowtowing was advertised, openly, in order that the Authority would believe in the absolute sincerity of the player.

The Authority, acknowledging the player's loyalty, publicly, would bestow his blessings upon him who, if lucky enough, would be able to enrich himself and, also, enrich his extended family.

As the wealth mounted, so the powerbase of the player grew.

In order to continue the drive to enrich the player's power base, support was necessary.

Act Two was the purchase of support.

Nowhere could support be found cheaper than in the masses of the elderly, the ignorant, and the naïve.

The elderly could be purchased for a day for a luncheon and a dinner, some fruit and nuts, a little entertainment and being transported to and from the village homes to where it was necessary in an opulent manner, to which the elderly had never been accustomed.

To continue to fan the flames of support, the key player would recognise the elderly, the ignorant and naïve for their hard work and for their loyalty to the great needs of the country.

He would make periodic public appearances with the supporters, smiling, bowing, and thanking them, one and all, for their love of him.

There, always, has been, however, throughout China's great history, the rebels, trying to usurp the player's grand designs.

The rebels were always the young and, more than likely, the educated.

Also, the rebels came from the poorer corners of the empire and they sought that which they did not have: A say in the government of the day.

Unlike the player, they had nothing but wanted something, that something, often being undefined for the most part, initially.

That which they knew that they wanted, today, as a matter of urgency, was an ample amount of food on the table; they wanted a good roof over their heads; they wanted a share in the wealth of the country; they wanted, inter alia, to be recognised as being part of the great empire of China.

Some of the rebels achieved part of the goals and, having improved their lot, they sought to strengthen their positions in the empire although they were still, far down the political ladder.

They could see the top of the political ladder, but they could not place even one foot on the ladder's lowest rung.

So those rebels, who had achieved a modicum of success, their newest plans, still having been thwarted by the rich and the political powerful, sought alliances with those who saw themselves as being not as fortunate as they.

Having achieved respectability, the rebels promised to work for the downtrodden and the not so fortunate.

They publicly proclaimed that they would work for these people and speak for them at the highest echelons of power as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

However, if their power base was in jeopardy, the promises of yesterday were conveniently placed to one side with new promises to the downtrodden along the lines that this was the best action to be taken, at this time, although the uninitiated and those not au fait with modern political thought may not appreciate it at that time.

'History will prove me correct!' was often the rallying call that one heard at that time.

In the same breath, it was stated, publicly, that promises, from time to time, have to be modified in the best interests of all, allowing for further political inroads to be made at a more auspicious time.

Act Three was, always, that the former rebels, who, by then, thought themselves as being on good terms with the Authority, and, being referred to as model citizens and feted at lavish feasts, given, personally, that which they never expected – they were promised some of the riches of the empire – they sensed that something was wrong.

Some former rebels did, indeed, receive gifts of power; most of them, however, received nothing.

For a time, peace reigned in the empire and, with peace came the quiet and inexplicable disappearance of the former rebels ... one by one.

This was achieved by making it known that their promises to the downtrodden were never kept and, in fact, the souls of the former rebels had been purchased on alter of forgiveness.

The empire had divided the various sectors of society into splinter groups so that they could easily be devoured, politically: Divide and conquer.

The former rebels, now without any power base, faded away and were forgotten, only to be replaced by the young men of the empire, who had learned to sing the same old songs of yesteryear.

These young men picked up the tattered standards that lay in the dirt of the empire, waved them high and called, once again, for deliverance.

Any of this sound familiar?

Feel like a glass of wine?

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