

**DEMOCRACY:  
IS IT, ALWAYS, THE BEST POLITICAL SYSTEM ?**

Last Sunday (June 1, 2014), about 2,000 people took to the streets of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), shouting a number of slogans, prominent of which was '*Democracy – Now!*' and '*End One-Party rule!*' (in the PRC, proper, being separate and distinct from the HKSAR of the PRC).

In Thailand, the lightning coup d'état of Monday, May 19, 2014, engineered by the country's military, led by General Prayuth Chan-ocha, Commander-in-Chief of The Royal Thai Army, was being felt as martial law was announced and censorship was imposed on the media.

For the time being, democracy in Thailand had suffered a major defeat.

The argument for the coup d'état was that General Prayuth Chan-ocha was loyal to king and country, not to any political party or to any particular political leader of the day.

With the ousting of former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, the country's interim government had been seen to have failed, miserably, to bring law and order to the country, causing royalists of King Bhumibol Adulyadej to become apprehensive, thus triggering the actions of General Prayuth Chan-ocha – on behalf of king and country.

Mr Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, more popularly known as Mr A. de O. Sales, the former Chairman of The Hongkong Urban Council, went public on quite a number of occasions, during his term of office, stating that not everybody in the territory should be allowed to vote at Urban Council Elections in spite of being eligible so to do.

They did not have sufficient qualifications to be able to make serious and valid decisions as to whom would be the best person to represent them, Mr A. de O. Sales always maintained.

For the lovers of democracy when Hongkong was a British Crown Colony – who were never known to have been very vocal, in any event – little was ever said of the utterings of Mr A. de O. Sales with regard to his determination that the majority of the eligible voters of the Colony were unfit to vote and, thus, should be proscribed from casting ballots.

Most of the Urban Council members of his day, starting from April of 1973, nodded their heads in agreement with their colorful and very loquacious leader.

Mr A. de O. Sales has been widely fêted for his many services to Hongkong, although he, always, maintained that he was a Portuguese national and it should never be said that he was a British subject.

Aside from being the Chairman of the Urban Council, he, also, was the President of the Olympic Committee of Hongkong.

His many honours included an officer of the **Order of the British Empire (OBE)**, a Commander of the Order of the **British Empire (CBE)**, a **Grand Cross of the Portuguese Order of Prince Henry (GCIH)** and the **Grand Bauhinia Medal (GBM)** of the HKSAR.

Successive British Administrations of Hongkong never embraced democracy, outwardly, and the Governors that were the head of the Hongkong Government were, always, appointed by Queen Elizabeth II since her accession on February 6, 1952, as Head of the Commonwealth and Queen Regnant of seven independent Commonwealth countries: The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon.

It was well accepted and appreciated by the Chinese population of Hongkong that their leader should be appointed by the reigning British monarch.

Under British rule, Hongkong prospered financially and it was Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman who pointed to the 416 square miles, applauding its political determination to maintain the Governmental policy of laissez-faire. He referred to Hongkong as one of the last-remaining bastions of free enterprise.

### **The People's Republic of China**

The People's Republic of China has never embraced democracy, also, and, today, it is the world's second-largest economy.

It accomplished this feat in less than 70 years, pulling up the socks of its many and varied peoples from a country in economic chaos to being one of the most-powerful nations, financially and militarily, in the world.

So relevantly fast was the rise of this country's power that the Western World has been forced to pay tribute and homage to the way in which the PRC achieved its many successes, year after year after year.

While one should never, completely, accept any government's statistics as being sacrosanct, at the same time, it is widely claimed, officially, that there is no abject poverty in the PRC, today: Nobody is without a bowl of rice.

Today, there are murmurings in the US and in Europe of foreboding with regard to the real destination of the PRC Government's future plans.

In contrast to the PRC's one-party rule – The Chinese Communist Party – in North Korea, this dictatorship, officially called The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is completely controlled by one man: Supreme Leader, Mr Kim Jong-un, the 31, year-old son of the late North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-il.

The economic situation in this country is one huge disaster area.

Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un rules with an iron fist and woe betide anybody who goes against him, be that person a family member or a close friend.

The country, officially, has been in and out of recession, during the past nine years and, today, it is generally thought that it is still in recession.

The term in economics of a recession is usually defined as being two successive quarters of negative growth of a country's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.

It is well known that many North Koreans are starving for lack of food.

North Korea is seen by the Western World as being a major threat to peace in Asia.

Indications are very clear that the country is aiming to become a nuclear power.

It is highly unlikely that the United States of America would permit this to come to fruition.

### **Don't Waste Your Time, Thinking**

One of the very positive aspects of a country's political system that does not embrace democracy is that people do not have to think too long or too hard.

In a number of fundamentalist Moslem countries, females are dissuaded from being educated and parents are often punished, sometimes very harshly, for sending their female children to school – especially when that school is teaching subjects in the time-honored, Western tradition.

It is held, in such societies, that females should be taught the virtues of motherhood and the care of the family as well as the love of Allah, his Holy words, having been inscribed in the Q'ran.

The idea, deep within the roots of philosophy, is that it is the path to the pursuit of wisdom; a search, if you will, for general understanding as to the values and reality by mainly speculative rather than observational means; an analysis of the grounds of, and the concepts, expressing fundamental beliefs.

To fundamentalists of all religious faiths, philosophy has to be seen as a threat; and, its study should be proclaimed as being akin to heresy – dissent or deviation from a dominant theory, opinion or practice.

In areas of the world where religious fundamentalism has had its roots, planted deeply in its citizens for many a decade, one notes that the majority of the peoples of these areas decline even to listen to contrary opinions about their religious beliefs.

They can very easily be riled into violent physical action when provoked on hearing contrary religious arguments, actions that they, otherwise, would disdain to engage.

Statistically, one notes that in areas of the world where dictatorship is the order of government, the average person lives a shorter life than his counterpart in an area of the world where democratic principles are considered in accordance with the rights of man.

The health of the man-in-the-street seems to deteriorate rapidly in many dictatorships, probably due in large part to diet-related problems: Not enough food and/or not enough of the right kind of food.

In areas of the world where accepted monotheistic beliefs find it difficult to take root, for one reason or another, and where the government of the day is strictly authoritarian, a paternalistic form of government has been seen to take the place of the consideration of the existence of an eternal and all-loving creator of the world and all life-forms that walk upon it.

In such areas, often the country can, for a period of time, flourish, but only too often, sooner or later, people tend to revolt, demanding what they believe are their rights.

The Western World is the lone culprit for instilling and, then, emphasising the importance of the rights of man.

However, in countries of the size of The Russian Federation (Landmass: 17,098,246 square kilometres) and the PRC (Landmass: 9,596,961 square kilometres) where the different ethnic populations are widely dispersed, seemingly insurmountable difficulties arise on many occasions.

This is especially true in the PRC with its estimated 1.35 billion, human population where the demands of one minority ethnic group (the Uyghur, representing about 0.79 percent of the total human population of the country) are in variance with the dominant ethnic group, 91.50 percent of the human population of the PRC, being Han.

In its wisdom, the PRC Government has found it necessary to take definitive action against the never-ending complaints and explosive actions (literally) of the leaders of the Uyghur population in order to safeguard the interests of unity within the country.

The PRC Government has decided that its one-million, Uyghur population cannot expect that it has an

inalienable right to carve out part of the sovereign territory of the People's Republic to be its separate country.

The Russian Federation has a similar problem to that of the PRC's Uyghur situation.

The Chechen Republic, usually referred to, simply as Chechnya, is a Federal Subject of The Russian Federation, but this North Caucasus Republic, with a human population of about 1.30 million people, wants to become independent of The Russian Federation.

And fighting is, intermittently, taking place in the mountains and southern regions of Chechnya that is when attacks are not made in the heart of The Russian Federation: In Moscow, the Capital City.

### **Politics Aside: Let's Be Friends**

The US Government wants to be friends with as many countries of the world as is possible.

But it does not curry favours or seek close friendships of authoritarian regimes or with governments that it determines denies the rights of man to its citizens.

The US Government maintains that the only true government is one that is staunchly democratic.

That being the case, it must irritate many US politicians to appreciate that the largest economy of the world is being forced to be beholden to the communist regime of the PRC – the second-largest economy of the world.

Ironically, it is being thought quite possible by most US economists that, within the next decade, the economy of the PRC will surpass that of the US, making the PRC, the largest economy of the world.

As with Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson at The Battle of Copenhagen of April 2, 1801, when he put his telescope to his blind eye in order to disobey the signals of Admiral Sir Hyde Parker to withdraw, so the US is quite capable of putting its telescope to its blind eye when it determines that it is in its best interests so to do, regardless of the very irritating politics of a vicious dictatorship.

Politics can, and does, make for strange bedfellows on occasions, does it not?

Southeast Asia is one of today's largest 'engines' of world growth; the US cannot disregard this truism though it would, dearly, enjoy doing so.

Spearheading the countries of this part of the world with its overflowing coffers is the PRC – a one-party, political regime that embraces a unique form of communism.

One can imagine that, sooner rather than later, US President Barack Hussein Obama will embrace President Xi Jin Ping (), the President of the PRC, as his bosom friend in order to seek the friendship of this authoritarian regime – because President Barack Hussein Obama has no other option.

Being pragmatic and honest, the US must grudgingly admit and accept that the PRC Government, in its present form and taking into account its strong, market-led economy that has evolved, quite naturally throughout the country, has been more of an economic success story over the past three decades than that of the democracy that is the US.

One has to admit that the PRC Government must have done some things correctly since 1984 in spite of Marxist-Leninist ideological belief.

While the US has, historically, worked well with democracies, it will soon have to learn to work well with regimes that do not accept that democracy is the best form of government for all countries of the world.

Thailand's present political problems appear to have been the result of suggested wrongdoings by members of the democratically elected government of the country, led by the former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

Regardless of whether or not this lady, or any other member of her Cabinet, is guilty as charged under Thai Law, she maintains a strong presence with the electorate and, if elections were called in a democratic manner, tomorrow morning, she may well be re-elected to run the country.

Beware of that which you wish ... it might come true!

Who was it that coined the chiasmus: Horses for courses?

In conclusion, of the 167 countries of the world, today, 25 countries enjoy full democracies while authoritarian regimes number 51 countries.

Countries that claim to embrace democratic principles, but whose governments are known to be far from being democratic, number 54.

As for the remaining 37 countries, they tend to have a range of diffused types of governmental doctrines that are subject to change, during the course of any one calendar year – and sometimes change more than twice in the course of a year.

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