

**THE 79-DAY SIEGE OF CENTRAL HONGKONG:
THE IGNORANCE AND THE ARROGANCE !**

Now that the Occupy Central Movement is put to bed and the student leaders and their hangers-on and followers have gone back to their warm homes, with mommy and daddy, looking after their needs, and with the excitement and consternation, having diminished, markedly, it is, perhaps, the right time to try to understand the prime factors that were the root causes of the creation of the Movement, as well as the most-important ingredients that, eventually, led to the Movement's failure and subsequent demise.

The initial, emotive rallying calls of the student leaders of the Movement, rallying calls that echoed throughout the world, were just two words: '*Freedom*' and '*Liberty*'. Later on, the students, added to their demands: '*Real Democracy*' for Hongkong.

Quite a number of Legislative Council Members of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China continues to espouse the rallying calls of the student leaders, but it is, perhaps, important to note that some of followers of the Movement were as young as 15 years.

A student, male or female, is most impressionable in his/her teens and craves gregariousness.

For 79-odd days, the Movement, by design, caused considerable inconvenience and havoc to the majority of the residents of the territory.

The Movement cost the economy of Hongkong dearly, with retail sales and the occupation levels of popular hotels, falling to multi-year lows.

The legacy of the Movement is in the separation of the 7.30 million, human inhabitants of Hongkong into various groups, some for the Movement, but many against it as well as severely criticising its leaders.

That which turned many people against the Movement was its violent acts, and, only too often, its ad hoc, modus operandi.

To the majority of the reasonable people of Hongkong, such acts, as were being advocated and demonstrated by the leadership of the Movement, were abhorrent because, inter alia, by and large, demonstrations of pith and moment in the territory have a history of being peaceful.

As the days of the Movement wore on, an underlying and nagging fear of the Government of the Hongkong was that, due to the fact that it was powerless even to consider, seriously, the students' demands, whatever counterforce the Administration deemed to take, it must not be viewed, by Beijing and/or the rest of the world, as having a destructive capacity, greatly exceeding that which was required for a given target of operation.

The student leaders were well aware of these facts and took great advantage of them. The leaders, also, were well aware that the Hongkong Government derived its power to rule the Hongkong Special Administrative Region only by tacit approval and endorsement of the National People's Congress.

The Hongkong Government, also, was fearful as to what was likely to be left in the wake of the Movement's

demonstrations. Many of the actions of the Movement were of an extremely aggressive nature and this went against the grain of the majority of the population.

It was well accepted that many of the Movement's acts were in direct contravention to the laws of the territory, but the Government was inclined to overlook these acts as being of a de minimis nature.

Perhaps, very disturbing to many people, especially high-ranking members of the Hongkong Government as well as to the majority of the members of the Hongkong Police Force, was conclusive evidence that a number of the democratically elected Legislative Councillors was, openly, supporting the students, with both wrong and improper suggestions, couched covertly within the framework of seemingly logical, definitive recommendations to perform acts that they knew would only make the ambers of the Movement burn hotter – with no actual intent, on their part, to achieve a worthwhile goal.

These Legislative Council members often feigned ignorance of the Movement's plan of action and refused to take any responsibility for their utterances, or the Movement's actions.

Because the student leaders were young and mostly oblivious of the logic and niceties of politics and political thought, they had little to no knowledge of constitutional and institutional structures and, thus, they tended to follow, often completely blindly, people that they considered of high social stature.

The student leaders, for their part, became excited at the idea that they might go down in the history books of Hongkong as being able to bring down the Beijing Government to its proverbial knees.

In order to bring attention to themselves, on occasion, they would challenge, openly, lawful authority, regardless as to whether or not they were correct in their assertions.

One very obvious flaw in the Movement's hierarchy, a fault that became very much in evidence as the days of the protests dragged on, was that the student leaders did not fully vet the quality of many of their more vocal members.

This was made manifest when, during television interviews or outpourings of frustration, one student leader was not loath to show, openly, his disagreement (and sometimes contempt) for another student leader's statements with regard to that which the Movement was trying to accomplish and how it was to be achieved.

The United States of America advanced its support for '*Freedom*' and '*Real Democracy*' for Hongkong, but not all American politicians whole-heartedly supported the methods, being employed by the Movement's leaders, only the abstract notion of the rallying calls.

The United States was founded in July of 1776 as a rather loose confederacy, with its 18th Century leadership, claiming, in no uncertain terms, that the British rule of the Americas and of its residents violated the rights of man – especially Englishmen (although little to no thought was ever given, at that time, to the rights of the predominant, Indian population of North America).

This loose confederacy declared independence from Great Britain after 18 years of political upheaval.

Rejected was the rule of King George III. He was said to have been tyrannical toward the colonists of the Americas – in the extreme.

The determination of the leadership of the original 13 colonies of the Americas, in what has come to be called, '*The American Revolution*', proclaimed, inter alia, that all men are created equal ... except, of course, the indigenous, American Indian.

The Founding Fathers of The United States adopted the political, philosophical concept of liberalism and the ideology of republicanism, rejecting aristocracy and a monarchical form of government.

What The American Revolution determined, among other things, were multiple safeguards that included:

- Restraint of abuse of power from any source;
- Constraining political power;
- Adopting policies that had the support of the people who would benefit from the policies; and,
- That the majority had no right to foist its beliefs on the minority.

That which The American Revolution had that the Hongkong Movement lacked was intelligent leaders, such as the ilk of Messrs Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, George Washington, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton.

The Hongkong Movement had, as advisors to its student leaders, such people as Legislative Councillors Leung Kwok Hung (), Albert Ho Chun Yan (), Emily Lau Wai Hing (), and Alan Leong Kah Kit (), to name just four prominent Councillors.

Some Legislative Councillors and certain very wealthy Hongkong industrialists were not averse to instructing the students to act in a manner that was, in essence, polemic, their fiery stentorian outbursts, aimed to commoving the young demonstrators to take a determined and very aggressive stance with regard to their rallying calls.

Some of these Hongkong industrialists pretended to align themselves with the student leaders, not because they believed in the vague tenets of the Movement, but due to a mandate of their own.

That which these industrialists were hoping to accomplish, among other things, was to belittle the Government of the People's Republic of China by chipping away at the power base of the Communist Party of China.

Some of these industrialists made this known, openly, stating that the one-party system of government in China must come to an end.

The students listened, wide-eyed. Many followed the line of these advisors.

When 100 or so members of the Hongkong Police Force were injured in scuffles with students, who attempted various aggressive acts of civil disobedience, leading to violent attacks on policemen/policewomen, and, especially, in respect of the assault on The Legislative Council Building, it mattered little to the invaders as to the harm that they were inflicting on these officers of the law; and, never once did the Legislative Council strongly denounce the students' blatant disregard for law and order, perpetrated by the Movement's instigators and its numerous agitators.

In fact, one Legislative Councillor, namely Leung Kwok Hung, obliquely assisted in the assault on The Legislative Council Building to the extent of giving up part of his office, within the building, itself, as a type of '*Command Centre*' to some of the student leaders, who took full advantage of the offer and used the premises in order to instruct the invaders as to what action to take, during the rowdy fracas.

Give Me Liberty, Or Give Me Death!

In 1775, one of the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution, Mr Patrick Henry, in a speech to the Virginia Convention, exclaimed: '*Give me liberty, or give me death!*'.

This emotional outburst is said to have caused the Virginia House of Burgesses to pass the resolution to deliver Virginian troops to fight in The Revolutionary War that followed in quick succession.

Words speak louder than actions in some cases, as Mr Patrick Henry demonstrated.

It was, indeed, fortunate that the student leaders of the Movement had not read of this outburst some 239 years ago, or even heard about Mr Patrick Henry's resolve, uttered in his eloquent discourse to the Virginia House of Burgesses.

The Movement, in its final stages of disarray in December of 2014, used its emotive words and phrases as rallying calls to the people of Hongkong and, while many people did listen to what the students claimed that they were trying to achieve, the statements of the student leaders became little more than bromidic sermons at the end of the day.

The bulk of the people that trudged down to Admiralty in November 2014 in order to look at what was taking place at the height of the Movement's success to block off part of Hongkong Central, took note, with a degree of disgust, at the mountains of rubbish, piling up in parts of this area.

What was shocking to most Hongkong residents, viewing this situation at Admiralty, was when it was discovered that many of the students had been urinating in bottles and leaving their bottles to be collected by Hongkong Government's cleaning staff.

This, and the violent acts of the students, did not go down well with many observers who, eventually, determined to turn their backs on the Movement.

By this time – in early December, last year – the Movement had become nothing more than a dirty inconvenience that needed to be swept away as soon as possible.

The fact was, and still is, that Hongkong is free, as free, if not freer, than when the 416 square miles was a British Crown Colony, the Governor (the head of Government), having been appointed by Queen Elizabeth II.

This fact was never mentioned by the student leadership, however.

The student leaders had, unfortunately, misplaced, to a very great extent, faith in what they perceived as the paths and causes of freedom, liberty and real democracy for the human population of the territory.

It was a great pity that the student leadership did not look in a dictionary in order to obtain the definition of freedom: The absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action.

Liberty, on the other hand, is defined as being the quality or state of being free; 1: The power to do as one pleases; 2: Freedom from physical restraint.

As for the definition of '*real democracy*', another of the students' many sobriquets that they liked to utter at meetings where the general public was in earshot, this medium has no idea what was actually meant by these words, used in conjunction with one another, except that the word, '*real*', must mean the existence of actuality, and '*democracy*' must mean a government by the people; especially: The rule of the majority.

Utilitarianism, when concomitant with pragmatism (that which is practical as opposed to that which is idealistic), is one of the many factors that was absent in the Movement's ill-conceived mandate.

In truth, however, the Movement had no real fiat of its own – except, perhaps, carrying the tattered banner of disgruntled Legislative Councillors who, out of convenience rather than out of any firm political belief or even, being members of the loyal opposition of the Hongkong Government.

The disgruntled Legislative Councillors of Hongkong had been able to obtain some of the student leaders' ears, filling them with ethereal concepts that they, the Legislative Councillors, knew, very well, were neither pragmatic nor realistic with regard to the territory at this time in its history.

Morality And Politics

Going back in time and looking, forensically, at those people, recorded in history books, people who, by accident or design, were desirous of being known as having charted the political course of a sovereign state, the one thing that stands out is that the successful political leaders of nations, or of religious leaders of note, always built into their grand plans, the concept of morality.

For the great Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the man who led the movement in British India to make the country independent of colonial rule, passive resistance was his weapon of choice.

He was recognised by most people, during his lifetime and to this day, as the greatest leader that ever lived in India.

Having achieved Phase One of his plan, with Great Britain, granting independence to India, Gandhiji – as he became known, popularly – turned his attentions to the plight of the downtrodden of the country: All men are equal, no matter as to his, or her, caste.

Expanding moral concepts, especially in respect of appealing to the population, generally, where large swaths believe that they are being denied that which are their rights under the law and/or the rights of man, as has been the case in The United States for centuries where the African-American citizens are still denied that which is their due, is often the key to unlocking a political door.

This was made unambiguous when Dr Martin Luther King Junior organised the 1963 March on Washington, there to deliver his famous speech: *'I have a Dream'*.

Expanded morality, alone, more often than not, cannot sustain a political ideal unless it is imbued within the realm of the possible.

In the case of the Hongkong Movement in the last quarter of 2014, what was lacking, among other things, was this concept of expanded morality within the realm of the possible.

The Movement should have considered, prior to screaming for *'Freedom'*, *'Liberty'* and *'True Democracy'*, whether or not that which it sought to achieve suited the majority of the population of Hongkong.

Freedom: The people of Hongkong have, always, enjoyed: It suits the majority of the population; and, the people would expect nothing less than freedom.

True Democracy: It is very questionable as to whether or not the territory would be better off than it is today if the head of government were chosen from the likes of the diverse and incongruous elements that sit in the Legislative Council, today.

The problem with political radicals is that they become so incensed with their theories in respect of people's rights that they forget – and/or prefer to forsake – the nature of man and how he perceives his priorities as they apply to his community and to society, in general.

Any political theory that loses touch with the people that it is supposed to assist is doomed.

The student leaders of the Movement that struck Hongkong in the last quarter of 2014 displayed, if anything, the arrogance of those who sought to cause the territory's commercial hub to come to a standstill.

The many of the Movement clearly disregarded the very likely perverse nature of their activities that were certain to be made manifest in due course.

The Safeguards Of Liberty

In order for liberty to be safeguarded, there must never be cronyism in government, the imposition of

preferential taxation on select individuals/corporate entities, as opposed to a system of taxation on a universal basis, the ad hoc appointments of persons from private enterprises to relatively higher-grade governmental posts than they held previously, strongly suggestive of favoritism to one or more persons/parties over another.

For all of these acts, and many more, lead, sooner rather than later, to undermining the very fabric of constitutional and institutional structures within the framework of government.

When Great Britain ruled the Crown Colony of Hongkong, the above three examples – cronyism in government, preferential taxation, and junior appointments to governmental posts – tended, surreptitiously, to erode liberty and subverted and/or weakened, insidiously, constitutional and institutional pillars of government.

With the exception of junior appointments to Hongkong Government posts, willy-nilly, and the showering of public accolades upon select residents of the territory for no apparent reason other than, perhaps, the suggestion that the presentation of such accolades would, in time, lead to favours, being forthcoming, things have changed in these 416 square miles that is but a pimple on the bottom of the People's Republic of China.

Any revolution must be infused with institutional safeguards in order to restrain the very revolutionaries, themselves.

In Libya, today, one can be witness to the results of the lack of institutional safeguards, having been put in place, following the violent fall of Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi from power in April of 2011.

The fall of Muammar Gaddafi was due, inter alia, to 30-percent unemployment in the country, dissatisfaction over widespread corruption, and the ability of patronage to purchase power and/or privilege.

Shades of King George III (1760-1820).

Uprisings by Libyans, the people, being exasperated with their lot, led, eventually, to the downfall of the Gaddafi Regime and, with it, fell his many cronies.

Due to the chaotic situation that followed, throughout the country, and the lack of institutional safeguards, having been put in place, today, it is, simply put: Might has the Right.

In short, there is a free-for-all within the country, with one, well-armed group, determined to take absolute control in order to form its style of government, while another, well-armed group has very similar intentions with another style of government that it would like to impose.

Institutional structures must be defended for very obvious, valid reasons.

Liberty must be seen as demanding of the strongest type of defence from those who would seek to prostitute it.

The colonists of the Americas, in the latter part of the 18th Century, determined and struggled with their blood to uphold the concept of liberty and the inalienable rights of man.

History is a great teacher of the future.

-- 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. TARGET
does not guarantee to publish readers' views, but reserves the right so to do subject to the
laws of libel.*