

24 Oct. 1989

JLg
HK affairs - Chen
Choi
HK

A dragon breathes fire

DAVID CHEN looks at the rift between Hongkong and China and outlines Beijing's thinking on how Hongkong should act in order to solve the differences.

BEIJING, incensed with what it perceived as an attempt to replace its socialist system by capitalism, has launched a campaign to counteract "unfriendly" actions by foreign powers, notably the United States and Britain.

China is determined to eliminate what it claims to be a base here in Hongkong to subvert and overthrow the Chinese Government, particularly through the Hongkong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement in China, a group formed to lend support to the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement in late May, which has offered monetary and other assistance to students there.

Chinese sources are adamant that the Alliance is involved in the escape route through which dissident members, including many wanted academics and students, have evaded apprehension and fled to Europe and the United States.

"We've got all the names of those leading members of Alliance engaged in the escape activities," said an impeccable Chinese source. "They constitute a very small number both within the Alliance and outside it, and we know what they have been doing."

"We also know how they have been organising these escape routes."

He refused to say what action the Chinese would take. It is known, however, that Chinese public security people have been collecting data on leading dissident groups in the territory. This could be used to try to persuade the Hongkong Government to take action.

At the latest round of the Joint Liaison Group, the Chinese side is understood to have put forward several demands including forbidding all organisations - the Alliance included - from resorting to monetary and other forms of assistance to anti-China groups both in China and abroad.

China is also reported to have asked that the Hongkong Government rescind the registration of the Hongkong branch of China Spring, a democratic movement based in the United States some 10 years ago.

But Beijing's greatest wrath was reserved for the United States, accusing it of engaging in major subversive actions by utilising three occasions: the

200th anniversary of the French Revolution, the 70th anniversary of the May 4th Movement and the 40th anniversary of the People's Republic.

The tough stand was taken following the Yang Yang case, the talented swimmer who came here to visit his relatives and who overstayed the three-month period allowed him in Hongkong.

The case, according to various sources, either close to Britain, the Hongkong Government or China, was one of indifference, ignorance, unwillingness to take resolute action, arbitrary arrest by junior officials, blunder in the initial handling of the case, misconception by the opposite negotiating parties, and in the end, the direct interference by two third parties - Taiwan and the United States.

While China was less critical of Taiwan, it has used its full weight to condemn the United States for taking Yang Yang to Washington - an action that could only be approved by some very senior officials of the State Department.

The latest "blatant" interference, as one senior Chinese official described the US action, has seemingly convinced Beijing that the United States is determined to contest socialism with its capitalism and this was but one of the latest in a series of activities that began late last year.

There is now speculation that perhaps there will be a "mini-summit" between the Governor, who has just returned from a visit to the United States, and the director of the New China News Agency here, who has recently visited Beijing for consultations and new directions.

The issue of China's refusal to accept expelled illegal immigrants from Hongkong is seen as the middle of three options - the other two being to cut off the water supply or to sharply reduce the supply of food and other necessities to Hongkong.

While the illegal immigrant issue has now been resolved, the Chinese are still demanding measures to prevent Hongkong from being used as "a subversive base against Beijing."

net, Sir Yue-kong Pao, was told repeatedly by the senior leader, Deng Xiaoping, and the new party General Secretary, Jiang Zemin, that Hongkong could not be used as a base to subvert China or to engage in counter-revolutionary activities.

Both threatened that China could not sit idly by while watching the territory continue its anti-China activities.

Analysts noted that Mr Deng's statement was made on September 27, shortly after Yang Yang's case came into the open, but before the United States' interception.

This indicated that he was angry with the democracy movements in Hongkong since June 4, and that the supreme patriarch would like the Hongkong Government to "do something" or else China would be forced to act to remove the anti-Beijing threat.

"One should not take the warning lightly," said a Chinese watcher. "Mr Deng is still the paramount leader and he remains the sole decision-maker even though some of the tactics employed in retaliation appear to be naive."

There are other irritants. The Chinese are known to be unhappy over omission in the Governor's work report of co-operation with Beijing - a phrase which has by now be-

come inevitable in similar reports.

Even more irritating was the Governor's emphasis that the Hongkong authorities have handled local affairs fairly independently of Whitehall - a reference that will have significant relevance to the future Special Administrative Region, sources added.

However, as a senior Chinese official claimed at a private gathering: "The United States is the main instigator in the current series of subversive activities and it is putting very heavy pressure on Britain and the Hongkong Government."

"The difference between China and the United States is one of confrontation against an enemy," he said. "But that between China and Britain is a combination of both confrontation, compromise and accommodation."

The key to solving China's rift with Hongkong, various Chinese sources say, lies in the elimination of Hongkong as a base for subversive action against China.

However, both sides also realise that the present impasse cannot go on for ever and while the various parties continue their quarrel, all realise that some formula must be worked out soon if the situation is not allowed to deteriorate.