CHAPTER 7

The Explosive Patten Package

On the morning of 7 October, 1992, the Gay Patten was to make his policy speech, I learned from Executive Councillors that the Governor had called them one by one to tell them that he had accepted their resignations, with the exception of the senior member who had suggested that they should, as a matter of courtesy, offer to resign. How Baroness Dunn herself felt about her colleagues being virtually dismissed while she was retained, I have never discovered, but her colleagues could be excused if they felt that they had been led into a trap so that Patten could appoint members more amenable to his political plans. To accept their resignations literally at the eleventh hour before making his policy speech the same afternoon, was indeed tricky, but as most of us came to understand, that was the nature of the man who claimed to be democratic.

Rita Fan, who had guessed what would happen when she was called before the Governor, went well prepared, and before Patten had the chance to humiliate her, she handed him a letter of resigna-
ton, not only from the Executive but also the Legislative Council. She had been a hardworking member of both Councils, was efficient and had stood up many times in the public interest. Eventually she gave her efforts to assisting in the transition to Chinese sovereignty. She then became the butt of criticism for the anti-
China lobby, including some of the media, which have done their best to make her unpopular.

There were rumours that some of the Martin Lee supporters had been invited to serve as Executive Council members, but had refused. It is worthwhile noting at this point that Martin Lee and his party have never been prepared to take responsibility. They prefer to be back-seat drivers, leaving them free to speak and court public support without having to make any decisions that might be unpopular. Members of the Executive Council have to accept the rules of collective responsibility and confidentiality. Decisions are supposed to be made by majority vote, after which members are expected to support Government action on the issue. In addition, as they are sometimes given information that is confidential during the period of discussion, they are required to remain silent on an issue until it is ready for disclosure to the public. I believe all cabinets behave in this way because there is no purpose in raising public anxiety until the cabinet has reached a consensus on an issue to put before the public for consultation. However, politicians who like to open their mouths first and think afterwards are not likely to accept such rules, because their purpose is not what is for the public good, but what is best for their own party's publicity. I am not advocating secrecy that cheats the people, but merely confidentiality at the early stages of discussion. For example, what would be the point in worrying the public that their taxes may be raised when after discussion it may be decided not to raise them? That some governments abuse confidentiality and collective responsibility cannot be denied, but that does not invalidate the system.
That the system was abused by Chris Patten, I have little doubt. Immediately after making his speech on 7 October, the afternoon following his virtual firing of the Executive Council, he appointed a completely new "cabinet", with Baroness Dunn as the leader. Most of those appointed were staunch supporters of the so-called "democratic" camp, though one or two failed to meet that criterion. I later learned that the Council was no longer run on democratic consensus lines, but that the members were simply told what Patten had decided and they were expected to acquiesce. That piece of information was given to me by one of the newly appointed members, and I have no reason to doubt its veracity, having witnessed the Governor's autocratic style in all areas of his government while in Hong Kong.

The very way in which he put his policy speech before the public on 7 October was autocratic. As Governor, he was supposed by constitutional law to discuss new policies with the Executive Council. He had circumvented this provision by firing (because that was what the "resignations" amounted to) the current Council, and not announcing the new Council until after he had finished his speech introducing radical changes in policy. When I questioned him later during question time whether his action was not unconstitutional, he merely replied that at the time of the policy address he had no Executive Council to consult. Tricky? I would call it totally unprincipled.

His dealings with China were equally tricky, and China was in no mood to tolerate deception. During his speech Patten had mentioned that Britain had discussed some part of the Patten package when the Foreign Ministers of Britain and China had met in New York two weeks earlier on some other business. At that meeting, China had made it very clear that the Basic Law would not be changed, but to this Patten arrogantly imposed his own opinion: "This is not the only way of building up democracy in Hong Kong. I am keen that we should explore in parallel how to develop our representative institutions to the maximum extent within the terms of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. The Foreign Secretary told his opposite number at the New York meeting to which I referred earlier, what I have in mind."

No matter that hundreds of Hong Kong people had given input to the formulation of the Basic Law, no matter that the Basic Law Drafting Committee had spent time and effort hammering out the law with much input from Hong Kong lawyers, no matter that the proposals made by the British Foreign Minister in 1990 had been included almost entirely, and no matter that the Basic Law, China's Constitution for Hong Kong had been passed by the Chinese National People's Congress, Chris Patten, with no knowledge or experience in this part of the world was going to tell China how to improve her constitution and how to interpret her own Basic Law. Whenever I think about this, I marvel at the arrogance of this last colonial ruler who tried to revert to the methods of the nineteenth century, but luckily the gun-boat policy could no longer be used. It is not surprising that the Hong Kong cartoonists thereafter depicted Patten as batman flying to the rescue of Hong Kong. In time, the cartoon added some plaster-covered wounds where he had been attacked.
Patten in his policy speech continued his arrogance and to act unilaterally, ignoring the agreements made between the two Foreign Secretaries in 1990. His purpose, he said, was "to demonstrate to our Chinese colleagues the benefits which a more representative system will bring to Hong Kong. The proposals I am putting forward will require serious discussion with Peking." The package he was putting forward, he claimed, was only the "broad shape" of what he hoped to agree with the Chinese Government. "Let me emphasise: these proposals are not the final programme." Indeed, his proposals were his final programme because he never moved one word away from his package. Moreover, he seemed unable to grasp the fact that we were dealing with a Chinese Constitution for Hong Kong to be implemented after the reversion of Hong Kong to China, and what China did was none of his business. The Joint Declaration had been made by the two Governments, China and Britain, and the colonial government in Hong Kong had not been party to that agreement, though China was careful to consult local residents on the Basic Law. China had never tried to interfere with the British Letters Patent, which is the British Constitution for Hong Kong as a colony, an arrogant document I must add. How dare this Governor tell China what she should be doing after 1997? China had made it clear that the colonial Government was free to make any changes it liked before July 1997, but that the transition would be interrupted if the political system in 1997 differed from the Basic Law.

Having discourteously ignored the Chinese leaders in Beijing since his arrival in July, as no other colonial Governor in recent years had done, Patten announced his intention of going to Beijing (or Peking as he insisted on calling the Capital, Peking being the Cantonese pronunciation of the name). He was given the treatment he deserved, being met by lower officials at the airport. After all, he was not the negotiator with China, though he seemed to imagine he was the colonial boss of all China. With his usual tactics (one might call them "tricks"), he sought local backing for his visit. Jimmy McGregor was always willing to oblige, having served the colonial government all his life, and now a member of the Legislative Council for the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce, whose advice to him he ignored when it suited him.

After the Governor's policy address, members of the Legislative Council are always given two weeks to prepare their speeches in what is conventionally called the "Motion of Thanks", though it gradually developed into a motion of "No Thanks". In this case Mr. McGregor decided not to wait two weeks but to move a motion on 14 October supporting Patten's plan in part, to give the Governor some backing for his visit to China. Usually the Martin Lee party would have strongly objected to McGregor's preempting of members' speeches but in this case he not only failed to agree with those who did object, but actively lobbied support for the motion. Many of us had not been accustomed to tricky politics and this motion caught us unprepared, and short of time for consultation with our constituents. I tried to find out the views of my Urban Council constituency, but some, as I discovered later, were so angry at Patten's plan that they refused to comment and did not return my survey paper. Those of the Martin Lee camp of course did return them with their support for McGregor's motion. I personally wanted to vote strongly
against it, but when my constituents, the Urban Council returned their survey forms, 12 had supported the motion, eight objected and the remaining twenty either abstained or did not reply. I said in my speech that I opposed the motion personally, but as a majority of those who had replied to my survey had supported it, I therefore supported it reluctantly, most reluctantly. Had we been given time, the result would have been different. When later I made another survey, and after members had had time to discuss Patten's plan, over 80 percent of the Urban Councillors opposed it.

Later, my opponent in the 1995 election dishonestly told my constituents that I had voted in favour of Patten's plan then changed my mind. Szeto Wah did a number of such distortions of my words. I had made it perfectly clear in my speech on the motion that I was not personally agreeing with it, but simply being democratic in stating the views of the half of the members who had given me their opinions. The fact is that I never, on any occasion, from his arrival and our first meeting in July 1992, agreed to Patten's claiming the right to interpret the Basic Law. It had been hammered out over a number of years with local input, and was broadly accepted. Patten's arrival seemed to indicate a complete change of heart by the British Government, and it was not without reason that some thought that Britain was still seeking to keep control on the administration. I find it hard to understand why Britain, including Douglas Hurd who had been so emphatic that changes could not be made, took a U-turn after the much-regretted departure of Sir David Wilson as Governor.

Speaking on McGregor's motion on 14 October, I said: "A smooth transition could preserve what democracy we have, while a rough passage in 1997 could destroy what we have". Chris Patten in fact came very near to destroying what we had, and credit should be given to China that she preserved what we had in spite of the breakdown of relations between the two countries on political affairs.

Martin Lee, of course was in his element with a Governor who had a common interest with him, and the McGregor motion played right into his hands. He lobbied me to support the motion, telling me that as the Chairman of the House Committee, I should support the motion. Maybe what he was hinting at was that his party had proposed me for Chairman and it was largely with their support that I had been elected to the chair. However, as chairman one of my responsibilities was to be totally neutral in matters of procedure, and as an independent member of the Council that was not difficult. However, in matters of public concern debated by the whole Council, my duty was to my constituents, and to my conscience. In reply to Martin's lobbying, I replied that I knew the motion breached the Basic Law and would create problems for 1997. He laughed at my fears. "That doesn't matter," he said, "in 1997 all the international communities will support us." I reminded him that other countries would do whatever was good for their economies, and what was good for Hong Kong. That was a bitter lesson Martin later had to learn when only Britain and the United States boycotted the unification ceremony in 1997, and even Britain and the United States have been falling over each other to capture the Chinese market.

Martin Lee's party had, and still has, an all-male core which makes all decisions, apparently in camera, decisions that members must follow or quit: their idea of democracy, though not mine.
After Patten had made his policy address on 7 October 1992, I happened to travel down in the lift of the Legislative Council Chamber with three or four of them. They were ecstatic. "You must be very happy about the political package," I remarked. Yes, they were. They had already counted how many extra seats it would gain for them, especially from the Election Committee, as revised by Patten. The original Election Committee in the Basic Law provided a wider electorate, being composed of four sectors of the population covering business, professions, grassroots organisations and experienced public figures. The Patten plan limited the voting to less than 300 District Board Members. The Martin Lee party had been working on this by putting social workers and party members into the districts where they could win the hearts (and votes) of the local people by handouts for the needy, concerts, cheap travel tickets and other treats which I would myself have felt were pretty near to bribery. We had once had a Member of Parliament in my home town, Newcastle, who did this kind of thing to get votes. We nicknamed him "Tea Party Bob" and my family never voted for him for that reason. But many people living especially in housing estates, which became their target, were old and illiterate, or poor and in need. It was natural that, after being given a treat, asked to mark a cross on a paper to register them as voters, and then told where to put a cross on election day, they would feel under obligation to do so. District Board Members can often obtain a seat on only a few hundred votes, and it was in the interests of any party to woo the poorest and oldest people to sign up and vote. That is why I prefer the larger constituencies where it is not so easy to influence voters by offering services. Patten's Election Committee proposal was therefore a gift of half the ten seats in the Election Committee constituency, possibly more.

Douglas Hurd cannot be excused for going along with this plan. He had made proposals to China that the Election Committee should include different categories of persons from the business, professional, grassroots organisations and other persons of wide experience in public life. The Basic Law did exactly that, and now Patten had overruled it all, making it a small circle of people who knew each other, being often of the same party, persons sometimes with little or no experience of public service, persons who had two votes in the same constituency (Geographical and Election Committee) and some who had gained seats on the District Boards with only a few hundred votes. In fact, the Election Committee was tailored to serve the interests of Martin Lee's party. Is it any wonder that some of us called the whole plan a conspiracy to keep colonial control through a political party? And is it any wonder that China began to plan anew for 1997 on the grounds that there could be no through-train. The "Through train" was an arrangement spelled out in the Basic Law, which stated: "If the composition of the last Hong Kong Legislative Council before the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is in conformity with the provisions of this Decision and the Basic Law, those of its members who uphold the Basic Law of the H.K.S.A.R. ... may, upon confirmation by the Preparatory Committee, become members of the first Legislative Council of the Region." Nothing could have been more clear. Patten set out to prove that his package was in conformity. In fact, it breached the Basic Law in about a dozen places!
As far as the Hong Kong people were concerned, Patten had in fact made all the wrong moves. The first was his coming to Hong Kong to take over a job with no knowledge of the culture of the people he was to govern or the Chinese with whom he was pledged to cooperate on the transfer of sovereignty. The next wrong move was to accept at face value the claim of Martin Lee's party to be democratic. I had made that mistake myself until I noticed that they had a different agenda which was certain to end up with confrontation with China. The next wrong move was to imagine that he could single-handedly interpret China's Basic Law, the Constitution for Hong Kong after June 1997. In the correspondence between the British and Chinese Foreign Ministers in 1990 it had been agreed that further details would be discussed. Apparently there had been no such discussions, or if there were, the public had not been told.

It had been the custom for previous Governors, MacLehose, Youde and Wilson, to keep close touch with China and they had all made frequent visits to Beijing. It must be assumed that if Patten did not visit Beijing, that would be his decision in view of the fact that other Governors had been welcomed there. Patten arrived in Hong Kong in July, 1992 but was boorish enough to ignore China and then, after three months of silence, to make his speech giving his own interpretation of the Basic Law. He intended then and only then to visit Beijing and possibly imagined that China would bow down and thank him for his political package. Even the Emperor a century and a half earlier had refused to bow down to the colonials and had only submitted under British gunfire. Patten's attitude suggests arrogance, maybe racism, and as time went on and the Chinese did not submit one inch, he became more and more like the colonials of a past generation. To the grassroots people in Hong Kong he condescended to shake the hands of the elderly and kiss the babies, but this was all part of the drive for popularity. The ugly colonial appeared when he was exasperated because he did not get his own way.

He was not the only one to feel frustrated. Lu Ping too was frustrated at the sudden change of heart of the British side. Usually polite, he occasionally used colourful epithets about Patten that were probably grossly exaggerated or mistranslated by the sensation-seeking media. Patten's barbs, however, were more biting in their sarcasm, and with his excellent knowledge of English Lu Ping understood well how demeaning they were.

Lord MacLehose, who neither gave nor received such angry exchanges between himself and the Chinese, had this to say: "It seems Chris Patten has not received very good advice - or has not followed it ... I am deeply worried. I can see no prospect of the satisfactory working relationship with the Chinese as I had hoped to see and which the people of Hong Kong wanted. That doesn't mean agreeing with the Chinese on everything, but a relationship where the differences can be discussed and settled quietly and positively. And this seems now to me to be impossible, given the relationship that has emerged."
Sir Edward Youde had died in office when he was Governor, and I found his wife greatly distressed at the turn of events on an issue on which he had worked himself to death. Sir David Wilson, with his usual diplomatic courtesy, a virtue alien to Chris Patten, said he would not, as a recent Governor replaced by Patten, make any public comments, but he made it clear through friends that this was a tragic end to all efforts for a smooth transition. The former Governors' views were supported by similar statements by former ambassadors to China, some in the Foreign Office, as well as the few Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords who had any deep knowledge of Hong Kong and China, and where confrontation would lead.

Patten, however, was a real chip off the Thatcher block. He knew nothing of diplomacy but enjoyed playing political tricks, provided he could get the better of his opponents. To understand the true undemocratic nature of the last Governor, as he loved to be called (though in fact he seemed a shade worse than Hong Kong's first Governor who had come to rule with gunpower), one has to look at what he called "public consultation". When putting forward his political package he had said they were only proposals and could be amended. That was untruthful. His officials were sent to meet District Boards and the two Municipal Councils, but only to explain what had been decided for their future and not to accept any of their amendments. Calling for the public to suggest amendments, he published two large volumes of their proposals, but accepted not one word or sentence. In fact, before the Bill was put before the Legislative Council it had already been passed in Britain and signed by Her Majesty, the Queen. It confirmed the arrangement in summary agreed between Mr. Hurd and Mr Qian, the Foreign Ministers of Britain and China. The wording is copied hereunder, dated 19 July 1993:

HONG KONG

Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Our other Realms and Territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

3(1) V1 (1) of the principal Letters Patent is revoked and replaced by the following new paragraph (1):-

(1) there shall be a Legislative Council in and for the Colony, and the said Council shall consist of sixty Members, being persons who are qualified for election and elected in accordance with laws in that behalf in force in the Colony and of whom-

(a) twenty shall have been returned in respect of geographical constituencies, and

(b) thirty shall have been returned in respect of functional constituencies, and

(c) ten shall have been returned by an Election Committee.

So Martin Lee could have continued screaming for 30 elected and Emily Lau for 60, but the numbers were already in the colonial law books and the Queen had appended her signature.
It was not unusual for the Government to introduce changes in the Constitution without informing the Hong Kong public. The three points mentioned in the British Letters Patent were in fact the only parts of the Basic Law that Governor Patten accepted and insisted upon leaving unchanged. For the rest of the Basic Law, he found any loophole he could to insert his own ideas, and where there were no loopholes, he inserted them anyhow.

I have already mentioned the flaws in the Election Committee which in no way met the Basic Law. I will now show that the functional constituencies were also a Patten invention, in fact, sheer gerrymandering for Martin Lee's associates.

Functional constituencies had been introduced by the British colonial government in 1985. The intention was to inject some expertise into the Legislative Council through electoral colleges. There were already 21 such constituencies, for example those of the teachers, the lawyers (which Martin Lee once occupied), engineers, architects, workers unions and so on. For 1995 as well as in the Basic Law, there were to be another nine functional constituencies. It was taken for granted that the nine new constituencies would follow the same pattern and no doubt that is why details were not spelled out in the Basic Law.

Patten, supported by Martin Lee and Company, cunningly changed the whole concept of functional constituencies for the nine new ones, making them into direct elections in which every working person would have a double vote. For example, in the new Textile Constituency, voters and candidates could be anyone working in a textile factory, whether as a floor-sweeper, a lorry driver, a worker, a foreman, a manager, or an owner. The one elected was to represent everyone in the trade, employer and employee alike, though how anyone could do so was anyone's guess. The new Community Social and Personal Services Constituency was to be even more amusing. The candidate for that would have to represent all civil servants from directors to road sweepers, shoe repairers, knife sharpeners, even to overseas domestic servants, totalling, if they all registered to vote, about half a million people. All of these people already had a vote in the geographical constituency, and now they had an extra vote. The total number entitled to a second vote was 2.5 million. By doubling every worker's vote, Patten was able to tell the world (and he never missed any chance to do so deceitfully) that he had enfranchised two and a half million voters.

Actually, about four and a half million people were entitled to a single vote in the geographical area, but only about half had ever registered, and of those, only about 20 percent went out to vote. Now Patten had given an extra vote to a further 2.5 million as double votes. Even so, with a possible total of seven million votes, the total who did vote in the 1995 election barely touched one million, and of those many were double votes. Not exactly a rush for Patten's democracy! Some women complained that as unemployed housewives, they had one vote, while the overseas domestic helper, if they had one, could vote twice, once in the geographical constituency and once as a voter in the Community Social and Personal Services Constituency.

Patten could have no other purpose in introducing this absurd system except to scoop up more seats for his friends by giving
supporters two votes instead of one. One must admit it was a cunning strategy to tell the world that he was offering an expanded franchise, a more democratic system. But to my simple mind he was making the system less democratic by favouring over half of the voters with two votes.

We, as well as Patten, knew that Martin Lee's party was well-organised, had unlimited resources, sought donations, and had for ten years been working on the districts, especially in public housing estates and getting support by organising demonstrations on populist causes. If the workers wanted more holidays, more compensation, more long-service payment, better and cheaper transport, lower taxes and rates but better facilities, the party always had a member delegated to organise a march with slogans and banners. Not that such demonstrations can do much in an administrative-led Government where politicians can shout at civil servants but can do little to implement any policy with a costing effect. The public would see them shouting and they would get the credit, while the civil servants would take the blame for non-implementation of their demands. If politicians had to take responsibility for whatever they propose, the voters would soon learn that no government can increase benefits and at the same time reduce taxes, unless the taxes are too high in the first instance, but that rarely happens. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the Hong Kong Government to operate because so many politicians depending on votes do not have to bear responsibility for the motions they introduce, or for the private bills which have no legal effect unless signed by the Governor.

The situation that is developing makes me wonder if the oft-quoted words of Winston Churchill, "Democracy is the best of all bad systems" should not be changed to "Democracy has become the worst of all good systems". It is all too easy to deceive the public who, most of the time, do not realise how many of the promises made to them are genuine and in any case how many can legally be implemented.

Propaganda has become the lord of all elections, and no one knows more than Chris Patten how to use it. He made an early start in the election of Mayor Lindsay in New York, when he became the head of the "Dirty tricks, stop Buckley Campaign" a job he had said was "good fun". I am afraid such a title would trouble my conscience and not provide much fun.

He made an early start in Hong Kong when he had a hand in setting up the "Eastern Express", after the Government mouthpiece, the "South China Morning Post", changed hands. For some time I did not know of the connection, so I was puzzled when a man named Steve Vines phoned me before the first edition had been printed, to ask me what I knew about Dr. Raymond Lee. I told Vines quite truthfully that Dr. Lee had been an active member of the Reform Club, a member of the Urban Council, that he had later emigrated but had since died. Vines wanted more than that. He wanted to know about Dr. Lee's property in the New Territories, or that of his son. I had no idea whether Dr. Lee had any property anywhere, and knew nothing at all about his son. I do not meddle in the family affairs of others. A week later, Steve Vines phoned me again. I do not know if he had forgotten that I had answered his questions, or whether he thought I had hidden something from him, but as his question was the same, so was my reply.
Imagine my surprise when, in the first day issue of the "Eastern Express" the whole page told a story about a former Acting Governor of Hong Kong and some property that formerly belonged to the Lee family. I later discovered that the former Acting Governor had opposed Patten's package very strongly, and obviously he was to be discredited. On the day the story was printed, his wife had heard loud knocking on the door, and when she opened it, pressmen swarmed over her house taking photographs and asking questions. The victims were in no doubt as to why they had been libelled. The story, as far as I remember, died a natural death. I was told that anyone who had crossed Patten's path to fame would find himself in trouble.

My first experience of that came immediately after the Policy Speech, when the Governor held a public meeting which I politely attended. He took questions from the audience, and one man complained something about housing, I cannot remember the details. When the Governor did not give a satisfactory answer and the man persisted, Patten remarked sarcastically, "Why don't you ask Mrs. Tu? She can do anything!" I was taken by surprise, and colleagues considered that it was intended as an insult. I had met the Governor only once and had never said I could do anything for anyone in need. It was an indication, as I later discovered, that I was on his blacklist - not that I cared about that. I only wondered why.

The "Eastern Express" was set up in 1993. Its owners agree that it was to be a Government and Patten mouthpiece, with some articles supplied by the Governor's people. His private secretary admits that he supplied information and wrote some articles. David Ford, said by many to work for M16, was also involved. Several letters appeared in the newspaper alleging that I had once been a democrat but had changed my stance. Such letters always appeared with Chinese names, but I was not deceived because the style was totally English without a sign of the usual style of Chinese writing or thinking. They were very damaging, because I was frequently asked by newsmen what had made me "give up democracy". I used to write in reply explaining the falsehoods in these letters, but each time, either the editor, Steve Vines, would not print what I wrote, or when he did print, he missed out words, distorted meanings, made grammatical and spelling mistakes, to make nonsense of my letters. I had never complained about printing errors, which do occur in some articles, but this was too much, so I phoned Steve Vines and asked why he was doing this to me. That made things worse because he replied, "I think you're paranoid". However, on that very day, the Oriental Press fired him on the grounds of incompetence which had nothing to do with my complaint made to him personally on the telephone.

Relations between the Patten clique and the Oriental Press soured, and Vines was removed. The Governor then needed another newspaper to do his propaganda. From hearsay, I learned that a solution was found when the Martin Lee party introduced a new Chinese newspaper, which came out of the blue, and provided propaganda for Patten and his political supporters. It sold at a cut-throat price which forced several other newspapers to close down, and also created an adversary for the Oriental Press group that had dumped Patten. The new newspaper, I was told, belonged to a relative of a leading member of Martin Lee's party.
It was now the turn for the Oriental Press to be savaged. I have seen some files on the row between the Governor and the Group. The Chinese newspaper of this group, the "Oriental Daily News" began to get charges against it and was taken to court for printing what was said to be pornography. One picture showed a small boy with terrible burns to the face, a fire victim. Personally I thought it was educational in warning children of the horrible consequences of fire. The "Ming Pao" had printed the same picture without being charged. Another picture printed by the Oriental Press brought a charge. It was of a naked statue in Exchange Square. Thousands of people walked past that statue every day, so it was difficult to see why the newspaper had been charged but the statue remained there. The Oriental Group explained to me that they had had 33 uncalled-for charges in nine months, all of which they attributed to revenge. The new newspaper and the Oriental Group are still locked in battle, and one wonders what role has been played by Patten and the so-called "democrats". One can only hope that any dirty tricks campaign will eventually be exposed.

I am printing some correspondence that tells its own tale. It appears at the end of this chapter. There is a receipt for a million pounds sterling "donated" by the Oriental Group to the British Conservative Party. There is also a letter querying why the commitment made by the Party along with the donation was not fulfilled and for the return of the money for that reason. I am told that the Tory Party has refused to return the money. In fact, I have seen a letter to that effect. I do not want to repeat the whole tale, but the gist of the matter is that a person in Taiwan is sick and wants to return to Hong Kong to be with his family when he dies. He was wanted for a serious offence, one which I would not tolerate. However, it was committed at a time when such persons were protected and even assisted in their criminal activities by the then corrupt Hong Kong Police. He fled to Taiwan, as much to prevent him splitting on his police connections as to save his own neck. All the Police were granted an amnesty. Why not he too, since he has been living in exile for over twenty years, while the corrupt police who worked with him went back to their jobs, and most are now on retirement pension? I am not condoning, but asking only for justice. According to the Press Group mentioned, Patten played middle-man in negotiating with the Conservative Party to arrange for the man to return from Taiwan. I have seen letters that prove the Party wrote to Taiwan for medical certificates so the Party cannot plead innocence in the deal. If the Party considered that this man, because of his past crimes, cannot come to die in Hong Kong, why did they accept the money? The Tory Party and Mr. Patten have a case, to answer there. Do I hear any of his political allies here in Hong Kong asking questions? I am sure they will see only the side they want to see.

After the Governor had made his explosive electoral reform speech, he introduced the British Parliamentary system of Question Time, no doubt imagining himself as Prime Minister. A trained and gifted orator as well as a good "music hall" performer, he was well experienced in all the tricks of evading questions and impressing
his audience by his quickwittedness, it is uncertain whether his motive was to inform or perform. Question Time attracted some of the local politicians because it gave another chance to those who wanted to 'stage a show'. Now they had an additional chance to posture before the cameras. Previous Governors had never staged such shows. It is doubtful whether they serve a real purpose, because there are policy secretaries who are, or should be, much more familiar with the issues and should be publicly accountable. A Governor must spend a lot of time familiarising himself with the nitty-gritty issues that a question time may raise, and if he could not give an informed reply he would certainly circumvent the question. I think it is arguable whether much can be gained, or on the other hand how much could be lost, by putting the Chief Executive on the stand to answer questions that the heads of the branches (or bureaux as they are now called) should answer. Being a straightforward person who gives the unvarnished facts no matter how disagreeable, Tung Chee Hwa would no doubt have a rough time which he would not attempt to escape by devious non-answers. He needs to spend his time on more important matters than stage-shows.

On the first day I was able to ask a question in Patten's question time, I had with me two letters, one from the former Foreign Secretary, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, and the other from the Minister for Hong Kong, David Owen. They were dated 1978. They were replies to letters I had sent signed by several Urban Councillors of that time, asking for a legislative system like that recently introduced in Macau. At that time the whole Legislative Council of Hong Kong was appointed, so elected Urban Councillors were the only ones likely to call for more democracy. No cry for democracy came from Martin Lee or Szeto Wah, who at that time were at least 40 years old. The new Macau system gave the people a legislature with one-third elected seats, one-third indirectly elected and similar to Hong Kong's first functional constituencies introduced in 1985 after it was known that Hong Kong would be reunited with China. The remaining one third in the Macau system was by appointment. That seemed to us to be a good step forward for democracy. But Goronwy-Roberts and David Owen both replied that we had to go carefully on democracy in Hong Kong to maintain prosperity and stability. In my question to Chris Patten, I asked why Britain had for so long denied even one step towards democracy, and now he was proposing something drastic that was unacceptable to China. The reply Patten gave me was the real "music hall stuff". He said, "I was not the Governor then." He did not seem to remember that he was at that time a member of the House of Commons, and while other Members had raised questions on democracy, he had shown no interest. That was the quality of the replies he would make when he knew he had taken the wrong way. On one occasion, when Tam Yiu Chung questioned him about the 1990 correspondence between Mr. Qian and Mr. Hurd, which agreements Patten had so glibly thrown on the garbage heap, the Governor just snorted an angry "NO", and called the next question. We were all shocked at his rudeness, especially as Tam Yiu Chung is very polite and was asking a reasonable question.
The Patten political package was the beginning of a five year rift between Britain and China, 1992 to 1997. It was difficult to know how much support Patten had in London, and who was really behind the rift. Some say it was Patten alone who, knowing nothing about Hong Kong, China, and Asia in general, was acting like a bull in a china shop, with all the arrogance that colonials had displayed in the early days of the colony, an arrogance that revived ill-feeling that Governors had for the past two decades tried to avoid. Some believed that Governor Wilson had been removed from office at the behest of a group of London-based businessmen such as Jardines, who had always looked upon Hong Kong as their own private property, and that Governor Wilson had not played according to their rules. Others consider that it was a combination of the British Government's reluctance to hand back Hong Kong, coupled with the rise of a local political force hiding under the name "democrat" when their real agenda was to stir up political confrontation both in China and with Hong Kong, using Hong Kong as a subversive base. Personally I am inclined to think that all these elements met together and joined forces to carry out their own agenda. Maybe history will eventually reveal the facts. One thing I do know is that the majority of people in Hong Kong wanted to get on with their lives undisturbed, and looked forward to being masters in their own house instead of second class citizens of a colony.

In my estimation, the advent of Patten was a disaster in every way, one that the local people faced with courage and patriotism to bring about a peaceful transition in the end. No other colony had been decolonised so peacefully. In most, there had been violent division, as witnessed in India, Malaysia and countries of Africa, where a divide and rule policy had encouraged brother to fight brother in the name of religion, culture and politics.

The sad part of the saga is that within months of the euphoric return of sovereignty, Hong Kong was hit by disaster after disaster. Disease not known before, chicken 'flu, red tide wiping out fish farms, an early start to summer cholera, multiple blunders in hospitals resulting in deaths, and, worst of all, the economic crisis that has halved the value of shares, created hitherto unknown unemployment, bankruptcies and business closures, have played havoc with the life-style of the Hong Kong people and wiped out the progress of the past two decades. It is not surprising that people are asking, "Is it sabotage?" Is it possible that some who had hoped to prolong the colonial era are now trying to destroy what they cannot control? Most of us are in the dark about the economic forces creating the chaos. Those who understand least simply blame the new government. Those who claim to understand all offer conflicting remedies, and, like lawyers, few economists agree with each other on what to do.

Patten, during his "reign of ERROR" here, boastfully said that Britain was leaving a new airport, equal to "Cleopatra's dowry". So what part did British firms play in the disastrous opening days? Were contracts given to incompetent firms, or was there some fiddling with the amount of money paid for inefficient equipment? One can only hope that the enquiry now in progress will give a credible explanation of what went wrong. Meanwhile Hong Kong has unfairly gained a reputation for inefficiency that originated in the days before 1997. However, it is human nature to blame the government of the day for the sins of its predecessors. Again, only history may give us the answers to these questions.
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NOTE

On questioning the donor why the words "Anonymous Donor" had been struck out and a name substituted on the receipt, * I was told that according to law, the donor must be named.

*Elsie TU
1 April, 1997

Rt. Hon. Brian Malwhinny, MP
Chairman
Conservative and Unionist Party
Central Office
Smiths Square
London SW1

Dear Mr. Malwhinny,

As you may be aware, my family, through me, has been frequent and major contributor to your Party.

My family is concerned given that one of these contributions for £1,000,000 (Receipt No. A10885 dated 29.6.94) was made with certain commitments that with a general election only a few weeks away; and with the uncertainties that the outcome of which I am sure there is no need to dwell upon, that there appears to have been no satisfactory outcome to the explicit expectations of my family prior to and during the period during which the various contributions to which I have earlier referred were made.

Various conversations regarding my family's expectations in supporting your Party at a difficult time in its history took place with Lord Hambro, Sir Phillip Harris, Rt. Hon. David Mellor and other senior parliamentary members of your Party and there is no doubt in my mind that the expectations of my family were clearly understood by all concerned. Indeed, Mr. Mellor subsequently did make various trips to Hong Kong to try and handle the matter and reported to us with the progress (or the lack of it) made.

In the light of present circumstances and the publications made over the recent past within the British press concerning the background of certain members of my family and the bona fides of the source of the family's wealth you may consider it appropriate for my family as well as for the well being of your Party in the forthcoming general election to return the sum of this particular contribution made. In this respect, I should be grateful if you would remit the fund to my account as follows:

Mr. MA Ching Kwan

In considering this matter should you require further details or information, please contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. C. K. Ma
CONSERVATIVE.

11th April 1997

Dear Dr. Ma,

The Party Chairman has asked me to reply to your letter. As you will know, we are at the moment in the middle of a General Election campaign, fighting an intense campaign for the principles and policies in which we believe - and which I know you share. We must protect the UK from the threat of the Labour Party which has done so much damage to our country every time it has been in power in the past.

The election demands round-the-clock attention and the Chairman is travelling widely throughout the country. I know he will wish to give your letter the attention it deserves and that he will write to you again as soon it is possible.

With very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Michael Trend
Deputy Chairman of the Party

Dr C K Ma,
Oriental Press Centre,
Wang Tai Road,
Kowloon Bay,
Hong Kong.

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PERSONAL

7 June 1974

Thank you for your letter of 10 July.

[Signature]

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