

# COLONIAL HONG KONG IN THE EYES OF ELSIE TU

杜葉錫恩



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## A First Taste of Hong Kong in the 1950s

**I**t was in February 1951 that our last group of missionaries made their way to Hong Kong from Nanchang, the capital city of Jiangxi Province. Some of the older missionaries had already left in early 1949 as the civil-war fighting in China drew nearer to that province. None of us, however, had been forced to leave by the new Communist government, which reached Nanchang in mid-1949 and proclaimed final victory over the Nationalists in October of that year.

The fact was that social conditions did improve after the Communists took over. None of the atrocities we had been taught to expect in fact occurred. Inflation eased, the economy picked up, law and order were restored, and facilities such as electricity, roads, communications and transport were greatly improved. We had no means of knowing whether this was true of all areas of China, but Jiangxi was special. Nanchang had been the headquarters of the popular Chou En-Lai (Zhou Enlai), and we missionaries were fortunate that the man put in charge of our affairs had been educated in a missionary college in Shanghai, knew how to deal with foreigners, and helped us with much useful advice on how to deal with the new government. On the surface, everything seemed fine, and no Chinese, not even the army, seemed to mind the foreigners among them, even though, theoretically if not in fact, the British and other European residents were enemy aliens, especially when war broke out between North and South Korea under the auspices of the United Nations. During that war, a son of one of our Chinese church elders was killed while fighting for North Korea,

and was given a hero's funeral. However, towards the end of 1950, rumours reached us that all missionaries would be leaving China, and that, presumably, the British Government had advised all British nationals to leave. Our Chinese friends also advised us to leave, for our own safety, although the government never treated us as enemies. Nevertheless, tension was high because of the war in Korea, and reluctantly we decided to travel first to Hong Kong, and from there make plans to join our church members in Borneo. In the event, we never left Hong Kong, and I have remained here for over fifty years.

The journey to Hong Kong by train to the border at Lo Wu was uneventful, and our crossing on the narrow little bridge from the Chinese village of Shenzhen to British-ruled Hong Kong, on the other side of the river, was achieved without incident. At one end of the bridge flew the Chinese flag, and at the other, the British Union Jack, which as I idealistically believed, stood for British justice. But I was wrong on that score, as I was soon to realize.

During those first days in Hong Kong we visited members of our Hong Kong English-speaking church. One of them worked in the public works department of the Hong Kong government. He told us of the corruption that overruled all laws and policies in Hong Kong. I personally was shocked, because I had expected to find Hong Kong ruled by a democratic government with a reputation for British justice. Corruption and justice do not make good companions, and I thought our public works department friend must have been exaggerating. He was not.

Also among the first people we met was a doctor working for the Hong Kong government, a European, who confirmed what the expatriate employee of the public works department had told us. He advised me to buy a camera and take photographs of what I saw in that connection, and give them to the press. He said the only way to deal with corruption was to make senior officials 'hot under the collar' as he put it. I never forgot his advice, but unfortunately at that time I was unable to put it into practice, partly because I could not afford to buy a camera, and partly because of our church's strict rules against women speaking up. My former husband would not even allow

me to write letters to anyone except relatives and personal friends. As to criticizing the government, we Christians were supposed to concentrate on heavenly, not earthly affairs, and I was thus not allowed to write letters to the press about the injustices I witnessed.

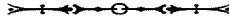
We had been in Hong Kong only a few days when a group of Chinese people came to see us at the Soldiers and Sailors Home where we were staying. They asked us to remain in Hong Kong and work with their church in a squatter community in the Wong Tai Sin area, known as Kai Tak New Village. When we explained that we could not afford to live in Hong Kong where rents were very high, they found an illegal apartment for us in their squatter area, where the rent was cheap. There we soon learned about the corruption, because every squatter had to pay the triad gangs for one thing or another, and when we refused to pay 'protection' money, a robbery attempt was made on our flat in the village on more than one occasion. Robbers in those days usually went for small things, even for socks and other clothing, though we did have our bicycles stolen from the verandah of the flat on the second storey of the house. These were later recovered, more, I suspect, because we were foreigners than because of good detection by the police. Foreigners could escape injustices while Chinese lived in constant fear of injustice. The squatters lived under constant harassment for dues to be paid, by triads who acted like tax collectors for corrupt government officials, with whom they shared their loot. To rob a European was rather risky. The government had no wish to allow the outside world to know what passed for British justice in those corrupt days.

My frustration at not being able to speak up about these injustices was only one of the reasons why I became disenchanted with our church and, eventually, in 1955, I quit that church forever. That led to the breakdown of my marriage. I found it impossible to live my life in silence in the face of injustice, nor could I continue to accept the church's Pauline teaching, which seemed to have little to do with the teaching of Jesus. Its narrow-mindedness was intolerable.

Once free from the bondage of the church, I was able to investigate more deeply the corruption and injustices permitted by the colonial

government. But at this juncture I must point out that I had no intention of causing trouble or of 'overthrowing' the government as some colonials seemed to imagine. Political change seemed to me to be the responsibility of the Chinese themselves. If they were content with the government, I would merely devote myself to trying to alleviate the worst injustices, and in this part of my book I shall relate what I remember of some of them.





## Is the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Succeeding in Its Mission?

**T**his is a question frequently asked by researchers into the Hong Kong corruption phenomenon. I believe that everyone in Hong Kong (including myself) who was familiar with the situation before the ICAC was set up, would give a hearty 'Yes' to that question. Hong Kong has become a different world, in which even young children are taught the evils of corruption either at school or on television. Corrupt people now know that their activities are in jeopardy, though some still continue to take the risk. Many of the guilty parties fled Hong Kong, some going to Taiwan where there is no extradition agreement with Hong Kong. Others settled in Canada or the United States and elsewhere. Honest people in the government are now free to report corruption without fear of being fired. Most important is the fact that aggrieved persons can go personally to the ICAC without fear that they themselves will become the accused persons instead of the real culprits.

Many people in Hong Kong believe that it was I who succeeded in setting up the ICAC, but that is only partially true. No doubt my constant efforts eventually reached the ears of those officials who did care, and no doubt the riots of 1966 and 1967 convinced the powers-that-be that something had to be done if Hong Kong was to maintain its stability. However, without the appointment of Governor Murray MacLehose, it is doubtful that the problem would have been tackled. MacLehose was a

different kind of Governor, being a diplomat, not a colonial of the old school that cared little about the rights of the local people in the colonies they ruled. Too many governors of colonies had been racists and interested only in making money during their term of office. Governor MacLehose was a good choice because he had served in the diplomatic corps in China, could speak Chinese, and loved Chinese culture. Moreover he was scrupulously honest, hardworking, and a man who knew his own mind and had the determination to achieve what he set out to do. His appointment of Alistair Blair-Kerr to head the inquiry into the Peter Godber corruption scandal was a good choice too. I had seen such inquiries many times but did not trust them because they seemed to aim at covering the facts rather than exposing the truth. For once this was not the case, and the inquiry exposed the pyramid of corruption that existed from the top to the bottom of the civil service.

Although I was very happy to see the setting up of the ICAC, I did point out some misgivings I had about its early beginnings. On the day the ICAC was introduced to the public on television in 1974, the head of the ICAC, Sir Jack Cater, went on the air saying that he believed that 'the vast majority of civil servants are not corrupt.' Also speaking on the TV programme, I opposed that attitude, pointing out that his job was to accept the possibility that the whole civil service was corrupt until he had investigated all departments to find which of them were. I was surprised that, as a civil servant himself, he did not know that corruption was widespread. However, that was not a major point. Maybe he was only trying to reassure those who remained honest. What really troubled me was the fact that the new ICAC engaged some of the police from the former Police Anti-Corruption Branch. It would be difficult to find an honest person in that branch, because no honest person was likely to have been seconded to it, since its main purpose seemed to be to protect corrupt civil servants, and it was notoriously more corrupt than the police. I always actively tried to dissuade complainants from seeking justice from that Branch, because the chances were that they would become the accused rather than the accusers. Asked by the Commissioner what I would have done in his position, I replied

that I would have gone to the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Police, told them to hand over the keys of the filing cabinets and to get out. In defence of his action, the Commissioner said that he needed expertise during the early days of the ICAC, and this police branch possessed that expertise.

I think my fears were confirmed when I took to the ICAC the case of a Housing Department officer who wanted to report corruption in that department. We were interviewed by a policeman whom I recognized as being one I had long suspected of corruption. The Housing Department complainant found that out to his grief when, soon after making his report, he was badly beaten up. I lodged a complaint about the case, and eventually the officer, a British person, was transferred out of the ICAC.

Unlike the police, who treated me as something of an enemy, I found the ICAC co-operative, and sometimes they would invite me to their offices to exchange views. My strongest reservations about the structure of the ICAC were that, although it was called 'independent' it was by no means so in its power to administer justice. While its officers could independently investigate cases, they had no power of decision to prosecute. That was a serious flaw, because the Prosecution Section of the Legal Department was notoriously corrupt. For a sizeable sum of money they could set free the biggest criminals on the grounds that there was not enough evidence to prosecute. They could, and often did, water down evidence to get a lighter sentence for the criminal who had money to pay. In fact, they were virtually the judges, withholding whatever evidence they wished to produce the sentence they wanted. To give the Legal Department the final say on whether or not an ICAC case could go ahead with a prosecution was equal to negating what the ICAC was trying to do. I opposed that policy for many years, but it still stands, although fortunately the corrupt officers of the Legal Department seem to have been ousted or retired.

On one occasion on a visit to the ICAC, I mentioned what I considered to be its major flaw, its lack of independence to prosecute. The officer I spoke to agreed that they had experienced difficulties in prosecuting some very serious cases because they were denied by the Legal Department. He mentioned that the case of a very senior British policeman, whom they had

investigated and found to be corrupt, had been rejected by the Prosecutions Section. Frustrated, the ICAC appealed to London, and eventually the policeman was tried and found guilty. The argument given by the Hong Kong government was that it was dangerous to put so much power into the hands of one department, namely the ICAC, and there was some truth in that argument. However, they would have been wise to clean up the Legal Department first before handing such powers to the corrupt Prosecutions Section, because some of the most corrupt persons escaped through this loophole. I mentioned one such case to Sir Jack Cater. Everyone knew this person was involved in serious corruption, but Sir Jack reminded me that he did not have the power to prosecute, and though the person I named was suspected, he had in fact retired and left Hong Kong.

I have been asked recently by a researcher why it appeared that British civil servants were seldom prosecuted. Did they have special privileges? To that I can only answer 'Yes', and explain that from its earliest days, the colonial system in Hong Kong afforded Extraterritorial Rights to the British and occasionally to their rich Chinese friends. Those rights, originally intended to protect British citizens residing at the treaty ports in China from the harsher laws of China a century ago, seem to have been abused, and even now there are complaints that Europeans are favoured both in decisions not to prosecute and, in some courts, even in sentencing. However, I am sure that the Judiciary until the end of the colonial period, in 1997, would have denied that.

Another weakness of the ICAC is its lack of power over triads, who form the main middle-men for corrupt civil servants, especially policemen. The ICAC can only deal with cases where it can be proved that money has been handed over. Some police who had been fired for corruption after being caught by the ICAC became comrades with triads, working in vice dens, or even running vice dens themselves. Others found jobs as strong-arm men protecting vice dens or night-clubs from attack by rival gangs. Even some serving policemen have been found ostensibly enjoying a night off duty at a night club, but have opened fire on behalf of the proprietor of the club. Through these contacts it is simple for triads to hand over money

to police, and as triad crimes are under police jurisdiction, the ICAC can do nothing to prevent corruption operating through this channel. Throughout my years on the Legislative Council, I always pushed the proposal to extend ICAC jurisdiction to cover control of triads, but that request was always rejected by the government. The excuse given for this refusal was that it would 'damage the morale of the police'. My argument has been the reverse, that it would enhance our respect for the police, and I am sure that any honest policeman would agree. I can only suspect that it would upset corrupt police who make use of the triads.

During the corrupt days before the ICAC came into being, a lady related to the police came to my office to tell me how the system with triads worked. In those days, a senior policeman expected a big bribe to recommend a junior for promotion to a high rank. Police who wanted promotion but did not have the money to pay for it would seek a loan from a triad gang in the district. The more vice there was in the district, the higher the price of promotion would be. This lady had a record of the price of a promotion in the most vice-ridden districts such as Mongkok and Wanchai. The policeman, having obtained the money to pay for his promotion, then had an obligation to the triads to protect them against any legal action. This was obviously true, for the higher-ranking police then were the worst, while honest police tended to be stuck in the lower ranks or were even sacked. Anyone who reported triad activities in the district then became the victim, because the police would forewarn the triads that someone had reported them. I remember one man who reported drug-trafficking by his Yaumati district neighbourhood, well known for its corruption. Soon after, the triads went to his house and beat him up badly. I saw his condition. His face and eyes were black. He complained that the police had informed the triads of the name and address of the man who had reported them, but he asked me not to take action on the case because obviously the police would protect the triads and not the informant. It happened once to me, when I reported quite a minor case of triad action by a landlady on her tenant. The police must have given my name to her because she came to my office to blame me for making a report to the police.

In fact, the connection between triads and police was so close that it seemed essential that the two issues should come under one jurisdiction in law, that is, under the ICAC. I am convinced even now that corruption cannot be stamped out unless triads are dealt with by some other body than the police, preferably the ICAC, because corruption and triads are so closely linked it is doubtful whether the police will ever be able to succeed so long as many of their members have triad connections. Even so, the situation is far less serious than it was in the bad old days of corruption, and some triad syndicates have been brought to book.

The triad–police connection was clearly exposed in the late 1970s, when large numbers of police were being charged with corruption in the Yaumati Fruit Market business. Everyone knew about the corruption that was rife in that wholesale market, which was controlled by triads who paid over large sums in bribes to the police to look the other way. Arrested by the ICAC, many of the junior police were convicted and imprisoned, but their evidence clearly indicated that arrests of top police would probably have had to be made soon. Then the totally unexpected happened. A large group of police officers entered the offices of the ICAC and began to attack the ICAC officers and throw plants pots at glass panes. An acquaintance of mine who had been a detective in my home town and had come to Hong Kong to join the ICAC told me that he had been in Hong Kong only a week when the attack took place and he had been pushed around. He said he could have identified every one of the police he saw involved in the incident, but the identity parade never took place, because the Governor was forced to declare an amnesty. Another friend, a member of the Legislative Council at that time, told me that the police had threatened to join with the triads and there would be a united mutiny by police supported by triads unless the arrests stopped and an amnesty was granted to police. I was disappointed that the Governor caved in, but apparently he had no choice. If the police had mutinied, law and order would have broken down completely. I believe that this amnesty greatly reduced the effectiveness of the ICAC, because it showed the extent of triad connections, and the lengths to which corrupt policemen would go to protect the rackets they were involved in.

There have been a few cases of corruption in the ICAC itself, but it appears that the Commission does not spare its own people, and some have been fired or charged. So one can say that it still does a good job. In the meantime, the public at large is no longer plagued with demands for bribes on every occasion to obtain licences or whatever they need from government officials. That cancer is under control, and for that we can all be thankful. Now when I talk to taxi drivers they all say they are thankful to be rid of the corruption that once troubled them. The ICAC provided support for honest people, and at heart I believe the vast majority of people are honest. Police are now better educated and more efficient as well as better paid. I would now like to see action taken to prevent police accumulating gambling debts, as many have committed suicide for that reason. I think it would be better if any policeman getting into debt were given one chance to change his ways, and then sacked if he fails to do so. Once police become compulsive gamblers there is no way they can be kept out of corruption or involvement with triads.

The rule of law demands honesty in the disciplined forces.



## Why Write About Democracy?

**I** think . . . all that alleged democracy is nothing but a fraud,' said Fidel Castro, president of Cuba, in a published conversation with a Catholic priest, Frei Betto, in 1986.

Castro had been called a cruel dictator by the United States press, but he had no means of responding to the accusation through the same press. During his conversation, he explained to the priest the difficulty in putting the truth before the American public and that he had come to the conclusion that, 'When you speak of freedom of the press you are really talking about freedom to own the mass media: a true dissenter from the system will not be allowed to write for the most renowned United States newspapers.' He was referring to the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and other prestigious newspapers.

Was Castro right? I read in a magazine issued recently that the United States media are all controlled by a conglomerate of six companies, all investing in each other's shares, and all singing the same political tune. I do not know if this is true, but suspect that it is. Some Americans have researched the facts and know what is going on, but most people read only the local press or watch the news on television; consequently they have no means of knowing the truth about what their country is doing or why things are done a certain way.

In recent years, only a selected number of newspapers have been allowed to report on America's wars of foreign intervention, such as that in Iraq and in the 'humanitarian intervention' in Kosovo. Generally speaking, in foreign



adventures of this kind, Americans are allowed to hear only what gives them 'feel-good' information.

That brings me to the question I put as the title to this chapter, namely, 'Why write a book about democracy?'

We people of Hong Kong have long been deprived freedom of the press, not by the present government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), but by Westernized editors, journalists or reporters who belong to the same political camp and mis-name themselves 'democrats'.

Before the reunification of Hong Kong with Mainland China in 1997, the English-language newspaper, the *South China Morning Post* was supportive of the colonial government, but at least it would sometimes print contrary views. The other English language newspaper, the *Hong Kong Standard* was quite liberal and would print both sides of the political scene. Alas, this is no longer the case. The 'Standard' has not only changed its editors but also its name; for a while it was called *iMail*, but is renamed *The Standard* in 2002. Now both these newspapers reject most views that are not in line with the Western idea of democracy. Hence we no longer have press freedom. And that is the reason why I now have to write articles or even books if I want to get anything across to the public. I am fully aware that what I write now will be read by relatively few people. In fact, I feel like a person who has just had both hands cut off in an accident, and that when I write I am just letting off steam. Still, who knows, maybe someone will read what I write some day, and at least I have made the effort.

Throughout my fifty years residence in Hong Kong I have done much of my work through the press. Whenever I felt strongly on any legislation, or whenever I found people being unjustly treated, I would expose the issue or injustice through the press, and at the same time write to the government department concerned calling for action. That method actually worked well because, without boasting, I think I can claim to have had a hand in many legislative changes in Hong Kong, from housing to education, to social welfare, to legal aid, and, most important of all, in helping to deal with corruption which was at the root of most social problems.

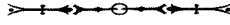
Now, since 1997, when people meet me on the street, they ask me why

I no longer write to the press. That's a good question, and my only reply is: 'The newspapers will seldom print what I say, and are only interested in anti-government or anti-China issues.' In fact I still do write to both newspapers, but the English-language press, particularly *iMail* omits almost anything that does not fit in with their own ideology. Of course, I realize that editors cannot print everything that anyone wants to write, but the change of heart on the part of this particular newspaper is too blatant for it not to be politically controlled by anti-China elements. Other people I know have also complained that they cannot get their letters printed.

In fact, it is so obvious that something is wrong, that I even wonder if they have some connections with the so-called 'democrat' camp which is now so undemocratic itself.

In fact, could there be some CIA activity? If not, Hong Kong would probably be the only former colony that has not suffered interference by the West, especially by the United States.

I have raised that last issue elsewhere in this book.



## Economic Colonialism

**I**n Chapter 23 I mentioned the political philosophy of Machiavelli, that ‘any political means, no matter how unscrupulous, is justified if it is intended to strengthen the power of any state.’ This philosophy is not dead. It has been the aim of successive American presidents during most of the twentieth century and especially in the fifty years since the Second World War. When, after the Gulf War, President Bush, Senior, talked of a ‘New World Order’ he was promising nothing new. According to writer Joel Bainerman in his book *The Crimes of a President*, this philosophy came directly from the secret society, ‘The Order of Skull and Bones’, founded over a century ago and based in Yale University, where new members are limited to 15 male students annually. The philosophy of the ‘Order’ is that its members ‘have a strategic and moral obligation to control the world’

Among the members of the Order, a man named Henry Stimson, the mentor of President George Bush, believed that America needed to enter into military confrontation every thirty years or so. President Theodore Roosevelt was merely quoting the Order’s philosophy when he said, as I quoted in Chapter 23, ‘I should welcome almost any war for I think this country needs one’.

Looking at the history of American interference in world affairs for the past fifty years, I would say that American presidents have fully carried out Stimson’s advice. However, knowing that most Americans prefer isolationism, and are not willing to sacrifice their sons on foreign battlefields, these military ventures have been largely carried out by covert operations,

except in cases where the White House was able to convince the people that 'national security' was at risk, even though the 'risk' was no greater than fear of an 'attack' on America by the tiny island of Grenada, which was invaded under that pretext. The population of Grenada is less than 200,000!

After the Second World War, the Americans grabbed the powers of the former colonials that were losing their grip on their colonies. Instead of using gunboats as the colonials had done, they used loans, gifts to local leaders, bribes, arms-sales, terrorist training to budding dictators, and, where considered necessary, threats. Whether originally for this purpose or not, they set up the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with the stated intention of assisting those countries that had suffered during the war, or who were in need of economic assistance for development. Instead of assisting those countries, the Bank and the Fund have plunged them into enormous debt, so much so that they cannot pay the interest on the loans, let alone repay the principal. It is true that some leaders in backward countries made personal gain, but the poor have been dispossessed of their land in many countries to make way for development that has brought them no benefit but only suffering. It is encouraging to see that many reformist groups are aware of the dangers of these world bodies, the World Bank and the IMF and, more recently, the World Trade Organization. The new economic colonials had plans to go one step further with a new organization, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), but even some advanced countries such as Canada have objected to an organization that would have the power to overrule the legislation of the member-governments in the event that foreign corporate bodies were impeded in their development plans in their countries. Demonstrations recently held in Seattle and Washington indicate that these world economic, finance, or trading organizations will meet with opposition when they are seen to be inflicting hardship rather than promoting development in developing or underdeveloped countries.

I am not against globalization as such because I believe that eventually our world must and should become united as a global community. However,

to achieve that ideal situation, much has to be done to ensure that the results will benefit the people of the whole world; in other words, it must be genuinely democratic. In the present state of play, the benefits go to corporations, which are enriching the rich at the expense of the poor: that is, corporations are moving their businesses where land is cheap and labour grossly underpaid and overworked, while workers in their own more affluent countries are losing their jobs to the slave-like labour of third-world countries. The aims of those corporations are clear, since they reject any proposal to introduce social reforms to protect the workers of their own countries or to abolish slave conditions in others. Clearly, their purpose is profit, not world unity, and they care not who suffers in the process of achieving their aim. The gap between rich and poor in the developed and under-developed or un-developed countries is so wide that it will be many years before we can even consider the possibility of full globalization. We need far-sighted statesmen to seek a worldwide solution to the need for world democracy in which every country will get a fair deal, while benefits will also reach the workers. Meanwhile we cannot allow greedy profit-making corporations of the more powerful countries to dictate the terms of globalization. Globalization must not mean world domination by a superpower.

The United States has enjoyed the greatest chance in the past half century, having profited from the sale of arms in the Second World War, and in their development of defeated nations after that war at the expense of those who were left devastated by the war. America has never experienced the devastation of any war in the past one and a half centuries, that is, not since their own civil war in the early 1860s. They have faithfully carried out the doctrine that wars are necessary, provided that those wars are not on American soil. They hold the key to blackmail any country that fails to toe their line, namely, the fear of nuclear bombs, a fear that prevents any country from challenging them politically or economically. As long as this undemocratic situation prevails, globalization can only pose a threat rather than a benefit to the world.

The election of George W. Bush as the President of the United States

was far from democratic, and we can expect little sense of world responsibility from him. George W. Bush, like his father and the members of the Order of Skull and Bones, believes the United States has the moral obligation to control the world. That was once the dream of British colonials. It was the dream of all imperialists from Alexander the Great of Macedonia to Adolph Hitler of Germany. The world cannot accept any more dictators, and George W. Bush should stop dreaming but read history, and of how all imperial aspirations have eventually led to failure. While the United States may pride itself as a super-power (presuming that that is something to be proud of, and with that I disagree), that country also holds the world record for murder, drug addiction, crime, and divorce.

Fortunately the world, including many Americans, is waking up to the dangers posed by a small covey of power-seeking corporations and politicians who care little for their own people and even less for those of other countries, and whose hypocritical slogan is 'democracy and human rights', a cliché they use as an excuse for aggression wherever they please.

In the pages that follow I shall give examples of that aggression, which belie the claim that they practise democratic principles and human rights.



## Epilogue

If anyone had any doubts whether George W. Bush would carry out his hawkish election promises, those doubts must now have been removed. He has made a splendid start by introducing his programme of tax relief for the long-suffering billionaires, announcing that he would pay back taxpayers' money to the taxpayers, especially to those who least need it. But not a word has escaped his lips to suggest that he will deal with the problem of the millions of undernourished and homeless families, a disproportionate number of whom are African-Americans. If they had been considered full human beings, they might at least be worthy of a roof over their heads. The ultra-capitalists and the hawks, naturally, are delighted. George W. Bush is their man.

Bush also announced his intention of causing further damage to the environment in the northern regions of the country to satisfy the greed of industrialists. He will satisfy the Christian fundamentalists, firstly by telling them he is a 'born-again' Christian (an expression that to me means behaving like Christ though it appears to mean something quite the opposite to Bush), and secondly by declaring war on abortion, thus saving babies unborn, while his immediate bombing of Iraq showed his intention of his continuing Bill Clinton's military policies of killing children after they are born wherever he thinks it is 'necessary' to carry out air strikes for the sake of US 'national security' and economic interests. He will also delight the arms lobby by continuing where Reagan left off with the dangerous game called 'Star Wars'. This project will of course be at the cost of the poorest, since he is giving

back money to the richest taxpayers. George W. Bush has to make a good start to show the world that he now rules the whole universe, earth, sky and space.

Bush has also indicated, to the delight of the gun lobby, that he will supply more sophisticated weapons to Taiwan, whether or not it heightens tension with China, to whom he will certainly preach the human rights that he neither believes in nor demands from the dictatorships of those countries that open up their economies to US corporations.

Bush has also made it clear that North Korea is in line for another round of suffering and isolation, or maybe worse. In March 2001, an article by *Washington Post* correspondent Greg Torode appeared in the Hong Kong press. Referring to the peace talks between North and South Korea, which had raised high hopes in Asia of peace and cooperation, Torode said: 'Bush has not ruled out a future dialogue with North Korea, but has expressed doubt whether the country is open enough for the United States to consider entering into formal negotiations.' Bush did not clarify what he meant by 'open', but if the term follows the US meaning world-wide, he probably meant 'open for American corporations to exploit, and for CIA agents to expand their espionage network'. As an aside, I query what God-given right the US government has to be the sole arbiter of negotiations in the world. What, then, is the role of the United Nations?

In his interview on television, part of which was shown in Hong Kong, Bush described Korea as a 'threat'. Questioned as to what kind of threat North Korea posed to the United States, Bush was at a loss for words. And no wonder! Anyone would be at a loss to visualize economically starved and isolated North Korea posing a threat to any country, let alone to the United States, with its near monopoly on every kind of weapons of mass destruction.

With his usual muddled thinking and hesitant communication skills, Bush stumbled on in his interview by responding: 'Part of the problem in dealing with North Korea is there's not much transparency.' He did not clarify how much transparency he would like to see. How does one quantify transparency anyhow? Was he hinting that the United States should 'do an



Iraq' in North Korea and have American soldiers spying out every weapon, as well as noting likely places to bomb the leader out of existence, as they have attempted to do in Cuba, Iraq and elsewhere? Is there any international law that requires North Korea (and the world in general) to strip itself naked for United States' inspection? What North Korea does in its own country is Korea's own business, and I know of no case in which North Korea has attacked any other country. The same cannot be said of most countries in the West, especially of America.

Bush continued to stumble on in this television interview, saying: 'We're not certain as to whether or not they're keeping all the terms of all existing agreements.' He did not mention which agreements, and my guess is that he did not know of any agreements but was bluffing to hide his ignorance. In any case, does North Korea have to answer to America on keeping the terms of any agreements it may have made with other countries? Perhaps Mr Bush would take a look at agreements made by his own country by former presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan, that the United States would 'show restraint in supplying weapons of war to Taiwan'. Bush has already decided to follow Clinton's bad example in renegeing on those agreements in promising more sophisticated weapons to Taiwan, and thereby jeopardizing the negotiations between the PRC and Taiwan leaders. Reunion with China might be in the interests of both China and Taiwan, but would not suit American interests.

Bush's secretary of state, Colin Powell, at this point in the interview, came to the rescue of his stumbling president and explained: 'We have not to be naïve about the nature of this "threat". Mr. Bush understands the nature of that regime, and won't be fooled by the nature of that regime.' Was Powell hinting that Bush was being naïve? Although Bush had shown little understanding at all, Powell claimed that Bush fully 'understood'.

But what did Bush understand? One might hazard a guess that Bush understands only that North Korea is a socialist country and therefore automatically a 'rogue state', inimical to the business interests of greedy corporations and world power-seekers, which constitutes a demonic sin in the eyes of American hawks looking for economic prey.

I know little myself about North Korea, never having visited the country, nor met anyone who lives there. What I do know is that things are never the way they are painted by critics of a different political colour. What makes me suspicious of the critics is the fact that socialist countries like Cuba and North Korea are forbidden territory to visitors from Western countries like America, even though those countries welcome visitors. Are those Western countries afraid that their citizens may find out that things are not so bad in the 'rogue' countries as their governments have informed them? On this point, I was shocked to read that Britain's Princess Anne has been refused her own request to visit Tibet. The reason given, that China will 'use' her, is ludicrous. Do they not trust the Princess to make her own judgement? Rather, is it not that they are afraid that she will learn something to contradict their propaganda? Why talk about freedom, the right to travel, if the British Princess herself is refused permission to do what she wishes? I am sure that many like myself would like to hear what she has to say, because we have lived long enough on mere propaganda from the West.

To return to the subject of President Bush's television interview, I noticed what looked like dismay on the face of South Korean President Kim Dae-jung at Bush's apparent dismissal of all efforts Kim has made to communicate and improve relations with his countrymen in the North. The hope of peace between North and South Korea was clear on the faces of all those visitors who were able to meet their families after fifty years of separation enforced by interference from the West. It seems certain that the president of South Korea is not free to make decisions for his own country. However, judging from his past performance, Mr Kim is not likely to give in to demands by the US president to cease the talks. Nor are the Korean people likely to accept a Bush dictatorship on that matter. President Kim has a record as a tough fighter for the rights of the Korean people.

Tom Plate, writing in the *South China Morning Post* on 12 March 2001, said of Bush's television interview: 'In the preceding meeting with Mr. Kim, Mr. Bush had said his administration was suspending bilateral talks with North Korea. So what the new American President did was to cut out Mr. Kim's heart.' Is that the action of a 'born-again' Christian or a democrat?

Plate gave Mr Kim's credentials, saying: 'No matter that the South Korean President is much more than a conventional democrat; despite difficulties in his own country, this legendary former political prisoner and recent Nobel Peace Prize winner is widely admired around the world for his visionary efforts to end the half-century-long state of war between the failed communist state in the north and the successful capitalist tiger in the south.' Yet this newcomer on the world scene, Bush, dared to 'cut out the heart' of a man regarded by his country as a hero. He dared to make sweeping decisions on issues he does not understand. One is reminded of the proverb about 'casting pearls before swine', or, as the Chinese would say, 'One doesn't play music to a cow'.

In fact Bush not only seems intent on further dividing North and South Korea, and Taiwan from China, but he has managed to create a split among the American people by his dubious election practices. He has opened old wounds between the Americans of the north and south, and between the African-Americans and Whites, revealing the split culture of centuries. I have heard Americans ask with dismay: 'How on earth could the American people have put such a person in the White House?' Well, maybe some day some historians will be able to unravel that mystery.

In the meantime, I can only conjecture that with Bush as president, the threat to world peace has increased. There exists no greater danger in the world than the rise to power of an incompetent leader who compensates for his inferiority complex by throwing his weight around to show how great and powerful he is. To make matters worse, Bush's greatest support comes from hawks so unscrupulous that even the tough secretary of state, Colin Powell, appears to meet with their criticism as a weakling.

Walter Russell Mead, in a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, apparently opposes these American hawks, and describes their attitude in these words: 'The United States has more power and more money than anybody else in the history of the world, and we need to use them. And because we are as strong as we are, if we let others know we mean business, they will give in.' That same message has been relayed already to the world by Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and already quoted earlier

in this book. It is worthwhile repeating her message, even if only to expose its sheer devilry, as well as to reveal the intention of the United States to build up more arms. Albright said, 'What's the use of having the world's greatest military force if you don't use it?'

And what indeed is the use? Which country is next on the long list of victims of those weapons? What a wonderful gift it would be to the world if someone in that position would say: 'What's the use of having the world's greatest military force, when the people of all nations are crying out for peace? Let's begin to dismantle our weapons and reduce our military strength which is no longer needed.'