

## Opinion

# On the 25th Anniversary of China's Recovery of Hong Kong

## A personal reflection

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**I**t's hard to believe that it was 25 years ago when China finally recovered Hong Kong after its subjugation from 1841 to 1997 by the British.

I was in Hong Kong as a member of the Committee of 100. We met with C.H. Tung, the first designated Chief Executive who also is my sister-in-law's brother. Due to scheduling difficulties, our members were joined by a Congressional committee of senators and congressmen with their usual blustering of there to ensure that people of Hong Kong will maintain freedom, democracy whatever that means.

Why were they there in the first place? Hong Kong was about to return to China and anything that happens from then on will be China's internal affair.

Perhaps it was the jet lag or being intimidated by the presence of U.S. dignitaries, none of the Committee members spoke. Since C.H. is family, I spoke up by first mockingly thanking the U.S. senators and congressmen for their interest in the affairs of Hong Kong but also reminded them that there never was any freedom under British colonial rule.

Did Hong Kong people choose the Governor? Hardly. Chris Patten, the last Governor who wrote in his Hong Kong Diaries: The truth is that I am at the heart of a great irony in which the Governor of Hong Kong has been chosen by the electors of Bath. C.H. later thanked me for speaking up.

As the day of the actual handover approached, we, more than a billion of us Chinese, both in China and overseas, became excited that the last of colonial possessions, except for Macau which was returned to China two years later, will be recovered. It signals that finally China can no longer be bullied and can now stand up to foreign invaders.

Whatever one feels about Chiang, he was a patriot. He hated the British and was certain that after WWII China would recover Hong Kong. Roosevelt promised him privately that he would support Chiang. But Roosevelt died before the war ended. And Truman was too green compared to the devious Churchill who sent war ships to Hong Kong the moment Japan surrendered.

Bentley came along with me on this trip. We stayed at my mother's apartment and alternately watched Wimbledon and the solemn ceremony taking place. It was the monsoon season,. It was a sad sight to see British soldiers wearing their bearskin hats drenched in the pouring rain marching with no one there to show to, a wonderful metaphor of the last of the British Empire.

When the clock struck midnight, the Union Jack flew for the last time while the Chinese flag rose signaling the end of China's century of humiliation and the rise of a new and strong China. The new administration was soon sworn in with C.H. as the first Chief Executive.



*The flag of Hong Kong, officially the regional flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (image istockphoto.com)*

For a brief moment, there was no official government. My brother Roger and sister-in-law Alice represented C.H. and escorted Patten out of the door which we watched on TV. Roger shook Patten's hands. I told him afterwards, I would have kicked his rear instead.



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