

Massive protests have begun to disrupt both Hong Kong and mainland China. There comes a time when the status quo is flatly unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated by the populace. That generalization fits the current circumstances in China.

China is experiencing a faceoff and showdown between a popular newspaper and an unpopular Communist propaganda chief of Guangdong province. This is a key and crucial juncture that will serve to test the leadership of China's new leader, Xi Jinping. As the leader of China, Xi is new -- he was installed at a party Congress in November, 2012.

It needs to be remembered that the Chinese Communist Party is unelected, has no democratic legitimacy, and abuses the people of China. To gain power in 1949, it fought a civil war that killed an estimated 40 million Chinese people. In the time since then, it has killed a further 42.7 million Chinese people, as estimated by the China Support Network. It is an abomination in motion, as it continues its crimes against humanity. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) holds the world's record in democide (a/k/a death by government).

The Year 2013 already has action to review. Whether we look at Hong Kong or at Guangdong province, "Beijing's man" is under pressure.

January 1 was the occasion of large marches and demonstrations in Hong Kong, demanding the resignation of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong -- along with greater democracy, which would allow the next Chief Executive to be popularly elected.

In Hong Kong, a former British colony, the people have been promised democracy, but instead the leadership continues to be hand-picked by Beijing. Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying is the latest pawn of Beijing, installed in that job in 2012.

Over in Guangdong province, as mentioned, it is a standoff between a popular newspaper, the Southern Weekly, and the CCP's over-zealous propaganda chief for Guangdong province, Tuo Zhen, who newly came to the job in 2012.

Guangdong is China's biggest province by population, and has the highest economic output. Because it is the southern province that wraps around Hong Kong, it is the factory floor to the world, containing the cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen.

What's happening in Guangdong is very telling. The Southern Weekly newspaper wanted to publish its New Years' message, titled "China's Dream, the Dream of Constitutionalism." One might think it's a mild blandishment to suggest that a country (China) should follow its own Constitution. Even ex-paramount leader Deng Xiaoping extolled "the rule of law" and encouraged the training of young lawyers.

But, for Tuo Zhen, the mild blandishment was out of bounds; and, he changed that New Year's message into a piece that praised the Communist Party. One immediate problem is that Southern Weekly already has a reputation as a reform-minded newspaper that pushes the

envelope; another immediate problem is that the original message, and word of the change, got around electronically. Hence, Tuo Zhen can no longer work in the shadows, and he is an exposed man in the center of a firestorm of controversy.

On January 4, journalists from the Southern Weekly signed an open letter, calling for the resignation of Tuo Zhen. This week, the journalists are on strike, leading to a BBC headline: "China newspaper journalists stage rare strike." On Monday, January 7, hundreds of supporters gathered outside the newspaper's office. Banners were seen calling for press freedom, constitutionalism, and democracy.

Cue the Chinese democracy movement -- it's back in bloom. For China, this is it: push is coming to shove. It's really on. Once before, in 1989, Deng Xiaoping was able to roll tanks into Tiananmen Square and roll back the Chinese democracy movement. That allowed the CCP to reclaim power from the uprising, which was led by Beijing college students, calling for democracy, for two months.

But it would be laughably silly if Xi Jinping now tried to stage a military assault upon an empty newspaper building. His options are very few -- he must walk back the CCP's appointment of Tuo Zhen, and endorse the editorial as originally written by the Southern Weekly. China should get on the page with its own Constitution, and stop having odd, corrupt, or evil government behaviors by the mercurial fiat, or whim, of high officials.

Even if Xi thinks that he can "partially" capitulate to the popular mood, in any partial capitulation he must talk the talk (or tacitly invite the talk) of constitutionalism. This will lead to more exposure of corruption and of those policy points where China is off the page with its own Constitution.

If he is still in power in the future, Xi will feel like a fireman, rushing from one brush fire to the next as each of these issues will generate its own movement and its own demands for reform and change in China. The gears are in motion for the population to hold its politicians accountable for how they wield power.

Perhaps 2013 is the year when we will see the triumphal return of the "student leaders" from the last uprising. They have been in exile, unable to return for the past 23 years. Some would like to see their parents before they die, and cruelly, the regime has prevented some parents from travelling outside of China to see their son, the exiled Chinese dissident.

The China Support Network restates its demand that Liu Xiaobo and all political prisoners must be released; that Charter 08 (a document by Liu Xiaobo and others, a reasonable road map to Chinese democracy) must be supported; and that all Chinese in exile must be allowed to return to China and to freely run conferences on the future of China; form and register political parties; and participate in the political process democratically.

China must also stop religious persecution, Falun Gong persecution, Tibetan persecution, Uighur persecution, Mongol persecution, laoiao administrative detention, and slave labor in laogai "reform through labor" camps. China must publish a complete list of the democide

## 2013: Chinese Revolution?

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victims, and satisfy the affected families by bringing perpetrators to justice. China must "play fair" with its neighbors in the South China Sea, and reverse deploy the array of missiles that threaten Taiwan. China must stop deportation of North Korean refugees, and end its abusive one-child policy.

It would be ideal if Xi Jinping would walk back the primacy, if not the existence, of the Chinese Communist Party. The only hope for today's political leaders to continue is if the Constitution now takes primacy in China.

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