

Hardcover: Hong Kong

The hidden hand of the CCP in Hong Kong

BY J. MICHAEL COLE
STAFF REPORTER

Ever since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921, Hong Kong has consistently been regarded as a threat and opportunity by party leaders. First as a British colony until retrocession in 1997 and then as part of the "one country, two systems," the CCP views the territory as a potential springboard from which foreign powers could undermine the authorities on the mainland.

Simultaneously, Hong Kong was the main platform where both the British and Chinese governments could conduct dialogue and, as 1997 approached, a source of much-needed capital and an instrument to test special administrative rule.

This, and much more, is the focus of former Hong Kong legislator Christine Loh's (陸恭蕙) fascinating *Underground Front*. The amount of information contained in her well-researched book makes it an extremely useful tool to understand the CCP's policies in Hong Kong.

Loh walks us through what she sees as the six main phases of CCP relations with Hong Kong: early Marxism in Hong Kong; the early years of CCP rule in China; the Cultural Revolution; the Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) era; the post-Tiananmen Square Massacre era; and the first decade after retrocession.

Throughout this time — and even after Hong Kong became a special administrative region — we see the CCP acting as if it were a criminal organization forced to remain underground. Part of this, we learn, is the result of Maoism's lack of mass appeal in Hong Kong, which since the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 had been ideologically shaped by the British.

Though the seeds of leftist thought were sown in Hong Kong, mostly via trade unions, Beijing was forced to show restraint lest its actions provoke a strong response from London. The exile of more than 1 million Chinese to Hong Kong — including supporters of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), industrialists, and ordinary Chinese who had grown tired of political repression — also created a population stratum that was unresponsive to Maoism.

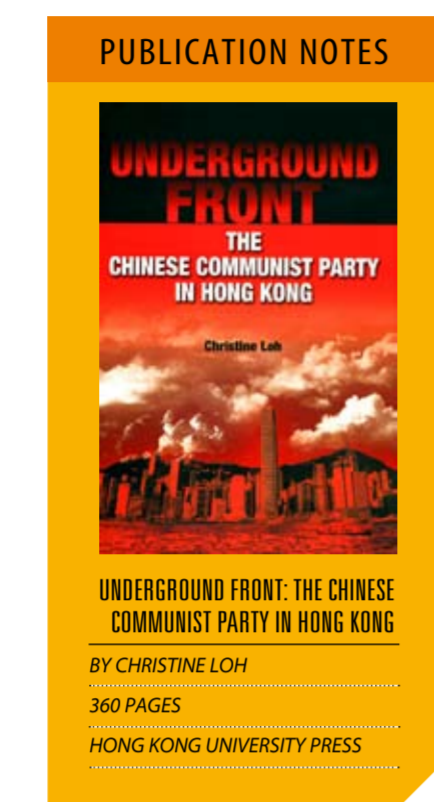
On the 1967 Riots that erupted in Hong Kong, Loh uncovers proof of indirect support by the CCP (for example, through condemnation of the Hong Kong authorities' reaction to the riots in state-owned newspapers) given to the leftist protesters. In the tense situation, premier Zhou Enlai (周恩來) stands out as the uber pragmatist, who despite calls by ultra-leftists in Beijing to take Hong Kong by force, insisted on a "go slow" approach to the colony, saying the time was not ripe for reunification.

In the early 1980s, with Deng now in charge of national policy, the first signs of an entente between London and Beijing emerge on the return of Hong Kong to China (Beijing never recognized its loss of sovereignty over the territory and successfully fought a battle at the UN to have it derecognized as a colonial entity).

As the negotiations commenced, Beijing made use of its Xinhua news agency bureau in Hong Kong, which served as a cover for CCP political action.

Between 1983 and 1997, fearing it could not trust London — especially in the wake of the Tiananmen Square Massacre — Beijing introduced tens of thousands (by some accounts, 83,000) of fifth-columnists, ostensibly on "family reunion" visits, to ensure steady progress toward reunification.

As 1997 approached, Beijing and its proxies in Hong Kong intensified their united front strategy and co-opted the



colony's elite to ensure stability in the lead-up to, and after, retrocession.

Loh adroitly captures Beijing's hard-line approach to the last governor, Chris Patten, which it referred to as "a sinner of a thousand years" for what it saw as efforts to create instability prior to the handover. From London's view, the only way it could abandon the colony with honor was to sow the seeds of democracy, which is what Patten tried to accomplish by making alterations to the Joint Declaration, which stipulated the basic policies of the PRC in Hong Kong and would later serve as the basic constitutional document behind the Basic Law.

Interestingly, after retrocession the CCP continues to act as an underground body in Hong Kong, relying instead on political proxies, such as the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) and the Federation of Trade Unions, to accomplish its objectives. This is perhaps the result of Beijing's failure, prior to retrocession, to understand the high level of opposition to reunification among the residents of Hong Kong. A low profile, rather than the shock therapy of a full CCP takeover of Hong Kong politics, may have been seen as the best strategy. Still, there is no doubt who's in charge under "one country, two systems."

Though Loh makes little effort to hide her preference for a more democratic Hong Kong, her work does not descend into outright condemnation of the CCP on ideological grounds. She recognizes that historical forces have resulted in a Hong Kong whose political future is very much determined by the central government in Beijing. This, however, does not mean that she isn't critical of what has happened to Hong Kong since it became part of "one country, two systems." The last section, in which she looks at the local media and electoral manipulation, constitutional contradictions as well as the failure of an executive-led, elite-driven administration to meet the needs of the population, clearly shows that Loh is uneasy with the direction in which Hong Kong has headed since 1997.

Underground Front is an indispensable addition to Hong Kong, CCP and China studies and manages to provide lots of information, both in the text and appendices, in a format that is both entertaining and does not overwhelm even the lay reader.

Technology: Taiwan



The HTC Legend, above, and HTC HD Mini, right.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HTC, JOIN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND KINETICS COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANTS

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

HTC (宏達電) is doing great things these days with smartphones. Two of the Taiwanese company's latest models, the HTC Legend and the HTC HD Mini, boast highly attractive designs and full-fledged features for those who need to be constantly connected.

The HTC Legend, which has a retail price of NT\$16,900, is a slim, sleek device with a multitouch screen that's fun and easy to use. It's powered by Android 2.1, the latest version of Google's mobile operating system, which makes the device a worthy competitor to the iPhone.

With its silver brushed-metal casing and glass touchscreen, the Legend looks like both a sci-fi gadget and a luxury accessory. The device, which measures 112mm x 56mm x 11.5mm, feels smooth with a slight left; it's like holding a fine stone carving. It's almost too nice — you wouldn't want to shove the phone in a pocket full of loose change and your car keys.

JUST A TOUCH

The Legend's elegant look and feel is matched by top-notch software. HTC designed a home screen interface (dubbed HTC Sense) that spices up practical functions with snazzy graphics. A clock displays the time and current weather conditions — if it's cloudy and rainy outside, then animations of raindrops and cloud mist float around the screen.

But the real feature is fast, user-friendly access to things like e-mail, text messaging and the Internet. The home screen is actually a set of five different pages where you can add a widget for the apps you use the most, whether it's a calendar or Twitter.

Just flick left or right to slide to a different page, or pinch inwards with two fingers to get a bird's-eye view of all the pages (similar to Mac OS X's Exposé function).

The Legend's screen, which measures 8.1cm in diameter and has a resolution of 320 x 480, is bright and crisp — the colors pop out and

the text looks crystal sharp. With multitouch gestures, the Legend is snappy and responsive, thanks in part to the 600MHz processor.

Typing on the Legend's virtual keyboard is what you expect from a touchscreen phone — it feels naked at first if you haven't used one before. HTC's typing software simulates a physical keyboard by making the phone vibrate with every key press. Not quite the real thing, but it helps.

APP HAPPY

Setting up the phone is a breeze. I used a demo model on loan from HTC as my mobile phone for a week and within 10 minutes of taking it out of the box and inserting my SIM card, I was checking my e-mail and Facebook accounts, surfing the Web and receiving phone calls.

For those who use Google Web services, Android makes it easy to import contacts and calendar events, which display nicely on HTC's calendar app. Gmail devotees will love Google's mobile e-mail app, which is included on most Android phones and has all the functionality of the Web version. One minor annoyance, though, is the lack of the ability to cut and paste text. But this function works on most other programs in Android, including HTC's own e-mail program and text messaging.

The Legend's Web browser is good, but falls slightly short of the iPhone's in terms of speed. It can, however, display Web sites that use Flash animation and video — something the iPhone doesn't do.

While it may not match the size of Apple's app store, Android Market is catching up and already offers some quality programs. I was wowed by the beta version of Google Sky Map, which uses the phone's GPS and orientation sensors to show the real-time positions of the stars and planets. On the more practical side, the popular Train Schedules (火車時刻表) app lists the latest schedules for the Taiwan Railway Administration and the High Speed Rail.

For avid users of social networks, HTC has a nice program

called Friendstream, which integrates your Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and Plurk accounts into a single window. It saves the trouble of logging on to each Web site separately, and I especially liked how it can display your Flickr contacts' photos in a gallery style format with just one tap.

THE BIG PICTURE

The Legend's built-in 5-megapixel camera produces surprisingly good pictures. With ample lighting, the quality is on par with many point-and-shoot cameras, but not so great in darkly lit rooms, even with the flash. For storage, the phone comes bundled with a 2-gigabyte microSD card, but supports storage cards of up to 32 gigabytes.

There's so much to like about this phone, which makes it easy to overlook some glaring shortcomings: the Legend lacks a way of synchronizing photos and music with your computer, except for manually dragging and dropping the files yourself. HTC includes a program that synchronizes your contacts and calendar with Microsoft Outlook — why not photos and MP3s?

For battery life, I managed a day and a half before having to recharge the phone. During this length of time, I made three or four brief phone calls, sent a half dozen text messages and spent three or four hours writing e-mails, surfing the Web and watching YouTube videos. The battery is removable.

THE BASICS: HTC HD MINI

I spent another week using the HTC HD Mini, a smaller and slimmer touchscreen smartphone that retails for NT\$15,900.

The price is steep, considering that the phone runs on Windows Mobile 6.5, an outdated operating system that drags in performance when compared to Android. The HD Mini has full touchscreen functionality, but it's neither as responsive nor as smooth as the Legend, which is similarly priced.

But the HD Mini does a fine job with the basics — e-mail, contacts,

text messaging and photos — thanks to the HTC Sense interface, which is different from the version on the Legend but still user-friendly. Unfortunately, since there is no app like the Legend's Friendstream, you have to access your Twitter and Facebook accounts through separate programs.

Web browsing on the HD Mini isn't bad, but not nearly as good as Android or iPhone. The HD Mini comes bundled with Opera, which allows for pinch and zoom features, but the pages generally are slower to load and the ugly fonts make the text unpleasant to read for long periods of time.

EVEN SMALLER AND THINNER

The HD Mini will win some people over for its compact size. Measuring 108mm by 57.7mm by 11.7mm, it fits snugly in the palm of your hand and easily slips into a front jeans pocket. The device is also attractive in its own right, sporting a sleek but rugged design with its smooth, rubberized back. The 8.2cm screen, which has a resolution of 320 x 480, is very bright and crisp.

There are a few other nifty features that the Legend doesn't have. The HD mini can act as a Wi-Fi router and share its 3G or GPRS connection with any nearby wireless device, such as a laptop computer. Say you and a friend are at a cafe with laptops but there's no Wi-Fi; you can both connect to the Internet through your phone.

The HD Mini is also designed to be discreet in social settings. The volume of the ringer automatically lowers when you pick up the phone, and you can mute the phone by turning it face down (the Legend also has these features). In "pocket mode," the phone automatically increases the ringer volume when placed inside a pocket or a bag to prevent missed calls.

The HD Mini and the Legend both offer good call quality and are closely matched in terms of features. Choosing between the two may boil down to looks, but the Legend is more intuitive and easier to use.

Hardcover: US

A woman for all seasons

Nobel prize winner Pearl Buck was the first Westerner to describe the Chinese as they actually were. 'Burying the Bones' does her extraordinary life justice

BY SUN SHUYUN
THE GUARDIAN, LONDON

This book has been an eye-opener for me, and I think it will be for many readers. Pearl Buck is not a household name, though she was one not all that long ago. Hilary Spurling has given us a brilliant account of her life in China, the wellspring of a writing career that would produce 39 novels, and much else besides.

Buck thought she was Chinese as a child, although she was born in America in 1892, when her Presbyterian missionary father was on leave. They soon moved back to Zhengjiang. She spoke Chinese before she spoke English. When she asked her Chinese nanny why her blond hair was being covered up, the nanny said: "It doesn't look human, this hair." Buck only realized she wasn't Chinese when she was 8. The family was forced to flee her father's missionary post in 1901 and seek shelter in Shanghai. The Boxer Rebellion had erupted, unleashing all the

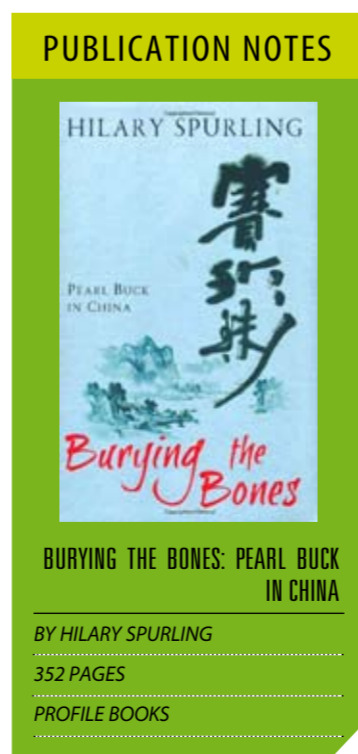
hatred of foreigners who had usurped the country after the Opium wars. More conflicts and calamities followed: famine, the abdication of the last emperor, and the consequent fighting for power between warlords, nationalists and communists. And all around her, she saw poverty and death.

The family lived for a time opposite a brothel because it was cheap. Four of her siblings died of disease one after another. The first bones she buried were the tiny ones she found, of female babies unwanted by their parents; it was a child's game to put them in burial mounds and decorate them with pebbles and flowers. Later, bones, body parts and corpses became commonplace. If there is a Dickensian sprawl in her fiction, this is where it comes from.

But it was with her first husband, also a missionary, and an agricultural scientist, that she plunged deep into Chinese village life, trying to convert but also to understand the core of Chinese

society. The experience inspired *The Good Earth*, the first part of a trilogy that sold millions of copies in the West and was turned into a Hollywood film, soon winning her the Pulitzer prize, and in 1938 the Nobel prize.

I knew little about Buck during my education in China, even when I majored in English literature. She was not on our curriculum, not on the reading list, not in the bookshops. She was criticized by the nationalists in her day, by the communists, and by Chinese intellectuals. The first said she only portrayed the bad, primitive and ugly side of China. The communists resented her failure to sympathize with their cause as the hope for China — revolutionaries played little part in her trilogy or anywhere else. The intellectuals, even Lu Xun (魯迅), our most famous 20th-century writer, were arrogant enough to say the best writing on China had to be by the Chinese — she was just "an American woman missionary who happens to



have grown up in China." The loss was ours. I believe she

understood China as well as anyone could — "the people I knew as I knew myself," she wrote. She was as puzzled by the Virgin birth as the Chinese, who "had no sympathy for Mary, and felt sorry for Joseph"; they thought Joseph was a cuckold. In fact, Buck was the first Western writer to describe ordinary Chinese as they really were, with warmth and depth. China owes her a considerable debt. One should remember the Western stereotype of the Chinese that prevailed before her — unbelievably strange and dangerously cunning, like Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu.

Buck humanized the Chinese, and as the Nobel committee put it, opened "a faraway and foreign world to deeper human insight and sympathy within our Western sphere — a grand and difficult task." Despite the grim realities she lived through, she was able to see China "as the inevitable future leader of Asia, and as a monumental force in herself with her unmeasured resources, both

human and material."

It was in the ordinary people like Wang Lung of *The Good Earth* that Buck put her hope, not communism, nor the Christianity preached by her excoriatingly zealous father. "We are no better than anyone else, any of us," she wrote.

Her sadness is that when she was in China, she hated her life and all the misery around her; but after she left Nanjing for America in 1934 to care for her disabled daughter, she was never allowed to return, and gradually lost all the energy, the anger and emotion that fired her work. She never felt at home in America, a land she did not know well, a people whose idiom and thoughts and behavior were alien to her. The dislocation haunted her. She threw herself into writing, supported by her second husband, Richard Walsh, her publisher, who discovered her and then became her anchor. Her life unraveled after his sudden death in 1960. She slowly gave up campaigning for China and racial tolerance, and

abandoned the six children she had adopted. Her last days resembled those of the Dowager Empress Cixi (慈禧), the heroine of her *Imperial Woman*, living in isolation in Vermont with a younger man and his hangers-on. She was deeply hurt when the Chinese rejected her request to accompany Nixon on his historic visit in 1972, and she died the following year.

Hilary Spurling has drawn a fine portrait. She is a terrific storyteller, bringing us vividly into Buck's world, and keeping up the pace, unveiling like a good detective the individuals who were models for her prolific fiction. Having aroused our interest in Buck's writing, though, she makes you wish there were more quotes from Buck's work; and I found the inconsistent transliteration of Chinese names quite confusing. But these are very minor peevish. Spurling should be applauded for bringing this remarkable woman back to us. We could do with another Pearl Buck for the China of today.