



## **The World Today**

### **THE CHINESE AND TAIWAN IN THE CARIBBEAN – PART TWO: THE TUSSLE FOR ST LUCIA**

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In a previous article we noted the diversity among Caribbean Basin countries on the issue of recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as against recognition of China.

So the question might well be asked: If some countries in the Caribbean Basin recognize the People's Republic of China, and others Taiwan, why should there have been a storm inside St Lucia, and surprise outside St Lucia when the new Government of St Lucia recognized Taiwan?

It would appear that the surprise derived from two sources: first, the change in the status of China in global relations in the last decade since Sir John Compton's United Workers Party (UWP) was in office; and secondly the prestige, and a certain reputation for realism, of Sir John Compton himself in regional relations over many years.

Citizens of St Lucia well knew that Sir John, and the UWP, had maintained good relations with the representatives of Taiwan during the party's years in opposition, and few would have been surprised if sources in Taiwan were a source of election campaign funds. But concern as to what Sir John might do, on his return to office ten years after China had been recognized, was apparently quickly laid to rest in the eyes of many, when the new Foreign Minister Rufus Bousquet revealed a letter written to the Chinese Government stressing that "the Honourable Prime Minister and I" recognized that there is but one China.

Subsequently however, certain confusion began to appear within the Government. For on the same day that the Government welcomed the Foreign Minister of Taiwan to St Lucia for talks on cooperation, Minister of Health Stephenson King was touring a medical facility (a mental hospital) being constructed by China with the Chinese Ambassador and observing that it was a major contribution to St Lucia's welfare.

It is a fact, however, that in the face of protestations from an increasingly nervous Chinese Government, the Cabinet of St Lucia met, under the Chairmanship of Sir John Compton, and decided to recognize Taiwan once again.

For a momentary period it seemed as if the St Lucia Government thought that it could square the circle and maintain recognition of both China and Taiwan. But China quickly put this to rest, and suddenly the Government of St Lucia found itself in the midst of a diplomatic storm. In the course of this, Sir John seems to have received a variety of expressions of surprise from persons around the Caribbean who have, over the years, seen him as an individual not given to precipitate action, and not given to flying in the face of significant historical facts – in this case the immense status in global political and economic affairs that China had gained in the ten-year period of his absence from government.

From all accounts, Sir John was being pleaded with not to follow the Taiwanese course. His own regional prestige thus became a weapon against the decision that his Cabinet had made. He seems to have quickly felt the force of this, and the possible consequences for both his historical reputation and St Lucia's prestige in the Caribbean.

In those circumstances, Sir John made a subsequent effort to get the Cabinet to reverse the decision to recognize Taiwan. But he failed and fell ill immediately afterwards, leaving Foreign Minister Bousquet free to proceed on a virtual verbal campaign against China's protests, and suggesting, in effect, that China could either take it or leave it.

Why could a personality of Sir John's recognized dominance of the political affairs of his country seem incapable of reversing a position taken by his Cabinet?

The answer lies in the development of a phenomenon which Sir John failed to recognize until, it appears, his Cabinet met to consider the recognition matter. This was an obvious decision of the Taiwan Government to penetrate the Cabinet of the country, and seek to influence members of Cabinet individually, and so set up the matter for a favourable result in advance of the Cabinet meeting to consider it. And the significance of this can only be understood by taking cognizance of the fact that historically, Sir John had always treated foreign affairs as a virtual private preserve, and this applied to relations with Taiwan in particular. (For most of the life of St Lucia as an independent state, Sir John held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs himself).

St Lucia had therefore become a "penetrated state" subject to continuing influences by Taiwan in its decision-making, with Cabinet personalities displaying dual allegiances (as between Taiwan and the Prime Minister's preferences) on this and related issues of Taiwanese aid to the country. It appears to some in St Lucia that Taiwan's presence has become "a state within a state".

Sir John found this situation almost impossible to reverse. Even the dismissal of Foreign Minister Bousquet has not occasioned a reversal of the decision to recognize Taiwan, which, journalistic reports have indicated, Sir John had intended to do at the second Cabinet meeting.

It is obvious that the penetrated nature of the state and its decision-making system can now only be reversed by a reversal of the original decision itself to recognize Taiwan.

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