



# **BBC World Service**

## **BBC Newsday**

### **Hong Kong - Censorship**

#### **Robert Lawrence Kuhn**

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**BBC HOST: We start with that story from Hong Kong. A famous statue marking the Tiananmen Square massacre has been removed from public view. The monument showed piled-up corpses to commemorate pro-democracy protesters killed by Chinese authorities in 1989. A highly sensitive topic in China, its removal by Hong Kong's oldest university comes as Beijing has increasingly been cracking down on political dissent in Hong Kong.**

**Let's speak to Robert Kuhn in New York, a long-term adviser to top Chinese leaders and international corporations. Welcome to the program. Why do you think the statue has been removed?**

**Robert Lawrence KUHN: It's the confluence of two ideas. First, the patriotic rectification of Hong Kong. and second, China's prohibition of what it calls "historical nihilism, which focuses on the Communist Party's serious past errors, especially the Cultural Revolution and the crackdown in Tiananmen Square.**

**The reason is the worry that if the Party's history is undermined, the Party could collapse. China's leaders have examined meticulously the collapse of the Communist Party**



of the former Soviet Union, which they traced back to the secret speech given by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 when he denounced the monstrous crimes of Joseph Stalin.

And so we see that all of these factors relate together. The symbol of the statue recognizes the crackdown in Tiananmen Square, which has this undermining effect on the Party's history.

In fact, the large majority of the Chinese people support the Party. They've seen the GDP per capita increase more than 65 times — 6500%! — since the 1970s, bringing 800 million plus people out of extreme poverty. They see the future that's planned. And so they support the Party.

**BBC HOST:** Those statistics are undoubtedly impressive. But can we really say with certainty that the majority of Chinese people support the Party, given the lack of freedoms, that this latest incident we're talking about seems to underline?

**KUHN:** I think those are two separate points. The fact is, independent polls have shown that a large majority of the Chinese people support the government, support the Party. They're not happy with everything. They have their own complaints about pollution and corruption and various prohibitions and lockdowns and various things. Everybody has their own issues, but overall, they do support it [the Party] because they've seen the physical results in their own lives.

Now, this is the difference between [China's] approach to what China calls "whole process people's democracy" and [which includes] the kind of human rights that are applicable to large percentages of the population, the vast majority.

**But in the process, individuals, individuals who dissent on various issues, will be at a disadvantage, for sure — put in prison, or certainly their voices quelled. This is the reality of China. We have both sides. We have the tremendous economic and social advancement, and we have the suppression of free speech, free assembly, and a free media.**

**BBC HOST: And I'm reading one of the quotes from a gentleman's student leader was jailed in the aftermath of the crackdown — Wang Dan, who says they've used this despicable act in attempt to erase this blood-stained chapter of history. I just wanted to pick up on that idea. You mentioned that for the Party, this comes almost as an admission of weakness rather than strength. They're concerned about their own vulnerability, despite what you say is their widespread popularity.**

**KUHN: Yes, they're absolutely concerned about vulnerability, and they've seen it happen in the Soviet Union. And that has been a very substantial imprint on the psychological way of thinking of Chinese leadership. They believe, many people in China believe, that the Party is the best way to improve the lives of the Chinese people. That doesn't in any way negate the terrible things that have happened in the past, including Tiananmen Square.**

**BBC HOST: Thanks indeed, to Robert Kuhn in New York, long-term adviser to top Chinese leaders and international corporations.**