

Hong Kong “Democracy” Riots: Pro-Imperialist, Anti-Communist, Fascist-Infested



Miguel Candela / EPA-EFE



Marco Rubio/twitter



Screen shot video/SCMP

Left: December 1 “March of Gratitude to the U.S.” near U.S. consulate in Hong Kong. Middle: Sign held at march reading “God Damn Commies, CCP go to Hell.” Right: Construction worker being doused with flammable liquid and set afire by masked protesters for objecting to their destruction of the Metro system, November 11.

The following article is based on a presentation at a forum of the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the League for the Fourth International, held in Berlin on December 15.

For the past eight months, the territory of Hong Kong, a former British colony and since 1997 a Special Autonomous Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), has been wracked by demonstrations and riots that have been almost universally hailed in the West. The protests are described as a “pro-democracy” movement, with “radicalized youth” in the lead, just as the Occupy Central or “Umbrella movement” of 2014 was portrayed. In reality, the mass marches led by middle-class

professionals are seeking to preserve the special legal status of this capitalist enclave, while the black-clad offspring of Hong Kong’s bourgeois elite have launched violent attacks aimed at the working class (e.g., torching subway stations) and mainland Chinese. Many leaders call for separation from the PRC. Ultimately, they and their imperialist patrons are looking to spark counterrevolution in the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state.

As we have stressed:

“The Hong Kong protests, trumpeted by the imperialist media marching in lockstep, have brought together an anti-communist unholy alliance extending from outright fascists and right-wing conservatives to bourgeois liberals and most



Nicolas Asfour / AFP



Kelly Ho / South China Morning Post



Kacey Wong

Yearning for colonialism: protesters outside British consulate sing “God Save the Queen,” September 15. Anti-communism and appeals for Hong Kong independence, July 1. “The shield,” September 29.

For Workers Mobilization to Defend China

37-year-old man reportedly from Wuhan
mobbed and assaulted by rioters in Mong Kok

By Dimsum Daily Hong Kong - 12:13PM Hong January 27, 2020



Photos: (left) Dimsum Daily; (center) Vincent Yu / Associated Press; (right) South China Morning Post

Hong Kong rioters exploit coronavirus hysteria, beating man from Wuhan, China (left), firebombing a planned quarantine center (center) and bombing hospital in Kowloon.

of what remains of an ostensibly socialist left. The League for the Fourth International, in contrast, warns that these protests are a threat to the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution. They must be countered with a working-class mobilization on a revolutionary program to drive out the imperialists, expropriate the Hong Kong bourgeoisie and end Hong Kong's "autonomous" status as a capitalist enclave." —"Hong Kong: Defeat Pro-Imperialist Riots With Revolutionary Workers Mobilization," *The Internationalist* No. 57 (September-October 2019)

Our aim here is to graphically show the ugly counterrevolutionary reality behind the curtain of misinformation spread by the capitalist politicians, bourgeois media and their "left" tails.

The opportunist left has desperately sought to cover up the blatantly pro-imperialist politics of this movement, which is a little hard to do when the protesters are waving U.S. and British colonial flags. In early December, Hong Kong protest leaders held a "March of Gratitude to the U.S." (top left photo on facing page) following Trump's signing of a resolution calling for increased sanctions on pro-China Hong Kong leaders, approved almost unanimously by Republicans and Democrats. Earlier, protestors sang "God Save the Queen" and waved Union Jack flags outside the UK consulate in Hong Kong. Whether nostalgic for their former colonial masters or appealing to today's hegemonic power, U.S. imperialism, the protestors have one thing in common: their allegiance to the

capitalist "free world" against communism.

The original target of the protests is long gone. The bill in the Hong Kong legislative council to permit the extradition of criminal suspects was shelved on June 15 and formally withdrawn on September 4. But instead of dissipating, the demonstrations grew increasingly violent, culminating in a pitched battle around the universities in mid-late November on the eve of elections for the district councils. In that vote, under the electoral system inherited from colonial rule, the "pro-democracy" (anti-China) bloc won 57% of the votes and 86% of the seats, while pro-Beijing candidates won 42% of the votes, but only 14% of the seats. The turnout for anti-China candidates in what was portrayed as a referendum on the protests reflects the economic and social reality of this territory, which has been a capitalist refuge ever since the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

In the new year, protests have resumed. On January 1, a mass march dotted with U.S. and UK flags and banners calling to "liberate Hong Kong" turned into arson attacks, including firebombing a bus and a subway train with passengers on board; 400 were arrested as the police cracked down. On January 19, at a demo billed as a "Universal Siege on Communists" — which the "mainstream" bourgeois media tried to pass off as a "rally for universal suffrage" — two police liaison officers were beaten bloody with metal batons by protesters right after speaking with the rally organizer. On January 26, amid the hysteria over the Wuhan coronavirus, rioters commemorating earlier clashes in the Mong Kok district brutally beat and stabbed a man in the neck when they saw that his identity card showed his residential address as Wuhan.

That same night, masked, black-clad protesters firebombed an unoccupied housing project near the border with mainland China that had been designated for quarantining people who did not show symptoms but had been in close contact with individuals who may have contracted the virus. The next morning, an improvised explosive device went off in a toilet at a public hospital in Kowloon. A posting on the encrypted messaging app Telegram used by protesters warned that the attack was "just a warning" and "there will be more real bombs to come" if Hong Kong authorities didn't close the border. And on February 3, a strike by a minority "union" of health workers raised the same demand, which Hong Kong "localists" have called for long before the outbreak. The majority union of health workers condemned the strike as endangering patients.

Duoweineews



Hong Kong "pro-democracy" protest in 2015 waved the British colonial flag on anniversary of return to China.

Anti-Communist Symbolism

Much of the reactionary symbolism in this year's protests has been around for a while. In 2016 there was a scandal and angry counterprotest when two Hong Kong nativist legislators in their oaths of office referred to China by the derogatory term "Shina" (支那) that was used by Japanese imperialism during its invasion of China. (One of the disqualified legislators referred to the People's Republic of China as the "re-fucking of Shina.") This is a term so offensive against the Chinese people that it is even banned in Japan. Yet now this derogatory slur is to be seen in common protest graffiti all over Hong Kong, for example defacing plaques of Chinese government offices and state-owned banks.

A more recent addition to the anti-communist symbolism was the adoption of Pepe the Frog as the movement's mascot. This character has been a favored symbol of the racist alt-right in the U.S. But it's not just the symbol: when the well-known fascist celebrity Joey Gibson (whose Patriot Prayer group has staged numerous provocations in Portland, Oregon) showed



Meme against Yao Wai-ching's use of the offensive anti-China slur "Shina" (支那) in place of "China" in her oath of office (October 2016).



Japanese imperialist propaganda using the derogatory slur "Shina" (支那) to justify invasion of China (bottom left). Today rioters use this slur to deface Bank of China branch (top, reads "happy collapse of Shina") and China's Liaison Office (bottom right).



Protesters with their alt-right mascot Pepe the Frog, September 30, on the eve of 70th anniversary of the Chinese Revolution.

up at the protests, he was enthusiastically greeted with chants of "U.S.A., U.S.A." Gibson was also welcomed to join in the storming of the Legislative Council building. Inside the Legco chamber, the podium was covered with a British colonial flag.

Among the graffiti all over the wall (see photo on facing page) is a reference the anti-China Sunflower movement in Taiwan. This points to the close links between counterrevolutionary movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan. While PRC flags are repeatedly burned or thrown in the harbor, Taiwanese flags (that is, the flag of Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang) are welcomed in the protests.

According to the *New York Times* (15 August), Edward Leung is "the closest thing Hong Kong's tumultuous and leaderless protest movement has to a guiding light." Leung was the spokesman of the Hong Kong Indigenous party, which is known for its xenophobic campaign of "retake" actions – publicly attacking random mainland shoppers and



Taiwanese flags fly at Hong Kong protest, December 8. Falun Gong banner (left) calls to "exterminate the CCP," calling them "locusts" while waving the British colonial flag. In 2016, Leung and two other members of his group were photographed meeting U.S. diplomats after Leung led a riot where he admitted to attacking a police officer. Leung now serves as the "inspiration and guidance" of the protests from behind bars. Protesters carry his portrait and his election slogan has become the central slogan of the protests: "Retake Hong Kong! Revolution of our times!" (光復香港，時代革命).

The Chinese term for "retake" (光復, *guangfu*) refers to retaking lost territory. Sharing the perspective of their imperialist

Facebook



Fascist organizer Joey Gibson waving U.S. flag at Hong Kong protest, 1 July 2019.

Winson Wong



Protestors storm Legco chamber, 1 July 2019.

sponsors, Hong Kong “localists” consider the territory to have been “lost” when it returned to China in 1997. So “retake Hong Kong” means returning Hong Kong back to the “good old days” under the boot of imperialism, “to recover the freedoms and impartial system of justice that they believe have been steadily eroded” (*New York Times*). In case anyone harbors any doubt about it, the meaning of this slogan is made entirely clear with the accompanying British colonial flags and cozy relations with U.S. imperialism. *Guangfu* also has a significant political history in capitalist Taiwan, where following their defeat in 1949, the main slogan of the Guomindang regime was to “Retake the Mainland” (光复大陆, *guangfu dalu*).

Twitter



Protesters holding photos of their alt-right “guiding light” Edward Leung, July 2019

The Ukrainian Connection

As we noted in *The Internationalist* No. 57, the Hong Kong protests have been “quite literally inspired by the fascist/Ukrainian nationalist uprising of 2014, copied the title of its anthem and adopted its violent tactics.” It was Edward Leung who “first pointed people towards the Ukraine example,” according to *1843* (15 October 2019), a magazine published by the London *Economist*.



Ukrainian Society of Hong Kong

Hong Kong screening of film *Winter on Fire* glorifying 2014 fascist/nationalist coup in Ukraine, August 2019.

During August thousands of Hong Kong protesters watched showings of a film celebrating the “Euromaidan” movement, *Winter on Fire*. Ukrainian fascists have also been showing up in Hong Kong in person, where they have been embraced by protestors.

Details on the Ukrainian connection have been exposed in an informative article in *The Grayzone* (4 December). Describing the background of the fascists who traveled to Hong Kong, the article notes: “These extremists previously fought in a notoriously brutal neo-Nazi militia called the Azov Battalion, in Ukraine’s war against pro-Russian militants.” The Azov Battalion is a neo-Nazi paramilitary group whose symbol is the Wolfsangel, taken from the German SS tank division Das Reich in World War II. After the Western-backed 2014 coup against Ukraine’s government, Azov was incorporated into the Ukrainian National Guard. It has received support from the U.S. government, which armed and advised the neo-Nazi outfit.

Also spotted in Hong Kong was Serhii Sternenko,



Duowei News

Ukrainian fascist group at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, site of pitched battle with police.

a former leader of the Ukrainian fascist Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), which burned down the trade-union headquarters in Odessa (see “Fascist Pogrom in Odessa, And the Aftermath,” *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014). In early December, these Ukrainian fascists posted photos of themselves at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University campus-turned-military-base-camp. After days of firebomb attacks launched by masked rioters, when police retook the campus “a total of 3,989 petrol bombs, 1,339 pieces of explosives, and 601 bottles of corrosive liquid were found,” according to the *South China Morning Post* (2 December 2019). Belying talk of supposed cop brutality against “peaceful demonstrators” in Hong Kong, the pitched battle at PolyU underscores that the pro-imperialist riots constitute a military threat which the Hong Kong police are right to repress.

Like the Ukrainian nationalist/fascist uprising of 2014, the so-called “pro-democracy” movement in Hong Kong is financed by the U.S. government, to the tune of many millions of dollars, funneled through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and other anti-Communist conduits like Freedom House. The NED has been heavily focused on Hong Kong since the “one country, two systems” agreement allowed them the freedom to use Hong Kong as an organizing base for counterrevolution on Chinese soil. The major political



Protesters hurl firebombs at police during battle at PolyU. After campus was retaken, a huge arsenal of incendiary weapons was found. So much for the imperialist media story of police wantonly attacking peaceful demonstrators.

parties that are mobilizing in support of these protests today all have sordid histories of working together with the NED, its subsidiaries, or participating in its counterrevolutionary political projects (see “Washington’s Hand Behind Anti-China Riots in Hong Kong” on page 23 of this issue).

Social-Democratic Accomplices of U.S. Imperialism

There are also self-proclaimed socialists in Hong Kong who have long worked together with this imperialist-sponsored “democracy” camp and serve to give a left cover to the current counterrevolutionary riots. Socialist Action (SA) was until recently the Hong Kong group of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), and is now affiliated with International Socialist Alternative (ISA) following a split in the CWI last July. In the photo to the left we see Socialist Action standing together with a Taiwanese flag and their banner saying “Down with the CCP Dictatorship.” The CWI/ISA and other fake socialists have a purely (bourgeois) “democratic” rather than a proletarian class program, and thus end up echoing the imperialists and siding with counterrevolution – as they also did in East Europe and the Soviet Union 30 years ago.

SA’s critique of bourgeois “pan-democratic” figures like Benny Tai is that they are too “timid and compromising” to the CCP. Tai has a long history of collaboration with U.S. agencies (see “Washington’s Hand...” on page 23 for details), and with fellow anti-communists in Taiwan. In 2018, Tai spoke at a meeting of the Taiwan Youth Anti-Communist Corps where he fantasized about their common dream of “retaking” all of China for capitalist exploitation, calling for a break-up of China: “We could consider going independent, being part of a federal system or a confederation system similar to that of the European Union.” When pro-Beijing politicians and media

Socialist Action



Fake-left “Socialist Action” (part of ISA split from CWI) joins bourgeois anti-communist chorus with banner reading “Down with the CCP Dictatorship” alongside reactionaries waving the blood-drenched Guomindang flag and CIA-funded “democratic” parties at April 28 Hong Kong protest.

Lam Yik Fei / New York Times



Benny Tai speaking at Taiwan Youth Anti-Communist Corps event, March 2018.

called for measures against Benny Tai for this explicit counter-revolutionary activity, the pan-democrats, joined by Socialist Action, all came out to support Benny Tai's "free speech."

The Hong Kong political scene has not always been so reactionary. In 1967, pro-communist workers mobilized strike actions and leftist protests that almost took down the British colonial regime. They carried portraits of Mao and clearly wanted to extend the gains of the Chinese Revolution to Hong Kong. A faction of the People's Liberation Army made plans to cross the border to assist the workers in sweeping out their colonial oppressors. However, this plan was called off by a late-night order to the local army commander on instructions from Premier Zhou Enlai. The capitulatory policy of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucrats, which has always sought to keep the status of Hong Kong as a capitalist opening to the world, meant that they refused to take the side of the workers in struggle, leaving them to be brutally crushed by British imperialism.



The "good old days" of British rule. Colonial police beat Hong Kong workers in 1967.

The Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy again betrayed the Hong Kong working class by agreeing to the 1997 "one country, two systems" deal with Britain, which would continue to subject Hong Kong workers to the existing capitalist economic and political system for another half century. Today, the Beijing regime perpetuates this betrayal in upholding the policy of "two systems" – which is why Hong Kong protesters can continue to run riot. Contrary to frauds like Socialist Action, which allies with pro-imperialist "democrats" and seeks to export counterrevolutionary Hong Kong protests to mainland China, authentic Trotskyists say: *Extend the liberating gains of the Chinese Revolution to Hong Kong! Expropriate the capitalists, drive out the imperialists!*

"One Country, Two Systems" = Stalinist Betrayal of the Revolution

The policy of "one country, two systems" is an extension of the Stalinist dogma of building "socialism in one country," which is based on the illusion of maintaining "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. This is reflected in the effort by the Beijing Stalinists leadership to recruit local capitalist politicians to run Hong Kong. Just before the handover to China, the British put Anson Chan in as No. 2 in the Hong Kong government, who was then confirmed by PRC leaders to "ensure government continuity." Since joining the colonial administration in 1962 until today, Chan has never stopped being a loyal agent of imperialism. The Heritage Foundation praises the fact that under Anson Chan, the counterrevolutionary sect Falun Gong was "allowed to use Hong Kong's city hall for a large gathering" as "a striking example of freedom in a Chinese-ruled territory."

The imperialists have sought to "retake" China ever since the 1949 revolution, when the capitalist state was smashed and replaced with a workers state based on collectivized property. This laid the basis for a centrally planned economy, the necessary foundation for building socialism, a classless society. But because political power has throughout been in the hands of the Stalinists at the head of a conservative nationalist



Pro-China strikes and demos in 1967 almost brought down colonial rule, but Beijing called them off.

bureaucratic caste, the enormous potential of this revolutionary conquest has not been fully realized. Today, even those gains are under assault with the expansion of “special economic zones” of capitalist exploitation by overseas companies, by the growth of a domestic Chinese capitalist class, and by the counterrevolutionary mobilizations in Hong Kong, in 2014 and today.

Nevertheless, despite bureaucratic mismanagement, the Chinese planned economy has made remarkable achievements in improving the lives of working people who had previously been hideously oppressed by imperialist plunder.

Since the revolution, the population of China has seen an unprecedented increase in life expectancy, from 35 years in 1949 to 77 years in 2018, and now enjoys a higher healthy life expectancy than the U.S. population. Moreover, from 1998 to 2018, workers’ wages increased by ten times (1,000%), tripling over the last decade, and are now higher than the newest members of the European Union. (U.S. workers’ real wages have stagnated for the last 40 years.) And contrary to the expectations of bourgeois economists and fake leftists who claim that China is capitalist, the state sector has grown greatly since the 2007-09 world capitalist crisis.

In the trade war, Wall Street and Washington bellyache about how “unfair” it is that China’s economy is governed by a plan rather than being at the mercy of the capitalist market. Democrats in Congress in particular demand that the PRC stop supporting state-owned enterprises. The capitalists are thirsting to shut down – or buy up – state-owned steel and cement industries, the largest in the world, which are described as woefully “inefficient” even as they have driven Western firms out of business. They want to get their hands on the banks, that they claim are hopelessly “burdened with debt,” yet don’t



June 30 rally in Hong Kong in opposition to the counterrevolutionary riots.

act as “normal” capitalist banks, since they are not driven by profit or loss. They want to control the oil and gas sectors, to gain a stranglehold over the economy, as they have in Japan. They want to privatize and loot China’s economy.

It’s not surprising that the U.S. government has been spending billions in its Cold War against China, just as it did, unfortunately successfully, against the former Soviet Union in 1991-92. The result of capitalist restoration there in the name of “democracy” was massive impoverishment and a drastic fall in life expectancy. Just as we Trotskyists fought to the end to defend the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc against the imperialist military/economic onslaught, we stand today for unconditional defense of China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states (North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba) against the threat of counterrevolution from within and without. Today, the Hong Kong riots are the spearhead of the imperialist offensive aiming to undo the Chinese Revolution.

Yet in response to the Hong Kong riots, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy is narrowly appealing to nationalism, opposing interference by “foreign nations,” rather than opposing the *class* interests the movement represents, namely the interests of capital against the working class. The reason is quite basic: the Stalinist dogma of building “socialism in one country” has always been based on the policy of class collaboration with sections of the bourgeoisie. That is the road to defeat. As we wrote in *The Internationalist* No. 57:

“What is required is the forging of a genuinely communist, Trotskyist vanguard to lead the struggle to expropriate the entire Hong Kong bourgeoisie, including its pro-Beijing components, and to join with class-conscious workers and communists throughout China in defending the revolutionary gains. Authentic Trotskyists have always stood for uprooting the heritage of Britain’s colonial theft of Hong Kong, while calling for workers political revolution throughout China to oust the privileged bureaucracy, smash the encroaching capitalists, establish the proletarian democracy of workers councils (soviets), and unite with the world’s workers to open the road to socialism.” ■



Martin Lee and Anson Chan at National Endowment for Democracy panel on Hong Kong, 2 April 2014.