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China

China and Hong Kong - One country - one system

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On June 30, 1997, British colonial rule in Hong Kong is to end. In the period of 155 years of occupation, British rule has been exploitative of labour in Hong Kong as well as politically repressive in order to maintain its domination. Activists fighting against imperialism and colonialism have been subject to repression through such laws and regulations as the Public Order Ordinance.

Why did British rule over Hong Kong manage to go on till the end of the 20th century rather than ending soon after the end of the Second World War, like many other British colonies? Above all because the ruling Communist Party of China chose to tolerate its continuation!

After 1949, economic developments in China have been slow; in contrast, Hong Kong took a faster path of development. Yet, this is not due to the superiority of British rule, but a combination of many factors one of which was the hard work put in by Hong Kong workers. Similar economic "take-offs" can be witnessed in Taiwan or South Korea which have not come under British rule.

The removal of the constraints of British colonial rule, should have given the people of Hong Kong greater mastery over their lives. But such possibilities have been thwarted by the imposition of domination and repression from the Beijing authorities who now control Hong Kong.

Undemocratic and anti-democratic

The formulation of the policy of "one country, two systems" is rhetorically used to promise non-change of the social system in Hong Kong, and yet its formulation and imposition from above have been and will be a deprivation of the right of the people of Hong Kong to decide on the social system they prefer.

The whole process of transition has been an undemocratic one: the Basic Law Drafting Committee was appointed by Beijing and proposed laws in the interests of Beijing bureaucratic rule and corporate capitalists. The Chief Executive and the Provisional Legislature were not elected democratically.

Some repressive parts of the Public Ordinance Bill have even been restored! The clear intention of the new authorities is to intimidate and restrict struggles by the people for their rights.

The change-over will not mean that the majority of the Hong Kong people will enjoy more rights and freedoms with the fetters of colonial rule gone. Instead, rule by a small minority of Beijing bureaucrats and corporate capitalists means a new period of repression of political freedoms and social and economic rights of the people.

The social and political struggle

The incoming government has already demonstrated its reluctance to improve social welfare or increase public expenditure on health, education or housing, despite a handover of a reserve of US\$90 billion by the British Hong

Kong government to the new Hong Kong government.

While the new government has explicitly rejected more spendings on social welfare or social concerns, "Celebrations" of the hand-over will be spending horrendous amounts of money. The fireworks display on July 1 alone costs US\$40 million.

The people of Hong Kong must actively take matters into their own hands rather than wait for benevolent changes from above. Both political and social issues are closely linked. The fights for more spendings on health, education, housing and social welfare in order to improve the quality of living cannot be separate from the struggles to safeguard the political democratic rights of making decisions, access to information, expression of their will, association and political organization, and so on.

Democracy for Hong Kong!

An appropriate focus for the struggles for political and economic rights could be the demand for a democratic election of a Hong Kong People's Congress. This body should make the major decisions relating to Hong Kong. The people of Hong Kong are now much more linked to the people of the mainland. Now that they face common enemies, joining hands against the rule of bureaucrats and capitalists will be much easier. But it will be a hard struggle.

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