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afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Mike Head

17.08.2019

As China masses troops on border, Trump calls for end to Hong Kong “problem”

Following five days of protests by youth and workers that paralysed Hong Kong airport, US President Donald Trump reinforced his calls for the Chinese regime to bring the upheaval under control. With further mass demonstrations expected this weekend, Trump solidarised himself with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the “tough business” of dealing with social unrest.

“I know President Xi of China very well,” Trump tweeted on Wednesday. “He is a great leader who very much has the respect of his people. He is also a good man in a ‘tough business.’ I have ZERO doubt that if President Xi wants to quickly and humanely solve the Hong Kong problem, he can do it. Personal meeting?”

Later, as Chinese paramilitary police paraded near the border, Trump urged Xi to “meet directly and personally with the protesters” to produce “a happy and enlightened ending to the Hong Kong problem.”



Chinese military forces massing across the border from Hong Kong [Credit: *Global Times*]

Trump’s comments are a further sign of the anxiety in the ruling class globally about the protest movement in Hong Kong and its potential to feed into similar discontent internationally over deepening social inequality and attacks on fundamental democratic rights.

In effect, while urging a “humane” solution—to avoid sparking even greater popular opposition in Hong Kong—Trump backed the police crackdown on protesters. Already, riot police have fired tear gas and rubber bullets at point-blank range, and arrested more than 700 protesters, including on serious charges of “riot” or breaching airport ordinances.

That brutality was on display in Hong Kong’s working-class Sham Shui neighbourhood on Wednesday. Police fired multiple rounds of tear gas to disperse protesters who shone lasers at a police station. Police armed with riot shields and batons marched through the neighbourhood, firing tear gas as they advanced.

The Beijing regime is conducting a show of force in the city of Shenzhen, near Hong Kong. Aerial photographs of a sports stadium show hundreds of military vehicles inside. The state-run *People’s Daily* noted that the para-military People’s Armed Police was in charge of “handling riots, turmoil, seriously violent, criminal activities, terrorist attacks and other societal security incidents.”

Another state outlet, the *Global Times*, warned protesters: “If they do not pull back from the cliff and continue to push the situation further beyond the critical point, the power of the state may come to Hong Kong at any time.”

Even as the Trump administration pursues its trade and economic war against China, and accuses Beijing of “coercion” in the Asia-Pacific, the two regimes have come together against the entry of the working class into the protests, which has included significant strikes by Hong Kong workers.

In backing the regime, the US president is not acting alone. Worried commentary in corporate media outlets globally declared that by occupying the airport, the “young, angry and leaderless” participants in the 10-week-old protest movement had “gone too far.”

“Hong Kong movement that thrived without leaders veers out of control,” the *Wall Street Journal* declared. From Britain, the former colonial ruler of Hong Kong, a *Financial Times* editorial board statement warned that the behaviour of protesters was “increasingly out of control.”

While advising Beijing to avoid a military intervention that could inflame the opposition, the commentary echoed the propaganda of the Beijing government itself. The media accused protesters of unacceptable “violence,” singling out two incidents in which demonstrators captured suspected undercover police provocateurs. One reportedly turned out to be a *Global Times* journalist.

These incidents reflected the rising anger among the protesters, and the Hong Kong population more broadly, over escalating police violence. One young woman was partially blinded when a bean bag bullet was fired at her face. Police agents have infiltrated protests to cause provocations, aiding Beijing’s efforts to brand the demonstrators as “terrorists.”

The media establishment’s real concern was not “violence,” but what the *Financial Times* called the “material interests” at stake in Hong Kong. It said the ex-British colony remained a “crucial” hub of global capital, making Hong Kong the world’s fifth largest stock market.

The airport occupation directly threatened the financial oligarchs and underscored the potential power of the working class. The full impact emerged when the Airport Authority revealed on Wednesday that 979 flights had been cancelled since Friday.

The White House is clearly in intensive discussion with Beijing about how to suppress the movement and prevent it from spreading to China and elsewhere.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and China’s most senior foreign policy official, Yang Jiechi, a Politburo member, met in New York on Tuesday. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said the two officials “had an extended exchange of views on US-China relations.”

Featuring marches of up to two million people, the Hong Kong protests first erupted on June 9, calling for the total withdrawal of a proposed law to facilitate extraditions to China.

Since then, the regime's police crackdown has triggered four further "major demands," voted for via social media platforms: an independent inquiry into the police brutality, retraction of the "riot" classification of the clashes on June 12, the immediate release and exoneration of all arrested demonstrators, and free elections with universal suffrage.

These democratic demands are driven also by the social crisis produced for young people and workers by the Hong Kong, Chinese and global financial elite, whose wealth has soared since the restoration of capitalism in China during the 1970s. As of last year, Hong Kong hosted 67 billionaires—the highest concentration per head of population in the world—while the rest of China had 476, second only to the US.

A report in the *South China Morning Post* warned: "[M]any young people in what is one of the world's most densely populated and expensive cities are also infuriated by sky-high living costs and a feeling that a home of one's own will never be more than a dream."

Right-wing, anti-communist elements within the protest movement have attempted to whip up anti-Chinese chauvinism, blaming mainland Chinese for the social problems in Hong Kong.

Significantly, the *New York Times* this week prominently featured one such group—Hong Kong Indigenous—describing its leader Edward Leung as the "closest thing" that the protest movement has to a "guiding light." Leung, currently in prison, and his group have incited physical attacks on "mainlanders" who shop in Hong Kong, accusing them of driving up prices.

The promotion of Hong Kong Indigenous is clearly aimed to dividing Hong Kong workers and youth from their counterparts throughout the rest of China who confront similar problems. The Chinese Communist Party long ago severed any links to genuine socialism and communism, and today rests on and represents the interests of a thin ultra-rich layer in China, including Hong Kong. The fight for democratic and social rights can only advance through unified struggle of the entire Chinese working class against the CCP regime in Beijing and its puppet administration in Hong Kong.

16 August 2019