

Chinese 70th anniversary parade testifies to a crisis-stricken regime

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The 70th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1 was commemorated in Beijing with a display of military power and obsequiousness to President Xi Jinping. Some four decades after it restored capitalist property relations, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime is wracked with perplexity and internal divisions over how to contain workers' struggles for their social and democratic rights, and how to respond to the economic and strategic offensive of US imperialism.

In an attempt to impress and intimidate the Chinese people and the imperialist powers, the CCP marched some 15,000 troops from various branches of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) through the streets of the capital.

A detachment of the People's Armed Police was included in the parade. The official television commentary lauded the force as "an important apparatus for social stability"—that is, for suppressing the opposition within the working class to the unchecked exploitation and political corruption that enriches the CPP-connected capitalist elite.

In Hong Kong, where the anniversary was answered with ongoing demonstrations against the Beijing-backed government, the regime's police gunned down a young student with live ammunition, leaving him with a serious bullet wound.

The state violence in Hong Kong is a microcosm of what takes place across China. The police are used to suppress tens of thousands of protests each year over poverty-level or unpaid wages and pensions, unsafe working conditions and the polluted environment. While precise figures are not possible due to pervasive media and internet censorship, the *China Labour Bulletin* reported a sharp increase in workers' strikes in 2018.

The years leading up to 2019—which was also the 30th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre—witnessed the wholesale arrest, interrogation and imprisonment of worker and student activists, academics, journalists, lawyers, artists and advocates for ethnic minorities.

Beside repression, the regime's only answer to the rising unrest over widening social inequality is to promote reactionary Chinese nationalism, hoping that appeals to "national unity" will contain irreconcilable class antagonisms.

Xi declared in his anniversary speech: "There's no force that can shake the foundations of this great nation. No force can stop the Chinese people and the Chinese nation forging ahead!"

The militarist parade featured trucks towing long-range, nuclear-armed inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and submarine-launched missiles that can strike across the continental US, as well as medium- and short-range cruise missiles and anti-shipping missiles.

Effusive television commentators did not observe that US military spending is at least triple China's, and the US nuclear arsenal is at least 10 times' larger. Moreover, the response of American imperialism to the expansion of China's nuclear capacities has not been to step back from a military build-up and provocations against China. Under President Barack Obama and now Trump, Washington's reaction has been to make strategic plans for war that include the option of a "first strike" nuclear attack.

The Chinese capitalist regime faces a global economic environment wracked by instability and a trade and economic war by the Trump administration that is aimed at driving major Chinese-based companies to the wall. In recent press conferences, Trump has

gloated that US tariffs have destroyed three million jobs in China and plunged the country into its worst economic situation in decades.

In the past year, foreign direct investment into China has fallen sharply as a result of US policies. Even the questionable official rate of 6.2 percent growth this year is the slowest pace since 1992—the year the CCP fully opened the country to the global economy.

Xi Jinping's regime already had effectively bankrupted China with its desperate attempt to pursue military and strategic competition with US imperialism, while preserving the private wealth of the capitalist elite and bureaucratic privileges of the bloated CCP apparatus. Uncontrolled lending by state-owned banks to government authorities, corporations and private households has sent debt to internationally unprecedented dimensions. The Institute of International Finance estimates that overall indebtedness reached 303 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2019.

The national government share of debt soared from 34.3 percent of GDP, before Xi was installed, to an all-time high of 50.5 percent by 2018. To finance the acquisition of the new generation weaponry that rolled through the streets of Beijing yesterday, military spending has been ramped up every year. The official 2018 defence budget was \$US177.5 billion. That figure, however, did not include spending on the police, judiciary and the paramilitary units responsible for internal repression, which, according to one study, reached \$193 billion.

The sheer dimensions of the challenges facing the Beijing regime lie behind Xi's elevation to the status of "core leader" and, in 2018, the removal of any time limits on his presidency. Under conditions in which public displays of conflict over policy within the CCP bureaucracy could ignite genuine popular opposition, Xi presides as a Bonapartist figure to suppress factional divisions. Among the most telling aspects of the anniversary parade was the appearance of former presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao alongside Xi, in a symbolic show of unity behind his rule.

The line-up of leaders, the emphasis on the military and the exaggerated nationalism all point to a regime that, even as it formally celebrates the 70th anniversary of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, is haunted by the prospect of a revolutionary movement by the Chinese

masses against its rule.

The Stalinist CCP relied on savage state repression to suppress the upheaval of the working class in 1989 against the devastating impact of the capitalist program it imposed on the Chinese masses. It has no alternative answer in 2019. The necessity in the struggles ahead, as part of a worldwide movement against the failed capitalist order, is the development of a genuine socialist and internationalist leadership in the Chinese working class as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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