

British perfidy hands Hong Kong to P.R.C.

by Mary Burdman

One thousand people are now leaving the British colony of Hong Kong each week, and the numbers will grow after the government of Margaret Thatcher, in its latest act of perfidy, yielded to the Communist Chinese government on all important demands in final negotiations over the future of Hong Kong the week of Feb. 12.

The final version of the Basic Law, which will govern Hong Kong after Britain yields sovereignty to China on June 30, 1997, gives Beijing the ability to do whatever it wants. Most of the final negotiations were not conducted by the official Basic Law Drafting Committee, which includes representatives from Hong Kong, but in secret diplomacy between the Chinese Foreign Ministry and British Ambassador to China Sir Alan Douglas, one of those "Foreign Office Sinophiles" who are doing all they can to save what they call "commercial communism" in China.

The Thatcher government is betraying the Chinese democracy movement. One million Hong Kong citizens demonstrated during typhoons to support the Tiananmen demonstrators on May 31, 1989. Hong Kong sent millions of dollars to support the demonstrators, and was the center for support operations from all over the world. After the crackdown, it was people in Hong Kong who ran, at the risk of their own lives, the underground railroad that brought many of the Tiananmen leaders to safety.

British-Chinese condominium

"Between now and 1997, the British intend that the government of Hong Kong shall be a kind of 'condominium' whereby they will provide the day-by-day administration; China will take, or have a veto over, major decisions and apply behind-the-scenes pressure to get its way on what it deems to be 'sensitive' topics," the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* wrote Feb. 1. "Britain has clearly signaled that its desire for 'convergence' between the pre- and post-1997 political systems in Hong Kong overrides all and any promises of representative government and protection of basic liberties."

What makes British perfidy even worse, is that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration is not even a binding treaty. At any time, the agreement could be repudiated, especially in the wake of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and the nationwide crackdown in China. Britain's pretense of championing direct elections to the legislature, is even

more absurd. There are no elections in Hong Kong now, and schools are not even allowed to teach about democratic processes.

Of far greater interest to the British government is paying tribute to the now-senile Deng Xiaoping. Deng, who has made the regaining of Hong Kong and Taiwan top priorities, told the 51-member drafting committee Feb. 17 that the Basic Law is a "masterpiece of creativity" and "a historical event not just for the present and for China but for all mankind." Deng, who nominally has retired from power, was flanked by Prime Minister Li Peng, President Yang Shangkun, and Communist Party head Jiang Zemin, who was there to clarify all of Deng's mumbled statements to the audience. In April 1987, Deng stated that Beijing would tolerate criticism, "but if they try to turn Hong Kong into an anti-mainland base under the cover of 'democracy,' we will step in."

Deng has done just that. A lot of brouhaha was made about London's standing up for one or two more directly elected Legislative Council seats, but actually Britain simply yielded to China on even more important security issues. China agreed to allow direct elections for 20 of the 60 members of the Council by 1997, instead of the 18 it earlier proposed. But this was a pyrrhic victory. The protracted negotiations over the number of seats preempted more important issues, including the choice of the Chief Executive, which Beijing will just appoint, and an independent judiciary.

Beijing has all provisions for a crackdown on Hong Kong in place. The wording of the Basic Law on declaration of martial law is sufficiently vague to allow Beijing to do what it wants. Any actions which would "subvert the central people's government" have been declared illegal. This law is already in force, as demonstrated when Beijing expelled two members of the drafting committee, leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China, Martin Lee and Szeto Wah, in October for their "subversive" activities. Both have been warned they could be prosecuted after 1997.

Foreign groups of "a political nature" are banned from activity in Hong Kong and Hong Kong groups are not allowed to work with foreign groups. The formulation is so vague that it could easily be applied to human rights groups, churches, and trade unions. Senior positions are closed to anyone with the right to abode outside Hong Kong, nullifying Britain's supposed "confidence-building" measures.

Thousands of Hong Kong students reacted to the announcement by demonstrating in the streets and burning copies of the Basic Law in front of the Xinhua News Agency office, the de facto Chinese embassy in Hong Kong. Hong Kong leaders said that if such an agreement had been reached in an Eastern European country, Britain would be the first to cry "half a democracy is no democracy at all," the London *Times* reported Feb. 17. Activist Szeto Wah told demonstrators not to believe anything the British or Chinese governments promised, and to continue fighting.