



"I BELIEVE LIFE ALWAYS FINDS A WAY."

Whatever



IF WE  
BURN,  
YOU  
BURN  
WITH US

## Additional Information

**lausan.hk**

**nqch.org**

**chuangcn.org/blog/**

**Vitalist International (@VitalistInt on Twitter)**

These texts were compiled and designed in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the fall of 2019 by **Whatever Distribution** as an act of solidarity with those who would rather be ashes than dust in Hong Kong.

“I believe none of us wants to die here, or wait for them (the police) to storm in and arrest us. I know we don’t!” said one person with a loudspeaker. “No!” People echoed in unison. And so everyone started discussing their next escape plan, arguing if they should leave via A-Core or Y-Core.

Yet no consensus was made after some discussions. Some deemed A-Core to be too dangerous, while others believed they could receive reinforcement outside. Some believed they could breakout with the weaker police presence at Y-Core, while the rest were concerned that there would be no outside support, and that they would be ambushed. Eventually they decided to scout out A-Core before coming to a decision.

At night, a voice recording of a boy circulated widely online. “We are a group of people who are trapped in Polytechnic University for over thirty hours. We are exhausted. The Hong Kong government leaves us no alternative... Most of our bodies are filled with wounds and scars. We don’t know if we’ll make it through tonight, or tomorrow morning. Now, our only hope lies with our fellows who are battling to break the police’s siege of PolyU from all corners to save us. If this hope perishes, our will probably won’t last us through tonight. If anyone is listening to this, I hope you will put down whatever is in your hand, come out, and save us. Carry with you a determination to save us—even if it costs you your life.”

But the opportunity for a breakout never arrived.

The “peaceful, non-violent, and rational” protesters and a small presence of frontliners around Tsim Sha Tsui were not able to breach the police’s lines of defense. As the night went on, the young people in the campus could only keep searching for secret routes, while some roped down the footbridge outside Block Z. On the two ends of the bridge, sobbing people cried, “Run! Go!” “Don’t ever look back!”

Cherry, who helped people escape on the Z Bridge, told us: “To be honest, I also wanted to go. But seeing those kids who were younger than me, looking like they were in middle school, I had to let them go first. They’re so young.”

The reporter couldn’t help but ask her how old she was.

“Almost 20,” she answered.

“I’m prepared. For the worst.”

The worst?

“Rioting charges.”

Are you not afraid?

“I believe life always finds a way.”

## 1 - 10

Out of Control—  
Hong Kong’s Rebellious  
Movement and the Left

## 11 - 28

“Saam Baa” in  
Hong Kong—Three  
Strikes Paralyze the City

## 19 - 35

The Longest Day:  
Housewives, Students,  
and Protesters in the  
Besieged PolyU

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If we burn, you burn with us.



A protestor wears a mask despite a ban on masks. Thousands of others did as well.

were shouting ‘we just want to go home’ as we walked back, we weren’t even resisting. I don’t understand what kind of law enforcement this is by the police. They just wanted us dead. They just wanted to shoot and kill us.”

“I feel like the police will massacre us tonight and recreate June Fourth.”

PolyU student S lost contact with two other friends during the third breakout. S said, “They left their gear behind before they left the campus. They didn’t plan to join the breakout since they couldn’t run fast. But as they saw most people go, they decided to follow them. One of her friends ended up being arrested under the thick smoke from the tear gas; S sprained her leg, but with the help of other protesters, she climbed over the barricade and limped her way back to the campus with the other friend.

S said that she had felt increasingly disappointed since the morning. In the early morning they felt a piercing pain on their skin because they were sprayed by the blue-dye water from the water cannon. Still, they didn’t want to leave because they thought that if they could defend PolyU, they could continue to block the cross-harbour tunnel and extend the ‘General Strike’. They also believed that the people outside would try to save them. Even though they knew that a lot of people had gathered in Jordan and Tsim Sha Tsui, the number was far from enough. “I feel betrayed by them.”

“I don’t want to say that I misplaced my trust in other protesters, but I thought everyone would have been bolder. A lot of time it was only us at the front who were willing to charge at the police, but no one was covering for us when we wanted to step back after we were ‘smurfed’ and couldn’t see. The three of us are just really ordinary girls. We don’t know anything. We can’t run, or fight, but we keep coming out on the streets just to help the movement. I know we are all afraid of dying. So am I. But we still have to watch out for those on the front. Yesterday I kept seeing blinded frontliners groping their way back, but no one was offering a hand to them.”

Throughout the day, S had been receiving calls and texts checking on her whereabouts and safety. S simply thought the others were missing the point. “It doesn’t matter if I’m here or not. There are other people here who need help. All you do is to ask if I’m safe, yet there is no blossoming [protests] in the eighteen districts outside. No one is coming to our rescue. You people could have done a lot more!”

5:30

NOVEMBER 18

#### **LIFE ALWAYS FINDS A WAY?**

Three hours after the third failed escape attempt, some of those who were trapped gathered in front of the stage of Block N for a meeting.

the next morning, after the breakout failed, there were only a few left at the gate next to A-Core and Y-Core. There was none found in other areas.

Since they failed to break out from the main entrance, some protesters tried to find any hidden routes that could allow them to evade the police. There were rumors flying around saying that the basement of certain buildings were connected to the parking lots of buildings outside the campus. The drainage pipe was also considered. Some youngsters teamed up in groups of two or three to look for a way out. However, after an hour, they returned telling other protesters that all possible exits were heavily guarded by the police.

Some people tried to find rooms to hide in. The number of people on campus gradually dwindled; it's unclear whether they managed to escape successfully or were arrested halfway.

12:30 – 2:00  
NOVEMBER 18

### THE SECOND AND THIRD BREAKOUTS

After noon, the remaining several hundred youths twice attempted to break out at 12:30pm and 1:30pm, but both attempts ended in failure. Each time they left in neat formation, but before long they would pull back to the campus in haste, looking completely flustered.

The third breakout was the most tragic one. A

young man returning to the campus was devastated and burst into tears, “I don’t know what I did to make them to treat us this way. I don’t want anything happen to my friends! I’ve already worried my family! We only want to leave! Why don’t they give us a way out!”

Some lost control and kept kicking the water bottles on the ground. Some yelled at their phone, “I can’t even leave, how can I know if your son is safe?”

Ah Tim recalled how, when the protesters had heard that there had been an increasing number of people gathering at Tsim Sha Tsui to save them, and that some people at Chatham Road South might be able to reach the cordon line, the protesters in the campus wanted to storm out to find them. However, they then came across a large number of riot police on their way. “They fired more than 100 tear gas canisters and we were shielding ourselves with umbrellas. No one was attacking, no one was using petrol bombs. But they didn’t stop shooting at us. The smoke from the tear gas was so thick that we could see nothing. They almost suffocated us.”

“Then, the riot police started shooting at us from just one or two meters away. They had no intention of arresting us, but were shooting at us uninteruptedly as if we were live targets. My ear, neck, and shoulder all got hit thrice by rubber or foam bullets, and all around me I kept hearing the sound of pepper spraying,” Ah Tim said as he wept. “We

9 - 10 - 19

**RALF RUCKUS**

# Out of Control—Hong Kong’s Rebellious Movement and the Left

*This article is the result of recent discussions with protesters and left-wing activists in Hong Kong. It gives a short overview of the escalated confrontation and argues that the broad ignorance of the global left is a mistake. Despite its limitations, the movement constitutes a major challenge for the right-wing regime of China’s Communist Party (CCP) and could be the prelude for more struggles against the capitalist relations in Hong Kong, the People’s Republic of China, and elsewhere.*

**Massive demonstrations**, rallies, violent clashes, tear gas and water cannons, burning barricades, attacks on police stations, blockades of streets and subway lines, strikes, and more—these are the dramatic forms of the current mass movement in Hong Kong. It expanded in June 2019 in reaction to a planned extradition bill which would have allowed handing over alleged criminals to mainland China’s repressive forces. Until September, the movement has escalated into the most serious social confrontation in Hong Kong since the riots against British colonial rule in 1967. And, as Hong Kong has been a semi-autonomous part of China with certain ‘democratic freedoms’ since the city was handed over by Britain to China in 1997, the escalation of the conflict also constitutes a serious challenge for the CCP regime.

Western politicians (and mainstream media critical of the CCP) describe the movement simply as one “for democracy and freedom”—and even ignore its violent tactics or call it simply a reaction to police violence. They see China’s global expansion politics as a threat to their own economic and political interests and want to use this chance to weaken China’s position and influence. The Western liberal and institutional left repeats the “democracy and freedom” hymn in the same way it usually defends the interests of national capitalist regimes using human rights arguments. That a part of the orthodox left has expressed support for the position of the CCP regime, instead, is also no surprise considering its outdated ‘anti-imperialist’ reflexes and lack of understanding of the capitalist nature of the CCP.

The important question is why the anti-capitalist left has been largely silent and inactive regarding the escalation of the conflict in Hong Kong. Is it being blinded by the mainstream reporting and does not want to support a mere ‘democracy’ movement? Is it believing the claims of orthodox leftists that China is still ‘socialist’? Is it deterred by the nationalist and racist discourses or requests for help from the U. S. government of parts of the Hong Kong movement? Or is Hong Kong—which has no long history of bigger and explicitly left-wing political movements—simply outside the radar of the anti-capitalist left and ‘too far away’ to even bother?

The point to be made is that the current confron-

tation between the protest movement and the governments in Hong Kong and China constitutes an important historical rupture. A look at the different phases of the movement’s development reveals that it a) has come up with radical forms of movement and struggle, b) has broken the existing social consensus on the relation of Hong Kong’s population, government and police, and c) threatens to destroy Hong Kong’s role for China’s (and global) capitalism.

The outcome of the confrontation is still open, but the anti-capitalist left should thoroughly analyze the development and support those currents within the movement that have a progressive potential. rounds, and other weapons. Many citizens and protesters who had originally intended on leaving were driven back to the campus grounds.

Mrs. Lee was sweating profusely as she stepped out of a kitchen at PolyU, clothes soiled by gravy. She and a few middle-aged people had seen the news earlier about the “Cafe Resistance” on campus and volunteered to help that afternoon.

“We’re not here to protest, we’re not rioters, we are just here to wash some vegetables, do some cooking, and do the dishes,” said Mrs. Lee. But by the time they finished busying themselves, the campus had already been blockaded. “We heard that a group of people were arrested and charged with rioting right after they left the campus. Of course we were scared. It had become impossible to leave.”

point in merely defending the campus! Let’s go!” More than 100 protesters assembled at the platform. Each of those at the front was holding a Molotov cocktail. They marched down the stairs of the main entrance, crossed the road and walked along the Science Museum Road. However, they came across riot police at the intersection on Cheong Wan Road. A massive volley of tear gas canisters and pepper-spray balls rained on them. The protesters couldn’t find a way out, even with the Molotov cocktail. After half an hour, they were driven back to the campus.

Some students returning from the streets said that, “Whether we stay or leave, we will die either way.”

9:00 – 12:30  
NOVEMBER 18

### **EXHAUSTED ALL WEAPONS AND SUPPLIES?**

After the first breakout attempt failed, the atmosphere of fear around campus spread further. Rumors circulated all over the campus and Telegram groups that the food supply at PolyU could only last until 1pm, and that there was not enough drinking water. There were appeals for citizens to go on strike as soon as possible and rush to Tsim Sha Tsui area to help by surrounding the police siege.

Vivian, a mom volunteering at “Cafe Resistance” confirmed the situation to the reporter: The ingre-

dients she had on hand were only enough for another half-day, and there was a shortage of bottled water. “This morning we were already asking the fellows to refill their bottles, saving some for those closest to the frontline,” she said. “There aren’t many vegetables left; they aren’t enough if we have two, three hundred more people... Either we break out, or starve to death.”

Vivian praised the young people there as being “very well-mannered.” “And everything was so organized—even if they had just returned from the frontline, when they saw only two of us in the kitchen, they came to help. I’m talking about those on the very front. I mean... these kids are so well-mannered, and smart, but the government treats them like this.” As she spoke she began to sob. “I’m not scared because ... [looking at people outside] On Facebook, lots of people are saying that they are worried about us, but ... they have never been out! Don’t tell me how worried you are, or talk about a massacre ... [sobs] ... Don’t say these useless things to me! If you’re really worried, if you’re really scared about people dying, just come here to help us, what are you waiting for? You’re still going to work! Are you kidding me?”

At the same time, the number of Molotov cocktails in the campus decreased. Our reporters had seen a lot of them on the campus the night before. However, as the armored vehicle and water cannon trucks tried to march in, protesters had to fight back using the Molotov cocktails. That’s why the numbers had been decreasing so quickly. In



PolyU gym after most of the protesters had left.

## PHASES

The movement in Hong Kong makes use of the experiences of previous mobilizations since the handover in 1997, namely the Umbrella Movement in 2014 when tens of thousands demanded “free elections” in Hong Kong from China’s regime and occupied a large space outside Hong Kong’s parliament for several weeks—before they were pushed aside without having reached their goal.

The first phase of the current mobilization began in February 2019 with the Hong Kong government’s announcement of the extradition bill. A public outcry and several peaceful demonstrations followed.

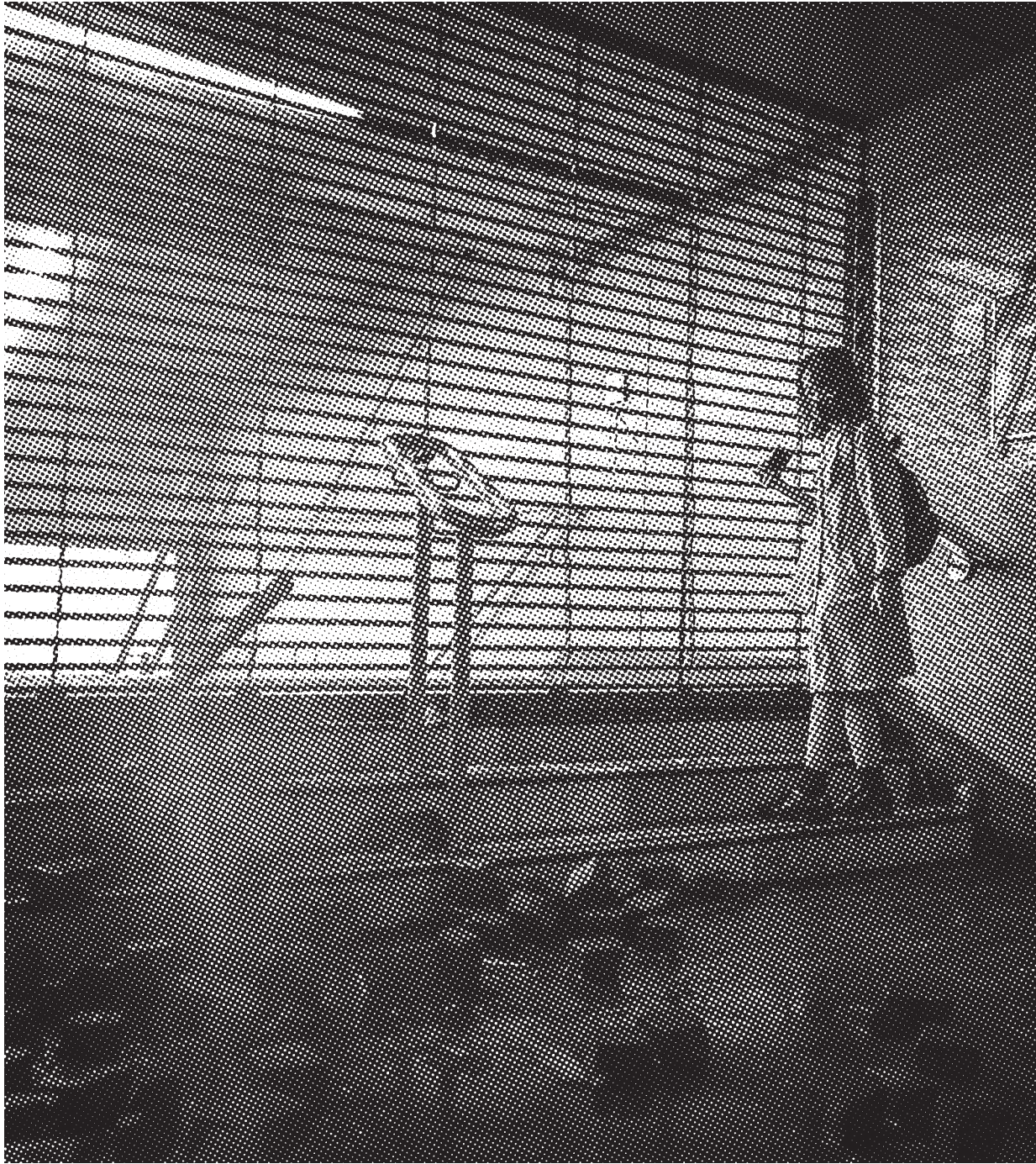
As the government did not stop the proceedings to introduce the bill, a second phase started on June 9. Several mass demonstrations with up to two million participants in the center of Hong Kong—surprising if we consider a city population of just 7.5 million—were followed by major clashes with the police using tear gas, rubber bullets, and bean-bag rounds against demonstrators building barricades and throwing objects at the charging police forces. The Hong Kong government suspended the bill on June 15, but without withdrawing it. By then, the Hong Kong government had already lost all the trust of large parts of the Hong Kong population.

The movement formulated five demands: 1) the complete withdrawal of the extradition bill, 2) the withdrawal of the ‘riot’ charge against protesters,

3) the release of arrested protesters and the drop of charges against them, 4) an independent inquiry into police violence, and 5) the implementation of genuine universal suffrage (sometimes also the resignation of Hong Kong government leader Carrie Lam). The second phase ended on July 1, when during a large demonstration hundreds of militants broke into the parliament building and ransacked it.

In the third phase, the movement decided to spread to other city areas. These actions were meant to take the protests to other parts of the Hong Kong population but also to outreach to mainland visitors and immigrants to explain the movement’s demands. They drew smaller numbers as before until the situation changed again on July 21, when hundreds of men in ‘white shirts’ from local (pro-CCP) triads attacked and injured homecoming protesters in a suburban subway station. The obvious collaboration of police and triads during the attack led to public outrage.[9] The police itself became the focus of anger and hatred of large parts of the Hong Kong population, and a spiral of increasingly violent action and counter-action began. Surprisingly, the violent attacks by protesters on the police have so far been supported (or, at least, tolerated) by the bigger part of the movement as it became obvious that the government hardly reacted to ‘peaceful’ demonstrations.

The protesters further changed tactics using ‘flash mob’-like actions by blocking roads, setting



Another trashed MTA station. The stations have seen a wave of vandalism after they had worked with police to stop trains.

The Special Tactical Force [literally “Raptor Team” in Cantonese] at one point entered the University Medical Centre next to the long staircase at the front entrance of the university, shouting: “Freeze! Hands up high! Everyone up against the wall and put down your phones!” The wounded and the first aiders were arrested, while a phone on the floor was still live streaming and seemed to be discovered by an officer, who bellowed: “Whose phone is this? Live streaming?!” After the police and those arrested had left, our reporter entered the scene and found large blood stains in the Medical Centre, and a handwritten letter.

“Sorry! Due to the Special Tactical Force’s sudden assault, I had to enter your room, I apologize deeply, I hope you will understand and sympathize, sorry,” it read.

6:30 – 8:00  
NOVEMBER 18

#### **A DIFFICULT DECISION: SWITCH GEAR OR BREAK OUT?**

The young people on site were visibly anxious and increasingly despondent. Most stopped discussing blocking the Cross-Harbour Tunnel or continuing the “General Strike”, and instead asked: “How can we leave?”

Suggestions to abandon their gear and change their clothes began to spread on Telegram. In this way, even if they were arrested, it would be hard-

er for the police to charge them with rioting. This suggestion was adopted. More and more teenagers in casual wear, without any gear, appeared on the campus, including Jacky and Edwin, who had stayed for more than 10 hours.

“We have to defend the campus. Otherwise, the police will just storm in. We are very exhausted after the skirmishes with police last night.”

On one hand, they understood that the police had declared the university as a rioting ground, and those who got caught within would be charged with rioting. Meanwhile, they hoped that changing clothes could help them escape safely. At that point they were told that there would be an evening prayer at S-Core, as in, a “religious-assemblies-do-not-require-permits” kind of gathering. Upon hearing this information, secondary students in casual wear at Y-Core, who were talking to journalists, all rushed off to the gathering without finishing answering the questions.

On the other hand, people discussed how they could break out. Discussions on tactics got increasingly fierce since midnight. “I don’t think we have to break out, but so many people want to go...” said Ah Kai, one of the protesters, “Ultimately, we cannot receive supplies from here. If we can get out, at least we can have a supply line, otherwise we might as well starve to death.”

At around 8pm, someone called upon the protesters, saying: “Let’s get out of here. There’s no



ing for them to break out, meet up, and launch a unified attack on the police. If they didn't leave, the number of people injured will only grow, as protesters fought back the police at the front entrance. Those outside would also be implicated and arrested. Those in support of this mainly comprised of full-gearred, "valiant" frontliners (勇武). Some who participated in the discussion were equipped with bows and arrows.

Yet there were also others speakers, mostly female and spoke politely with a soft voice, who advocated for staying. The reason was that there were many first-aiders on campus without any gear, and many of the injured who shouldn't be left unattended. In the spirit of "advancing and retreating as one," (齊上齊落) no one should be left behind. These speakers also emphasized that, if they were to charge, they should bring together everyone on campus, discuss and plan their respective routes, and then coordinate with people outside to act in concert. But another problem arose: Everyone was spread across the campus past midnight. Some were taking a nap in the gymnasium while some were resting in the canteen. It was impossible to gather everyone. As observed by our reporter, at the peak, there were at most a hundred people gathered to discuss their next move on the top of the long staircase next to A-Core.

Not having been able to reach a consensus after a long discussion, a few protesters who were in favor of breaking out began to get impatient. Some

## **But whether people supported going on the offensive or staying behind, "surrender" never came up as an option in the discussions[...]**

grumbled: "They say they want the revolution of our time (時代革命), but they're dithering. You guys are totally useless! Come on, let's go!" Upon finishing the sentence, they rose to their feet. That time in the early morning, about 70-80% of people involved in the discussion followed.

But whether people supported going on the offensive or staying behind, "surrender" never came up as an option in the discussions—no one suggested laying down their weapons and turning themselves in, nor did anyone say they regretted coming in. Most also felt that there was no way back, because they would be arrested regardless.

At around 5am, the police suddenly attacked the front entrance of PolyU, arresting several people.

up barricades, etc. in one part of city, then using the subway to move to other parts to do the same there, always trying to be ahead of the police—a tactic self-described as "be water" (referring to a Bruce Lee quote). Meanwhile, the police upgraded its equipment and tactics, with more protective gear, new weaponry, undercover cops posing as protesters, and more flexible and aggressive attacks. The height of this phase was August 5, when a strike call was followed by hundreds of thousands, the subway was brought to a halt, and mass demonstrations including coordinated attacks on several police stations took place. Then the demonstrators shifted their attention to the airport, a central and economically important traffic hub not just for the city but for the whole region. It was partially shut down on August 12 and 13.

The forth (and ongoing) phase began with the movement's decision to halt the violent clashes and regroup its forces. Peaceful demonstrations on August 17 and 18, the latter with 1.7 million participants, showed the still massive support of the movement, as did the human chain action (inspired by a similar action in the Baltic states in 1989) of several hundreds of thousands on August 23.

As the government still made no concessions, the violent clashes have returned on August 24 and after. The police have ordered the subway authority to shut down stations in protest areas, continued to use tear gas, rubber bullets, and bru-

tal baton attacks, and recently started to employ water cannons. The protesters have used Molotov cocktails, set fire to barricades, ransacked subway stations, and blocked train services and roads to the airport. On September 2, university and high-school students returned to school after the summer break and started strike actions. On September 4, Carrie Lam actually fulfilled the first demand and withdrew the extradition bill, but so far that has not stopped further clashes.

Why did the movement escalate from peaceful marches to bring down a bill to a massive and partially violent movement that targets the police, the position of the Hong Kong government, and the influence of the CCP regime? When Britain and China agreed on the handover and formulated the "Basic Law" as the constitutional document that defined China's 'one country, two systems' rule after 1997, people in Hong Kong and elsewhere believed that it was China that would change and become more democratic in the course of its industrialization, urbanization, and integration into the world-economy. Instead, China has not moved into that direction but has not only tightened its authoritarian repressive rule but also amplified its economic and political interventions in Hong Kong.

Today, many people in Hong Kong expect that China will not even wait until 2047, the official end of the 'one country, two systems' arrangement. The extradition bill was seen as just one more threat to the relative freedoms of expression and asso-

ciation and the Western style ‘rule of law.’ Protesters see their struggle as an ‘end game,’ the final chance to stop a full takeover and the introduction of an even more repressive regime by China.

Besides, many people in Hong Kong, especially young people, suffer from the immense social inequality in the city, the high rents and relatively low wages, the competition of mainland immigrants for jobs, housing, and welfare. They feel that China’s increasing influence will further worsen their economic situation unless they stop it.

### **ORGANIZED STRUGGLE**

At least a third of Hong Kong’s population (2.5 million people) have actively taken part in the movement—probably a world record. The movement is heterogeneous, with people of different ages, genders, social positions, and professions involved: high-school and university students, white collar workers, civil servants, airport workers, nurses, and many more. According to surveys, most of the participants are highly educated and rather ‘middle class’ but many blue and pink collar workers are also taking part or simply support it but cannot participate much due to economic pressures and long working hours. Actually, many protesters live in two worlds, a full work schedule during weekdays, and the rebellious movement on the street in the evenings and on weekends. Notable is the general absence of the city’s hundreds of thousands of immigrant female domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia.

The masses of participating young high-school and university students grew up in post-1997 Hong Kong and never developed a ‘Chinese identity.’ They fear the repressive CCP system and want to keep their Hong Kong ‘way of life.’ Meanwhile, many of the older protesters are migrants from the mainland or their descendants who suffered from CCP purges or other campaigns before they came to Hong Kong in the past decades. They don’t trust the CCP.

The protesters are confronted by a smaller part of the population that does, indeed, supports the Hong Kong government and police as well as the CCP and has staged own demonstrations with up to tens of thousands of participants.

The protest movement shows an amazing ability to self-organize, develop and change strategies, and make decisions—despite its massive size. Debates and actions are often organized through forums like (Reddit-like) LIHKG, Telegram and Facebook groups, as well as other digital tools. Sometimes thousands or ten thousands of members use these chat groups, and even decisions on the next step during a demonstration are made using apps. During peaceful and violent actions, people take over certain functions: front-line fighting, building barricades, providing supplies like masks or helmets, offering medical treatment, etc. Others administer the digital communication tools, post information on the location of police squads or PIN-codes for doors in the neighborhood for people to escape, provide visual art work

an end, Jerry said his greatest regret was failing to use his time wisely.

“I played too many computer games in the past and didn’t study a lot; I wasted too much time, and was unable to do other things that I’d wanted to do.” If he could start all over again, how would he change?

“I’d read more books, learn more about military strategy, and remember it all in my head, so that protesters don’t have to struggle so much; or perhaps I’ll memorize the maps better, so that I don’t have to get lost all the time.” Jerry’s voice choked up with tears.

2:00 – 6:00  
NOVEMBER 18

### **CONUNDRUM: BREAK OUT OR STAY BACK?**

Around midnight on Nov. 18, the protesters on the PolyU campus remained wide awake. Nearby in Yau Ma Tei and Tsim Sha Tsui, people gathered to back them up. Floods of Telegram and LIHKG messages called for more to gather and wait for PolyU protesters to break their way out, then to merge into one group.

“I thought people would stir things up elsewhere to save us, but calls have led to little action. I don’t know, it feels like we’re fighting alone,” 16-year-old Form 5 student DP said.

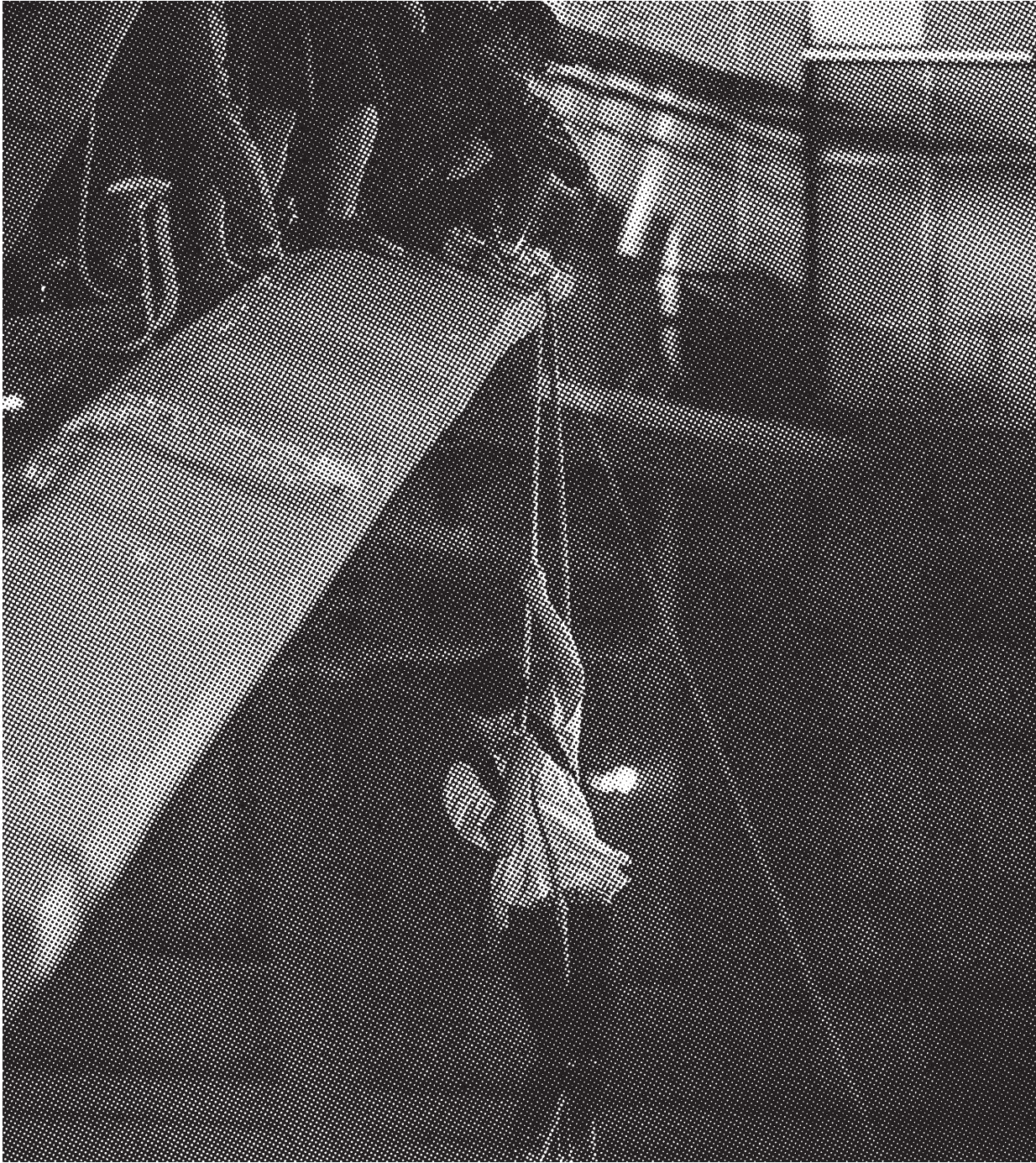
DP was on campus with his mother that night.

“Having witnessed so many fellows getting arrested, so many suspected to be murdered, and also because of what happened to our classmates Chow (Tsz Lok) and Chan Yin Lam [both deaths were rumored to be covered up by the police], it’s natural to get more and more angry and go further to the front, wanting to do more.” He said his whole family very much leaned “yellow” [pro-democrats] on the political spectrum, and while his father couldn’t join because of work, his mother came with him and was cooking in the kitchen. He was happy with her decision to come but he also felt guilty. As the police warned of escalating actions, DP began to worry.

“We don’t know how long we can defend ourselves here. And I’m scared, things could happen tonight. There’s just no way to leave; they say they’ll let us leave but people are arrested once they get outside.”

He admitted that he was growing more pessimistic. “Once we’re trapped here, and if people don’t save us from outside, that’ll be the end.”

Other than waiting to get arrested or get rescued, what else can be done? From midnight till dawn, protesters in PolyU had discussed numerous times whether they should break through the police blockade. There were two camps: Those in support of taking the offensive said that they shouldn’t wait for their doom. The crowds outside were wait-



Some protesters descended from a footbridge and were carried off into the night on motor bike.

## **Protesters see their struggle as an ‘end game,’ the final chance to stop a full takeover and the introduction of an even more repressive regime by China.**

related to the movement, and take care of the ‘Lennon Walls’—posters, stickers, photos, etc. put up on certain walls. Many people also use their own money to buy water, food, subway tickets, or equipment like gas masks and distribute it to demonstrators, or they donate money if they have no other way to support the movement.

Striking is the absence of leaders and the weak position of political parties. For the CCP leaders and the Hong Kong government, this is hard to believe. They, as well as Western media, present people from certain ‘democratic’ or ‘localist’ parties (who played a role during the Umbrella Movement) as today’s leaders or representatives, but

those are hardly important for the current movement. This absence of leaders is partly a result of the repression after the Umbrella Movement because many outstanding figures were charged and got prison sentences. Another reason are the divisive tactics of Umbrella Movement leaders like those from ‘localist’ (nationalist) groups. There is a wide consensus that leadership conflicts and divisions weakened the Umbrella Movement and should not be repeated.

So the current movement is mostly pushing for the five demands and uses general slogans like “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” or “Hong Kong, go forward.” More issues have frequently been voiced and discussed, e. g. left-wing demands regarding social inequality or right-wing demands regarding the limitation of mainland immigration or Hong Kong independence. However, the movement stays with the five demands to ensure its unity and push through these common demands first.

### **CHINA’S INTERESTS**

The Hong Kong government under Carrie Lam is visibly shaken by the movement but has largely remained in the background. It is clear that the decisions on how to deal with the movement are made in Beijing. After the CCP did not allow any public reporting in mainland media at first, it later changed its course and started to push a nationalist media campaign that portrays the protesters in Hong Kong as “criminals” or “terrorists” who are driven by “foreign black hands” and pursue a “color

revolution” against the CCP and China’s national interests. Chinese state media and government representatives have threatened a direct intervention of Chinese security forces, and Chinese anti-riot units of the People’s Armed Police organized public drills in Shenzhen, close to the Hong Kong border. The CCP regime also uses its economic power and put pressure on companies like the airline Cathay Pacific after its employees had openly taken part in protest actions.

The CCP regime wants to undermine the protesters’ legitimacy and weaken the movement as it looks to protect its political and economic interests. Hong Kong plays a vital role for China as well as Chinese and foreign companies as a transitional hub for capital inflows and outflows, investments, and connected financial and legal services. The city is able to play that role because of its special political status, its own currency, and its Western legal system. The protests as well as the ongoing Sino-U.S. trade war already take a toll on Hong Kong’s economy.

Any direct intervention by the People’s Armed Police or even the army could destroy Hong Kong’s economic function and bring massive economic losses. However, a continuing movement that openly challenges China’s rule in the city and demands more autonomy or even Hong Kong independence undermines the CCP’s authority and could even prove contagious and provoke more social uprisings in China. Despite the CCP propaganda and the nationalist mobilization in China against the

Hong Kong protests, mainlanders do, indeed, have different perspectives on the movement.

Therefore, the CCP leadership wants to quickly stop the movement (and the spreading of pictures of burning barricades), at least not later than the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 2019. That might not be possible without increased repression and the direct intervention of Chinese security forces. The CCP regime is nervous as the and the escalation of the conflict and the inability of the governments in Hong Kong and Beijing to contain and stop it has already led to speculation about a weakened position of the CCP’s leader Xi Jinping.

#### LIMITS AND POTENTIALS

Leftists have shown apparent difficulties in dealing with recent social movements that don’t fit into their expectations, that refuse to be led by leftist representatives, and that include elements that voice politically problematic positions and demands, as, for instance, the Yellow Vests in France and now the movement in Hong Kong. However, the latent racist positions of parts of the Hong Kong movement and its blurred and problematic demand for ‘democracy’ (or for the defense of the status quo) should be a reason for left-wing activists to get involved, resist those positions, and support the movement’s progressive currents—as some in Hong Kong already try to do.

The current movement in Hong Kong is surely one of the most amazing mass mobilizations seen in

## “I will keep defending this place until I die; I will do my best to protect other people.”

As the clock ticked, some people—like Pat, a volunteer first-aider—started to worry about their situation. That was Pat’s second time volunteering to be a first-aider.

“The police have presumed that everyone inside the campus is a rioter. You won’t be safe even if you are a reporter or a first-aider... The worst case for me is to be charged. I know the worst outcome, all I can do is accept it. There’s nothing I can do now.” That was around 1am. When the protesters were taking a break as the battle cooled down a little bit, they heard that a group of people were arrested when trying to leave the campus through Y-Core. At that moment, Pat and five or six first-aiders were taking a rest by the exit of Y-Core.

Pat said that he came alone that day and he wasn’t updated with the news. He only found out that he had been trapped after nightfall. When asked whether he had any regrets, he pondered for a

while and said, “It depends. If I look at it from a broader perspective, I have no regrets. I’m witnessing history in the making, even though I’m not one of the makers.” What if the police use live rounds? Pat’s voice finally wavered.

“As a first-aider, I’ve kept witnessing injustice in Hong Kong. I want to do what I can. If they shoot live rounds and my life is threatened, it may not be a bad thing. At least I won’t have to see what’s going to happen in the future.”

Another frontline protester who also spoke of death was Jerry. Having stayed at PolyU for nearly three days, he admitted that resources were rapidly depleting. The situation was becoming increasingly dangerous, but he refused to give up.

“I will keep defending this place until I die; I will do my best to protect other people.” In the face of death, he was scared. He also said that he had already sent his personal information to other protesters.

Jerry had already thought through what he would do if the police invaded the campus. “I will do my best to kill the police to protect other protesters. I won’t hold anything back. I won’t show them mercy out of my own conscience.” He didn’t have close ties with his family. “I told my mom that if I died, it would be none of her business; she is so blue [pro-Chinese regime] that she’s black. From the start, I have thought of myself as an orphan.” Facing the possibility that his life might be coming to

crossroads between Chatham Road South and Austin Road, large numbers of protesters were confronted with water cannon trucks and armored vehicles. The police repeatedly fired water cannons on protesters, who in turn responded with Molotov cocktails. During the confrontations, many were injured and had to return to the PolyU campus for emergency treatment.

When our reporter approached a protester named Janson, he was resting after having just been hit by a water cannon, and was receiving first aid treatment.

“We were only shouting at the police when a water cannon vehicle rushed towards us and fired us with blue-dyed water and pepper-laced water.” This was not the only time Janson was hit by a water cannon that day.

“My entire body stings now. I didn’t feel much at first, but after a while it stings really badly, and my body feels like it’s burning.” Why did he stay here despite being injured? Janson said he had learned from the lesson of the battle at the Chinese University (CUHK) “After everyone left CUHK, Tolo Highway was reclaimed; if we let them take back control of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, it will be business as usual tomorrow and everything we did before would go down the drain.” He said that the worst case scenario would be for the police to force their way into the campus and himself being charged with rioting. Is he mentally prepared?

“Yes,” he replied very softly.

Facing the possibility of being arrested or even shot by live rounds, the protesters inside the campus held different views.

Some, like Mr. Lee, a university student in the UK, were more optimistic. Speaking with the journalist past midnight, he had been on the campus for 10 hours. Mr. Lee believed that defending PolyU was strategically important.

“We have to remind ourselves what was the purpose of blocking the roads around these particular universities? It’s because there’s important infrastructure. The Cross-Harbour Tunnel is here,” he said.

Although protesters were trapped and were at a disadvantaged position, police hadn’t made it into the campus yet.

“They tried water cannon trucks, armored vehicles, even riot police. But we still held our line of defense.” He hoped that the police could reach a consensus with the legislators. “At the end, we’ll be retreating like what happened in CUHK.” Mr. Lee’s friend Hailey, who was by his side, bluntly expressed that they weren’t worried about not being able to leave.

“I can’t be worried about this, can I? If I were worried every time I went out, I would just stay home.”

the past decades. After all, for the CCP it is the biggest challenge by popular protests since the Tian’anmen Movement in 1989—even if this comparison has its limits due to the changes in China and globally since. It also comes close to some of those during the ‘Arabellion’ in 2010 and 2011.

The movement is, indeed, no anti-capitalist mobilization, yet, but it has questioned the position of the capitalist class that governs (and virtually owns) Hong Kong as well as that of the rulers of the CCP in Beijing. The attacks on the police show that many in the movement have no trust in core state institutions. Strikes and other mobilizations in workplaces (hospitals, the airport, schools and universities, the public sector, etc.) further undermine the acceptance of capitalist relations, or, like one protester said: “Workers don’t work as hard as usual and speak up against managers now.”

What will happen next? In a pessimistic scenario, it could end up just like most of them, in a crackdown and defeat, as the Hong Kong government is already talking about declaring a state of emergency, and the CCP seems unable to find a smooth solution and might mobilize its security forces to crush the movement.

In a less dramatic scenario, the movement might just run out of steam. In that case harsher repression measures and many more arrests are still likely as they already have begun. At least some of the ‘democratic freedoms’ in Hong Kong might be kept, which could be seen as a success of the move-

ment. Many in the Western left underestimate the importance of these ‘freedoms’ for organizing resistance and social movements. So far, Hong Kong has been a haven for labor groups, feminists, and other left-wing activists who have used the city to organize activities across the border in China, and any serious crackdown by the CCP regime in Hong Kong could mean they have to stop.

In an optimistic scenario, the movement could be the beginning of a rebellious generation and further social struggles. The underlying social issues that large parts of the population face (high rents, low wages, long working hours, social inequality, low quality of health care, etc.) could spark anti-capitalist currents, and the experience of collectively standing up and struggle against powerful state authorities might be just the start of more struggles to come that question the capitalist relations as such. That could trigger similar movements in mainland China which face the same enemy—the right-wing CCP regime that has been at the center of the capitalist restoration in China for decades and engaged in a highly repressive drive against left-wing activists in the past few years.

Much depends on the limitation the CCP’s influence in Hong Kong and the containment of the right-wing ‘localists’ and their nationalist and racist polices in the city. The involvement of left-wing activists, the promotion of anti-capitalist topics and debates, and even the support from left-wing movements abroad could play a decisive role in making the last scenario more likely.



Brick structures line the streets to prevent the police and vehicles from passing.

and what's it all for? It's to defend this campus. They don't want to attack and repel the police, they just want to prevent the police from entering. These are people fighting for democracy and freedom, should they be treated this way and made to suffer?"

At around 9pm, members of the "Guard Our Children's Future" group, wearing yellow vests, attempted to leave the campus, but the police forbade them from leaving. The members, including Mrs. Law, decided to stay and protect the children to the very end.

Mrs. Law is a 60-year-old with two children and two grandchildren. Since July 21, she has practically been taking to the streets without fail, later donning the yellow vest of "Guard Our Children's Future" group.

"People in my age, we haven't got many burdens at home as our kids are all grown up. Given the current situation, I just couldn't bear to watch the youngsters do it on their own," she said.

At 4pm on Sunday, out of concern for the protesters on the campus, Mrs Law and other members rushed to the scene. "All we did was to take care of the injured and those in need, just helping the young ones."

As night fell, the situation became increasingly tense: The police cordoned off the campus, and those at the scene were filled with dread. During the interview, Mrs Law's family called constantly to

check on her. Yet she remained surprisingly calm. "These last few years, I've had the feeling that nobody knows when you go to sleep tonight, whether you'll see another day tomorrow. It could be a natural disaster or man-made catastrophe; it could be an illness. They come at you anytime, anywhere—nobody can predict what's coming." As a Christian, she believes she understands life and death. "I have no idea what will happen in the next moment. But I cannot just stand still now because I'm afraid of dying later."

One by one, protesters who were knocked to the ground by the water cannon were rinsed off by first-aiders; the conditions on the scene were chaotic, with some protesters crying in agony in front of reporters and Mrs. Law. She knew that she couldn't do much.

"Apart from feeling heartbroken, there is nothing I can do to help." She was prepared to be arrested; her only hope in being there at the scene was to let the young protesters know, especially if they weren't accepted by their families: "In this world, there are so many people who love you; in this world, there's still love."

11:00  
NOVEMBER 17

#### **FACING INJURY AND DEATH**

On the night of Nov. 17, the scenes outside the PolyU campus were tense and volatile. At the

11-18-19

RALF RUCKUS

# “Saam Baa” in Hong Kong— Three Strikes Paralyze the City

*This report is mostly based on eye-witness accounts and discussions with protesters in Hong Kong over the past week. It describes the latest escalation of the protest movement’s struggle against the Hong Kong government and police and the “saam baa” or “three strikes” actions in mid-November 2019: workers’ strike, class boycott, closure of businesses.*

**On Saturday**, unarmed soldiers of China’s People’s Liberation Army cleared street barricades close to Baptist University that had been erected by protesters in the past days—the first known deployment of the Chinese army in connection with the protest movement. After a turbulent week, the situation calmed down slightly on Friday and Saturday. While protesting students gave up the occupation of Chinese University in Shatin on Friday evening, the clashes concentrated around other barricaded universities and Mongkok which has seen repeated confrontations and tear gas attacks recently. On Sunday, the police used armored cars, water cannons, teargas, and rubber bullets to attack Polytechnic University in Hung Hom, apparently the last occupied university that has been heavily barricaded and was defended



An archer on the roof of PolyU, ready to fend off a police attack by any means.

by hundreds of student protesters. In districts nearby, other protesters erected barricades and fought with security forces. Until Monday morning, the police were not able to take over Polytechnic University but surrounded it—with presumably hundreds of protesters still inside.

The new escalation of the past week is connected to events the week before. On Friday, November 8, a 22-year old student died after he had earlier fallen down a floor in a building during a police attack. On the same day, it became known that a 16-year old woman had been raped by several police officers after her arrest. The police deny the allegation. Heavy clashes between security forces and the “black bloc” followed during the following weekend. On Monday, November 11, a “general strike” and traffic blockades had already been planned. After an attempted street blockade, a policeman shot two people in Siu Sai Wan, one of whom seriously. In Kwai Tong, a traffic cop on a motorcycle repeatedly drove through a group of protesters and seriously injured one person. On Tuesday, police forces tried to enter Chinese University in Shatin through a bridge after protesters had thrown objects on the highway underneath. For hours, the police shot teargas—all in all well more than 1,000 rounds—and rubber bullets while the protesting students defended themselves with Molotov cocktails and more.

#### **TRAFFIC BLOCKADES**

These events mobilized many for the actions planned for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday

## **On Friday, Nov. 8, a 22-year old student died after he had earlier fallen down a floor in a building during a police attack.**

day last week under the slogan “saam baa” or “three strikes”—workers’ strike (baa gung), class boycott (baa fo), and the closure of businesses (baa si). Starting in the early morning, protesters blocked Hong Kong’s subway or MTR (in leaflets also called “empty R”), used by millions daily to get to work. At the same time, many streets were blocked so that the traffic broke down in many places and buses could not get through either. Many people in Hong Kong did not get to their work places (or arrived late), some office workers were asked to work from home, others used the chaos to have a free day or take part in protests.

In Central, the banking and business district, thousands of office workers took part in illegal demonstrations and street blockades. Several times in the past weeks, masked office workers had staged protest demonstrations in the morn-

ing. What on earth happened in PolyU on this, the longest day? Our reporters visited different corners of the campus to ask those who stayed—whether they were frontline protesters, first aiders, legislators, elderly members of the “Guard Our Children’s Future” group, or housewives who volunteered to cook—what they were fighting for, what they feared, and what they were worried about.

Besieged and trapped, what have they experienced, and what do they have to say to the free people outside?

7:30 – 11:00

NOVEMBER 17

#### **THE CAMPUS WITH NO ESCAPE**

On Nov. 17, PolyU was in a state of chaos. As messages circulated about the blockade of the campus and the possibility that the police would use live rounds, multiple last wills began to circulate online, written by none other than the hundreds who were trapped on campus. As our reporters walked around, we discovered that there were not a lot of PolyU students left on site. Whenever people got lost, and asked if there were people who know the campus, it usually went unanswered. Our reporters also found that most who stayed hadn’t intended to guard the campus with their lives. Among the interviewees—from protesters who stayed since the beginning, to those who came as reinforcements later on—the majority didn’t expect to be trapped. By the time they realized they could

only stay, however, they didn’t regret showing up in the first place, in the spirit of an oft-repeated mantra among protesters—“We advance and retreat as one.” (齊上齊落)

Legislator Ted Hui entered PolyU at 7:30pm, he said the situation inside was already chaotic.

He saw many young secondary school students. “They told me that they really wanted to leave, but couldn’t.” So he tried to look for an exit for the students; he tried three to four places, but all were guarded by the police. “Protesters were trying some narrow, hidden routes. Some even cut the wire fences to get out. But at the front and rear entrances and even the hilltop behind, the police were there, flashlights out and ready.” At some points, they were even fired upon with tear gas, forcing them to return to the campus.

Hui had tried to reason calmly with the police, pointing out that some of those trapped were just ordinary citizens who wanted to leave. What he found, however, was that many police were in a state of frenzy and heightened agitation, shouting insults endlessly.

“With police armed with live ammunition in such a mental state, I feel like this could be a repeat of the June Fourth massacre, that’s what worried me most,” he said.

Looking at the people on the campus, his heart was aching with pain: “So many young people,



rounds, and other weapons. Many citizens and protesters who had originally intended on leaving were driven back to the campus grounds.

Mrs. Lee was sweating profusely as she stepped out of a kitchen at PolyU, clothes soiled by gravy. She and a few middle-aged people had seen the news earlier about the “Cafe Resistance” on campus and volunteered to help that afternoon.

“We’re not here to protest, we’re not rioters, we are just here to wash some vegetables, do some cooking, and do the dishes,” said Mrs. Lee. But by the time they finished busying themselves, the campus had already been blockaded. “We heard that a group of people were arrested and charged with rioting right after they left the campus. Of course we were scared. It had become impossible to leave.”

Quoting the Police Public Relations Bureau, the Hong Kong Journalists’ Association said “all those who leave Polytechnic University will be arrested unless they can produce valid press pass.” At midnight, the police also warned the protesters to stop all attacks, including using petrol bombs, arrows, and other such lethal weapons, or else they would retaliate with live ammunition.

Heavily besieged by scores of police, all those trapped in PolyU face the possibility of 10-year prison sentences if charged with “rioting”; they are also under the threat of death, should the police storm the campus or use live ammunition.

## **Heavily besieged by scores of police, all those trapped in PolyU face the possibility of 10-year prison sentences if charged with “rioting”; they are also under the threat of death, should the police storm the campus or use live ammunition.**

Ah Wai was sobbing when he spoke to our reporter. He was terrified. “I’ve sent my personal information to those I fought alongside with before...” He was ready to die fighting. “I don’t want to bow to the totalitarian authority, to the government. I don’t want to see this beautiful world and wonderful city ruined, and our freedom and happiness taken away.”

ing from the subway to their work places in office towers. Most of them are young, so they belong to the masses of those who get a (precarious) job after their studies or work training but they cannot afford renting their own flat. In the past week, they met during their lunch break at a junction on Pedder Street, waited until they reached a critical mass, and then occupied the street, blocked the traffic, built barricades from rubbish bins and construction materials or dug up paving stones and piled them up to the meanwhile characteristic “mini-Stonehenges” in order to prevent police vehicles from advancing. On some days, the police attacked them and made arrests.

Less successful was the call on shops and restaurants to close during the days of the “general strike.” During the past weeks, protesters had begun to make lists and maps with shops and restaurants that support them (“yellow”) and those who stand on the side of the government and the police (“blue”). In several districts, cues of people supporting the movement have formed outside “yellow” places while “blue” ones have been boycotted and face attacks during clashes. On Monday, several “yellow” restaurants closed and hung up solidarity declarations, but most restaurants and shops stayed open.

### **CLASS BOYCOTT**

High-school and university students have belonged to the core and motor of the movement in the past months. On Monday, they staged class boycotts in many schools and universities, and af-

ter the police attack on Chinese University several other universities were occupied on Tuesday and Wednesday. In Polytechnic University, Chinese University, and City University masked students in black began to collect materials for the defense against expected police attacks. They built brick walls, prepared cases of Molotov cocktails, and barricaded roads and bridges leading to the campus. Many people came from outside and brought them needed gear like helmets, gas masks, and umbrellas as well as food, clothes, and more. The campus exits were now guarded, bags checked, and only students, some supporters, and journalists could enter. Since the city government first suspended class and later declared that it would end the semester immediately, many university employees left the campus. Students and supporters took over some of the canteens and other university facilities. The early end of the semester also meant that many students (including those from China) packed their suitcases and left, partly out of fear that the police would attack. Around the university campus, protesters built more barricades and sealed off roads. Close to Chinese University, a highway was blocked, and next to City University a highway and the entrance to the Harbour Tunnel, one of the main traffic arteries in the city.

### **UPRISING IN THE DISTRICTS**

It is notable that for weeks militant demonstrations and blockades have also taken place in Hong Kong’s suburbs. That is partly due to the frequent closure of the MTR in the evenings. The subway

company became a target of the movement in the summer when it started closing subway stations in “riot” areas following police orders as it made it more difficult for protesters to escape. Since then, exits, ticket machines, and whole stations have been destroyed. The closure in the evenings means that many people cannot reach the city center anymore. Activists reported that local communication structures have consolidated and more local actions have been organized since. Among these rebellious districts are Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Sheung Shui, Tai Po, and Tung Chung where also many workers from poorer parts of the population live. During local actions some of them join the high-school and university students of the “black bloc.” In Yuen Long, for instance, last week several blockades of the main shopping street took place, when hundreds destroyed facilities of the light rail system as well as Chinese banks and shops. The police attacked them with teargas, cleared the barricades, and went back to the police station, but the protesters frequently came out again.

#### **STILL BROAD SUPPORT FOR THE MOVEMENT**

The “saam baa” actions were so successful that they were continued on Thursday and Friday. After the two-million-march on June 16, the parliament storm on July 1, the attack by triad members on protesters in Yuen Long on July 21, the “general strike” on August 5 and the severe clashes on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic on October 1, the past week is another culmination and probably turning point of the

movement. It is still supported by large parts of the population that sees the “black bloc” as the front line of a legitimate uprising. The increased repression and brutality from the side of the police plays a big role here. More than 4,000 people have been arrested so far. About 40 percent are high-school or university students. Many of the arrested report beatings and acts of sexualized violence by police officers. Minors have been sent to foster homes for weeks as a punishment. Most demonstrations are banned, and participants risk years in prison. Still, thousands ignore this regularly, and even the ban of masks declared in early October is largely ignored. In the eyes of many people in Hong Kong, the police as well as other state institutions have lost their legitimacy.

The clashes have also led to a deep division in the society as a part of the population has sided with the city government—and therefore with the right-wing government of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Beijing which controls the government in Hong Kong. In the past few weeks, groups of these “pro-Beijingers” have helped cleaning streets after clashes and organized smaller demonstrations. Frequently, violent fights break out between individuals or smaller groups with injured on both sides. On November 11, for instance, a “pro-Beijinger” was spilled with an inflammable liquid and set on fire, and one day later a 70-year old was hit by a brick thrown by a supposed protester. The old man died later.

11 - 19 - 19

#### **STAND NEWS**

# The Longest Day: Housewives, Students, and Protesters in the Besieged PolyU

**On November 17** at Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), the air was tinged with the pungent smell of tear gas; the atmosphere was heavy with fear and foreboding.

In a statement released at around 9:30pm, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) urged people inside PolyU to “leave immediately through the exit at Block Y of Lee Shau Kee Building in northern direction,” citing the actions of rioters who “hurled bricks and petrol bombs, jeopardizing public safety,” behavior which “made people’s hair stand on end”. However, live reports from PolyU said that many people who left via this exit were arrested; media also reported that there was tear gas smoke near Y-Core Exit, and the police were also suspected of using stun grenades, tear gas

## In the eyes of many people in Hong Kong, the police as well as other state institutions have lost their legitimacy.

### **UPRISING WITH UNKNOWN OUTCOME**

What has developed in Hong Kong in the past six months is not just a movement but a popular uprising against the governments in the city and Beijing. The increasing intervention of the authoritarian regime China's, police repression, and the refusal of the city government to fulfill the demands of the protesters—no charges against them, an independent inquiry into police violence, and “free” elections—have led to the escalation. Representatives of the CCP leadership still declare that the protesters were “terrorists” and “thugs” and the movement was controlled by “black hands” of the CIA.

The uprising is no revolution as the exploitative capitalist relations are not questioned and the movement's demand stay largely reformist so far.

However, the broad self-organization, the refusal of representation (by politicians or others), and the solidarity networks that carry the movement undermine existing social structures at some points and make way for new social connections. Left-wing activists underline the “collective intelligence” that shows up in the movement's structures and communication and push it forward. Problematic are still the racist positions of parts of the movement, above all against migrants from China. However, there are anti-racist tendencies in the movement, too.

Still unclear is, whether protesters in Hong Kong will see more connections with the current wave of uprisings around the globe. So far, mostly references to the Yellow Vests and the movement in Catalonia have been made.



Hundreds (and possibly thousands) of Molotov cocktails, or “fire magic”, assembled and used against the police at PolyU.



Frontline protestors don't fuck around.

"I would rather be ashes than dust!" was a line of graffiti written on a wall in HK.