

## Preparatory Committee Established for Hong Kong SAR

A 150-member Preparatory Committee for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) was approved by the Standing Committee of mainland China's National People's Congress (NPC) on December 28, 1995. The committee comprises fifty-six mainland Chinese representatives and ninety-four residents of Hong Kong.

Among the mainland members of the committee, 42 percent are officials of the Foreign Ministry, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, or the Hong Kong and Macao branches of the Xinhua News Agency; 18 percent are officials from financial and economic departments of the government or banking institutions; 16 percent are NPC deputies or legal specialists; and the remainder are from the military, the police, united front work and propaganda departments, or local governments. Of the Hong Kong representatives, 36 percent are from the business sector; 35 percent are professionals; 17 percent are from religious, social work, grassroots, or rural circles; and 12 percent are politicians.

The list of Hong Kong members of the Preparatory Committee can hardly be considered representative. More than half are wealthy local businessmen while only sixteen can be said to represent grassroots interests. Pro-democracy forces are also poorly represented. The four pro-Beijing political groups (the New Hong Kong Alliance, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance, and the Liberal Democratic Federation) have a total of twenty-one members on the Preparatory Committee. The left-of-center Liberal Party and the moderate-democratic Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood have four and two seats, respectively. The One-Country Two-System Economic Research Institute, which is widely considered to be Beijing's think-tank for Hong Kong affairs, has a total of eight seats. However, the Democratic Party, which is the most representative of Hong Kong opinion, is completely excluded. Finally, almost all of the Hong Kong members of the Preparatory Committee are politically pro-Beijing. Eighty-five

of them are current NPC deputies, members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Hong Kong affairs advisors, or Hong Kong district affairs advisors.

The appointment of a large number of leading local businessmen and pro-Beijing figures to the Preparatory Committee was obviously intentional. One of Beijing's chief means of winning over Hong Kong business leaders has been to appoint them to the NPC, the CPPCC National Committee, or the Preparatory Working Committee of the Hong Kong SAR Preparatory Committee, or to make them Hong Kong affairs advisors. That is why businessmen hold more of these posts than people from any other sector of Hong Kong society. Beijing's preference for business interests is aimed at maintaining Hong Kong's economic stability and prosperity and thereby preventing an outflow of capital from the territory before and after 1997. These businessmen are not expected to play an active part in the work of the Preparatory Committee, but they will endeavor to promote their own economic interests. With the majority of its membership made up of mainland officials and pro-Beijing Hong Kong figures, the Preparatory Committee will remain firmly in Beijing's hands, thus smoothing the way to the establishment of the SAR government. Judging from past experience, some pro-Beijing figures might make proposals detrimental to Hong Kong's future development to serve their own political purposes.

The Preparatory Committee has two main tasks: to prepare for the establishment of a committee to select the first SAR chief executive and organize a provisional Legislative Council, and to draft concrete measures for the establishment of the first SAR Legislative Council. From Beijing's point of view, these tasks are crucial elements in a smooth transition to mainland rule and in preventing the extension of British political influence and interference by other foreign forces. The fact that 63 percent of the Preparatory Committee's members and five of its nine vice chairmen are from Hong Kong seems to indicate that Beijing has kept its promise to grant Hong Kong a "high degree of autonomy" and to allow "Hong Kong people to rule Hong Kong." However, it is clear that Beijing has chosen the Hong Kong members very carefully, thus ensuring mainland control over the Preparatory Committee. Moreover, the fact that the Preparatory Committee will practice collective responsibility and its discussion will be confidential will do much to minimize public and media influence.

For Taiwan, the most notable thing about the membership list is that it includes Tang Shubei, deputy director of the Taiwan Affairs

Office and vice chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits. This shows that Beijing intends that the Preparatory Committee should decide the form of Hong Kong's relations with Taiwan after 1997, including the implementation of Qian Qichen's "seven points." Whether Beijing will use Hong Kong to step up its "united front" activities among Taiwan businessmen and other residents in Hong Kong is as yet unknown.

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