

The Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike, 1925-1926

Hongkong Workers in an Anti-Imperialist Movement

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
PhD

The University of Leeds
Department of East Asian Studies

October 1994

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Abstract

In this thesis, I study the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike of 1925-1926. My analysis differs from past studies' suggestions that the strike was a libertarian eruption of mass protest against British imperialism and the Hongkong Government, which, according to these studies, exploited and oppressed Chinese in Guangdong and Hongkong. I argue that a political party, the CCP, led, organised, and nurtured the strike. It centralised political power in its hands and tried to impose its revolutionary visions on those under its control. First, I describe how foreign trade enriched many people outside the state. I go on to describe how Chinese-run institutions governed Hongkong's increasingly settled non-elite Chinese population. I reject ideas that Hongkong's mixed-class unions exploited workers and suggest that revolutionaries failed to transform Hongkong society either before or during the strike. My thesis shows that the strike bureaucracy was an authoritarian power structure; the strike's unprecedented political demands reflected the CCP's revolutionary political platform, which was sometimes incompatible with the interests of Hongkong's unions.

I suggest that the revolutionary elite's goals were not identical to those of the unions it claimed to represent: Hongkong unions preserved their autonomy in the face of revolutionaries' attempts to control Hongkong workers. Other writers have concentrated on the actions of Chinese revolutionaries, Hongkong's Chinese elite, and the Hongkong Government during the strike; my approach is unique because I focus on Hongkong's smaller unions, who fought revolutionaries' attempts to impose their own conception of a "modern" society. Finally, I show that, although the strike leadership gained control over a strike bureaucracy and built a solid power base through alliances with union leaders, its mass support ebbed away. The strike's main policy, a boycott of Hongkong trade, created opposition to the strike from merchants, peasants, and workers, which opposition GMD politicians exploited to bring the strike to an end.

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Notes on Format

This study uses the pinyin system of romanisation, i.e., Guangdong not Kwangtung and Deng Zhongxia not Teng Chung-hsia. Names that are so familiar in other romanisations that, in my judgement, it would be confusing to use pinyin have been left unaltered. Such names include Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen, and Ho Kai.

Throughout most of this study, I have used the spelling Hongkong rather than Hong Kong. For consistency I have spelt other Chinese words in pinyin in the same way, i.e., by running syllables together to form words as in "*Gongren zhi lu*" not *Gong ren zhi lu*. Where titles of works in the bibliography use the spelling Hong Kong and when quoting directly from such works, I have used the original spelling.

I refer to Chinese newspapers and periodicals by their pinyin romanisation and follow it with an English translation the first time they appear in the main text. For example, *Gongren zhi lu* (*Workers' Road*), which appears as *Gongren zhi lu* throughout this study. Normally I translate societies' and unions' names into English. However, when such societies are best known by their Chinese names, I have not translated them; for example, the Xingzhonghui, Po Leung Guk, and the Lianyi Society. When I translate society and union names from Chinese sources, I give their pinyin romanisation the first time they appear in the main text, either in brackets or in a footnote if there is insufficient space, for example, in a table.

I have used the following abbreviations:

GMD: Guomindang (Nationalist Party)

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

ACFTU: All-China Federation of Trade Unions

GFWU: Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union

HFWU: Hongkong Foreign-Employed Workers' Union.

The abbreviations GMD and CCP appear throughout the thesis, whereas ACFTU, GFWU, and HFWU appear in tables to save space.

Introduction

A study of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike of 1925-1926 has much relevance to China's situation today, for present-day China, as in the 1920s, is opening its economy to international markets. A study of the economy and politics of the 1920s, when China had long been exposed to foreign trade, helps one to understand the choices facing China's leaders now. This study is relevant to the question of Hongkong's future, too. By examining the factors behind the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, one can better understand present day demand for social and political change in Hongkong.

Many past studies of Chinese history have used systemic analyses to explain Chinese social movements. For example, as I discuss in chapter 1, some academics have suggested that either nationalism or class oppression caused the revolution in China between 1925 and 1926. Most such analyses, however, have so far been based on few detailed studies of revolutionary movements. Writers who advance abstract systemic interpretations of the causes of revolution (such as imperialist and colonial "oppression") often advance our understanding of the process of revolutionary change, but it is sometimes fruitful to look at interactions among individuals and small political groups to explain social movements and thereby develop a base of smaller-scale, detailed analyses of particular movements on which broad systemic theories can then be built. In this study, I take a narrow look at the details of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike; instead of using systemic theories to explain the strike, I describe what happened to small groups of people who participated in the strike, including revolutionaries, unions, and union leaders.

My thesis divides into two parts. In the first part, I deal with the historical context of the strike, outline the theoretical framework of my study, and examine social and economic conditions in Guangdong and Hongkong. In the second part of my thesis, I describe the strike movement and draw conclusions from the evidence I have presented.

In chapter 1, I explain my theoretical approach to studying the strike. I consider the question of what causes people to rebel and examine other questions relevant to the study of revolution. I go on to review some of the ideas and attitudes

that historians have expressed about Guangdong in the 1920s and that are useful for a study of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike.

In chapter 2, I describe the economic and political environment in Guangdong in the 1920s and focus on the positive effects of foreign trade on subregional economies in Guangdong. I demonstrate that the position of Hongkong in the economy and politics of Guangdong was that not of a cancer but of a catalyst. I suggest that regional and subregional organisations prospered from foreign trade and became more powerful relative to central authorities, i.e., the Guangdong Government or, in Hongkong, the Hongkong Government and some of the Chinese elite's governmental institutions.

In chapter 3, I present my view of the development of Hongkong society and government and the economic and political relationship between Guangdong and the colony. I examine the development of Hongkong's Chinese elite and show how it grew to control an increasingly settled but fragmented Hongkong community. I present a view of Hongkong society as not an excessively oppressive, racist, and alien society as experienced by its Chinese population but a relatively free society compared to China and one governed partly by Hongkong's Chinese.

In chapter 4, I describe Hongkong non-elite society and look at workers' organisations. This description deals mainly with Hongkong unions and uses memoirs, official Hongkong Government reports, and past research to portray the internal structure of Hongkong workers' organisations. I examine, too, in how far "modern"¹ Hongkong unions differed from "backward" ones and whether unions' internal structure was simply authoritarian or whether it contained some limited democratic elements.

Chapter 5 concludes part 1 of my thesis. In it, I study past Hongkong social movements and examine the aims of revolutionaries and workers in these movements. By examining previous strikes and boycotts, I trace the development of Hongkong politics, explore the specific interests of revolutionaries and Hongkong unions before the strike, and make some generalisations about the methods political leaders used to launch social movements in Hongkong. I argue that revolutionaries' ideas generally left Hongkong politics unchanged.

Part 2 begins, in chapter 6, with an examination of the outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. In this chapter, I demonstrate that the strike was a well-organised movement rather than a spontaneous, violent eruption of mass discontent. I show the contribution to organising the strike, rallying support, and causing panic and chaos in the colony that Hongkong's small, long-established unions

¹ "Modern" in the sense that these new trade unions conformed to revolutionaries' ideas of modern workers' organisations. In my theoretical approach to the study of the strike, I consider briefly the link between revolution and modernisation.

made, which contribution past studies of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike have neglected. I have researched many unpublished memoirs written by CCP leaders and activists and held at the Guangdong General Trade Union to find evidence about the role of Hongkong's union leaders in the strike and the boycott of trade with Great Britain and Hongkong. Chinese writers have always considered these Hongkong unionists to be "scab-union leaders" and have ignored their role or treated them with disdain. Western writers, too, have ignored the popularity and influence of Hongkong's smaller trade unions among Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population.

In chapter 7, I describe how the CCP used the revolutionary situation in Guangzhou to build a large strike bureaucracy, which exercised wide powers over workers' day-to-day lives. By studying the reaction of Hongkong union leaders to the creation of the strike bureaucracy, I show that the CCP and many Hongkong union leaders who wanted to remain independent reached an uneasy compromise rather than forged a solid alliance.

In chapter 8, I consider in a more general way the nature of the relationship between the strike leadership and its mass support. I suggest that the strike's propaganda and education activities concentrated on creating a unified strike movement under CCP control and discuss to what extent these activities formed authoritarian power relationships between the central state and local society rather than empowered individuals.

In chapter 9, I look at the difficulties that strike leaders met when they implemented the strike's trade-union unification movement, in particular the problems of subordinating unions' sectional interests to what the strike leaders perceived as the common good. I determine whether the CCP's policies of trade-union unification succeeded in creating a unified working-class movement or simply built an authoritarian power structure led by the Strike Committee.

In chapter 10, I briefly describe some of the factors that contributed to the termination of the strike and look at some of the actions of Hongkong's Chinese elite during the strike. I suggest that the strike ended not solely because of ideological conflict between the GMD and CCP but also because of conflicts between local powers in Guangdong and the Strike Committee that eroded the strike's mass support and fuelled increasingly strong political opposition to the strike.

In chapter 11, my conclusion, I draw together the various ideas and themes examined in the thesis and present a complete view of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Although the events described in this study took place nearly seventy years ago, they have some relevance to Hongkong society today. The conclusion of this thesis attempts briefly to show the value of a study of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike to questions faced by today's Hongkong.

Part 1

The Historical Context of the Strike

Part 1 contains my theoretical approach to this study and my description of the historical background to the strike. I explore the effects on the Guangdong economy of foreign trade, examine the development of Hongkong society, and describe the nature of Hongkong workers' organisations. Finally, I present a view of Hongkong's past mass movements and show how the interests of revolutionaries and local political groups were sometimes incompatible. Throughout part 1, I argue against using oversimplified notions of imperialist oppression, impoverished masses, and disadvantaged populations as causes of the strike. I concentrate instead on showing which groups had the power, money, and will to launch a strike against the Hongkong Government.

Chapter 1

Approach to the Study of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike

In this chapter, I outline my theoretical approach to the study of the strike. First, I discuss a theoretical model for the study of revolution. I argue against vague notions of mass discontent as the cause of revolutionary movements and suggest that to understand social unrest one must examine the forms of political organisation employed by those taking part in the unrest and identify their specific interests in joining a protest movement. Then, I briefly examine the role of class analysis in my thesis and go on to look at past approaches to the revolution in Guangdong in the 1920s. I reject the idea that classes, as Marxists understand the term, were the main actors in the revolution; instead I suggest that specific political groups that sought their own sectional advantage were the strike's actual protagonists. In the conclusion to this chapter, I set out the main points of my approach before I go on to test it against the evidence.

Theories of revolution

"Volcanic" is how Aya (1990) describes theories that see revolution as a sudden, overwhelming, and spontaneous outbreak of collective violence. Whether particular theories of this sort stress economic, cultural, structural, or class tensions, the assumption that "volcanic" theories make is the same: deep grievances cause the worst-off sections of society to revolt against the ruling elite until state power falls into their hands. "Volcanic" theories differ most significantly in their perception of the causes of popular discontent. I use Aya's term "volcanic" to emphasise the weakness of studies that rely too heavily on such theories and simply describe revolutions as outbreaks of mass discontent without paying due attention to the role played by revolutionaries in leading and organising social movements. Many revolutionaries claim rhetorically to be leaders of spontaneous eruptions of mass discontent, but few revolutionaries actually make the mistake (common in certain schools of historiography) of confusing such rhetoric for reality.

Economic theories of revolution in the "volcanic" class claim that revolutions spring either from immiseration of one section of society or from social tensions due to the economic exploitation of one section of society by another. This claim has led to theories of revolution that concentrate on the condition of the poor in times not only of economic recession but also of prosperity, when the condition of the labourer, for example, improves at a lesser rate than that of the proprietor or landlord. Discontent is likely not only when the labourer receives paltry reward for his work but also when his reasonable expectations are dashed. Davies claims that revolutions are most likely to happen "when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a period of sharp reversal" and that their main cause is a feeling that hard-earned prosperity may be quickly lost (Davies 1971: 133). Adas, who writes about popular movements against colonial authorities and has a different perspective from Davies, still believes that popular frustration and deprivation cause rebellion and suggests that a sense of loss of community in the face of colonialism often causes rebellion (Adas 1979: 44).

Davies assumes that revolutionary potential is due to frustration but fails to identify how frustration becomes political action. Johnson suggests that popular discontent is "at best weakly associated with individual differences in potential or actual participation in aggressive action" (Johnson 1983: 172). Aya is more definite in his rejection of "volcanic" theories. He believes that volcanic theories reduce specific grievances to vague notions of generalised discontent. He writes: "[V]olcanic theorists cannot show the presence of frustration, deprivation, or strain independent of the revolutions they supposedly produce" (Aya 1990: 48). Volcanic theories lack a

framework of analysis that reveals how political groups mobilise revolutionary support.

To provide such a framework, one needs to examine political groups in society. Theories of revolution that take this view are known as structural theories. Analysis of the structure of society can show the relative strength of different political groups. In later chapters, for example, I describe how subregional political groups in Guangdong and Hongkong grew in power and undermined the influence of central government structures. Structural theories of revolution stress the importance of revolutionising social structures and claim revolution takes place through a process of democratisation, modernisation, or changes in society's class structure. Smelser suggests that revolutions are responses to an "imbalance" in the social system and argues that revolutionary behaviour is the product of "something wrong in the social environment" (Smelser 1962: 47). Huntington expresses similar views and claims revolution is "more likely to occur in societies that have experienced some social and economic development and where the processes of political development have lagged behind the process of social and economic change" (Huntington 1968: 265).

Structural theorists suggest that some societies can transform potentially revolutionary movements into non-violent political protest. For example, peasant societies have a large number of voluntary intermediary associations between the individual and the state, which associations absorb and pacify popular discontent. As a consequence, structural theories claim that peasant revolution is most likely to occur only after a sudden overwhelming shock to the prevailing system (Aya 1990: 48).

Defining revolution by great transformations in the structure of society has two weaknesses. First, if no transformation happened, then, by implication, no revolution could ever have taken place. Structural theories must judge revolutions by the intentions of the revolutionary elite to transform social structures and by the outcome of the revolution once revolutionaries have seized political power. The intentions of the revolutionaries may, however, emerge only after the revolutionary war. Intentions that are not particularly revolutionary may power great revolutions. Second, many sociologists make the mistake of suggesting that societies, rather than revolutionaries, cause revolutions.

Because popular discontent and public grievances exist to a greater or lesser degree in any society, one must study not how these grievances came about or how acute they might be, but how revolutionaries mobilise particular grievances. One needs a model of revolution that traces the emergence of new political groups and studies their evolution to positions of political power hostile to the ruling elite and strong enough to compete for political control, i.e., a political model of revolution. In

China in the 1920s, such groups included political parties, trade unions, subregional groups, peasant associations, militias, and merchant groups.

Political theories of revolution hold that the position of the state in a society is central to understanding and defining revolutions. One must treat the state as "an analytically distinct category from either the class structure upon which it is based or the social values that it may embody." The state is "more complex than the simple repository of political legitimacy and the expression of generalized and consensually held political values" (Kimmel 1990: 146). Revolution is, of course, a fight for control over the state. Both states and their challengers have their own political platforms or revolutionary visions: revolution is the attempt to seize power to impose these visions.

Tilly (1978) develops an idea called "multiple sovereignty" based on the notion of "dual power" in Trotsky (1959 [1932]) and an article by Amann (1962). Multiple sovereignty is an attempt not to define revolution but to avoid dogmatic definitions of revolution by describing what a revolutionary situation looks like. Amann's approach, which sparked Tilly's analysis, is clear and straightforward. He says:

As I define it, revolution prevails when the state's monopoly of power is effectively challenged and persists until a monopoly of power is re-established. Such a definition avoids a number of traditional problems; the fine distinction between a [*coup d'état*] and a revolution; the degree of social change necessary before a movement may be called revolutionary; the possibility of a conservative revolution; the uncertain differentiation between wars of independence, civil wars and revolutions (Amann 1962: 39).

Revolutions are ultimately a bid for state power. Traditional beliefs, ideologies, economic conditions, and social structures still have a place in the study of revolutions. However, these factors play a greater role in the drafting of party manifestos, revolutionary tactics, or the reorganisation that takes place in society after the revolutionary war. Because the process of revolution is the attempt to seize political power, to understand the process of revolution one must study the groups that mobilise revolutionary forces. In the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike these groups included political parties and Hongkong trade unions. In my thesis, I identify the ways in which these organisations mobilised support for the revolution.

Revolution, bureaucracy, and modernisation

Revolutions frequently build large bureaucracies. According to Weber (1958), revolutionary leaders are generally charismatic individuals and visionaries who alone

can mobilise revolutionary support. Weber argues that charisma is personal and transient; to maintain control over society for future generations and to prevent the revolution devolving back into pre-revolutionary social orders, revolutionaries generally replace existing institutions and bureaucracies with larger and more pervasive institutions of their own (Weber 1958: 125-128). Tilly points out that political competition among states causes rulers to establish stronger, more centralised bureaucracies to increase their tax base and prepare for war (Tilly 1984: 75). Political competition between states is liable to create large bureaucracies; so, too, is conflict between political factions.

Population growth and mobility, foreign trade, and an increase in local power in China during the Qing dynasty severely weakened the power of China's imperial bureaucracy to interfere in local society (Rankin 1986: 16).² The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, however, reversed this process. In later chapters, I describe how the CCP built a huge bureaucracy to expand its mass base and support its tiny party membership. The institutions that CCP revolutionaries created to control the strike demonstrate their attempt to be sole leaders of the workers' movement (Wilbur and How 1989: 163). The CCP wanted direct control over the strike in order to diminish the influence of Hongkong unions and GMD right-wing officials (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 614-616)³ and to establish a power base to impose its "modern" visions of society.

Writers have their own views of what is "modern." For Huntington, efforts to achieve modernity that "undermine traditional sources of political authority and traditional political institutions" cause revolutions (Huntington 1968: 5). Giddens believes that revolutions that try to create or oppose a nation-state are "modern" (Giddens 1985: 313-325). For Paige, "modernization" in agrarian revolutions is caused by the commercialisation of agriculture and the resultant transformation in rural class relations (Paige 1975: 358). Moore equates "modernity" with principles of social and political organisation (Moore 1978: 128). Deng Zhongxia claims that China's "modern" workers' movement began after the formation of the CCP in 1920.⁴ He equates "modernity" with the transformation of class formations and the replacement of Confucianism by Marxism (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 424). For Chan Ming-kou (1975), "modern" unions in Hongkong and Guangzhou were

² Skinner traces the weakening of China's imperial bureaucracy to trade and population growth in the Tang dynasty (Skinner 1977: 19-21).

³ See also Hu Tichun and Chen Shanxin (1991) and Han Xiaofang (1991).

⁴ The CCP held its First Congress in July 1921. Here, Deng Zhongxia is referring to the establishment of the Communist Party nucleus, formed by Voitinsky in Shanghai in August 1920 (Dirlik 1989a: 203).

workers-only organisations. According to W. K. Chan, the Hongkong labour movement modernised when "class relations were restructured and more sharply defined" (Chan, W. K. 1991: 182).

The relative weakening of central state power is not necessarily a "modern" process, nor is the recreation of a bureaucracy necessarily a "conservative" one. If the degree of "modernity" in a revolution is dependent upon the degree of change, then revolutions may be intrinsically conservative movements because revolutionaries are liable to make compromises and coalitions with existing "conservative" powers to build their own power base. Aya (1979) notes that revolutionary behaviour can be conservative. Of some participants in revolutions, he says that their

radicalism has been tactical, their collective violence the cutting edge of defensive conservatism, and their "revolutionary" intervention an attempt to turn political crises to their own sectional advantage (Aya 1979: 72-73).

"Modern" thinkers are more likely to propagate their views successfully if those views reflect familiar beliefs. For example, Liu Shipei believed that China might be able swiftly to achieve "modern" anarchist thought and political organisation because of anarchism's similarities to laissez-faire elements in Confucianism and Daoism (Chan and Dirlik 1991: 20). Successful attempts to grab state power or win popular support for political platforms are likely to use "modern" structures and beliefs that are similar to existing structures and beliefs: Skocpol believes that revolutions create highly bureaucratic states built on the structural legacies of the old regime (Skocpol 1976).

One common view of revolutions is that they are turning points in the history of a nation, i.e., revolutions end one era and begin a new one. This view is misleading in important ways. A successful revolution takes control over the state from the old regime and establishes a new one, but the process of revolution often relies on pre-revolutionary political ties between state and local powers. Existing groups may mobilise mass support for revolution and thereby promote their links to the new state and further their own sectional interests. Such was the case in the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, when the aims of many local power groups sometimes conflicted with the revolutionaries' aim to centralise political control. Aya (modifying Clausewitz) describes revolution as "politics by other means" and emphasises that many people participate in revolutionary movements "not to 'revolutionise' society, but to get (or keep) things they felt rightfully entitled to" (Aya 1990: 51-53).

The process of revolution and of building mass support generates its own set of aims and expectations for revolution, which aims are likely to be conservative. My description of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike shows how the revolutionary elite communicated with its mass support. The nature of such communication is important because it influences the constitution of society after a revolution. I will show that the

belief of the revolutionaries that they had reached a turning point in Chinese history, after which they would be able to remodel China's society and government, was a misunderstanding of the realities of revolution and contributed to the collapse of the strike.

Class theory and the cultural nexus of power

I now examine the concept of class theory and its relevance to my study of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. I consider class theory along with the concept of the cultural nexus of power in the Chinese countryside as set out in Duara (1988). By examining general class theory and Duara's exploration of power relations specific to China, I try to build an approach to the study of revolutionary power blocs that is relevant both to China and to the theory of revolution that I have already outlined.

Marxists see society as divided into classes that take their shape from the division of labour or, more generally, from the relations of production. For Marxists, this economic truth underpins all other relations and institutions in society. However, according to most non-Marxist historians, the great socialist revolutions of the twentieth century and the resultant states show that one cannot define society in such dogmatic terms: one cannot always relegate to pure class interest the choices that any group in a society makes (Rostow 1990 [1960]: 151).

In response to such criticisms, Marxist writers have defended their position with new arguments. For example, Poulantzas (1973) represents class or social structure as a rather more complex mix of economic, political, cultural, and ideological determinants. However, he still maintains that, ultimately, the economic factor is decisive. By extension, a revolutionary party should be able to "purify" the revolutionary motives of a particular class through education, and a revolutionary situation should be capable of bringing economic determinants to the fore. Yet, even in revolutionary situations, classes can act in ways that do not conform to Marxist theory.

Frank Parkin describes a theory of class structure with reference to a process of social closure. Social closure is the act of one group to achieve a position of privilege at the expense of others. Parkin says:

Modes of closure can be thought of as different means of mobilizing power for the purpose of engaging in distributive struggle....

Collective efforts to restrict access to rewards and opportunities on the part of one social group against another, including one group of workers against another, can be regarded as inherently exploitative even though the relationship is

not one of surplus extraction deriving from property ownership (Parkin 1979: 45-46).

If we couple this theory to a view of class formation that allows for a variety of determinants and for the ability of revolutionary leaders to alter the nature of a class through education, we then begin to build a more satisfactory theory of class relations. However, one should include another element - revolutionary power blocs are groups or classes engaged in a struggle for state control and one must understand the relationship between social groups and the state to understand these groups' actions as revolutionary power blocs.

Duara (1988) develops the notion of a cultural nexus of power that dominated the Chinese countryside and that, through its traditions and symbols, reflected the power of the imperial authorities. The nexus includes lineage and marketing organisations, temple organisations, water control associations, merchant associations, and interpersonal relationships between affines, patrons and clients, or religious teachers and disciples. According to Duara, the nexus was an "intersecting, seamless nexus stretching across the many boundaries of settlements and organisations" (Duara 1988: 15-16). Duara contends that the emperor exercised power over the countryside not merely through a gentry class but through a cultural mix of symbolic representations interlaced with Confucian ideals. In the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Qing bureaucracy, followed by the Nationalist Government, began replacing this matrix of power symbols with their own new bureaucracies, they met with local resistance. Townsend suggests that Chinese nationalism depends on a shared culture and not on loyalty to a nation state (Townsend 1992: 105). Consequently, I hypothesise that, in 1920s China, shared cultural backgrounds may have been a stronger bond for collective action than the policies represented by an educated, centralising, revolutionary elite. I explore this hypothesis in the following chapters.

Subregional groups, for example, lineages and many workers' organisations, are strong political groups because a shared language, culture, history, and ancestry create a unifying force and make lines of communication smoother and political organisation easier to achieve. Local elites used populist causes to pursue goals of greater political and economic autonomy, but they derived their political power from the Chinese state. Lineages engaged in struggle over irrigation, land rights, and market control, but ultimately the political power and prestige of lineages in the past, as in the present, derived from the lineage leaders' participation in the state structure.

Faure (1993) identifies four steps in the formation of lineage organisations in Guangdong that appear to present lineage organisation as a political grouping generally created to establish state power in the regions. Local people benefited from the establishment of the lineage through schools and state support. According to

Faure, the earliest phase of Guangdong lineage formation was generally tax registration. The second phase concerned the imperial Chinese state's wars against rebel uprisings in Guangzhou, when a locality won imperial recognition for the local temple if it fought on the side of the imperial government. The third phase in the history of lineages was the fight against the Yao, the aboriginal inhabitants of Guangdong. Towns and villages whose inhabitants were loyal to the imperial state won backing for the building of local schools. These local schools propagated Confucianism, drawing local communities into the cultural nexus of power. Finally, to enhance its legitimacy in the province, the imperial state promoted the establishment of ancestral halls and village temples. These halls and temples, according to Duara (1988), mimicked in local society the social structure of elites in the capital. According to Faure, the history of regional political organisation and lineage groups was, in the eyes of the imperial officials, a process of the enlightenment of the barbarian South by the scholarship of the North as the Guangdong elite gradually integrated into the state (Faure 1993).

Mao Zedong (1982 [1930]) describes revolution in South China in terms of local elites' political attitudes:

[Elites] with substantial wealth and considerable security were basically conservative, though most would accept or even promote some change if it worked to their own advantage. Lower-level elites just emerging from the peasantry had little time for politics but clung like bulldogs to every shred of social and economic advantage they had accrued within the existing system. And declining lower-elite families were most anxious to see changes political or otherwise that would arrest their downward slide (Mao 1982 [1930]: 127-130).

I draw from Duara and Faure's work the conclusion that, during a revolution, any revolutionary party would find it far easier to use the cultural nexus of power than to replace it. Local groups, including lineages, subregional associations, and workers' organisations, would respond to the new state by seeking to reaffirm or strengthen existing bonds between the state and the locality to enhance their own organisation's local power. An attempt to increase the power of the central state would meet with a local mixture of support and defiance.

I reach this view because lineages, subregional associations, and most Hongkong unions shared the same cultural nexus of power that Duara outlines and that is linked with the state. Faure demonstrates that power links to the state were a crucial factor in the existence and survival of these local organisations. We can hypothesise that subregional associations and unions in Hongkong could act to strengthen their links to the state without wanting to compromise their independence.

Success, tragedy, and misconception

Past studies have generally seen the revolution of 1925-1927 in two different ways. One view is that the Guomindang (GMD) sought national unity, whereas the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) pursued narrow, divisive policies. A principal proponent of this view is Wilbur (1984). Another view is that the revolution was a "tragedy" (Isaacs 1961 [1938]) or "abortive" (Eastman 1974). According to Isaacs, in 1927, Chiang Kai-shek's bloody coup in Shanghai and his massacre of CCP members betrayed the revolution. Both views emphasise ideological differences between the GMD and CCP.

Fitzgerald (1990) offers a different perspective on the history of the period. He emphasises the similarities between the parties. The principal conflict in the revolution was, according to Fitzgerald, between social classes and the new state: "[E]ven though ideological differences were certainly important, the key issues were the definition of the nation and the incorporation of local society into the new national state" (Fitzgerald 1990: 324). Writers generally agree that the new state sought to expand its influence and power into local government. As the revolution progressed, the new state sought to "displace the local elite's control over the police, militia, taxation, and other matters of local government" (Eastman 1974: 243). The revolutionaries wanted to subordinate sectional interest to the public good. Sectional and national interests first clashed in 1923, when the GMD angered Overseas Chinese, professional politicians, and journalists by redefining the enemies of the nation as warlords and imperialism. Chinese in the colonies were particularly sensitive to their position (Fitzgerald 1990: 324).

After the Guangzhou merchant insurrection and the May Thirtieth Movement, Chinese activists began to identify the bourgeoisie as the enemy of the public; further cracks in national unity appeared. However, the greatest source of conflict, according to Fitzgerald, came from local elites' resistance to the expansion of the GMD state.

The peasant movement was seen at the highest levels of the Nationalist administration as a tool for wrenching control of local administration from local elites; the peasant associations were regarded as agencies for mediating between peasant and government (Fitzgerald 1990: 334-335).

According to Cohen (1993), the driving force for revolution in China has stemmed from elite anti-traditionalism. Cohen believes that the May Fourth Movement of 1919 was an expression of national independence and anti-traditionalism. According to Cohen, revolutionaries driven by elite anti-traditionalism attack existing elitist behaviour, however, they still despise the views and beliefs of the ordinary Chinese population (Cohen 1993). Elite anti-traditionalism is an attack

on existing modes of social organisation and morality by an educated elite. The revolutionary elite may claim to be the representative of the mass population and to pursue policies that it sincerely believes will benefit the masses, however, the position of the elite is always as an exclusive, powerful ruling body that seeks to popularise its beliefs and standards of behaviour through education and channelling mass energy through its own political structures. In this way, elite anti-traditionalism can preserve some of the power relations of the old elite even though the ideology and symbolism of the new elite may claim to be a radical alternative to the beliefs of the old regime.

I explore this theme when I consider the reactions of social groups to the new state and the nature of revolutionary education programmes. Revolutionaries replicated the old power relations expressed in imperial writings and edicts and the Qing education system. Ironically, this replication of pre-strike power relationships occurred because revolutionaries wanted to disseminate rapidly their populist ideology and to use their state power to sweep away existing beliefs and power relations between the state and local power groups.

Past research on this period of Chinese history has tended to present the strike as a united proletarian movement. Isaacs (1961 [1938]) describes the strike as a progressive, radical, and modern workers' movement crushed by the political treachery of a cabal of merchants. Although Chesneau (1968) describes the strike with greater attention to the rivalries and splits between unions in the movement, he suggests that the antagonism between the right and left wings of the political movement caused antagonism between the right and left wings of the labour movement (Chesneau 1968: 305). This antagonism was, in my view, due not simply to political factionalism. Class interests may have played a part, but so, too, did the reaction of Hongkong unions to revolutionary state-building. I suggest that Hongkong's smaller trade unions preserved their independence in the face of revolutionaries' attempts to seize control over the state and transform the structure of local power groups.

Studies of Hongkong history and the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike

Perhaps because of the question of the transfer of sovereignty over Hongkong from Great Britain to China and the increase in interest in the question of Hongkong's future, several new studies of Hongkong history have recently emerged. Some have contributed much new detail to the study of Hongkong history; others have presented new analyses of the development of Hongkong society. Welsh (1993) is a comprehensive study of the history of the colony through the eyes of the colonial authorities and the Chinese elite. It is the latest of many studies of Hongkong elite

history that includes works such as Eitel (1895) and Endacott (1977). These studies examine the Hongkong Government and Chinese elite and provide a valuable account of the trends in the government of Hongkong and the relationship between the authorities and the Chinese elite. Recently, however, Hongkong academics have written a number of new studies on Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. W. K. Chan (1991) studies the formation of Hongkong society and outlines a dynamic formation of class consciousness in Hongkong and Tsai (1993) studies social movements in Hongkong from its foundation until 1913.

Some writers have studied Hongkong workers and the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Chan Ming-kou (1975) provides a detailed study of workers in the Zhujiang Delta and sketches the economic impact of the strike on Hongkong. Ho (1985) presents the theme of the crisis of legitimacy of the Hongkong Government and Kwan (1986) expresses grave doubts that the proletariat could have led the revolution as CCP revolutionaries envisaged. Other studies have considered the effects of the strike on Hongkong, for example, Chung (1969) and Chan Lau Kit-ching (1990). Neither Chung nor Chan, however, seeks to show at length the role of Hongkong's labourers in the strike.

Hongkong academics now study Hongkong history more independently of Britain and China than in the past. The political conflict between China and Great Britain over the return of sovereignty to China in 1997 has shown people in Hongkong that China and Britain constantly subordinate Hongkong's interests to their own national ones. Today, in Hongkong, far more powerful independent political forces operate. As an example of the new tendency in studies of Hongkong history, W. K. Chan (1991) and Tsai (1993) avoid describing the development of Hongkong society exclusively in terms of influences from China and Britain.

My study concentrates on the non-elite population of Hongkong and the independent motives of Hongkong social groups, while paying some attention to the elite in order to show how it kept control over Hongkong's Chinese population. The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was the latest in a series of mass movements that hit the colony from the late nineteenth-century onwards. The emphasis on the role of international conflict between China and Britain in these movements is often excessive. Of course, the backing of the politicians and revolutionaries in Guangzhou was an important and necessary element in the strike, yet the aims of the Guangdong revolutionaries and the Hongkong workers were not identical. Although the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was in part a patriotic movement, one of the principal goals of the Hongkong unions was to enhance their political power and their influence on local affairs. Their patriotism was an expression of the strengthening of regional political power groups rather than a desire to submit local power to a unified central state. I will therefore look, too, at the question of how far the wish for

independence of Hongkong social groups conflicted with the new nation-state patriotism of the strike leaders.

Official Chinese histories of the strike, for example, Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), Gan Tian (1956), Xiao Chaoran (1956), Liu Likai (1957), Cai Luo (1980), and Zao Ping (1985), have represented the non-elite population of Hongkong as victims of an oppressive colonial regime. My study examines these claims and shows that Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population cannot be reduced to such a general description. Evidence from census reports suggests that, by the 1920s, there was a distinct settled Chinese population in Hongkong with its own elite-run institutions.

The strike cannot be considered simply as the history of a conflict between China and Britain. The population of Hongkong had, by 1925, built up its own local political institutions and loyalties to local power groups. Hongkong people had developed their own economic interests and political demands as well as local institutions to govern Hongkong's Chinese population. Hongkong's independence from the Chinese state was not just a result of invasion by a foreign power. In 1925, Hongkong people were more independent, more settled, and more localised than Chinese revolutionaries acknowledged.

Conclusion

Views of revolution as a "volcanic" eruption of mass discontent caused by economic or structural oppression and exploitation have led to mistaken assumptions about the causes of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. "Volcanic" theorists make too simplistic a link between revolution and "oppression," a term they use to describe many different, specific grievances. Such theorists characterise the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike thus: foreign trade disadvantaged China's workers and peasants; colonial society was inherently "oppressive" - Hongkong workers suffered the harshest exploitation because they were "forced" to Hongkong to find work; and the class structure of Hongkong unions, too, was "oppressive" because labour bosses exploited their workers.

By viewing people solely as victims and objects of external forces, "volcanic" theorists wrongly emphasise similarities and ignore differences between sections of the population. For example, some writers have described Guangdong's workers as fresh from the ranks of the peasantry, and sharing the same interests as the peasantry. Others claim that colonial oppression gradually forged a sense of unity and class consciousness in the Hongkong workforce. Such views see the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike as a libertarian movement that lifted the CCP on a wave of spontaneous mass protest. Some writers make similar analyses to explain the end of

the strike. For example, Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) believes that mass peasant discontent pressurised the strike leadership to call off the action. However, when describing the end of the strike, most "volcanic" theorists take a different perspective, and argue that a well-organised, GMD-led putsch halted it.

Past and present studies of the strike and Hongkong society, including Gan Tian (1956), Xiao Chaoran (1956), Chesneaux (1968), Liu Likai (1957), Motz (1972), Chan Ming-kou (1975), Cai Luo (1980), Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), Cai Changrui (1985), Zao Ping (1985), Kwan (1986), and Ren Zhenchi ed. (1991), all share the "volcanic" view to a lesser or greater degree. They either generalise about the causes of protest or overemphasise workers' unity. In my thesis, I attack the "volcanic" view of revolution, rebut views of the strike that rely on generalised notions of "oppression," and discover the specific reasons behind workers joining the strike. I present the strike as an organised, authoritarian, bureaucratic movement led by a revolutionary elite, which mirrored in its structure past mass movements in Hongkong, and highlight conflicts between the strike leadership and Hongkong unions.

Chapter 2

Foreign Trade and the Guangdong Economy

In this chapter, I look at the effects of foreign trade on Guangdong's economy. This issue is important, for one of the main policies of the strike leaders was a boycott of trade with Hongkong. I examine foreign trade's positive effects and reject claims that foreign trade caused widespread poverty in Guangdong. Evidence shows that foreign trade opened new opportunities to people from a variety of different social backgrounds and incomes. During the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, the CCP leadership asserted that the interests of workers and peasants were similar and that these two classes should unite against imperialism. I consider instead that merchants and peasants, particularly near small ports on the Zhujiang Delta, benefited from foreign trade and that their interests were incompatible with the boycott. I look at the effects of foreign trade on Guangdong's subregional economies and suggest that local political groups prospered and grew politically strong during the early twentieth century. In later chapters, I show that the growth in power of local political groups relative to the governments in Guangdong and Hongkong facilitated revolutionaries' mobilisation of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population and caused conflicts between local political leaders and the CCP cadres over who should control the strike.

Problems of the "anti-imperialist" standpoint

Revolutionaries saw the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike as part of a worldwide anti-imperialist revolutionary movement. This view encouraged them to stress the harmful effects of the foreign presence in China. To understand the economy and society of Guangdong before the strike, one must study the effects of foreign trade.

Revolutionaries have argued that foreign trade and the presence of Hongkong caused immiseration in Guangdong, which immiseration was in turn responsible for the revolutionary upsurge of 1925-1926. I stress the positive aspects of foreign trade for the development of subregional economies in Guangdong. My thesis is that subregional economies were developed, not underdeveloped, by foreign trade.⁵ Subregional organisations traded in order to accumulate capital. This capital strengthened subregional organisations such as temple associations, ancestral trusts, and unions, and turned them into strong political competitors. Leaders of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike attempted to unite peasants and workers, and to insulate the Guangdong economy from foreign trade. Many peasants and subregional organisations were unwilling to support the boycott and thereby forfeit the wealth they earned from foreign trade.

The main loser through foreign trade was the state. China had long sought to limit foreign trade to a few privileged ports or even selected families. The development of Hongkong into an international trade centre and the links of Hongkong merchants to localities in Guangdong meant that the state found it ever harder to maintain its monopolistic position. Guangzhou had to compete for business not only with Hongkong but also with a number of new and rapidly developing small ports on the Zhujiang Delta. Because subregions grew stronger relative to the state, not China but the Chinese state suffered through foreign trade.

From the 1840s through to the 1920s, China, in particular Guangdong, experienced an increase in trade with foreign countries such as Britain, Japan, Germany, Holland, and America. Chinese academics used to argue that, during this period, the economic welfare of the majority of the population, the peasantry, was thrown into crisis because the economy suffered from a lack of high-yielding farm land, the destructive actions of local warlords and tax collectors, and havoc caused by natural disasters. Chinese historians have argued that foreign trade, too, harmed China's economy. Chinese writers used to argue as follows: because China lacked the right to impose tariff protection, its foreign trade deficit increased over time, so, while China's wealth flowed from the country, foreign capitalists profited hugely from trade. The resulting imbalance hampered domestic money-capital accumulation and

⁵ See Lippit (1978) for a discussion of the development and underdevelopment of China.

prevented industrialisation, whereas foreign imports undermined indigenous products and impoverished millions of Chinese farmers and handicraft workers. Once integrated into the world economy, Chinese agriculture was subject to the vagaries of the market economy. Thomas, a Western writer, also claims that imperialism impoverished China because China lacked the independence to impose customs tariffs to protect domestic industries (Thomas 1984: 16-20). Some Chinese historians, fearful of criticising Maoism, wrote that China's rural economy laboured under a feudal economic system and that foreign trade brought the new power of market forces to bear on the peasantry.

Today, however, Chinese economic historians present a different view of the effects of foreign trade.⁶ A recent analysis of China's economy in the 1920s argues that commercial capitalism sprang up in the treaty ports; free trade and economic competition, the expansion of money and credit, the opening of new markets, the commercialisation of agriculture, and the introduction of Western styles of commerce aided China's modernisation (Hao 1986: 108-111). Due no doubt to the new "open door" policies of the Chinese Government, academics in China have recently felt confident enough to put forward arguments that offer a radically different view of the early twentieth-century economy. One Chinese account of the Opium Wars and the effects of foreign trade on Guangdong suggests that today's Chinese Government should draw from the wars the lesson that although it must protect itself against foreign political interference, foreign trade "will strengthen China" (Guo Weimin 1989: 72).

Guangdong and Fujian in particular had long histories of foreign trade. In the nineteenth century, China already had long-standing trade links to the rest of the world. Even at the end of the sixteenth century, the total value of its exports to Latin America was greater than the total value of all Spain's imports (Deng Duanben 1992: 152). Chinese enjoyed some positive aspects of foreign trade, particularly because of their access to cheap labour and their control over local specialities. Many proofs can be cited, as I will now show.

Foreign competition and local products

Some writers contend that Guangdong's industries were unable to withstand foreign competition. I argue that foreign competition spurred innovation and specialisation in local manufacturing and gave local producers the opportunity to sell to a larger market. Dongguan is a region of Guangdong between Guangzhou and Hongkong

⁶ For a discussion of the new approach of Chinese economic historians, see Wright (1992a).

and a major route by both land and sea for trade between the two cities. Dongguan merchants shipped produce to Southeast Asia and to Hongkong, so we can safely say that Dongguan bore the full brunt of the economic impact of foreign trade or, alternatively, enjoyed its full benefits. One Chinese Communist account suggests that the state of handicrafts in the local rural economy got worse day by day and that twenty per cent of the local population smoked opium. In addition, merchant corps and bureaucratic landlords exploited the peasants through harsh levies and miscellaneous taxes and destroyed the economy (Chen Xianpeng 1985: 69-87). However, more recent assessments of Dongguan's economy claim that

in 1842, when the English took Hongkong, Guancheng [now Dongguan], Taiping, Daojiao, Shuanggang, Yongkou, and Shilong all became ports and import and export trade developed. Most of the trade at that time was in water plants, woven-straw products, handmade paper, gunny sack, rutabaga, dried fruits, firecrackers, bamboo products, and a few other local specialities. Trade was usually conducted through Hongkong and Macao and the imported products were mostly pocket watches and metal goods (*Dongguanshi shangye zhi* 1989: 25).

After foreign powers forced the Qing government to open up the five treaty ports, including Guangzhou, Dongguan's foreign trade surged. Locals exported goods directly to Hongkong and thence across the world. By 1887, the value of Dongguan's exports of firecrackers had reached more than one million silver taels. Dongguan merchants shipped firecrackers to the Dutch East Indies, Singapore, Vietnam, Burma, Europe, America, Australia, and Africa. In 1918, due to the success of the Lightning Bolt firecracker, 180,000 cases of firecrackers were sold with a value of over ten million silver dollars. Dongguan's straw-paper products were in great demand in Southeast Asia. Between 1910 and 1914, Dongguan's water-plant production and marketing reached its peak. Dongguan's straw-producing field area increased greatly, annual straw production improved to approximately 17,500 tons, and exports of straw-woven products rose to about 180,000 sacks (*Dongguan duiwai maoyi zhi* 1990: 1-2).

Because of Guangdong's extensive and cheap water-transportation system and its products' success in export markets, the region began to specialise intensively. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Dongguan was dependent on Guangxi for rice. Agricultural production specialised on the basis of local differences in soil types, irrigation, and local expertise. Particular subregions or even villages produced specific products. During the Nationalist period, Dongguan's local handicraft economy developed continuously. In Guancheng, Shilong, Taiping, and every market town, workshops proliferated, particularly those employing carpenters, bamboo workers, and iron workers. Craftsmen in Guancheng, Taiping, Shilong, Houlie, and Daojiao produced increasing numbers of woven-straw products. Guancheng's most

successful products were fireworks, firecrackers, wooden furniture, bamboo crafts, and leather shoes. Shilong specialised in producing wooden furniture, bamboo crafts, boats, metal goods, and malt sugar. Taiping's most successful handicrafts were woven-straw products, wooden furniture, bamboo crafts, and its most successful industry was boat-building. Taiping's boat-building industry attracted customers from Shenzhen, Bao'an, and Panyu. Shilong had some one hundred bamboo workshops, renowned throughout Dongjiang, that employed nearly one thousand craftsmen.

During the 1920s, Taiping's three trading houses, Hesheng, Jianye, and Fuyuan, specialised in shipping to Hongkong, Macao, and abroad. Taiping's export volume was second only to Shunde's silk exports. Taiping's straw-matting industry had seven competing brands: Aeroplane, Tiger (successful in Hamburg), Two Fishes, Butterfly, New Humen (in great demand in Holland and Greece), Jewel Mountain, Yellow Jade Mountain, Lotus Mountain, Modern, New Life, Phoenix Cry, and Lotus Flower (*Dongguanshi qingongye zhi* 1991: 2).

Local products that found a market thrived. However, even when foreign goods seemed to have marginalised some local products, local producers could innovate and find new markets. This innovation did not necessarily require a large amount of capital. In Dongguan the bulk of industry had been in the manufacture of tools destined for rural use, but foreign trade caused new handicrafts and services to emerge, including platform scales, watch repair, machine tailoring, engraving, and soap making. Some of these operations were performed by families, others in larger-scale shops and workshops. The population of Shilong in the 1920s was about thirty thousand, of which more than four thousand worked in the handicraft industry (*Dongguanshi qingongye zhi* 1991: 2).

Foreign trade helped Guangdong to build domestic capital. In the 1920s, the silk-manufacturing industry in Guangdong was booming, for Canton Crepe was in great demand on the American market. Guangdong's silk producers were gradually ousting Japanese silk from its dominant position. The pace of the development of Guangdong's silk industry was remarkable. In 1910, Guangdong had a total of 109 silk-reeling mills equipped with 42,100 reeling machines. By 1926, it had 202 mills and 95,215 reeling machines. Almost all these mills were partnerships with an average capitalisation of about thirty thousand Chinese dollars each (Du Xuncheng 1991: 115).

Other sectors of the economy that competed with foreign goods transformed themselves successfully with imports of new technology. The hand-spinning industry became a machine-spinning industry and competed successfully with foreign cloth because of the cheap price of Chinese labour and machine-spun yarn. Imported cotton yarn and dyestuff enhanced the quality of domestic textile products. Imports of mechanical equipment, iron, timber, and even the automobile played an important

part in building Chinese cities and transport routes (Ding Richu and Shen Zuwei 1991: 173).

The question of the effect of foreign competition on China's economy in the 1920s is vexed. Most Chinese accounts have until now always stressed the problems that Chinese enterprises suffered in the face of foreign competition, when imperialist powers maintained control over China's tariff levels. Thomas Rawski presents a view that stresses foreign trade's positive effects. He describes "the positive impact of foreign trade on [China's pre-war] industrial progress" and claims that many products were "manufactured domestically only after imports alerted Chinese businessmen to the size and profitability of the local market" (Rawski 1980: 27).

The success of private industry and small ports

Hu Sheng (1973) is typical of many Chinese accounts of the effects of foreign trade on China's economy in that he emphasises its effects on China as a whole and on its largest ports. However, the main engines of the local economy were private investment and small local ports, not state investment and large ports like Guangzhou. The rise of private enterprise in Guangdong increased the amount of capital and political power held outside the central state. Detailed data about year-on-year investment in Guangdong between 1900 and 1927 in Du Xuncheng (1991: 285-528) illustrates three booms in investment throughout Guangdong. The first two booms are well known and documented.⁷ During the last five years of the Qing dynasty, a programme of national strengthening invested in Chinese industry. Although some individuals invested private money in industry, much of the investment in Guangzhou was state capital lent to armaments factories. The next period of growth was during the First World War, when private individuals invested much capital in match factories, rubber plants, and other manufacturing industries.

The third boom, from 1920 to 1925, was caused by a large amount of investment during a period of renewed exposure to foreign trade after the First World War. Much investment in Guangdong came from Overseas Chinese who could invest in their ancestral homes now that the economies of the Western world, no longer occupied with providing for the war effort, were booming. I conclude that foreign trade aided the accumulation of domestic Chinese capital and developed Guangdong's industrial base. In later chapters, I show that Chinese capitalists were reluctant to support the boycott of Hongkong initiated by leaders of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike.

⁷ See, for example, Thomas (1984).

Many small ports benefited from foreign trade. Whereas foreign imports to Guangzhou almost doubled in value from 1895 to 1913, exports from Guangdong's subregions tripled in value (Yang Ruizhen 1993: 111-112). For example, during the Nationalist period, Dianbai County became one of the main cargo ports of the inner regions of the Xijiang River; small steamers frequently passed through Dianbai to Macao, Hongkong, and Guangzhou. The Dianbai subregion exported fruits, rice, hemp, tungsten ore, fish, and salt; it imported miscellaneous goods and textiles. Following the development of a commodity economy and the flourishing of foreign trade, the county's internal network of rural trade between towns and villages gradually expanded and developed. Like Diancheng (the county's capital), Shuidong and Bohe, too, became foreign-trade ports. New market towns sprang up and village markets multiplied. Aside from selling the usual agricultural products - fish, food, salt, and livestock - these country fairs dealt in cotton, myriad varieties of hemp and silk, medicines, leather and pelts, honey, sugar, and oils (Liang Hua 1992: 267).

Private merchants carried out Dongguan's exports by sea through Taiping and by land on the Guangzhou-Kowloon Railway. Nor was trade limited to one or two large concerns. Several companies sprang up to deal in firecrackers: the Chendayi Company, Zhangdayi Company, Luohutai Company, Gongxinxiang Company, Guangyuantai Company, and Juran Company. The Dayixian Company, Zhaotai Company, and Detai Company from Daojiao were all successful in the water-plant trade. Other companies, such as the Guangyulong Company, Huangkuiji Company, and Guangyuanlai Company, competed in the trade for miscellaneous other goods (*Dongguan duiwai maoyi zhi* 1990: 118).

The Shiqiao region in Panyu was another beneficiary of the increase in foreign trade. It developed its rice-milling industry right up to the 1920s. Because of the success of its other handicraft industries, local trade developed rapidly. Between 1862 and 1911, it had shipping lanes to nineteen destinations worked by a total of thirty-eight vessels. In the three years of the reign of Xuantong at the end of the Qing dynasty, lanes to twelve new trading destinations opened up, including Hongkong, served by thirteen new vessels. Because Shiqiao was close to Hongkong, it had long since developed links to the colony, beginning with the smuggling of sugar, petrol, foreign goods, and salt. In the Nationalist period, Shiqiao remained Panyu's number-one handicraft-trading port - its waterways and overland routes were clear and ran smoothly. To the east, west, and north, Shiqiao had a loop-shaped network of roads, along which countless vehicles travelled day and night and took the local produce from every surrounding village into Shiqiao, where it was processed and then resold to the villages. Peasants transported goods to the markets themselves, overland or by water. Some who were wealthy enough hired labourers to carry their products or shipped them by junk (He Jiliang and He Pinduan 1992: 246-247).

It has long been argued that Hongkong achieved its prosperity at the expense of Guangzhou during the Nationalist period. Hongkong's ability to ship goods effortlessly across the whole world meant that Hongkong generated growth in a host of small ports that would have been unable to sell on these markets had they been forced to rely on Guangzhou as the local centre of shipping. Guangzhou had long enjoyed an unrivalled position in foreign trade; its city officials had become exclusive and complacent. Merchant groups had based themselves there in the past because of its monopoly of the trading economy (Huang Qichen 1991: 122-124). Market forces and the long reach of the modern Hongkong shipping lines allowed for the development and expansion of ports throughout the Zhujiang Delta and along the Guangdong coast and spurred the creation of new market towns to serve subregional ports and their surrounding villages. This growth of small ports' economies undermined Guangzhou, which had for long enjoyed a monopoly of foreign trade and a middle-man position in the province's economy.

Opportunities for peasant trade and industry

Although new centres of bustling commerce sprang up in smaller ports around the Zhujiang Delta, did local people get greater access to foreign trade? Isaacs describes the peasantry as burdened by taxes, extorted by militarists, and "fleeced" by merchants because they could not ship their crop to "distant" markets (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 27). Leaving aside Isaacs' comment about taxes, I now examine his charge that peasants were blocked from entering the international market. One Chinese account shows that, during the Qing dynasty, the peasantry had found it possible to break into the trading economy:

Following the increasing development of Guangdong's commercial and money economy, self-cultivating and tenant farmers, seeing with their own eyes that trading was profitable, frequently gathered together small amounts of capital and began to trade. For example, Nanhai county's Lao Lianfang, who's ancestors were three generations of "pure farmers" until he came to manage the household affairs and went to Guangzhou to trade, "changed from being a peasant to engage in commerce." In Panyu, Shunde, and Xinhui, this situation was rather widespread (Huang Qichen 1991: 125).

The increase in trade and the arrival of new technologies enabled more people to engage in commerce. Guangzhou customs officials made the following observations:

The manner of conducting business [has] changed so much during the past ten years.... [F]ormerly, nearly all trade was in the hands of foreigners and it passed

through the city of Canton [Guangzhou]; now it is done almost entirely by Chinese, who make their purchases at Hong Kong, and take their goods direct to their native towns, without passing through [Guangzhou] (Customs Reports 1864, quoted in Fok 1990: 100).

The development of the export trade promoted prosperity in other areas of the rural economy; farms grew sideline crops for export such as silk. One account says that many Guangdong families relied on profits from the spring cocoons to "tide them over" and some families were dependent on profits from the international silk trade for their clothing needs (Ding Richu and Shen Zuwei 1991: 168). Peasants in Shunde, Nanhai, Zhongshan, Xinhui, and Sanshui began to manufacture silk for the export market (Yang Ruizhen 1993: 116). Around 1920, silk production and sales peaked. In 1920, silk yielded seventy per cent of the income of Wuxing peasants; as silk prices soared ever higher, peasants began to prefer producing silk to tilling the land. Farmers who raised silkworms could reap a bumper harvest within a month, and in so doing earn enough to support themselves for a year.

Hongkong-induced demand for sugar caused sugar merchants to advance loans to peasants to grow sugar cane. In the winter months, merchants built sugar refineries and bought the produce back off the peasants to process and then export it. This system allowed peasants, who might otherwise have been too poor, to grow cane and thus benefit from the new trade, and was particularly widespread in Haifeng county (Marks 1984: 104-105). The fortunes of the peasantry were linked to the international demand for these products, which declined rapidly after 1907. Nevertheless, foreign trade offered new opportunities to the rural economy, and these opportunities reached even the smallest producers.

According to a 1929 Chinese Government report on the general condition of Guangdong's agriculture, some areas with a well-developed debt industry also had a flourishing local economy. In detailed information concerning peasant debt, Deqing and Nanhai are described as having a developed economy and prosperous peasantry with a total of more than 120 pawnbrokers in Nanhai County, to whom people went for commercial loans. Gaoming is described as having a relatively prosperous peasantry due to the trade in silks, tea, tobacco, and other goods. In Enping, debt facilities were concentrated in the richest areas, suggesting that peasants frequented usurers not for the purpose of tiding themselves over the hard part of the year, but maybe for funeral and emergency expenses or even for trading loans (Guo Xiaodong and Liao Rong 1992: 215).

Many people from Bao'an lived overseas and remitted money home, which remittances enabled peasants to invest in fishing industries. Peasants in Hongshan enjoyed the benefits of trade in silk, tobacco, and tea. In Shunde, where the total population was some seven hundred thousand, several tens of thousands of relatives

lived abroad. Relatives' remittances added up to several million silver dollars a year. In Shunde, about forty thousand women between the ages of sixteen and forty went out to work and "the income of one was sufficient to support three" (Guo Xiaodong and Liao Rong 1992: 215). Peasants in these developed areas could generate large sums of capital over and above what they needed for subsistence.

Cheap and accessible transportation was crucial to peasants engaged in trade. I have shown how increased foreign trade led to the establishment of new market towns and that the transportation routes were apparently good enough in places like Shiqiao to allow for the sale of local produce to the trading ports. Peasants in these areas were in an ideal position to take advantage of any opportunities that arose. Areas such as Dongguan, Shilong, Dianbai, Shiqiao, Xinhui, and Panyu were all well served by inland waterways. These transport systems were quick and extended far inland from the Zhujiang.

The junk trade on the Zhujiang did not lose out to foreign competition from modern steamers for two simple reasons. First, junks could go where no steamer could follow. Second, they kept their freight charges low. The steam launch, an innovation from the 1880's that took river junks in tow, even opened up new possibilities for pre-modern river traffic. The railway to Sanshui and the steam launch on the lower and middle reaches of the river greatly eased transportation. In some areas the competition between rival firms was so fierce that passengers could be carried to their destination for just a few cents (Faure 1989a: 221).

The telegraph, a new technology brought by foreign powers, widened access to trade. Maritime Customs officials in Shanghai complained that the telegraph facilitated "the carrying on of trade with small or almost no capital" and promoted a "sharpness in business and a keenness in competition which tend[ed] to make getting business a more important consideration than how it [was] got" (Faure 1989a: 26). One effect of foreign trade was to widen access to trade across the whole of Guangdong. This fact was later to become a source of conflict between the CCP's anti-imperialist stance during the strike and some coastal peasant communities that profited from foreign trade.

Trade and the increase in local power

Foreign trade caused no disintegration in the structure of Guangdong society of the sort that structural theorists of revolution claim causes revolutionary protest. However, many existing social structures and local powers became wealthier in relation to the central state. According to Wellington Chan, merchants in China's treaty ports fought against central government taxation and interference in trade

(Chan, Wellington 1980: 460-462). According to Rankin (1986), the Qing state was "chronically underfinanced" and "superficial." Foreign trade created many jobs outside the bureaucracy and enhanced the power of local elites. By the end of the Qing, state power had "hopelessly decayed" - not absolutely, but in relation to the strength of local political groups (Rankin 1986: 13-28).

The local market town was the centre of the economic life of peasants from the surrounding villages and provided for the peasants' basic needs (Skinner 1964: 5). Many new market towns sprang up to meet the expansion in commerce due to the increase in foreign trade. These new market towns became the focal point for discovering news as merchants travelling between towns gathered in the tea-houses after the close of the market and related news and stories that they had heard up elsewhere (He Jiliang and He Pinduan 1992: 246-247).

Skinner (1977) suggests that the importance of the marketing system in rural China was likely to be political as well as economic and argues that the marketing system was the focal point of the surrounding peasant communities and that it provided the context for marriages, religious organisations, lineages, and secret societies. Consequently, local political control was likely to mean control over the local marketing system. In an examination of whether or not Skinner's hypothesis is applicable to South China, Marks (1984) decides that local lineages controlled rural market towns. Land ownership and control over local trade was the key to political power. Dominant lineages controlled market towns, groomed sons for the official class, and commanded the local militia (Marks 1984: 64). In Huicheng and Huancheng, major lineages accumulated land and dominated the local political economy not only through a many-tiered contract tenancy system but also by controlling the thriving trade in grain, fan palm, and citrus. Through their close-knit communities, common ancestry, trust lands and alliances with other elites, they created power groupings that penetrated the outlying areas (Siu 1989: 297). By renting out its land, the trust obtained interest on its capital in order to expand further the amount of land it owned or to finance other interests. Because earning interest on trust capital was a prime concern of lineage organisations, they sometimes made commercial investments to earn money (Siu 1989: 62).

Lineages were cultural forms of organisation that served political and economic ends. Local leaders with official degrees were the centre of lineage authority. They had the backing of the central state and surrounded themselves with lineage institutions. Lineages were "self-serving," "self-organising," "self-feeding" and "self-regulating" political organisations (Faure 1989b: 4-36). In later chapters, I describe the growing influence of subregional forms of organisation in Hongkong, for example, subregional associations (*huiguan*) and township associations

(*tongxianghui*), and examine the influence of same-surname kinship groups and native-place ties in Hongkong's unions.

Guangdong's economy

In this chapter, I have concentrated on the effects of foreign trade on the economy of counties, towns, villages, and small ports in Guangdong. I shall now take a brief look at the economy of Guangdong during the same period. After 1910, Guangdong's balance of trade, as measured through the port of Guangzhou, maintained a healthy surplus.

Guangdong's trade from 1911 to 1924

Year	Imports	Exports	Surplus
1911	29 533 302	54 627 044	25 093 742
1912	25 796 004	42 877 242	17 081 238
1913	31 791 219	55 937 841	24 146 622
1914	34 880 588	44 144 353	9 263 765
1915	26 037 359	42 127 765	16 090 406
1916	25 939 697	55 074 383	29 134 686
1917	27 874 400	49 994 066	22 119 666
1918	28 215 554	50 436 445	22 220 891
1919	31 121 914	64 676 057	33 554 143
1920	32 509 218	59 221 881	26 712 663
1921	41 496 668	71 333 835	29 837 167
1922	54 232 571	89 016 601	34 784 050
1923	73 846 423	90 228 494	16 382 071
1924	54 019 748	82 777 970	28 756 222

Figures are in haikwan taels and taken from Cheng Hao (1985: 154).

The First World War allowed some Chinese industries to flourish briefly as they filled the gap left in the market by European and other foreign goods. Cotton mills, cigarette factories, rubber factories, and lamp factories sprang up one after another. According to one account of the period, "China's unfavourable trade balance dropped abruptly to record lows" (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 21). The effects of the decrease in foreign trade on Guangdong were different from those on China as a whole. Guangdong's trade surplus was particularly low in 1914 and 1915, when foreign trade had declined in volume. The trade surplus recovered most of this fall in 1917 and 1918. By 1919, Guangdong's trade surplus had completely recovered. Between 1921 and 1924, the value of Guangdong's imports and exports increased

rapidly at the same time as foreign trade recovered. Some writers suggest that the First World war stimulated Guangdong's exports and that this positive impact might have continued for a year or two after 1918, but this suggestion is not supported by the above figures. Guangdong had long benefited from its contact with foreign trade. The province had a permanent trade surplus from 1911 to 1924, and its export earnings and domestic investment were highest during periods of greatest foreign trade. Foreign trade enriched Guangdong.

Conclusion

Foreign trade brought new opportunities to peasants and merchants in Guangdong. Subregions around the Zhujiang Delta were rejuvenated; large ports, for example, Guangzhou, were disadvantaged because they lost their monopoly rights to foreign trade, and because smaller ports began to prosper. Thus, freer trade had a positive effect on the economy of small ports. Peasants enjoyed new opportunities as a result of the rise in foreign trade. Coastal communities and small ports appeared to do well because they had excellent transportation networks, powerful lineage support, or wealthy relatives abroad, and enjoyed an improved standard of living due to welfare programmes financed largely by Overseas Chinese.

Foreign trade did not cause local social structures to collapse. It provided subregional groups with greater resources than in the past. Some of these groups, particularly in the Zhujiang Delta, had enriched themselves through links to foreign trade. This shift in the relative power of central and local resources was a crucial obstacle to the attempts of revolutionaries to lead a united, centralised movement against imperialist powers. Writers like Isaacs, who studied the revolutionary movement in Guangdong in 1925-1927 against a background of the Chinese national economy, treat the strike as part of a movement of national liberation; I focus instead on the effects of foreign trade on Guangdong alone. My focus permits a better understanding of the conditions in which revolutionaries organised the strike and the interests of the social groups that participated in the strike.

Chapter 3

Hongkong Society and Government

In this chapter, I study theories of colonialism and of the formation of Hongkong society. I examine trends in the development of Hongkong's Chinese population and its elite-run institutions. I attack views of colonial society that see the relationship between the colonial government and its Chinese population as merely one between oppressors and the oppressed. I show that significant sections of the Hongkong population were settled and outline the development of Hongkong's Chinese elite and how it maintained its control over the colony's Chinese population. I describe the development of Chinese elite-run governmental institutions in Hongkong and look at their relationship to the colonial authorities. I reject the view that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was a spontaneous mass revolt against colonial authorities, and reject, too, the idea that Hongkong workers experienced Hongkong society as an unusually harsh and unjust place in which to live or that Hongkong society was so unfair as to cause a general feeling of discontent, capable of erupting into mass political violence, in Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. I show, too, the changes in the structure of Hongkong society before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, changes that undermined Hongkong's Chinese elite-run institutions and put power in the hands of local political leaders who sometimes looked to China for political support and patronage. Finally, I describe how revolutionaries in 1920 attacked Hongkong's Chinese elite and wanted to grasp political control over Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population.

Theories of colonialism and Hongkong society

Balandier argues that the relationship between colonisers and colonised is "fundamentally antagonistic" due to the imposition of an alien rule (Balandier 1966: 34-61). Adas claims that European colonialism threatened "established indigenous groups" by imposing new ideas and organisational patterns (Adas 1979: 44). Ding You describes the prosperity of early Hongkong as "built on the sweat and corpses of Chinese workers" (Ding You 1983: 82). These theories suggest that colonial governments were typically invasive, harsh, exploitative, alien, and antagonistic to the local population. Chen Kunyao (1988), on the other hand, theorises that a mixture of Western and Chinese culture influenced the development of Hongkong society. Zheng Deliang (1989) agrees with this basic proposition. The first part of Chen's analysis can be summed up as follows: a stable colonial government, pursuing economic policies inspired by free market liberalism, created an entrepreneurial society. Confucian values of thrift and the pursuit of wealth encouraged the Chinese population to take advantage of colonial free-market policies. Foreign merchants' capital, colonial government spending, and Chinese kinship groups' savings accumulated vast amounts of capital. The second part of Chen's theory claims, however, that Colonial oppression and Confucian values of hard work, obedience, and docility restricted labourers' demands (Zheng Deliang 1989: 22-23 and Chen Kunyao 1988).

Both Tsai (1993) and W. K. Chan (1991) are critical of oversimplistic descriptions of both colonial oppression and colonial good government. They describe an ambivalent relationship between the Hongkong Government and Hongkong's Chinese elite, and suggest that sometimes they cooperated, but that Hongkong's Chinese elite assumed the day-to-day running of the Chinese population. Although elite-run institutions similar to those found in China governed Hongkong society, I do not treat Hongkong as merely an extension of China. W. K. Chan chooses to treat Hongkong society in its own right and not as a product of uncontrollable external forces; he suggests that by 1922, Hongkong society had "come of age" and was "able to stand on its own two feet" (Chan, W. K. 1991: 207-208).

In my study of the development of Hongkong society before the strike, I argue the following points: first, Hongkong workers did not experience Hongkong society as especially harsh, indeed Hongkong was in many respects freer and more prosperous than Guangdong, and Hongkong society did not create a simmering, generalised mass discontent that boiled over into revolutionary fervour to create the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Second, both Hongkong's Chinese elite and an increasingly large part of its non-elite population were settled. This fact suggests that

Hongkong's Chinese population had loyalties to Hongkong as a distinct place separate from China and undermines descriptions of Hongkong as a repressive society in which Hongkong workers were without exception temporary residents labouring under a cruel regime.

Hongkong's population from the 1840s to the 1920s

Before looking at the development of Hongkong's Chinese elite, I briefly describe the population of Hongkong from the colony's early years to the 1920s. In this description, I focus on whether or not a significant proportion of Chinese had settled permanently in Hongkong, and thus help to answer the question of how far one can treat Hongkong workers as separate and distinct from workers in Guangdong. The following table shows the growth in Hongkong's Chinese population from 1841 to 1931.

Hongkong's Chinese population from 1841 to 1931

Year	Chinese Population
1841	5 450
1844	13 441
1848	16 852
1850	21 759
1855	47 122
1860	63 882
1865	94 790
1871	91 735
1876	107 423
1881	121 701
1891	178 960
1901	233 263
1906	262 136
1911	383 716
1921	654 715
1931	821 429

1841 to 1901 from W. K. Chan (1991: 63), 1906 to 1931 from *Hongkong Census Reports*.

Past histories of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population tend to treat it as a mass of impoverished economic refugees. For example, one account argues that

when imperialist powers forced open China's treaty ports, Guangzhou lost its monopoly of foreign trade and thousands of labourers lost their jobs; a large population of unemployed handicraftsmen, boatmen, dock hands, and seamen fled to Hongkong to work (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 16). Another account says Chinese were "forced" to Hongkong by "economic hardship and sociopolitical unrest on the mainland" (Tsai 1993: 293). Some arrivals were indeed refugees from Guangdong. The first large surge of refugee immigrants coincided with the defeat of the Taiping Rebellion in 1865 and various revolts in Guangzhou (Mei 1979: 463-501). The second surge coincided with the turmoil of the 1911 Revolution. Because some historians regard Hongkong's Chinese as refugees, they believe that they had no roots in the colony. For example, Lethbridge says:

Before 1941 the majority of Chinese were migrants or transients - temporary sojourners. They came to Hongkong to seek work, especially if conditions were bad in China. Most returned to their towns and villages when conditions improved in China or worsened in Hongkong. Normally, they left their children in China to be educated (Lethbridge 1978: 2).

However, much immigration to Hongkong was not simply a temporary reaction to turmoil on the Chinese mainland, but represented a steady stream of Chinese looking for work, business opportunities, or education. I argue that Hongkong society developed considerably from an initial position, to which Lethbridge's comments seem to apply, and that one cannot satisfactorily describe Hongkong's entire Chinese population in 1925 as "transient." One eye-witness account supports the view that a significant sector of the Hongkong population had begun to settle permanently before 1949:

The inflowing tide [of immigrants] is comprised of three distinct currents: the stream that flows straight through, the stream that comes and goes, and the stream that comes to stay.... It is an impressive scene that we witness - the scene of China moving in. At a discreet interval after the men the women follow. Children are now being born in the strange place.... The swarm begins to settle, the agitation of the drones subsides and the industrious hive proceeds to make honey (Sayer 1975 [1919]: 126-127).

As the above table shows, Hongkong's population grew rapidly but steadily between 1841 and 1931. The early population of Hongkong quickly built an urban society. In 1841, only fifteen per cent of the population lived in the city of Victoria. This proportion reached sixty-two per cent in 1844 and eighty-five per cent in 1865 (Chan, W. K. 1991: 63). These figures suggest that Hongkong's population grew largely from a steady stream of immigrant labour. Sayer's key observation is that three elements constituted Hongkong's Chinese population: one element used Hongkong as a gateway to the rest of the world; another was made up of the

"temporary sojourners" that Lethbridge identified; but a third element constituted a settled population. Of the migratory nature of the colony's Chinese population, Hongkong's 1931 census says: "With the increase in family life this coming and going may be somewhat reduced" (*Hongkong Census Reports* 1931: 134). W. K. Chan, too, identifies an increase in Chinese families in Hongkong from 6,987 families in 1871 to 25,125 in 1901 (Chan, W. K. 1991: 65). By 1931, thirty-nine per cent of the urban population of Hongkong had been resident for over ten years and twenty per cent had lived in Hongkong for more than twenty years (*Hongkong Census Reports* 1931: 134). These figures support Sayer's observations that a significant portion of even the supposedly highly mobile, "transient" population of Hongkong had begun to settle before 1925.

Sayer points out that the number of Chinese wives moving into the colony indicated a settling Hongkong population. The 1921 census records a total of 92,330 married females and 160,779 married males. The number of married females represents almost the whole adult female population, whereas the number of married males represents only sixty-five per cent of the adult male population. Between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-five, males outnumbered females in Hongkong's Chinese population to the greatest extent. This difference suggests that Hongkong's transient population may have been limited largely to this number of unmarried males. The number of children living in the colony is further evidence of a growing settled Chinese population. The census records a total of 84,288 children under fourteen years of age. For any given age under fourteen, the total for boys almost exactly equals the total for girls, so it is likely that these children represented part of a settled population (*Hongkong Census Reports* 1921: 202). The 1931 census report contains more data that implies a significant settled population - 68,280 males and 69,017 females of a total population of 654,715 in Hongkong and Kowloon claimed to be natives of the colony. In 1931, 30,053 male Chinese and 29,960 female Chinese claimed British nationality. In total, eleven per cent of the population of Hongkong and Kowloon claimed British nationality (*Hongkong Census Reports* 1931: 127-130).

These statistics back Sayer's suggestions that a significant and growing proportion of Hongkong's Chinese population was settled. Though Lethbridge may be right to say that the earliest settlers in Hongkong were "transient," this fact should not obscure the observation that a growing proportion of Hongkong's population was made up of settled local families. From all the above data, I draw the conclusion that the migratory section of Hongkong's Chinese population was comprised mostly of single men of working age, probably the poorest labourers and coolies. Labourers on better wages were likely to have had their wives and children with them in Hongkong and to have been more committed to life in the colony.

Chinese elite government institutions

Alien systems of government never oppressed Hongkong's Chinese population in the precise way that some writers on colonialism argue. Nor was the relationship between colonisers and colonised purely and simply "antagonistic." Hongkong's Chinese population was quick to develop its own social organisations, including neighbourhood associations, temple committees, guilds, and lineage trusts (Sinn 1990a: 162). Even in the early years of the colony, when the population was least settled, a Chinese elite soon emerged in Hongkong to oversee the activities of these associations. The focus of the political organisation of the early Chinese elite in Hongkong was the Man Mo Temple.

The Man Mo Temple was established by Sz-man-king and Tam-tsoi in 1847. Sz-man-king (sometimes known as Loo King, Loo Aui, or Loo Aking) has been described as a comprador, triad leader, and pirate (Chan, W. K. 1991: 73-76). He was, according to Tsai (1993: 43-44), "an outcast Tanka bum-boatman from Whampoa." He had a similar background to many early Chinese immigrants to Hongkong. Sz originally made his wealth from a reward of land given by the British for supplying provisions to Her Majesty's fleet during the opium wars. Later, he prospered through collecting rents and operating gambling houses and brothels (Tsai 1993: 43-44). Tam-tsoi (sometimes called Tam Achoy, or Tam Tso) has been described as a labour contractor (Chan, W. K. 1991: 73-76) or a foreman at the government dockyard in Singapore (Tsai 1993: 44). Tam-tsoi, like Sz-man-king, had links to the British colonial authorities.

The Man Mo Temple was dedicated to the Gods of War and Literature and drew its authority from symbolic representations of state military power and China's educated Qing elite (Tsai 1993: 49). However, the Temple forged links to Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population, too. When the Temple was enlarged in 1851, guilds presented tablets and stone lions for the new courtyard. The prestige of a particular guild could be inferred from its links to the Temple. The Temple elite, which by 1874 represented every district in Hongkong, acted as a local gentry (Sinn 1989: 16-17).

By evoking old Confucian gods, the Temple was a traditional⁸ institution that mirrored temple associations on the mainland, but it maintained links to the Hongkong Government.

⁸ Traditional in the sense that it reflected long held Chinese beliefs, religion, culture, and forms of Qing subregional administration.

[The Man Mo Temple] "secretly controlled native affairs, acted as a commercial arbitrator, arranged for the due reception of mandarins passing through the colony, negotiated the sale of official titles" and formed an unofficial link between the Chinese and the colonial government. It was an essentially Chinese institution (Wood, W. A. 1940: 99).

The Man Mo Temple represented the religious and spiritual side of Chinese culture. Yet the Temple was backed by powerful men with links to the British colonial authorities. The different backgrounds of the Temple's founders reflect its dual nature as an institution: on the one hand, it had to appeal to Chinese workers in Hongkong, hence the need for the patronage of the reputed triad leader Sz-man-king and the strongly religious nature of the institution; on the other hand, the Temple required the backing, or at least the tolerance, of the Hongkong Government. One can see this by the pro-British credentials of both Tam-tsoi, who had joined the British community's protest against the levying of ground rents in 1848, and Sz-man-king, who had supplied the British navy (Chan, W. K. 1991: 72).

As the colony prospered, relations between the Hongkong Government and Hongkong's Chinese elite improved. In the 1850s and 1860s, Hongkong's Chinese elite began to change gradually as Chinese with status and merchant backgrounds arrived in the colony (Tsai 1993: 60-61). The local Chinese elite began to establish new community institutions and to cooperate increasingly closely with the Hongkong Government. In 1866, neighbourhood leaders met to persuade the colonial authorities to allow them to establish a District Watch Force by centralising control over forces that Hongkong merchants and storekeepers already organised. The District Watch Force won Governor MacDonnell's recognition as a supplement to the operations of the Hongkong Government's own police. The Governor nominated individuals from the ranks of the Chinese elite to hold membership of the District Watch Committee (Lethbridge 1971: 117-119).

The population of Hongkong continued to increase rapidly between 1870 and the 1920s. The problems of providing welfare, particularly burial services, for the colony's increased Chinese population began to stretch the resources available to the Chinese elite. In 1867 some small houses were set aside in Taipingshan under the sign "Places of Convenience" to serve as funeral homes and hospices. Care of the dead and dying in Hongkong was impossible in the cramped boarding houses in Victoria. When an employee was dying, his boss took him to one of these hospices, where a series of ceremonies and rites were performed. In 1869, when the Hongkong Government accidentally discovered these hospices, it found the ground littered with graves. The Hongkong Government learnt that sick people were brought there to die, supplied with water to drink, and given a coffin. The only food that they might eat was that brought by relatives or charitable people (Wood, W. A. 1940: 97).

Non-Chinese residents were outraged at the "Places of Convenience" and the Chinese themselves were eager to make improvements. The Hongkong Government and the Chinese elite decided to build an official hospital, to be managed by the Chinese. The Governor granted a free site near Possession Point and some capital from the Special Fund (Welsh 1993: 249). Thus work on the Tung Wah Hospital began. The Tung Wah Hospital represented the charitable face of the Chinese elite and cooperation between the elite and the Hongkong Government: it was financed partly by a grant from the Hongkong Government and partly by private contributions. Any individual donating ten Chinese dollars or more became a member. The number of Tung Wah Hospital members grew from 870 in 1873, to 4,814 in 1907. Guilds elected duty officers to assist the directors and assistant directors of the Hospital. Ninety-eight founding duty officers were elected between 1869 and 1871, and about thirty more annually thereafter.

[N]otices would be sent out to the various Guilds who for the time being have the right to nominate representatives to serve as directors. On receipt of such notices, each Guild would proceed to call a meeting of its members and to nominate one to serve. The Guild would inform the Hospital of the person nominated.... Eventually the representatives elected by the Guilds would all have signified their agreement to serve, and their names would then be posted up in the big hall of the Hospital as notice to the public in case anyone should like to raise any objection to the nominees (Jarret 1933-1935: 535, quoted in Chan, W. K. 1991: 84).

The Tung Wah Hospital enjoyed much independence from the colonial authorities at first. Jones (1990) recognises the coordination of efforts between the Hongkong Government and Hongkong's Chinese elite and calls this cooperation "government-voluntary coexistence." The Hongkong Government was reluctant to tackle the sensibilities of the Hongkong population head on and felt that a strong Chinese presence in the running of the community was essential to the colony's success (Jones 1990: 123-124).

The Tung Wah Hospital became the focus of Chinese Government in Hongkong and, like the Man Mo Temple, was similar in structure and style to elite institutions in Guangdong. The Hospital provided not only charity, sanitation, and funeral services but arbitrated in disputes, too. It maintained peace and order and acted as a centre of mediation and conciliation between different social groups and individuals in Hongkong, between Hongkong's Chinese population and the Hongkong Government, and sometimes between British and Chinese state officials.

The Tung Wah Hospital provided medical services free for the poor Chinese that were suspicious of Western medicine. Burial services, too, were free, but available only for the poor. The Tung Wah Hospital organised relief work and fund-raising campaigns to relieve disasters in Hongkong and China. Homeless and jobless

refugees were repatriated to the mainland at the Tung Wah Hospital's expense. Those people with references from influential Chinese were admitted as resident patients (Tsai 1993: 119). The Tung Wah Hospital did not confine itself to the emergency needs of the poor; it provided free education, too. It established its first free school in 1880, three more in 1893, two in 1897, two in 1903, one in 1904, two in 1912, two in 1917, and five between 1919 and 1920. By 1922, the Tung Wah Hospital managed eighteen schools. In addition the Hospital served as a community centre, registered businesses, and judged civil disputes. The colonial authorities allowed the Chinese elite to run the Chinese population according to Chinese law; the Hospital grew strong enough to organise limited collective community action (Chan, W. K. 1991: 88-93).

Hongkong community and the growth of subregional associations

In chapter 1, I suggested that historians should treat Hongkong as a distinct community, separate from China. In this chapter, I have shown that Hongkong's Chinese elite built local governmental institutions. I now go on to show that these institutions represented politically a sort of Hongkong community, but that the growth of subregional institutions in Hongkong, at which I hinted in chapter 2, undermined the sole authority of Hongkong-based Chinese associations over the colony's Chinese population. One can say that a Hongkong community existed, if one proves that this community acted politically. From the early days of the colony, the Chinese elite constructed their own institutions to control the colony's Chinese population, which institutions emphasised harmonious relationships between different classes and political organisations. Hongkong's Chinese elite promoted compromise and co-operation between different sections of society. These elite-led organisations often interceded in disputes between Hongkong workers and the colonial government.

The Hongkong population was to an extent organised along subregional lines. Some subregional associations, such as the Xin'an Association (Xin'an huiguan) founded by fishermen from Xin'an county, were established in the years immediately following the British occupation of Hongkong. However, although subregional organisations existed in Hongkong, mostly workers' guilds, neighbourhood associations, temple committees, and lineage organisations, subregional associations were relatively unimportant in the colony's early political life (Eitel 1895: 168-169). The political representation of the Chinese population in early Hongkong was the preserve of the Man Mo Temple, the Tung Wah Hospital Committee, and guilds:

The dominance of the guild element over the speech/regional element is best demonstrated by the formation of the Tung Wah...Hospital Committee.... The speech/regional element played no part, and while the guild representation was constant, the "ethnic" composition of the Committee varied from year to year (Sinn 1989: 56).

The Tung Wah Hospital's authority is evidence of the rise of a Chinese merchant elite in Hongkong that sought to exert its influence over the colony's entire Chinese population. This new merchant elite sought gradually to extend its influence over Hongkong's Chinese population and to lessen the influence of subregional associations in favour of representing a single and distinct Hongkong community. In 1872, neighbourhood leaders persuaded cargo coolies to end a strike against a Hongkong Government plan to control coolie houses through a licensing system. In return, members of Hongkong's Chinese elite undertook to make representations to the government on behalf of the coolies. In 1883, Hongkong Government plans to keep shop fronts unobstructed angered hawkers and rickshaw-pullers. The Tung Wah Hospital took the side of the shopkeepers, advising the Hongkong Government that many suffered from the obstruction caused by the hawkers, but interceded to force the colonial authorities to admit that they had removed the hawkers without proper consultation. The *Hongkong Daily Press* proclaimed that:

Much credit is due to the influential Chinese residents who co-operated so cordially with the Government officials to bring about a proper understanding with the hawkers" (*Hongkong Daily Press*, May 24, 1883).

Hongkong's Chinese elite had succeeded in creating a set of institutions that operated in defence of some kind of community interest. Hongkong's Chinese population, although fragmented to a degree by the influence of some subregional associations, was generally represented by the Tung Wah Hospital, Man Mo Temple, and the District Watch Force as a single, unified community. The Chinese population appeared to have confidence in the Chinese elite. Labour organisations made applications to the Hospital's directors to represent them or their case. However, the growth of subregional organisations in Hongkong soon undermined the Tung Wah Hospital's authority and concerned the Hongkong Government.

In chapter 2, I described how Guangdong's subregions prospered because of foreign trade. This prosperity led to a growth in the number of subregional political organisations in Hongkong between the 1870s and the early twentieth century. Merchants organised subregional associations in Hongkong for Chinese from a particular town or county to provide welfare functions for their members that the Tung Wah Hospital already offered. Subregional associations established burial grounds for their members, too. A burial ground was built in Hongkong for Sanzao natives in 1872; one for Gaoyao natives in 1875; one for Shunde natives in 1876; one

for Sanshui natives in 1883; and one for Nanhai natives in 1884. These subregional associations typically provided burial services, performed spring and autumn sacrificial rites, and organised the repatriation of remains (Sinn 1990a: 163). In Hongkong, Chinese merchants established boarding houses which offered accommodation to workers from particular areas of Guangdong, for example, Shunde, Panyu, Sanshui, Taishan, Nanhai, and Dongguan. Chinese gentry from a particular region managed boarding houses in order to maintain a pool of loyal workers for businesses in Hongkong, or to provide temporary shelter for emigrants on their way to the West (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 425). Subregional associations of all types promoted loyalty to kinship groups and native places. Fighting between members of different associations became commonplace. Rooted in Chinese localities and powerful lineage groups, subregional organisations had strong links to Guangdong. Sometimes, men were sent from Hongkong to perform community services, public works, and disaster relief in their home counties. Subregional associations were a mechanism whereby some nationalistic Hongkong merchants raised funds to protect home towns in Guangdong during the political instability that followed the collapse of the Qing empire as well as a tool to promote their personal power and influence in Hongkong. Subregional associations arbitrated business disputes and resolved conflicts between villages on the mainland. Their remittances and charitable contributions to local development enhanced their prestige (Sinn 1990a: 164-165). The development of the power and influence of these subregional associations diminished the relative prestige and influence of the Tung Wah Hospital. In chapter 4, I describe how Hongkong's unions shared many of the characteristics of subregional associations and that the growth in power of subregional influences increased the political power of some unions. In chapter 5, I describe how the subregional associations in the colony that so undermined the influence of the Hongkong elite's own political and charitable institutions had great potential as engines for political action against the Hongkong Government.

The division between Hongkong's elite and non-elite populations, and CCP revolutionaries' opposition to Hongkong's Chinese elite

So far in this chapter, I have discussed how Hongkong's Chinese elite established its own governmental institutions to manage Hongkong's Chinese community. I have described how subregional institutions grew in number in Hongkong and undermined these elite-run institutions. I now consider how many members of Hongkong's Chinese elite who had become distant from Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population became increasingly Westernised and closer to the Hongkong Government. I explore

how many powerful Chinese revolutionaries in the 1920s considered Hongkong parasitic and opposed members of Hongkong's Chinese elite, whom they saw as collaborators with imperialist powers and enemies of China. Because of revolutionaries' opposition to Hongkong's Chinese elite and this elite's proximity to the Hongkong Government, politics in Hongkong increasingly centred around antagonism between Chinese revolutionaries and the Hongkong Government.

First, I consider the economic and political relationship between Hongkong and Guangdong. Motz echoes the beliefs of the revolutionaries that led the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike when he describes Hongkong as a "parasitic city" (Motz 1972: 9). I argue that Hongkong acted as a spur to the development of Guangdong's economy and politics. For centuries, apart from occasional exchanges between private traders, China's foreign trade was limited by the imperial policy of emphasising the peasantry and restraining the merchants (*zhongnong yishang*). Severe imperial embargoes on foreign goods and trade with the outside world caused Guangdong merchants to organise their own merchant associations to protect their own interests. These organisations were particularly strong in areas of Guangdong like Dongguan and Chaozhou (Huang Qichen 1991: 122-123). With the further increase in trade from the nineteenth century onwards and the new prosperity of smaller ports around the Zhujiang Delta came a further growth in these merchant groups. The growth of Hongkong as a free port and the emergence of a Chinese merchant elite in the colony meant that some merchants suddenly had a secure base from which to protect their interests. For these merchants, Hongkong was not only a centre of trade but a safe haven dedicated to the commercial values Chinese officialdom had belittled for centuries. During the late Qing period, Hongkong developed quickly into a thriving entrepot and, by the 1920s, the colony had built a reputation as a financial centre with a powerful and rich Chinese merchant elite that dominated the trade with China.

Hongkong's positive effect on the economy of Guangdong and its independence and financial excellence is neatly summarised by a local British observer, who writes: "[Hongkong] is the valve through which the lifeblood of China courses to the arteries of Pacific commerce.... Hong Kong allows of [China's] expansion into a larger sphere" (Wood, W. A. 1940: 264). Hongkong was an open door not just for foreign capital but for investment from Overseas Chinese in industry, commerce, mining, services, transportation, finance and property. Overseas-Chinese investment was concentrated in investors' native regions. A recent study of the correspondence of Hongkong businessmen in Fok (1990) reveals that Chinese communities abroad remitted large amounts of money through Hongkong merchants to relatives in China. The letters of one businessman, Ma Chu-ch'ao, a native of Taishan, show that he remitted more than thirty thousand Chinese dollars and two

thousand taels into China on behalf of his overseas contacts. This sum reflects just a small part of the money remitted through Ma. The remittances were mainly from kin and were almost exclusively from relatives of people in Taishan (Fok 1990: 110).

Popular investments for Overseas Chinese in their home towns were roads. They were encouraged in such investment by state officials and warlords eager to build up Guangdong's infrastructure or move their armies more efficiently. Overseas Chinese were aware that proper transportation routes to local ports increased commercial opportunities for many peasants and traders in Guangdong's subregions. Many projects to finance road-building included an element of social welfare, for they also provided the local community with schools and hospitals (Lin Jinzhi and Zhuang Weiji 1989: 51). The rate of Overseas-Chinese investment in Guangdong picked up between 1919 and 1927 with an annual average investment of 906,994 yuan, compared with an annual average of only 160,600 yuan between 1862 and 1919 (Lin Jinzhi and Zhuang Weiji 1989: 159). Most investment flowed into Guangzhou, Shunde and Panyu, Nanhai, Xinhui, Dongguan, and Taishan. However, Lin and Zhuang's data suggest that Guangzhou received remits sporadically: about eighty per cent of the total remitted to Guangzhou between 1895 and 1929 entered Guangzhou between 1905 and 1909. The subregions outside Guangzhou received remittances at a far steadier rate (Lin Jinzhi and Zhuang Weiji 1989: 160-163). The Hongkong elite directly aided the prosperity of Guangdong's subregions outside Guangzhou. Links between Hongkong businessmen and their hometown areas and the growth in political power of subregional associations caused the Hongkong elite to develop into a heterogeneous community.

Some members of Hongkong's elite became Westernised; others retained a strong Chinese nationalist sentiment and strong economic ties to Guangdong. The colonial authorities tried to integrate Westernised members of Hongkong's Chinese elite into the Hongkong Government. Tsai (1993) describes this situation as follows: "What was political integration from the government's view point was in fact a tendency toward community disintegration from the Chinese stand-point" (Tsai 1993: 95). Tsai identifies a challenge to the existing Chinese elite government structures in Hongkong from population growth, the development of labour consciousness, and the emergence of a generation of innovative, Western-oriented businessmen and professionals (Tsai 1993: 95-96).

Leaving aside the question of the development of labour consciousness, which I address in chapters 4 and 5, I now examine the so-called disintegration of Hongkong society and the emergence of Western-oriented members of Hongkong's Chinese elite. It seems wrong to talk of the disintegration of Hongkong society, given that Hongkong's Chinese population was increasingly settled. Newly established subregional associations appear to have rendered Hongkong's Chinese elite-run

institutions relatively weak. However, this change in the balance of power was not a form of disintegration. Subregional associations simply usurped many of the elite's welfare activities. The emergence of these subregional associations coincided with the increasing prosperity of Guangdong's subregions and Hongkong's Chinese merchants. Subregional associations could draw upon the native-place loyalties of large numbers of new immigrants after 1911, whereas the Tung Wah Hospital was an institution rooted in Hongkong. The importance of the Tung Wah Hospital as a community power for Hongkong's entire Chinese population was already waning. The Hospital was squeezed from above and below: from below by subregional institutions that could provide the social welfare programs that it could no longer afford due to the increase in the population; from above by other elite groups that became part of the colonial administration.

The colonial authorities pursued a policy of increasing the representation of Hongkong's Chinese elite in the Hongkong Government. This policy exacerbated the split between the colony's non-elite Chinese population and many members of its elite. By 1900, sixteen justices of the peace had been appointed from among the Chinese elite (Smith 1985: 162-167). By 1925, eleven prominent members of the Chinese community had served on the Legislative Council (Cheng 1969: 7-30). In 1891, the Hongkong Government brought the District Watch Committee under its control. The Po Leung Guk, another charitable institution, underwent a similar transformation in 1893. The separate governing powers in Hongkong controlled by Chinese and British elites sought closer cooperation as the Chinese elite's organs of government merged into the colonial administration (Sinn 1989: 152-153). The Hongkong Government invited Ng Choy (one of the Tung Wah Hospital founders) to serve on the Legislative Council from 1880 to 1882. Another Tung Wah Hospital founder, Wong Sing, served on the Legislative Council from 1884 to 1890. In 1890, Ho Kai, who was a Westernised member of the elite and had no connection to the Tung Wah Hospital, replaced Wong. Although many other directors of the Tung Wah Hospital continued to be appointed, a break had been made with the past. The period between 1800 and 1925 saw a development of the political power of smaller community organisations and the intention of the Hongkong Government to exert closer control over the Chinese population. It saw the relative decline of the influence of the Tung Wah Hospital as a political power and the end of its role as the sole representative of a single Hongkong community.

The affinity of many Chinese merchants in Hongkong with Westerners and Western values had developed into a repudiation of many of the characteristics of Chinese culture. Members of Hongkong's Chinese elite began to uphold Western civilisation as a blueprint for reform in China and Hongkong became a base for Chinese revolutionary movements from 1894 to 1911 (Ng 1984: 131-156). As

members of the Hongkong elite were drawn into Hongkong's official government structure, the views of a section of the elite became increasingly pro-Western. Many members of Hongkong's Chinese elite represented a particular brand of patriotism - one that saw China's salvation in links to foreign powers. An example of this new thinking is the merchant Ho Kai, a native Hongkong Chinese with a "shaky" command of the Chinese language (Welsh 1993: 336). To Ho, the colony epitomised the system of government he admired and advocated. In Hongkong, according to Ho, education was superior to that in China, commerce thrived, and the merchants held an important position in society. He believed that Chinese received fair treatment from the British and that Hongkong's Chinese were given every opportunity to rise in society as long as they had the ability (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 28-29). Ho Kai's views were inspired by classical liberalism, which he expressed in Confucian terms to make it more palatable to Chinese (Tsai 1993: 155). Ho believed that foreign capital was beneficial to China because it circumvented Chinese official high-handedness. He was a "curious mixture of a Chinese nationalist and what the Chinese Communists label as a running dog of Western, especially British, imperialism" (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 28-29). Ho Kai proposed reforms of China's industry, trade, and government along the lines of Western society (Ng Lun Ngai-ha 1984: 136).

Many other pro-Western Chinese were influential members of Hongkong's Chinese elite, for example, Sir Robert Ho Tung, a comprador of Jardine Matheson; R. H. Kotewall, a Eurasian; and Sir Shouson Chow. Kotewall and Chow acted as intermediaries between the Hongkong Government and the Guangzhou revolutionaries during the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. In 1873, Wong Sing, another prominent Chinese, started *Xunhuan bao* (*The Circular*), which promoted Western political ideas (Ng 1984: 134). The colony became the source of modernising, revolutionary political stimuli championed by powerful individuals, for example, modernisers like Hong Reng'an, a long term resident of Hongkong (Deng Duanben 1992: 155) and revolutionaries like Sun Yat-sen.

Hongkong's elite education system trained a generation of future Chinese Government officials with a better understanding of Western culture and more predisposed to continuing close links to the West (Fok 1990: 23). Local Chinese criticised education in Hongkong, fearing that Confucian classics would be neglected (Fok 1990: 22). Yet the influence of Hongkong-educated students continued to grow as the usefulness of Western education began to be accepted. The Hongkong Government was sensitive to its position as a base for Chinese revolutionaries: the University of Hongkong, established in 1912, tried to avoid arousing students with revolutionary doctrines (Welsh 1993: 357); the Viceroy of Guangdong expressed the hope that the University of Hongkong would benefit both China and Hongkong (Ng 1984: 128). A large number of Hongkong students entered the Chinese Government

in the early twentieth century, when Western-trained Chinese were in great demand (Fok 1990: 27).

I have described the emergence of a Chinese elite in Hongkong and the gradual incorporation of parts of that elite into the colonial government. Many members of that elite backed radical ideas and revolutionary movements to "modernise" China. At the same time, Hongkong's Chinese population began to organise on an increasingly small-scale and subregional level. This change appears to have created an increasingly wide division between the non-elite Chinese population and the Hongkong Government. To Sir Cecil Clementi, Hongkong Governor from 1925-1930, the lack of co-operation and understanding between the non-elite Chinese population of Hongkong and the colonial authorities was a particularly important problem:

[M]y acquaintance with Hong Kong and with things Chinese now extends over a quarter of a century and nothing has been a cause to me of more anxiety throughout that period than the fact that the Chinese and European communities of Hong Kong, although in daily contact with each other, nevertheless move in different worlds, neither having any real comprehension of the mode of life or ways of thought of the other. This is a most regrettable misunderstanding which retards the social, moral, intellectual and even the commercial and material progress of the colony (Quoted in Rafferty 1989: 135).

The only centralised basis of power that Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population had access to was the network of local governmental institutions centred around the Tung Wah Hospital. However, these institutions and the Hongkong community that they represented were undermined by the growth of subregional organisations in Hongkong in the early twentieth century. Political power in the Chinese community began to concentrate at a much lower level of organisation than before. Many of these low-level organisations were strongly patriotic and led by nationalistic members of Hongkong's Chinese elite. I have described Hongkong as jointly administered by Chinese and Westerners. Recent studies of Hongkong show two distinct administrations that gradually merged into a single government community, or elite, that possessed both Chinese and Western features. Historical accounts written by Chinese Communists have tended to exaggerate the power of British rule and to neglect the influence of Chinese administrative institutions. Hongkong is often portrayed, notably by mainland Chinese historians wary of offending the Chinese Government's official stance, as a colony where the local Chinese population was subject to direct political and economic exploitation by a racist colonial regime. This is a superficial description of the colony: it neglects the role of the local Chinese elite, which provided leadership for the Chinese population.

By 1925, the Chinese elite in Hongkong had helped to create a novel colonial government structure with a mixture of Chinese and Western values.

The treaty-port Chinese were better able to do that difficult thing, snap the tough thread of Chinese history and achieve the happy balance between modernity and Chineseness, between moving with the times and remaining themselves (Pan 1990: 373-374).

However, many mainland Chinese intellectuals were angry at the presence of Hongkong and humiliated by the unequal treaties. Although the Chinese state had largely managed to keep the imperialists at bay and many mainland Chinese had little direct contact with the British in Hongkong, important Chinese officials had long despised contact with the British. In 1841, in a report to the Qing Emperor, the Commissioner in Guangdong bemoaned the social intercourse between the local population and foreigners. He found the Chinese in Guangdong "ungrateful and avaricious" and complained that they "dwelled indiscriminately with foreigners," were "accustomed to see them day by day," and that "after living many years together, the utmost intimacy ha[d] grown up between them" (*Hong Kong Gazette* 1841: 4, quoted in Chan, W. K. 1991: 10).

Chinese revolutionaries in the 1920s, determined to modernise China and realise national independence according to their own vision, focused on Hongkong as the centre of British presence in China and the economic and military base of the strongest of the imperialist powers. The Hongkong Government was the main perpetrator of what the revolutionaries saw as imperialist aggression, domination, and exploitation. Although leading members of Hongkong's Chinese elite supported the revolutionary movement led by Sun Yat-sen in 1911, for example, Ho Kai, Wei Yuk, and Ng Choy, who acted as the revolutionaries' delegate to the 1911 Shanghai Peace Conference (Ng 1984: 133), Hongkong's elite was abhorrent to CCP revolutionaries with a Leninist view of the world. Such revolutionaries, for example, Deng Zhongxia, bitterly attacked members of the Chinese elite in Hongkong for what they believed to be their conservative, backward values and their closeness to the British Government. Deng believed that "imperialist oppression" had forced China to react. He writes:

Ever since the Opium wars, imperialism's attacks and oppression have been so fierce that China cannot but rise up in reaction to them in a spirit of "self-strengthening resistance to foreign aggression" (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1924c]: 89)

In addition, he attacked members of Hongkong's Chinese elite by belittling their native-place connections. He complained:

I believe there is no reason why Chinese people should not reside or trade in Hongkong. However, if they must reside there, then they should reside; if they must trade, then trade. They should not become Hongkong gentry. If they were

gentry on the mainland, then they were probably not from glorious home towns or illustrious circles. If being a Hongkong gentry means forgetting one's origins, then one is treating the enemy as kinsmen; this is a great disgrace!

Today the average Hongkong gentry holds power only under the majesty of the British empire. Traitors to their country, they tyrannise their compatriots and are the running dogs of imperialism. They carry out counter-revolution to prolong the chaos on the mainland and act as capitalism's tools to exploit labour (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 201).

Deng Zhongxia attacked Hongkong's position with respect to Guangdong's international trade and claimed the colony could "control the destiny of the Guangdong economy" because "Chinese merchants regarded Hongkong as a paradise" and complained that it seemed as if "the mainland would be unable to trade without [Hongkong's] paper money" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 277).

Yeh (1993) argues, as does Pye (1993), that revolutionaries' opposition to Western civilisation as represented in the treaty ports was partly a puritanical rejection of life in the cities. Pye adds that the antagonism of many intellectuals towards China's treaty ports and colonies like Hongkong were reflections of the populism of Li Dazhao, which propagated the idea of leaving the "corrupting life" of the cities and going to the villages. Revolutionaries sought modernisation through what they believed was the "revolutionary spirit of mistreated workers and peasants" (Pye 1993: 122). In 1925, CCP revolutionaries attacked Hongkong's Chinese elite from a variety of standpoints: they accused its members of being old-style gentry, denounced them as traitors because of the elite's closeness to the Hongkong Government, and complained that they promoted Western civilisation because of private commercial interests that revolutionaries believed were responsible for China's problems.

Conclusion

Hongkong's Chinese population grew steadily from 1840 to 1930, and the settled portion of this population, which brought its families to Hongkong, became increasingly numerous. Chinese elite institutions, originally run by Chinese from poor backgrounds, were organised more and more by Hongkong's merchant elite. In the early 1900s, the Hongkong Government and Hongkong's Chinese elite began to increase their social welfare activities and maintained strong political leadership over Hongkong's Chinese population. However, the demands of the growing population were too great for the resources of institutions run by Hongkong's Chinese elite.

Subregional institutions grew in number and took over the role of providing social welfare. Power shifted from the local Chinese elite to subregional associations, many of which had strong political links to mainland China. Simultaneously, Hongkong's Chinese elite divided: many of its members becoming more Westernised and incorporated into the Hongkong Government. What was integration from the point of view of the Hongkong Government actually exacerbated the divide between the non-elite Chinese population and the colonial authorities.

The weakness of Chinese institutions that once governed Hongkong's Chinese community and the comparative strength of subregional institutions that derived much of their prestige from links to the Chinese state potentially put power into the hands of mainland Chinese politicians. Chinese revolutionaries began to regard Hongkong in much the same way as officials of the imperial Chinese state had in the past. They were shamed by the national humiliation of foreign control over part of Chinese territory and lambasted local Chinese "gentry" as traitors. Hongkong was the port through which most foreign trade and Western ideas reached Guangdong; revolutionaries blamed Hongkong for what they perceived as the collapse of the state in South China and the loss of central control over Guangdong's economy and politics.

The widening gap between the Hongkong Government and the colony's non-elite population made Hongkong society less stable; this instability is interesting from the point of view of structural theories of revolution. The Hongkong Government communicated well with Hongkong's Chinese elite, but hardly at all with the non-elite Chinese. Elite-run institutions that had previously acted as mediators between the Hongkong Government and non-elite Chinese lost some political power to non-elite organisations. The position of Hongkong's Chinese elite as the mediator between Chinese politicians and the colonial authorities weakened, too, because of the revolutionaries' strong anti-imperialist views. Antagonism between colonisers and colonised in Hongkong was largely as a result of political antagonism between Guangdong politicians and the Hongkong Government.

Chapter 4

Hongkong Workers and Unions

In this chapter, I study Hongkong workers and unions. I describe general characteristics of the working population of Hongkong and the structure of Hongkong workers' organisations and show that vastly different wage levels and competing unions divided Hongkong workers. In chapter 3, I demonstrated that subregional political groups had grown in power relative to elite-run institutions and that Chinese revolutionaries were antagonistic towards Hongkong's Westernised Chinese elite. In this chapter, I show that Hongkong unions were powerful, independent, self-regulating organisations that had many of the characteristics of some subregional organisations, i.e., strong ties of loyalty to the group and sometimes strong kinship and native-place ties, too. I describe how Chinese revolutionaries, eager to win control over Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population at the expense of Hongkong's Chinese elite, built large political factions and federations of workers' organisations, which mimicked in structure the relationship between central state and local powers in Guangdong. I explore how revolutionaries tried to forge direct links to Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population and consider whether or not Hongkong unions' political links demonstrated increased labour consciousness.⁹

⁹ Labour consciousness in the sense that much Western social science understands the term. Hongkong's labourers regularly struck for higher wages and better working conditions or against unfair treatment. However, Hongkong had no unified working class engaged in a struggle against the capitalists as a class.

Hongkong workers

First, I establish that Hongkong workers had urban origins and worked in a variety of different occupations and earned different levels of wages. I reject descriptions of Hongkong workers as a homogenous mass with close links to China's peasantry. Past studies have exaggerated the importance of single industries in Hongkong, overgeneralised about the character of Hongkong workers, and neglected the diversity of occupations in Hongkong and the differences in workers' wages.

Chan Ming-kou (1975) suggests that most Hongkong workers were seamen, dockhands, or coolies and estimates that the shipping industry alone employed twenty-two per cent of the Hongkong workforce. He suggests that dockers, coolies, and warehousemen comprised sixteen per cent. W. K. Chan analyses Hongkong workers on the basis of his description of the five largest occupations in early Hongkong's working population, i.e., shop assistants, coolies, servants, carpenters, and hawkers, which five professions accounted for fifty per cent of the population of Hongkong in 1891 (Chan, W. K. 1991: 149). Tsai focuses on coolies as the majority of workers in the colony and even suggests that "skilled labourers fared little better than unskilled coolies" (Tsai 1993: 107). Isaacs suggests that most Chinese workers had peasant origins (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 33). The above views of Hongkong workers have led to a perception that they were a homogenous mass of generally unskilled workers who had close ties to China's peasantry. In this chapter, I try to show that Hongkong workers came from a variety of different trades and native-place backgrounds and earned vastly different wages.

The 1931 *Hongkong Census Report* shows that the colony's workers worked in a wide range of occupations. The following table shows industries employing the largest number of males:

Industries employing most Hongkong males	
Transport and Communication	19.5%
Commerce and Finance	15.0%
Personal Service	14.0%
Manufacture of Metals, Machines, Implements, Conveyances, Jewellery and Watches	6.3%
Public Administration and Defence	6.2%
Other Industries	5.8%
Building and Decorating	4.8%
Agriculture	4.6%
Fishing	4.2%

Wood Working and Manufacture of Rattan and Basket Ware	3.8%
Manufacture of Clothing	3.6%
Manufacture of Food, Drink, and Tobacco	2.5%
Professions	2.0%
Paper making, Stationery, Books, and Photography	1.6%
Manufacture of Textiles	1.2%

(Hongkong Census Reports 1931: 152)

The next table shows industries employing the largest number of females:

Industries employing most Hongkong females	
Personal Service	27.4%
Agriculture	24.8%
Transport and Communication	11.2%
Fishing	7.3%
Manufacture of Textiles	5.7%
Commerce and Finance	5.0%
Entertainment and Sport	3.7%
Building and Decorating	3.1%
Manufacture of Clothing	3.1%
Professions	2.5%
Manufacture of Food, Drink, and Tobacco	2.1%
Other Manufacturing Industries	1.1%
Wood Working and Manufacture of Rattan and Basket Ware	0.7%

(Hongkong Census Reports 1931: 152)

Chinese workers dominated all of these occupations save Public Administration, in which about sixty-five per cent of employees were European or US citizens, nineteen per cent were other non-Chinese, and fifteen per cent were Chinese. In 1931, all transport industries together employed only 19.5 per cent of the male workforce. Warehousemen, storekeepers, and packers together accounted for less than one per cent of Hongkong's working population (*Hongkong Census Reports 1931: 152*). Many others worked in small-scale manufacturing industries or produced handicrafts.

Even the 1931 census figures may underestimate the number of people employed in small-scale industry. Evidence suggests that, in the mid 1920s, Hongkong's Chinese workers were employed in a wide range of industries and services and that past accounts have generally overlooked the number of Chinese employed in small-scale manufacturing and who belonged to small unions. By 1931, Hongkong's economy had already become broad-based. Trade was important, but so, too, was manufacturing. Leeming (1975) shows that, in the mid-1920s, small enterprises proliferated in Hongkong's industry. Merchants from Guangdong, particularly Nanhai, Shunde, and Xinhui, built many firms in Hongkong. According to Leeming, in 1927, Hongkong had some three thousand factories and workshops (Leeming 1975: 337-342). Hongkong's small workshops employed on average eighteen workers each. Most of these workers belonged to Hongkong's smallest unions and formed the backbone of Hongkong's vast small-scale industrial workforce (Zheng Deliang 1989: 41).

Chan Ming-kou (1975) shows that the workers of Guangdong generally did not have immediately peasant origins. He says that only fifteen per cent of Guangdong workers had immediate family members engaged in farming (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 93). Guangdong had long had a large skilled workforce of non-peasant origins - many skilled workers from Guangdong emigrated to factories in Shanghai and Beijing to find work (Chesneaux 1968: 53). Foreign trade had long promoted the growth of handicrafts and investment in industry throughout Guangdong. Most of Hongkong's Chinese workers came from prosperous areas of Guangdong, such as Shunde, Panyu, Dongguan, and Nanhai (*Hongkong Census Reports* 1921, 1931). Skilled Hongkong workers, particularly handicraft workers and labourers working in small factories, were of urban origin and generally came from prosperous subregions of Guangdong which had well-developed local industries.

Workers were in no way "united by poverty," nor were skilled labourers little better off than coolies. Some workers were considerably better off than others - how skilled a worker was and where he worked affected the level of his wage. Wage differentials were an important political division between Hongkong workers as they were between workers in other Chinese cities.¹⁰ Chen Huayan (1929) conducts a detailed survey of Hongkong workers' wages. His survey shows that daily wage rates were markedly different in different trades. For example, furniture-makers earned from thirty-three cents with board and lodging to one dollar and sixty-six cents; mechanics earned from fifty cents with board and lodging to two dollars and sixty-six cents; tram workers earned between fifty cents and two dollars; and seamen earned

¹⁰ See, for example, Elizabeth Perry, who uses the term "labour aristocracy" to describe silk weavers in Shanghai between 1927 and 1937 (Perry 1992: 305-342).

between fifty cents and two dollars and sixty-six cents. Workers in European factories and the best Chinese factories earned higher wages than workers in other Chinese factories. A Chinese factory paid an average of fifty-five cents daily with board and lodging to ordinary mechanics, whereas European factories paid one dollar and twenty-five cents (Chen Huayan 1929: 33-42). Unskilled workers such as dockyard coolies could expect to earn a maximum of sixty-six cents a day without board or lodging. Experienced workers in factories making Chinese slippers earned an average of forty-four cents with board and lodging for a ten-hour day. Assistants to pork butchers worked twelve to fourteen hours a day for an average of forty cents and meals. Printers, on a salary of between fifty cents and two dollars a day, worked for only fifty-two hours a week and were paid overtime (Chen Huayan 1929: 33-42).

Internal organisation of Hongkong unions in the 1920s

[T]he situation in Hongkong was like this: although there were more than one hundred unions, if they weren't scab unions, then they were guilds (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 610).

Deng Zhongxia, the well-known CCP labour organiser and leader of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, described trade unions in Hongkong in the above terms. In one sense, Deng was not exaggerating - many unions contained employers and employees in the same organisation. Even industrial unions such as the Seamen's Union (Haiyuan gonghui) and the Mechanics' Union (Jiqi gonghui) had a mixed-class membership and a Confucian element in their internal structures. However, Hongkong unions' internal organisation contained democratic elements that Deng and many writers since have ignored.¹¹

Hongkong's unions were the subject of a Hongkong Government Report in 1912.¹² The report studied unions' internal organisation and identified three forms. The first form was "akin to the craft guilds of mediaeval Europe" (Wood, A. E. 1912: 3). The report describes the regulations of these unions as:

[F]requently very minute, and one may trace in them the influence of the "father and mother" attitude which is so pleasant a feature of ideal Chinese

¹¹ For example, Chesneau (1968), Chan Ming-kou (1975), and Kwan (1986) all accept Deng's view of many Hongkong unions as conservative or backward.

¹² The report calls all Hongkong unions "guilds." In this study, I generally use the word "unions" to describe all Hongkong workers' organisations. Hongkong unions differed in their internal structure, but, to refer to the Seamen's Union on the one hand and Hongkong guilds on the other, exaggerates the differences between them and incorrectly implies that in some way the Seamen's Union was far more "modern" or Westernised.

administration.... Most guild rules contain regulations about food and premises, and discountenance misbehaviour of any kind. (Wood, A. E. 1912: 3).

Other sorts of union already possessed features characteristic of the "modern," Western-style trade unions that some Chinese labour organisers, including Deng Zhongxia, wanted to encourage. Such unions were generally workers-only organisations, described by the Hongkong Government Report as:

[S]ometimes turbulent, and often powerful, and are the guilds that call most for the attention of the Government. Important modern problems, e.g., strikes and a minimum wage, are introduced. Certain guilds employ professional fighters to do their persuasion for them, put compulsion on masters to engage none but guild-men, and retain lawyers for defence of members who get into trouble on account of the guild (Wood, A. E. 1912: 3).

A third sort of union were like clubs or mutual-benefit societies, whose members came from all backgrounds and a variety of professions. An example of this sort of union is the United Happiness Club (Tongle bieshu), which catered mostly for hospital workers but included policemen in its membership (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 94-95). Such organisations were sometimes misleadingly known as friendly societies, for some, like the Blackwood Trade Union, were powerful and engaged frequently in industrial action (Wood, A. E. 1912: 3).

Deng Zhongxia's dislike for many Hongkong unions has influenced other writers, for example, Chesneaux, who claims that, in the early twentieth century, workers could "no longer rely on the protection formerly given them by their guilds" (Chesneaux 1968: 12). These historians doubt the democratic nature of these workers' organisations because their membership included both workers and employers. Hershatter, who describes workers' organisations in Tianjin, concludes otherwise - she believes that union leaders and members were adept at giving and receiving patronage (Hershatter 1986: 139). In his study of Beijing in the 1920s, Strand suggests that despite their hierarchical structure, the sense of mutual obligation between master and workers stressed by Confucian paternalism allowed workers to scrutinise and control their leadership (Strand 1989: 150-151). For example, union rules governing masons described the obligations of union leaders as follows: "Artizans must live in concord with their superiors and inferiors, they must not, relying on their strength, commit outrage on the weak" (Clementi Papers 1905: 8).

Were union members manipulated by labour bosses? In fact, many unions, including the union representing masons, divided internally along class lines and usually committees not individuals administered the union. Committee members normally served in rotation for about a year at a time to prevent any individual from dominating the union. The committee was responsible for keeping union accounts,

administering funds, and preventing quarrels (Wood, A. E. 1912: 6). The committee governing master masons had only two members, both elected, whose duties were purely religious (Clementi Papers 1905: 1). Artisan masons exerted some democratic control over the composition of their committee, whose members they elected annually at the union's religious ceremony. The union posted in advance the names of existing directors and nominees. Any misconduct by the committee was censured by a general meeting (Clementi Papers 1905: 3, 8). Thus, some Hongkong unions had their own internal democracy and open decision-making processes.

Union operations were varied and reflected the long-standing operations of workers' organisations in Guangdong. Union operations stressed the solidarity of the group and the interdependence of its members. Welfare provision and the observance of religious rights formed the mainstay of the unions' work - most unions provided burial expenses for members and their relatives. The Sandalwood Union had originally been called the Long-Life Association - a burial fund club, that ensured its members enjoyed a good afterlife (Wood, A. E. 1912: 4). However, union operations were varied. Unions legislated business rules, represented the employees' interests against those of the masters (and vice versa), united both employees and masters against outsiders and opposition, provided support and mutual help in hard times, and defended the interest of the trade as a whole. During the early twentieth century, these aspects of unions' work were growing in importance (Wood, A. E. 1912: 4).

For example, the rules of the union that represented master masons were intended to restrict the masons' trade to members of their union, to ensure that disputes between masters and artisans were kept to a minimum, and to see that every member adhered to fair trading practices. Union rules governed the quality and value of rice and vegetables fed to masons at mid-day and in the evening, established a fixed rate of exchange from copper to silver coins for payment of wages, and set rules for wage levels for odd jobs. For example, artisan masons had to pay a "union tax" of one or two per cent if engaged on odd jobs (Clementi Papers 1905: 8). As for health and safety measures, the rules stated that:

When a master mason engages an artizan for hire we pray for heaven's blessing and protection. But should the artizan be stricken with a dangerous sickness, his master must look after him until he recovers before accounts can be settled between them. For the rest each must submit himself to the will of heaven (Clementi Papers 1905: 8).

A union of particular interest, because its leader played a prominent role in the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, is the Peace-Keeping Union (Chiping gonghui) for

pork butchers.¹³ This union was headed by Huang Jinyuan, the owner of three pork butcher shops. The Pork Butchers' Union managed its own armed picket corps, whose main duty was to ensure that shopkeepers and pork butchers respected the union's conditions of trade and adhered to the union's tax policy. This policy demanded one dollar as tax for every one hundred dollars of pork sold (Lu Lan 1962b: 153). The Pork Butchers' Union owned its own pig-oil company and required that all pig oil be sold to the union. The union's armed corps guaranteed that pork butchers obeyed this rule. At the end of the year, members of the union received a bonus distributed from union taxes and profits from the union's business. If a butcher lost his capital or business and became an ordinary worker, he remained as a member of the union. Butchers' assistants could hope to save three to five hundred dollars from union bonuses and set up their own business (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962b: 3-4). Thus the union provided ordinary workers with the opportunity to save to create their own business and provided a safety net for members who fell on hard times. In Hongkong, a society with little state-welfare provision in the 1920s, the unions provided security and stability for their members.

Hongkong workers frequently used money lenders. Their preferred methods of money management reveal common prejudices and mistrust. For example, Hongkong workers were suspicious of other races: Hongkong workers' racism meant that they were suspicious of Jewish money lenders, generally known as "big-eared debt ghosts" (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 92). Workers preferred to borrow money from other union members. This type of usury was known as "pooling." The pool had a "pool chief" (often a high ranking union member or master) and "pool members." Pools were run on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, but the most common form was the daily pool. In the daily pool, workers bid against each other for the loan by trying to offer the highest stake money. The successful bidder was then in debt to every other member of the pool according to how much he had bid. Pooling was common because there was minimal interference from masters in the setting of rates and pools stressed the communal obligation of the debtor to his fellow workmen. Only the one dollar fee that the debtor sometimes had to pay to the pool chief caused some discontent (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 93). Generally, the internal structure of many Hongkong unions stressed mutual obligations between employee and employer and loyalty to the group. Many Hongkong union leaders appear for the most part to have been to accountable in limited ways to their members.

¹³ Hereafter called the Pork Butchers' Union for short. I have chosen to call many unions by the professions they represented for the sake of clarity. Where one profession is represented by several unions, I have used the full name of the union.

Subregional influences in the unions

In chapter 3, I argued that the growth of subregional associations' political power relative to Chinese elite-run institutions in Hongkong and the integration of many members of Hongkong's Chinese elite into the Hongkong Government gave revolutionaries the chance to usurp the elite's leadership of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. However, revolutionaries could not automatically assume such leadership. Although some unions looked towards China for their natural leadership, others were Hongkong-based. The Guild of Master Masons, also called the Eternal Life Society (Yongsheng tang), had 120 members in Hongkong and maintained strong ties to its original guild in Guangzhou, which city the guild referred to as "our city." Any important matters were referred back to the original masters' guild for a final decision (Clementi Papers 1905: 6). However, of the eighty-five unions studied by A. E. Wood, only eleven had a connection with the Guangzhou union of the same trade. These unions were the Blackwood Trade Union, Chinese Compositors' Union, Dyers' Union, Masons' Union (both masters and employees), Printers' Union, Restaurant Employees' (no. 2) Union, Sandalwood Union (both unions), Tea-House Employees' (no. 2) Union, and Tinfoil Union (Wood, A. E. 1912: 14).

Even masons maintained links to the Hongkong elite, too, and paid an annual donation of fifty Chinese dollars to the Tung Wah Hospital, accumulated from individual contributions of 0.1 taels per member given annually on January 13 (Clementi Papers 1905: 8). These contributions to charitable institutions, typically the Tung Wah Hospital and the Po Leung Guk, were made by many unions and reflect the position of the unions as part of the established political organisation of Hongkong (Wood, A. E. 1912: 5).

Unions' participation in the power network of Hongkong society was not unlike the position of local organisations in the cultural nexus of power described by Duara (1988). Individual unions acted independently and the political connections of each union differed from any other. Some unions had strong ties to kinship groups and native places in Guangdong, but almost all unions had links to the Chinese elite's government institutions. Hongkong-based unions had their own power base and political contacts in the colony. In later chapters, I describe how, during the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, some of these unions fought to preserve or expand their Hongkong power base, whereas others tried to strengthen ties to revolutionaries. However, Guangdong subregional influences were strong in some Hongkong unions. In chapters 2 and 3, I showed the growing importance of subregional politics in Guangdong and Hongkong during the early twentieth century. Unions grew in strength too, for many of them based their organisation on native-place or kinship loyalties (Chesneaux 1968: 117). Hongkong workers mostly came

from the Zhujiang Delta, where a particular trade in any area was often dominated by workers closely related to each other.

For instance, among the 166 members of the Shun-teh [Shunde] branch of the Kwangtung [Guangdong] Provincial Inland Shipping Union, 78 workers had the same surname, P'an, which was also the surname of the president, vice-president, and the other five officials of the local branch (Chan 1975: 92-93).

The union representing artisan masons was subdivided into various branches that reflected the workers' subregional backgrounds and clan or kinship ties. Masons from Gayingzhou were divided into the United Prosperity Society (Lianshengtang) for workers with the surname Li, which had one hundred members; the United Victory Society (also romanised as Lianshengtang) for workers called Zeng, which had two hundred members; and the United Comrades' Society (Lianyitang), which represented all other natives of Gayingzhou and had more than three hundred members. Masons from Huizhou were represented by either the Exquisite Victory Society (Qiongshengtang) for those named Zhang, which had two hundred members, or the Harmonious Victory Society (Xieshengtang) for all other natives of Huizhou, which had three hundred members. The report adds that all these subregional societies were individually represented in the twenty-five ports where the union had offices (Clementi Papers 1905: 6).

Other unions organised exclusively or mostly along ethnic lines. The ethnic composition of such unions was as follows: artisan tailors (half Hakka), barbers (many Hakka), bricklayers (a few Hakka), European tailors (many Hakka), masons (many Hakka), and rattan-chair workers (Hakka). In addition, some Hakka boarding houses operated as unions (Wood, A. E. 1912: 26). In the Seamen's Union, most boiler-room workers came from Bao'an, most deckhands from Panyu, and most quarterdeck crew from Xiangshan. Dockyard coolies generally came from Dongguan or Siyi (Zhonggong Guangdong quwei 1925b: 58-60).

Like subregional associations in China, many trades and unions worshipped particular patron saints and thereby emphasised their individuality and caused further divisions among Hongkong workers. Carpenters, joiners, and masons worshipped Lu Ban; engravers and lithographers worshipped Cai Shen; cobblers worshipped Sun Bin; and dyers, painters, and incense-stick makers worshipped Ge (Chesneaux 1968: 116). The worship of patron saints created a culture peculiar to each union, which culture imitated village and ancestral organisations in Guangdong. Many unions had their headquarters in temples or had the word temple in their names (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 159-160).

Hongkong's "modern" unions

In chapter 1, when I outlined my theoretical approach, I described revolution as an organised political movement and rejected notions that it was necessarily "modern" or radical; rather, I argued that revolutionaries presented their own vision as "modern." According to Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), most Hongkong unions were anachronisms - only unions like the Seamen's Union and the Mechanics' Union could be considered "modern." Other writers have repeated Deng's assertions. According to Chan Ming-kou, the Guangdong Tea-House Union is an example of the transformation of a "traditional" guild into a "modern" union. Instead of being divided into separate organisations representing different trades, a centralised Tea-House Employees' Union, established in 1918 with the support of Sun Yat-sen and Guangdong anarchists, represented tea-house employees throughout the trade (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 164-165).

"Modern" unions, according to Deng Zhongxia, should be industry-wide, workers-only organisations that ended divisions between "sex, age, religion, political belief, provincial ties, and nationality" (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1925a]: 182-189). By comparing the structure of the Mechanics' Union and the Seamen's Union with Deng Zhongxia's theory and with the structure of other Hongkong unions that I outlined earlier in this chapter, I will show that Hongkong's "modern" unions differed in structure only slightly from its "anachronistic" ones. In this study, I suggest that revolutionaries called some unions "modern" principally because of the unions' political links to revolutionary parties.

The Mechanics' Union is generally recognised as the first "modern" union in Hongkong (Leung P. L. 1982b). Yet, although many Chinese writers consider the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike a "modern" workers' movement, for example, Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), the Mechanics' Union did not take part in the initial strike movement. Chen Bagui suggests that successful strikes by mechanics in Singapore and Hongkong encouraged Guangzhou workers to organise unions (Chen Bagui 1964: 107). In reality revolutionaries organised the Mechanics' Union.

Ma Chaojun was a principal organiser of the Mechanics' Union. Ma was born to a poor family in Taishan County, Guangdong, in 1885. In 1900, he came to Hongkong to work as an apprentice in a Kowloon dockyard. Ma studied English and, in 1902, went to the USA. In 1904, he met Sun Yat-sen; in 1905, in Japan, he joined Sun's Tongmenghui. In 1906, Ma returned to Hongkong to encourage mechanics to support the Nationalist cause (Boorman *et al* eds 1968: 461). In 1908, Hongkong mechanics at the Taikoo dockyards succeeded in forcing an apology and compensation for the maltreatment of a colleague. In the aftermath of their strike, they established four workers' clubs. In 1909, these groups merged to form the Chinese Institute for the Study of Mechanics. Union leaders used this name to give

the false impression that their organisation was not a union, thereby evading Hongkong's laws on trade-union registration (Leung P. L. 1982b: 9-11).

Huang Huanting and Ma Chaojun (both Tongmenghui and, later, GMD members) spearheaded the movement to create a national union for mechanics (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 167-169). In 1918, the Guangdong Mechanics' Union and the Hongkong Mechanics' Union agreed to set up a joint union with its headquarters in Guangzhou and a Foreign Affairs Office at the Hongkong union address. The reorganisation was complete in 1919 and, in 1920, the Hongkong Institute for the study of Mechanics changed its name to the Hongkong Chinese Mechanics' Union (Mechanics' Union for short) (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 41).

At the end of 1920, workers in Guangzhou factories at Zhoutouzui organised mutual-aid workers' clubs. Later, Yuehan railway workers established two clubs and Guangsan railway workers, Guangzhou-Kowloon railway workers, Henan mechanics, lamp-factory workers, and foundry workers all set up separate workers' clubs (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 42). Other workers established clubs in most workshops, encouraged by mainland Chinese revolutionary intellectuals and labour organisers. In 1921, Ma Chaojun became director of the Guangdong-based Mechanics' Union (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 42, Chan Ming-kou 1975: 167-169). The Hongkong Mechanics' Union was not independent but part of a network of mechanics' clubs and unions that revolutionaries coordinated through the Guangdong Mechanics' Union. For example, electricians, sand-workers, ironworkers, and ship-builders all maintained separate unions (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962a: 1). The provincial union had long been politically influenced by anarchists and was organised and led by GMD labour leaders such as Ma Chaojun and Xie Yingbo and supported by GMD right-wing politicians who were anarchist sympathisers, for example, Wu Zihui. One Chinese account asserts that, throughout numerous superficial reorganisations and name changes between 1909 and 1919, Guangzhou mechanics remained in organisations including both workers and employers (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 41). The union had no "modern" structure in the sense that its membership was not confined to the working class.

According to many accounts, however, Hongkong workers were a progressive, "modern" influence on Guangzhou mechanics both in Guangzhou and throughout China. In reality Ma's organisational activities in other parts of China outside Hongkong and Guangdong (for example, Shanghai and Hanyang) concentrated on Cantonese workers (Chan Ming-kou 1982b: 24). The reason that Guangdong and Hongkong mechanics were regarded as more progressive was that

Ma Chaojun, a Cantonese, was better able to draw them into a network of political power headed by Nationalist politicians and not that there was any radical change in workers' beliefs or a transformation in the structure of workers' organisations. Hongkong mechanics were an important part of a political organisation similar to a federation of workers' groups that, though it allowed local autonomy in the style of small-scale workers' clubs, had a strong central executive with close links to revolutionary powers in Guangdong. Patriotic revolutionaries held the organisation together and workers' clubs responded by trying to enhance their prestige through political connections. In fact, mechanics showed no signs of an increase in labour consciousness. They were extraordinarily skilled and highly paid workers (Chen Huayan 1929: 29-42); labour leaders at the time of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike felt they were elitist (Huang Ping 1961: 12). Consequently, the mechanics were an independent, well-organised political faction among Hongkong workers and had strong links to the GMD right-wing. However, the structure of individual workers' organisations within the Hongkong Mechanics' Union differed little from the structure of other Hongkong workers' groups.

The Seamen's Union was one of the most powerful workers' organisations in Hongkong, powerful enough to act independently. Some writers, for example, W. K. Chan (1991), emphasise the "modern" nature of the Seamen's Union; seamen's contact with Western ideas of liberty, human rights and class struggle; and worker solidarity developed through being "tied to one ship" (Chan, W. K. 1991: 169). Many CCP organisers regarded the Mechanics' Union as "GMD-led," "capitalist," and "backward" and extolled the Seamen's Union as "modern" and "Communist" (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962a: 2). In 1921, the Seamen's Union was officially established, when the Seamen's Philanthropic Society transformed itself into a more centralised trade-union structure to create the Seamen's Union. Sun Yat-sen, then President of the Guangzhou Government, not only named the union but sent a personal representative to attend the opening ceremonies (Glick 1969: 21). Like the Mechanics' Union, much of the perceived "modernity" of the Seamen's Union is due to its links to political parties - it had close links first to Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary movement and then to the CCP. An Executive Secretariat controlled the union and included leaders like Su Zhaozheng and Yang Yin, who both came from Sun Yat-sen's home county and were simultaneously leaders of the Seamen's Union and members of the Tongmenghui (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 173).

However, the Executive Secretariat system was simply the committee controlling a network of boarding houses, seamen's associations, subregional associations, and brotherhood societies that formed the basis of seamen's social organisation. Throughout the development of a more centralised and politicised

union leadership largely under the influence of the CCP, this basic union structure remained unchanged (Song, Shao, and Tian 1985: 13-14).

Boarding houses organised seamen according to birthplace, ethnicity, and even individual jobs. The foundation of the union's structure was a plethora of boarding houses and small ship-based workers' groups. Each separate group was represented in the union's new hierarchy. By the time of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, the Seamen's Union Executive Committee was only four years old; boarding houses and other small-scale seamen's organisations were still an important part of the internal structure of the Seamen's Union.

Seamen's boarding houses existed in a variety of types, representing economic and ethnic differences between seamen. One sort of association was the shipmaster association, which was set up inside a shipping company and run by either labour contractors, high-level officials in the company, or a mixture of the two (in many cases the company officials were themselves labour contractors). Shipmaster associations were a kind of labour office - any seaman looking for work had to bribe the labour contractor to be hired (Zhong Dian 1983a: 8). This bribe typically cost the worker ten dollars, but the labour contractor sometimes demanded another thirteen to fifteen dollars from the seamen's wages while on board the ship (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 5).

Examples of shipmaster associations organised by labour contractors are the Wu Treasure and Peace Society (Wubaotai), Liang Source of Harmony Society (Liangyuanhe), Big Knife Association (Dadaoguan), Ship's Happiness Society (Hangle), Celebration and Happiness Society (Qingle), Know China Pavilion (Zhizhongge), Brotherhood and Harmony Society (Renyihe), and Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity (Yixingge). Butterfield and Swire ran two associations which organised the crew for ninety-seven vessels between them: the Great Peace Society (Guang'an) and Tranquility and Peace Society (Tai'an). Dutch ships were catered for by the Eternal Tranquility Society (Yongtai) (Fang Cai 1962b: 3, Feng Xin 1983: 118). These associations monopolised the supply of labour to a company and every profession on the ship was represented by a separate group in the shipmaster association. Shipmaster associations would sometimes even be split along the lines of particular jobs. For example, the Know China Pavilion, United Prosperity Society (Lianxing), Brotherhood and Harmony Society, and Universal Brotherhood Pavilion (Guangyige) all had a membership of cargo-hold workers (Fang Cai 1962b: 3).

A second type of association was known as a sovereign society. Such associations were run like businesses (Zhong Dian 1983a: 8). A labour contractor with links to a shipping company usually set them up. All those who enrolled had to pay a fee of several tens of dollars. Any seamen temporarily unemployed received

board and lodging but were expected to pay small amounts of cash for their food and were subject to various nominal charges. Work was allocated to the seamen at the discretion of the labour contractor and not on the basis of first come, first served. The labour contractor could extract large bribes from workers (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 5). The ownership of the association passed from father to son to grandson. The officials of the association were not elected and members could be hired and fired at the whim of the "sovereign." The finances were secret and the rules were formulated without discussion among members of the association (Fang Cai 1962b: 3).

A third type of organisation was the brotherhood society, sometimes known as the democratic society. These societies were set up by the seamen themselves. Everyone was expected to pay a membership fee, but the regulations of the association were agreed on and formulated by the members as a whole and the association's officials, too, were chosen by the membership. The association's accounts were published once a month for the scrutiny of members. Members also had the power to set the wages of the association's officials. Anyone wishing to join a brotherhood society had to be accepted by the existing membership before they were allowed to enrol (Fang Cai 1962b: 3). Because most seamen had received little education, it was common for them to call in an outsider to manage the daily affairs of the association. They mainly chose an educated, old man whom they then called "manager" (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 5).

Some brotherhood associations represented different groups of workers according to their jobs. Galley cooks had their own brotherhood associations such as the Liaison Club (Lianluoqian), Club of the Hero's Embrace (Xiahuaiqian), Bequest of Peace Society (Yi'an), and Universal Benefit Society (Tongyi). The Rest and Happiness Society (Qile) catered for electrical workers and the Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity, Rest Society (Qi'er), Universal Happiness Society (Guangle), and Ship's Happiness Society were exclusively for seamen working on the quarter-deck (Fang Cai 1962b: 3). The membership of these associations typically ranged from two or three hundred to two or three thousand (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 5).

Brotherhood societies were sometimes based on regional and ethnic lines too, thereby showing the disposition of the Hongkong workers to organise themselves around ethnic or township ties. The following are some of these seamen's brotherhood societies and their regional or ethnic bias: Masses' Brotherhood Society (Qunyi), whose members came mostly from Zhongshan; Tan Wild Goose Society (Tanhong), whose members came from Siyi; Orchid Leisure Society (Xulan), whose members came from Guangfu; Orchid Villa of Leisure (Xulan bieshu), whose members were Hakka; News Society (Xiying), for Kowloon seamen; Villa of Eternal

Life (Yongsheng bieshu) for settlers from provinces outside Guangdong; Fujianese Society (Minlu), for Fujianese seamen; Peng Brotherhood Society (Pengyitang), whose members came from Dapeng Bay; and Pavilion of the Cool Sea (Lianghaige), for Hainanese seamen. The Huning Townsmen's Association (Huning tongxianghui), Three Rivers Society (Sanjiang gongsuo), and Peace and Prosperity Society (Anxingtang) all catered for workers from parts of Jiangsu and Zhejiang (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 5). In 1872, in Hongkong, Hakka sailors established their own association, the Brotherhood and Harmony Society (Yihetang). In 1873, natives of Xiangshan set up the Contented Brotherhood Pavilion (Taoyige). Later, sailors from the island of Sanzao, in Xiangshan, split from the Contented Brotherhood Pavilion and formed the Peace and Orchid Club (Anlanqian), which later split into three organisations that represented three separate villages on Sanzao (Sinn 1990a: 164-165).

Subregional associations and local politics seem to have had at least as much influence on the "modern" Seamen's Union as on any other Hongkong union. Seamen's associations, whether based on kinship or professional ties, were important units in the Seamen's Union. Leaders of the Seamen's Union remained loyal to their own associations; some of these associations became powerful factions that groomed future union leaders. The Seamen's Union Executive Secretariat developed on the basis of a recruitment technique that allowed any leader of a seamen's group who recruited five hundred or more seamen to obtain the position of executive secretary. The system attracted natural leaders and gave the Executive Secretariat direct links to the largest seamen's associations (Glick 1969: 24-25). One can see the power of some factions by examining the high-level leadership of the Seamen's Union and their society affiliations (association names in brackets follow the names of Seamen's Union leaders): Chen Quan (Ship's Happiness Society); Chen Yu (Celebration and Happiness Society and Ship's Happiness Society); Zheng Kang (Celebration and Happiness Society); Li Peng (Ship's Happiness Society and Celebration and Happiness Society); Wu Gengde (Ship's Happiness Society); Su Zhaozheng (Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity); He Lai (Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity); Tang Han (Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity); Tan Huaze (Happy and Carefree Society (Taoran), Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity and Lianyi Society¹⁴); Chen Jianfu (Lianyi Society); and Chen Denglin (Orchid Leisure Society) (Fang Cai 1962b: 5). This list reveals that the higher-level leaders of the Seamen's Union

¹⁴ Past studies have commonly written "Lianyi Society" instead of Lianyishe or United Brotherhood Society, so I have continued this usage to avoid confusion. Sun Yat-sen ordered Zhao Zhizhi to establish the Lianyi Society in Hongkong in 1914. Revolutionaries used the society to ship arms and transmit secret documents to GMD centres in China (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 135, 362n). Lin Weimin, Su Zhaozheng, Chen Xinglin, and Dai Zhuomin, all CCP activists and leaders of large sections of the Seamen's Union, were Lianyi Society members (Luo Zhu 1962a: 1).

belonged to just a handful of associations, with the Ship's Happiness Society, Celebration and Happiness Society, Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity, and Lianyi Society appearing to be the most powerful factions. We know that the Ship's Happiness Society and Pavilion of Brotherhood and Prosperity were associations for seamen on the quarter-deck, which indicates some kind of hierarchy among the workers.

Other small groups competed for political power within the Seamen's Union. CCP revolutionaries created propaganda troupes on ships. For example, seamen onboard ships of the "Queen fleet" organised entertainment societies, which became the centre of their political and social activity and provided entertainment for the seamen as well as welfare. The Asia Queen had a society called the After-Work Entertainment Society (Gongyu leshe); the Canada Queen had the China Entertainment Theatre Society (Zhongle leshe); and the Australia Queen had the Know China National Society (Zhizhong guoshe) (Fang Cai 1962b: 6). These societies took money from ticket sales and supplemented the funds of the Seamen's Union Executive Committee. Because entertainment societies acted as organisations for workers' political activities outside the seamen's association, disputes arose between the societies and seamen's associations over the scope of their activities (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 6). These disputes further contributed to factionalism inside the Seamen's Union.

Some associations occasionally tried to break away from the Seamen's Union, but their attempts were often thwarted. For example, during the 1922 seamen's strike, some seamen formed a rival trade union called the Navigators' Club (Hanghai julebu). This union stood in opposition to the main Seamen's Union. It had been formed out of the Navigators' Association (Hanghai huiguan) under the leadership of Zhai Hanqi and continued to exist until the outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, when the CCP expelled Zhai and disbanded the union (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962d: 6). The "modernity" of any particular faction had more to do with its position in the union structure. Leaders like Zhai could carry the support of workers. However, when they opposed the Seamen's Union, revolutionaries regarded them as "reactionary."

Historians like Chan Ming-kou and W. K. Chan attribute the radicalism of the Seamen's Union and the Mechanics' Union to the reorganisation of the unions into "modern" workers-only organisations and the growth of class consciousness (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 169, Chan, W. K. 1991: 169). However, closer examination shows that the internal structure of both unions was far from unified. Workers were typically organised in small-scale clubs or subregional associations. The power of both unions sprang directly from their links to the emergent Nationalist revolutionary movement in China. Both unions had strong central executive committees led by

high-ranking GMD members. The myriad of small-scale groups below these executive committees mimicked the pattern of state government in China: power relations ran from top to bottom. The diversity of seamen's organisations and frequent squabbles and rivalries suggest that seamen had little sense of worker solidarity.

Labour consciousness and political links to Chinese revolutionaries

Before looking at revolutionaries' attempts to gain political leadership of Hongkong workers, I examine the disunity of Hongkong unions and show that unions protected their small-scale organisation and their independence. I suggest that the growth in numbers of unions in the early twentieth century is unrelated to a growth in labour consciousness of the sort that writers like Tsai identify (Tsai 1993: 95-96). By 1925, Hongkong had about 150 unions (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611), many of which, according to W. K. Chan, emerged after the successful Hongkong 1920 mechanics' strike. After this strike, the Hongkong Government reported 112 new societies - eleven masters' societies, eighty-one men's societies, and twenty joint societies (Chan, W. K. 1991: 164).

This new growth in unions cannot be taken as necessarily due to an increase in labour consciousness. Eye-witness evidence suggests that workers who had previously belonged to large-scale organisations formed many new, smaller unions. At the same time, long-standing activities of the old workers' groups, like worshipping patron saints, remained unchanged.

The three trades of the construction industry, i.e., cementing, carpentry, and bricklaying, originally belonged to an institution called the Great Brotherhood [(Guangyihang)], which was dedicated to Lu Ban. Proprietors, masters, and apprentices belonged to the same organisation. Later, when establishing unions, it split into various separate unions, such as the Cement Workers' Union [(Nishui gonghui)], Carpenters' Union [(Mujiang gonghui)], Masons' Union [(Dashi gonghui)], Painters' Union [(Youtu gonghui)], Shed-Builders' Union [(Dapeng gonghui)], and Toonwood Workers' Union [(Dachun gonghui)]. Each union generally set up three dormitories (each dormitory usually held between thirty and forty workers), creating a separate union of over one hundred members. However, these unions still worshipped Lu Ban and labour contractors still belonged to the organisation; such unions were still similar to craft guilds (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962b: 2).

These new unions divided not united Hongkong workers. Brass-smiths belonged to one union, brass-engravers to another. Rattan workers divided into the

Peace and Happiness Union (Pingle gonghui) for rattan-splitters,¹⁵ another union for workers who cut rattan into circles, and yet another for workers who cut rattan into squares. The new unions split along geographical lines, too. Among many unions such divisions, however, were not just subregions of Guangdong or kinship groups - the Cleaners' Union (Qingjing waiyu gonghui), for example, split into a Hongkong-based union and a Kowloon-based union, which two branches frequently quarrelled (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962b: 3). Carpenters split into ten different unions: the Sour Plumwood Carpenters' Union (Suanzhi mujiang gonghui), Foreign Residences' Furniture-Makers' Union (Yangzhuang jiasi gonghui), Coopers' General Alliance Union (Tonghang guanglian gonghui), Construction Industry Carpenters' Union (Louchang muye gonghui), Tea-Box Makers' United Victory Union (Chajuxiang liansheng gonghui), Wooden-Clog Cobblers' Union (Mulü gonghui), Carpenters' Union, Camphorwood Workers' Union (Zhangmu jiawan gonghui), Foreign-Style Carpenters' Revive-China Union (Yangmu zhen Hua gonghui), and Wooden-Box Makers' Peace and Harmony Union (Muxiang pinghe gonghui) (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 346). Seamen had several organisations, which included the Seamen's Union, the Hongkong Chinese Inland Waterways Seamen's Union (Qiao Gang neihe lunchuan zonggonghui), and the Hongkong-Wuzhou Seamen's Union (Gangwu gonghui), which represented only seamen on the Hongkong to Wuzhou line (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962a: 1).

Union members were further divided by the growth of some subregional associations in Hongkong that I mentioned in chapter 3.

Most union members were members of township associations, too... As the prestige of township associations grew, so their members seemed to grow in stature. Thus, adversely affecting attempts to unify the working class (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962b: 3).

Hongkong unions were divided by the persistence of triad influences on union organisation, too. Chinese triads were originally anti-Manchu secret societies. Hongkong, under British control, was a safe place for the triads to base their anti-imperial activities (Chesneaux 1972). When the colonial government outlawed triads, these secret societies went underground and courted support among Hongkong workers. Triad membership was mostly confined to the poorest classes of Hongkong society (Stanton 1990: 26-28): in 1847, perhaps three quarters of the Chinese population of Hongkong belonged to triads (Morgan 1960: 60-61) and rickshaw-pullers enrolled in triads "as a rule" (Chan, W. K. 1991: 157).

Triads successfully recruited workers in most occupations, including coolies, boatmen, hawkers, rice-pounders, stone-cutters, coal coolies, barbers, earth-carriers,

¹⁵ Hereafter called the Rattan Splitters' Union.

boiler-makers, soy-dealers, seamen, policemen, district watchmen, and government officials. Triad societies did not seek to foster links to the merchant elite, some even promised to protect their members "from the law itself" (Tsai 1993: 113). Triad societies were small groups, bound by kinship or ritual, that defended their independence from outside authorities (Chesneaux 1968: 117-118). Triad societies in Hongkong have often been associated with ethnic groups such as the Fujianese and Hakka minority communities in Hongkong (Welsh 1993: 163). Each triad society set up its own organisation and pursued its own interests, although triads could be hired to fight other people's political battles (Morgan 1960: 64-65).

Hongkong had many different triad groups comprising only a few members that were linked with unions, for example, the Sharp Hats (Jianding), Crooked Mouths (Waizui), Single Ears (Dan'er); and High Legs (Gaojiao) (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962c: 4). Many Hongkong unions were led by secret-society bosses. For example, Huang Jinyuan of the Pork Butchers' Union; Yuan Rong of the Unity and Virtue Dockyard Coolies' Union (Tongde gonghui),¹⁶ representing dockyard coolies who unloaded cargo from ship to shore; Huang Juchou of the Society of Worthies Stevedores' Union (Jixian gonghui),¹⁷ representing dockyard workers who loaded cargo from shore to ship; Gao Zhan of the Coopers' Union (Jiugang gonghui); Zhao Mei of the Tea-House Employees' Union (Chaju gonghui); and Liang Ziguang of the Tailors' Union (Cheyi gonghui) were all reputedly triad bosses (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962c: 4).

Morgan (1960) emphasises the small-scale nature of secret societies in Hongkong. He suggests that small organisations could better protect their members' interests from the influence of large triad groups. However, in order to extend their influence, triad groups and unions sometimes merged with other unions and workers. One example is the Pork Butchers' Union, which, in order to control a greater portion of the street market, merged with fishmongers, poulterers, and beef and mutton butchers to form an organisation called the Workers' Friendship Society (Gongqin'ai), led by Huang Jinyuan (Luo Zhu 1962i: 13). The Government Workers' Happiness Alliance (Qingwenle) was another such organisation, formed when hygiene workers, the United Happiness Club, and the Postal Workers' Union (Youwu gonghui) merged (Luo Zhu 1962i: 13). Since these workers were all in the employ of the government, the Government Workers' Happiness Alliance was a powerful weapon in calling the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962n: 1). According to Luo, these organisations behaved like secret societies and

16 Hereafter, Dockyard Coolies' Union for short.

17 Hereafter, Stevedores' Union for short.

were impenetrable to labour organisers, although revolutionaries maintained some contacts with their leaders.

Morgan (1960) shows that triads could sometimes unify large numbers of Hongkong workers to support patriotic causes. A triad called the China Harmony Society (Zhonghetang) was, according to Morgan, Hongkong's first local triad organisation with widespread support. The China Harmony Society was established to coordinate local triad support for the Xingzhonghui revolutionary movement based in Hongkong. At the height of its power, the China Harmony Society had twenty thousand members (Morgan 1960: 64-65). Sun Yat-sen and other revolutionaries, making use of the anti-Manchu sentiments of secret societies, used triad connections to support their revolutionary forays into South China from Hongkong (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 42, 48).

Most workers' organisations in Hongkong were small-scale organisations: this is true of unions and secret societies. However, by 1925, Deng Zhongxia identified three large political factions among Hongkong workers. The first of these factions was the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates (Xianggang gongtuan zonghui). This faction included over seventy small unions, mostly handicraft unions, plus the Seamen's Union. The second faction was the Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union (Xianggang huagong zonggonghui). Most of the thirty unions comprising this faction were handicraft unions, too. The most important union in this faction was the Tram Workers' Union (Dianche gonghui). The third faction was made up of large, independent Hongkong unions representing mechanics, dockyard coolies, coal coolies, and foreign-employed workers (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611).

This analysis of the factions among Hongkong unions has been accepted by historians since Deng, for example, Chan Ming-kou (1986a: 121). However, by 1925, the leadership of the Seamen's Union had formed strong links to CCP labour organisers and was acting independently of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates. The Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union had not been officially established, although leaders of its preparatory committee had strong links to Communist labour leaders. The Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates had its power base in Hongkong - it was an alliance of Hongkong unions with no specific allegiance as a unified federation to one political party, although individual union leaders had political contacts to some Nationalists. The Mechanics' Union remained a supporter of the GMD right wing. Hongkong's large, independent unions did not form a single faction; each followed its own interests.

All four factions that I have identified were organised along similar lines. All had a strong executive committee that represented a multitude of small-scale workers' groups organised in individual factories or along ethnic and kinship lines.

No faction represented a unified working class. Each club, union, or workers' association formed a political power base to support its leader's political career.

The Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates was different from factions led by the Seamen's Union, Mechanics' Union, and Tram Workers' Union. The principal difference being that the leadership of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates was held in rotation by union leaders, like Huang Jinyuan and Liang Ziguang, who lacked education and strong links to revolutionaries, but who had a strong power base in Hongkong, built partly on secret-society connections.

Huang Jinyuan was more than forty years old at the time of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike (Huang Ping 1961: 12). Born in Huaxian in Guangdong, he went early on in his life to Hongkong to set up a pork stall, later becoming the boss of three shops. Huang had once studied martial arts under the guidance of Lin Shirong, a renowned Hongkong martial-arts teacher. He enrolled in the Hongmen triad organisation and, with the support of Hongkong's pork butchers, became a prominent figure in local secret-society networks (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 1-2). Liang Ziguang was another powerful Hongkong union leader. In 1925, he was about thirty years old. He, like Huang Jinyuan, was skilled in martial arts. The Tailors' Union, which Liang led, was regarded by the Hongkong Government as "active" (Wood, A. E. 1912: 18). Other union leaders who were concurrently secret society leaders, like Gao Zhan and Zhao Mei, were also leaders of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates. Some of these leaders cultivated personal contacts with GMD figures, often in the GMD right-wing old guard (Huang Ping 1961: 13). Some of these unions, for example, the Tea-House Employees' Union, had links to anarchists in the GMD (Dirlik 1991: 170), and had been influenced by the syndicalist movement in the early 1920s (Chan Ming-kou and Dirlik 1991: 38-41). The use of the word "syndicates" in the union's title suggests anarchist influence. However, the links that the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates had to revolutionary politicians in China were not as strong as those of either the Mechanics' Union or the Seamen's Union.

In 1920, after the Hongkong Mechanics' Union successfully struck for higher pay, Huang Jinyuan decided to unite pork butchers with poulterers, beef and mutton butchers, and fishmongers under the banner of the Workers' Friendship Society. Later, Huang formed the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates with some seventy other unions including the Restaurant Employees' Union (Jiulou gonghui), Tea-House Employees' Union, Tailors' Union, and Barbers' Brand New Union (Lifa huanran gonghui) (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 1-3).

Before 1920, these unions had a reputation as Hongkong's most radical and active unions (Wood, A. E. 1912: 9). Huang became an influential leader in the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates and, although a supporter of Sun

Yat-sen, he resisted attempts by the GMD right-wing workers' leader Ma Chaojun to draw the Hongkong unions too closely into the network of political groups led by the GMD.

When the blackleg Ma Chaojun came to Hongkong to carry out political activities, he tried to win over Huang. He once sent an inscribed plaque to the Pork Butchers' Union as a mark of respect, but though Huang met him and organised a banquet reception, he never let himself be used (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 4).

Leaders of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates had strong ties to Hongkong's triad societies, which had links in their turn to Sun Yat-sen's GMD (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962e: 8). However, although the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates was a patriotic organisation (in the sense that it had strong links to patriotic groups such as triads), its member unions and their leaders had long-established political power bases in Hongkong and were wary of handing control over their organisation to mainland politicians.

The Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates was a powerful organisation. It pre-dated the reorganised Seamen's Union and, in 1922, was able to mobilise Hongkong workers to join the seamen's strike. Joining the twenty-three thousand seamen on strike were pork butchers and other market traders, tea house employees, rattan workers, barbers, tailors, grocers, and various other trades governed by the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates amounting to over twenty-five thousand workers (*South China Morning Post*, March 10, 1922).

The Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates controlled a vast number of workers and many professions: shipmasters and captains, carpenters, postal workers, sanitary workers, hospital workers, cooks, dairy workers, butchers, fishmongers, grocers, tea house employees, painters, furniture makers, bricklayers, cement workers, plasterers, masons, road-builders, box-makers, coopers, barbers, hawkers, Chinese medicine workers, jewellers, tailors, metal-workers, glass workers, milliners, and cobblers (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962c: 4-5). As such the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates was a powerful, well-organised political force whose leaders were close to its membership and which represented Hongkong unions with weak ties to revolutionaries and politicians in Guangdong.

The Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union was, in 1925, a new, pro-CCP faction, which split from the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates. The leading figure in the Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union was He Yaoquan, leader of the Tram Workers' Union. He came from a comparatively well-off family, was educated until the age of sixteen, and worked as a telegram clerk in the Guangzhou Police Bureau. He had a cultured image, was well-read, and wrote excellent calligraphy. After marrying, He came to Hongkong to work as a ticket inspector on the Hongkong tramways (Wu Yizhen 1961: 138-139).

He Yaoquan became an influential committee member of the Tram Industry Active and Progressive Society (Dianche jingjinhui). In 1921, he formed part of a delegation that won a thirty per cent wage increase and extra holidays for tram workers. In 1922, still only twenty-three years old, he represented the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates at the National Labour Congress in Guangzhou (Bai Jiezhi 1961: 109). Communist labour leader Deng Zhongxia recognised the importance of the Tram Workers' Union and, when the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was established in May 1925, Deng recruited He Yaoquan on to its executive committee. Deng encouraged He to head the preparatory committee for a new faction of trade unions to undermine the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates. He's preparations to form a faction with tram workers, printers, engravers, and clerks were interrupted by the outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962c: 5). However, He played a prominent role in the preparations for the strike in Hongkong (Bai Jiezhi 1961: 110). The creation of the Hongkong Chinese Workers' Union was the result of an attempt by Chinese revolutionary politicians to increase their grassroots support at the expense of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates.

When the GMD and CCP labour organisers tried to lead the Hongkong workers' movement, they created four factions of Hongkong unions: the Seamen's Union, Mechanics' Union, Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, and the Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union. The leadership of each large faction of Hongkong workers was strongly rooted in the patron - client relationships that had long dominated union structures (see Hershatter 1986: 139). In each faction, strong executive committees, which comprised representatives of each union or workers' association, controlled the federation from above: workers and unions responded to authoritarian initiatives rather than acted together out of worker solidarity. Before the intervention of Chinese revolutionaries, most workers' leaders were the oldest and most respected patrons (Strand 1989: 149). After the intervention of Chinese revolutionaries, many workers' leaders were interested in pursuing political careers (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962c: 4). The intervention of political parties in the Hongkong workers' movement created large, bureaucratic federations of workers' groups under the political patronage of the GMD and CCP, and encouraged union leaders to seek political careers.

Nationalist political parties strengthened the executive leadership of Hongkong factions, but did not merge small-scale groups into unified workers' unions. Revolutionaries failed to revolutionise the structure of Hongkong workers' organisations. If we treat the GMD as a contender for state power, then we can understand the GMD's influence on the organisation of Hongkong workers in terms of a future state's attempt to create its own bureaucracy. The revolutionary alliance

of Nationalists and Communists was not created by class forces but was a case of introducing revolution from above.

Conclusion

Most Hongkong workers had urban origins and worked in a wide variety of trades and professions. Differences in Hongkong workers' wage levels were large; because one of the main functions of Hongkong unions was to protect wage levels in any particular profession, this disparity caused political divisions among Hongkong workers. Hongkong workers were divided along ethnic and kinship lines, too. The view that many small Hongkong unions were monopolised and manipulated by individuals is false - a form of democratically elected committee was the norm in many unions. Nor were Hongkong's "modern" unions intrinsically more democratic - the Seamen's Union contained some of Hongkong's least democratic workers' organisations, i.e., sovereign societies; the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates included some unions most accountable to their members, i.e., small-scale unions.

Chinese revolutionaries were, however, hostile to the form of organisation of many Hongkong unions because both workers and employers comprised these unions' membership. Before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, the influence of Chinese revolutionaries on Hongkong unions was to create a loose workers' bureaucracy held together by a strong central executive in the hands of Guangdong-based revolutionaries and politicians. The impact of revolutionary political parties on the organisation of Hongkong workers seems to indicate that revolutionaries were establishing political contacts with existing workers' leaders rather than riding a wave of labour consciousness. Hongkong unions replicated the organisation and activities of village, kinship, and subregional associations. By creating bureaucratic political factions, which consisted of a central executive committee that controlled many small, independent political groups, revolutionaries failed to create unified working class structures; rather, they mimicked the authoritarian power relationships between provincial and subregional organisations in Guangdong rural society. The organisation of Hongkong workers did not reflect a "modern" workers' movement or a radical departure from past forms of political organisation among Hongkong workers.

Chapter 5

Hongkong Social Movements

In previous chapters, I explored the growth in power and influence of subregional associations and workers' groups in Hongkong and Chinese revolutionaries' attempts to control them politically. In this chapter, I study social movements and politics in Hongkong from 1844 to 1925. I identify the reasons for mass political protest in Hongkong during this period, consider how much these reasons remained unchanged throughout the early twentieth century, and compare the political interests of revolutionaries with those of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. In chapter 4, I explored unions' structure and the form of Chinese revolutionaries' political leadership of Hongkong unions; in this chapter, I examine the causes of the increase in strikes from 1900 to 1925 and consider the impact of the revolutionaries' ideas of anarchism and Communism on Hongkong political movements. This study helps to answer the question addressed in later chapters as to whether the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was an innovative movement or one that mirrored well-established forms of protest in Hongkong: was it, to borrow a phrase from Aya (1990), "politics by other means."

Theories of non-elite political protest in Hongkong

Writers on Hongkong history have identified a variety of generalised reasons for popular grievances in Hongkong. Chan Ming-kou claims that the Hongkong Government lacked legitimacy in the eyes of Hongkong workers because it was an alien regime exercising political control over a Chinese population on Chinese soil. He believes the colonial authorities were arrogant, insensitive, unfair, aloof, and, in particular, that they shirked the welfare responsibilities proper to a modern state (Chan Ming-kou 1990: 142). Luo Xiuhu and Fan Yinmin claim that, ever since 1842, the Hongkong Government severely curtailed the freedoms of Hongkong's Chinese by imposing restrictions on the freedom of speech, publication, association, and even "everyday behaviour" (Luo Xiuhu and Fan Yinmin 1991: 313). W. K. Chan suggests that Hongkong workers increasingly recognised social relations in "what can be described as class terms" and could use "the strength of their unity in collective bargaining" (Chan, W. K. 1991: 182). Lethbridge suggests that the non-elite section of Hongkong's Chinese population was interested not in politics but only in problems of "wages and livelihood" (Lethbridge 1978: 2).

Can these views be reconciled? In previous chapters, I have described the increase in political power of subregional political groups in the early twentieth century. In chapter 3, I described Hongkong as a society where subregional groups played an increasingly important role; in chapter 4, I emphasised the strength of Hongkong's unions as local political groups and described their links to China's newest revolutionary political parties. In this chapter, I draw on these preceding arguments to present a description of Hongkong politics up to 1925 as operating on two levels. The first level was revolutionaries' visions to transform Chinese society and politics, to use patriotic calls to attain mass support and, as in the past, to use Hongkong as a base for social movements against both foreign powers and the Chinese Government. The second level was the union-based politics of Hongkong workers, who were suspicious of any attempts to centralise political power at the expense of their unions' autonomy. However, unions responded to patriotic calls that enhanced their prestige and supported radical demands that increased union autonomy, such as freedom of association.

In this chapter, I explore how far the GMD and CCP labour organisers radically transformed Hongkong politics and describe in what terms workers were likely to understand the main demands made by the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike's revolutionary leadership: the demands for freedom of assembly, association, speech, publication, and residence; equality under the law; universal suffrage to elect Hongkong's Legislative Council; and the formulation of labour laws. I demonstrate the following points: first, Hongkong workers were interested in politics, but only

within the narrow confines of workers' organisations, whose independence they sought to preserve; second, revolutionaries used patriotic calls backed by intimidation to win mass support; and, third, the Hongkong workers' apparent unity was actually a case of individual workers' organisations reacting in similar ways to the political leadership of Chinese politicians.

Increased strike activity, poverty, and "modern" strikes

In chapter 4, I considered whether Hongkong's "modern" unions were significantly different from other unions. I showed that the greatest difference was that these "modern" unions' executives were controlled or strongly influenced by revolutionary political parties. Some historians, for example, Chesneau (1968: 155-169), claim that there was an increase in strike activity and a growth of unions in Guangdong and Hongkong in the early twentieth century that was due to "modern" social and economic forces. Tsai (1993: 95-96) and W. K. Chan (1991: 169) suggest this is evidence of increased labour consciousness. Many accounts of Hongkong society suggest that the poverty of Hongkong workers was a primary cause of much social unrest, for example, Tsai (1993) and Zhang Guoliang (1962e). In this chapter, I argue that strike demands, like Hongkong unions' structure, remained generally unchanged before the strike and that stronger political leadership, not labour consciousness or absolute poverty, caused an increase in strike action. Figures from Chen Da (1927) show an increase in the number of strikes in China between 1918 and 1926. For strikes between 1918 and 1924, the figures are:

Strikes in China from 1918 to 1924

Year	Number of Strikes	Reported Strikes
1918	25	12
1919	66	26
1920	46	19
1921	49	22
1922	91	30
1923	47	17
1924	56	18

Chen Da concludes that the causes of most of these strikes from 1918 to 1924 were demands for wage increases, opposition to ill-treatment at work, and support for patriotic movements. Strikes caused by wage demands accounted for fifty-nine per cent of all strikes between 1918 and 1924; sixteen per cent of strikes

were in opposition to ill-treatment; and ten per cent were patriotic movements. Only six strikes, less than two per cent of all strikes, were caused by the reorganisation of guilds into trade unions (Chen Da 1927: 843-865).

A. E. Wood (1912) reports on the number of registered strikes by Hongkong unions from 1882 to 1911. Wood reports a total of twenty-nine strikes in Hongkong, although almost certainly many other disputes were routinely settled without having reached the attention of the Hongkong Government. Hongkong unions appear to have been reasonably active. Between 1882 and 1900, eight strikes were either to maintain or raise wage levels (or food allowances) or shorten hours; three strikes were a reaction to the dismissal of union members; and one strike was an attempt to maintain a union's control over the labour market. Between 1901 and 1911, nine strikes were demands for better pay; three strikes resulted from quarrels with workers; three strikes developed from quarrels with contractors; and two strikes were attempts to control the labour market (Wood, A. E. 1912: 20). These figures suggest workers' demands remained basically unchanged from 1880 to 1911. Workers were mostly concerned with raising wage levels, as Chen Da (1927) observes. Chen Da shows that the number of strikes in China increased from 1918 to 1924. Wood's report suggests that strikes in Hongkong were more frequent between 1901 and 1911 than between 1882 and 1900. However, increased strike activity does not necessarily mean increased labour consciousness, for strikers' objectives remained largely unchanged.

Many accounts characterise Hongkong workers as extremely poor. Such accounts claim workers earned low wages, lived in poor conditions, and looked haggard by middle age (Chan, W. K. 1991: 152-154). According to one CCP activist, workers felt that the Hongkong Government had "treated them as slaves for 90 years" (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 95) and commonly complained that they were "beasts of burden for a lifetime, close to death but unable to die" (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 97). Although many members of the Hongkong workforce were paid meagre wages, there was a considerable difference in pay between the highest and the lowest-paid workers, as I explained in chapter 4. W. K. Chan (1991), Chow (1985), and Chung (1969) suggest that workers usually reacted not to absolute poverty but to acute downturns that threatened the standard of living of groups of workers. Strikes in Hongkong became more numerous to cope with rising inflation after the First World War. Notes in circulation in Hongkong increased from 29,845 dollars in 1915 to 36,299 in 1919. The value of the Hongkong dollar fell between 1915 and 1919 (Tom 1964: 118, 151-152) and food prices in Hongkong rose (Coates 1977: 78-80). One account implies that only skilled workers in modern unions protected their members' standard of living and suggests that Hongkong witnessed a series of strikes as skilled

workers, like mechanics, shipwrights, carpenters, furniture craftsmen, box-makers, and masons, struck to raise wage levels (Chan, W. K. 1991: 165).

Evidence shows that, in general, Hongkong workers struck to maintain their standard of living, as the above writers suggest. However, "modern" unions and skilled workers were not necessarily more successful at maintaining their members' lifestyles. Although mechanics' wages rose considerably, whereas coolies' wages rose slightly, this discrepancy reflected different lifestyles - it did not necessarily mean that mechanics were more radical than coolies. Mechanics' wages rose partly to compensate for the rise in the price of pork between 1915 and 1929, whereas coolies' wages stayed relatively low because of the low price of rice (*Hongkong Government Blue Books 1915-1929*).¹⁸ This fact suggests that all groups of workers maintained their own standard of living and that "modern" unions like the Mechanics' Union were not especially successful at safeguarding their members' real wage rates in comparison with coolies' unions. Using 1915, a year of generally stable prices, as a benchmark, the following table shows the change in the price of pork and rice and the rise in the level of mechanics' and coolies' wages.

Wages of mechanics and coolies and some Hongkong food prices, 1915 to 1925

Year	Pork	Rice	Mechanics	Coolies
	Price levels (%)		Wage levels (%)	
1915	100	100	100	100
1916	100	100	100	100
1917	109	100	80	100
1918	109	100	80	100
1919	120	100	107	100
1920	126	50	133	100
1921	96	50	167	117
1922	96	50	167	117
1923	115	50	167	117
1924	124	50	167	117
1925	124	50	167	117

(1915=100 %. Data from *Hongkong Blue Books 1915-1925*).

Just as the Mechanics' Union and the Seamen's Union are often considered "modern" unions, so the 1920 mechanics' strike and the 1922 seamen's strike are

¹⁸ Workers in Hongkong and China spent between sixty and seventy per cent of their wages on food. Pork can be used as a rough indicator of the cost of living of mechanics because it formed a relatively important part of the diet of skilled workers, whereas coolies lived almost exclusively on rice (Chesneaux 1968: 99-101).

considered "modern" strikes.¹⁹ In 1920, Hongkong mechanics struck for higher wages. Nine thousand strikers from twenty-six enterprises joined the strike, led and encouraged by the GMD-influenced Guangzhou Mechanics' Union (Chesneaux 1968: 159). Xie Yingbo, an anarchist-influenced GMD leader, coordinated the mechanics' protest. The mechanics made no political demands and were careful to court the support of the entire Hongkong population (Ayers 1950: 109). The strike was free from violence and concerned solely with a demand for higher wages (Chow 1985: 71). Subsequent strikes by other skilled workers in Hongkong were aimed at responding to the same rises in the cost of living that sparked the mechanics' strike. Most of these strikes were resolved quickly through mutual agreement between employers and employees (*Hongkong Administrative Report* 1920: c14). The mechanics' strike was neither radically anti-imperialist nor anti-colonial. The tactics employed by the strikers imitated tactics used in past strikes and boycotts: refuge in Guangzhou and support from the Guangzhou Government, but the mechanics made no political demands.

The 1922 seamen's strike is sometimes described as "modern," too. Deng Zhongxia attributes the seamen's strike to specific grievances: a rise in the cost of living; racial discrimination in pay, meals, and accommodation; excessive floggings; and poor leisure allowances (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1924a]: 105). Ma Chaojun blames the inequities of the labour-contractor recruitment system (Ma Chaojun 1959: 98-99). As we have seen, concern with maintaining the standard of living and allowing workers' groups to regulate recruitment procedures were established union activities. The seamen's strike, like many previous Hongkong mass movements, enjoyed the backing of the Guangdong Government. The leader of the Seamen's Union was Chen Bingsheng, a prominent GMD member (Chesneaux 1968: 181). The provincial authorities gave the seamen financial support; in return, seamen were put to work building roads (Song, Shao, and Tian 1985: 30-31).

In December 1921, the Seamen's Union made a pact with some Hongkong unions to support them in the event of a strike (Ma Chaojun 1959: 167-169). Superficially this pact looks like a sign of labour solidarity. In fact, the unions concerned either represented workers such as freight workers and cargo coolies that would be unable to work in the event of a seamen's strike (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 464-465), or powerful unions with secret-society, triad, or right-wing GMD links, for example, the Restaurant Employees' Union, Huang Jinyuan's Workers' Friendship Society, and the Tea-House Employees' Union (Song, Shao, and Tian 1985: 30-31). These unions joined the strike to win prestige and power for their own

¹⁹ For such a view of the seamen's strike, see Song, Shao, and Tian (1985).

organisations. They had such an opportunity because of their links to Chinese politicians that GMD and CCP revolutionaries had tried to create.

Hongkong seamen presented three demands to their employers in September 1921 and resubmitted the demands in November. The demands were for increased wages, union control over recruitment, and union participation in agreeing employees' contracts (Song, Shao, and Tian 1985: 25-26). As such they represented long-held demands to increase wages and enhance unions' power. The seamen's strike was successful - the Hongkong Government agreed to reinstate unions, including the Seamen's Union, that they had outlawed at the beginning of the strike, and employers agreed to raise wages by between fifteen and thirty per cent. In return, the Seamen's Union was willing not to force the issue of labour-recruitment reform (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 178).

The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike: a political strike

The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was not a strike about raising wages or improving working conditions. It was, as Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) says, a political movement. I now consider the interests of both revolutionaries in preparing the strike and of Hongkong unions in allying with revolutionaries. The revolutionaries' aims in preparing the strike were to seize control over Hongkong's Chinese population in order to transform the unions and bring them into a national federation of trade unions controlled by the CCP. In previous chapters, I described how CCP revolutionaries sought to usurp the control of Hongkong's Chinese elite over the colony's Chinese population. Because of their antagonism towards Hongkong's Chinese elite, revolutionaries in 1925 wanted to increase the political power of non-elite Chinese in Hongkong.

Hongkong's Legislative Council contained representatives from the Hongkong merchant community, but no representative from the non-elite sectors of Hongkong's population, which constituted some eighty per cent of the total population. CCP revolutionaries called for universal suffrage to elect Hongkong's Legislative Council. Early attempts to institute greater democracy in Hongkong failed, even though Hongkong's Governor proposed them. In 1855, Sir John Bowring, Governor of Hongkong from 1854 to 1859, suggested that three unofficial members of the colony's Legislative Council be elected by universal suffrage (Welsh 1993: 216). The Colonial Secretary in London rejected his proposals, and claimed that the Chinese population of Hongkong was too unruly, unbalanced, and transient and lacked morality or the "main principles on which social order rests" (Welsh 1993: 217 and Jones 1990: 62).

Before the strike, the question of Chinese political representation in the Hongkong Government appears to have been largely the concern of Hongkong's Chinese elite: they won representation in the Hongkong Government through the petition by twelve members of Hongkong's Chinese elite in 1879; these people were principally concerned with the unfair tax burden borne by Hongkong's Chinese merchants and "undue restrictions" in trade (Chan, W. K. 1991: 122-125). Proposals for suffrage for any section of Hongkong's population foundered on the Hongkong Government's argument that it was impossible to allow Chinese views to prevail, but abhorrent to allow a system of representation for non-Chinese only that would leave "the bulk of the population wholly unrepresented" (Endacott 1977: 224-225). Apart from recruiting some members of Hongkong's Chinese elite, the Hongkong Government made no further attempts to render itself more representative. In 1928, Governor Clementi suggested that liberal attempts at increasing the representation of Hongkong's Chinese population in the colonial government had been "killed" by the realisation that support from the Chinese community for a directly elected body would be too strong for the executive to resist safely (Miners 1987: 141). For revolutionaries, a democratically elected Hongkong Government would ensure *de facto* political control over Hongkong for powerful politicians in Guangzhou. The revolutionaries' demand for democratic representation for non-elite Chinese in the Hongkong Government was, at least in part, a continuation of their attempts to increase their political influence in the colony at the expense of the British and Westernised members of the Hongkong elite.

CCP intellectuals wanted to use the power they sought in order to transform unions and to impose their vision of society. One example of this wish is the revolutionaries' support for the promulgation of labour laws. The Hongkong Government had enacted practically no labour legislation; what little they had enacted, the CCP cadres found abhorrent. According to one labour activist, apprenticeship regulations and child labour were major concerns of the CCP:

A child labourer (for example, an apprentice) often worked for fourteen or fifteen hours a day, and also had to suffer beating and abuse, for a monthly income of only two or three dollars (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 97).

The *Hongkong Census Reports* suggest that the youngest child labourers were between five and ten years old. Many of these children worked in transport and communication, or in domestic service. The 1931 census records a total of 5,753 child labourers, 871 of whom were ten years old or under. Children of fourteen years of age were not even considered child labourers (*Hongkong Census Reports* 1931: 147). Yet regulations on child labour and apprenticeships were formulated by workers' organisations. No mass movement in Hongkong before 1925 petitioned the Hongkong Government to promulgate modern labour laws. Labour laws were set

and amended through internal argument in unions (Wood, A. E. 1912). CCP revolutionaries' vision of a modern society included an end to unlawful floggings and dismissals of workers, the provision of welfare in the form of job security and health care, and the improvement of education opportunities for women and children. These demands for "modern" laws were part of revolutionaries radical vision of a fair society, not a demand of Hongkong unions. To realise their vision, CCP revolutionaries wanted to extend their control over unions to bring unions under the control of a CCP-led national union, which they would use to launch and coordinate strikes throughout China (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1925b]: 123-124).

However, some of the revolutionaries' aims reflected the interests of Hongkong unions, too. Libertarian calls made up much of the revolutionaries' political programme. CCP revolutionaries called for the labour movement, under their direction, to fight for freedom of speech, assembly, and association; they opposed any government's imposition of rules governing union organisation and structure (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1925b]: 126-127). Hongkong unions' political concerns centred around maintaining their autonomy and independence. Therefore they strongly supported the revolutionaries' demand for freedom of association and the independence of workers' organisations, which were major political concerns of Hongkong workers' leaders. Workers' leaders resented the interference of the colonial government in the running of workers' clubs, unions, and societies, and saw as illegitimate the intrusion of the colonial state into local, i.e., union affairs.

The Peace Preservation Ordinance of 1884, which targeted triads, made it a criminal offence to belong to any society that the government deemed "incompatible with the peace and good order of the colony" (England and Rear 1981: 122). The Societies Ordinance of 1911 was designed to monitor the growing influence of subregional associations outside the Chinese elite's control. Both the 1884 and 1911 measures to control workers' organisations were extremely unpopular among union leaders because of the bureaucracy involved. The Hongkong Government used its Secretariat for Chinese Affairs to monitor the operations of workers' organisations in the colony. Government ordinances allowed workers' groups to function, but burdened them with bureaucratic regulations that were open to official abuse. If any Chinese wished to form a society or hold a meeting, he or she had to register with the Secretariat.

Although in theory you could apply to organise a society, it was, however, extremely difficult to get approval. It was particularly difficult for workers trying to organise a union.... If workers wanted to organise a union, they had to chase around everywhere and ask the running dogs of the imperialists - the senior Chinese officials in the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs and the Labour Office - to

make representations and had to invite them to act as advisers. Only then did they have a hope of getting approval (Zhang Guoliang 1962c: 96).

Several days before a society wanted to hold a meeting, it had to inform the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs of the contents of the meeting and the number of people expected to attend, and submit drafts of speeches to be made at the meeting. The Secretariat then sent one or two agents as observers to make a record of the meeting and required the senior figure in the society to sign their official record. In practice societies had to ensure that observers wrote a favourable report:

You also had to invite [the observers] to "have a midnight snack," asking them to make a good report to the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs. If you did not "pay tribute" to their satisfaction, the society's leader might be called to Secretariat for Chinese Affairs to answer questions; it was exactly like a court-room interrogation (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 96).

Hongkong unions wanted to expand their control over Hongkong's workforce. One way to do this was to abolish the labour-contractor system, as seamen demanded in their 1922 strike (Chesneaux 1968: 181). Such demands fitted in with revolutionaries' visions to transform society. In contrast to the limited control they had over most union leaders, Hongkong workers had not the slightest democratic control over labour contractors. Although labour contractors ran workers' organisations that performed similar functions to unions, membership of these organisations was obligatory and the control that the labour contractor exerted over the workers was a perversion of the relationship between union leaders and their members in Hongkong's other workers' groups. Factory managers employed labour contractors to recruit workers, and labour contractors had full authority over the labourers they recruited. Labourers depended on labour contractors for payment of wages and arrangements concerning working conditions (Chesneaux 1968: 57). Because of a high demand for work, only by paying a cash "tribute" could workers find employment. Because of the inability of Westerners to communicate directly with the Chinese workers in their factories, labour contractors were powerful and monopolised many labour markets in Hongkong, particularly at dockyards and shipping companies (Chan, W. K. 1991: 150-152), where large amounts of unskilled labour were needed.

Labour contractors ran their own workers' associations: they seldom operated in professions regulated by unions. Once employed, a worker was obliged to enter the society run by the labour contractor and to pay a monthly membership fee (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962f: 7). Enrolment cost at least ten dollars, sometimes several dozen dollars. Workers were expected to pay more fees to the labour contractor when they began work and the contractor continued to take part of workers' pay (Fang Cai 1962b: 8-9).

Labour contractors were wealthy. Although their associations performed similar ritual ceremonies to other unions, these associations were run for the labour contractor's personal profit. Labour contractors set up gambling halls and mah-jong tables for the workers, sold opium and Western cigarettes, and advertised their associations in Hongkong with the phrase: "You can go whoring, you can gamble, and the cream of the cream can smoke imported tobacco" (Fang Cai 1962b: 9). Labour contractors lent money, too. However, they were not popular: their rates were high (their lackeys often took a share of the profits), and they treated debtors severely.

On Friday, when food was given out, the money had to be repaid. It did not do to be short. Every Friday afternoon, after the distribution of food, the labour contractor's lackeys waited outside the gates of the factory. When the debtor came through the gates they stopped him and pressed him for money. If he was unable to repay he first had to seek the consent of... [the labour contractor] to postpone the payment, otherwise he was beaten up (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 93).

Chesneaux claims trade unions wanted to abolish the labour-contractor system because they wanted to monopolise the labour market themselves (Chesneaux 1968: 62). However, some workers, too, disliked labour contractors. Workers' associations run by labour contractors did not have the same democratic safeguards as unions: workers were dependent on the labour contractor for work and the labour contractor was inextricably linked to the factory owner. Workers had no power to remove him and no power to elect him (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962f: 8). During the 1922 strike of Hongkong seamen, one of the strikers' demands was that the labour-contract system be abolished and that unions at each factory be allowed to regulate the rules of employment (Liu Dachao 1983: 112). Hongkong workers opposed the labour-contractor system because it denied workers the right to organise independently and CCP revolutionaries could expect some support for limited rebellion against some union leaders who were labour contractors.

Small-scale organisations' interests and state power

While revolutionaries' political vision focused on creating intellectual political freedom, reforming the central state, guaranteeing civil rights, and formulating labour laws, unions were eager to strengthen their own political power. Union leaders allied with politicians because they believed that in so doing they could further their own authority and the prestige of their union. Many mass movements in Hongkong were aimed at increasing the power and prestige of workers' groups and preserving their independence from the Hongkong Government. Workers' organisations resisted the

Hongkong Government's attempts to expand its control and sometimes joined patriotic movements to further specific, individual interests.

From the colony's earliest years, the Hongkong Government met strong resistance to attempts to expand its control. The colonial authorities made many attempts to build a stable civic government, but non-elite Chinese fought hard to stop the expansion of government control over the colony's non-elite Chinese population. In 1844, Governor Sir John F. Davis tried to establish some government control over the population of the colony by prescribing compulsory registration for all residents. However, the idea of a poll tax on each individual was abhorrent to British and Chinese alike (Eitel 1895: 222). Chinese merchants, British merchants, and Chinese coolies united against the government's attempt to expand its power. Coolies retreated *en masse* to their home towns in Guangdong (Leung P. L. 1982a: 1). In 1862, 1863, and 1872, coolies stopped work and protested against planned registration or licensing of coolies (Chan, W. K. 1991: 159, Tsai 1984: 2-5).

In 1888, cargo-boatmen coolies struck against a regulation requiring them to carry photographs for identification (Chan, W. K. 1991: 159). In 1895, Hongkong's Chinese community protested the Hongkong Government's decision strictly to enforce an ordinance requiring Chinese to carry a lamp and a pass at night. In March 1895, dockyard workers struck against lodging-house regulations. The strike spread rapidly because of rumours that the Hongkong Government wanted to impose a coolie poll tax and registration fee. By the end of March, twenty thousand Chinese were on strike (Tsai 1993: 99, 176). In 1894, local coolies went on strike to protest against colonial authorities' plans to begin inspection of boarding houses, even though the Hongkong Government intended these inspections to prevent the bubonic plague spreading through the colony. Chinese protested because the measures resulted in "a more direct rule over the Chinese community" (Tsai 1993: 94).

Strikes and riots against the colonial authorities by Hongkong's Chinese population were, according to Chan Ming-kou, symptomatic of the "serious problem of state-society mutual perception at the lower level of the grass roots" (Chan Ming-kou 1990: 137). In fact, Hongkong's Chinese population resisted all colonial attempts to usurp the authority that local small-scale organisations had over the Chinese community. Some workers' organisations called strikes simply to demonstrate their power. For example, in 1911, printers at the *South China Morning Post* went on strike to show, in the words of the authorities, the independence and power of their union (*Hongkong Administrative Reports* 1911: c21).

Revolutionaries claim that they used patriotic calls to stir the mass of Hongkong workers to support the strike movement. Hongkong has a history of apparently patriotic movements protesting against foreign powers and unfair treatment at the hands of colonial authorities. Hongkong's Chinese, according to a

Communist labour organiser, were extremely patriotic because they were treated as second-class citizens in a racist society (Zhang Guoliang 1962e). Revolutionaries suggested that Hongkong's Government limited press freedom, but in reality Hongkong had a relatively free press. The colony had several Chinese-language publications and, although many supported the government, they included a broad range of viewpoints. *Xunhuan bao*, *Huazi bao* (*Chinese Daily*), and *Gongshang ribao* (*Commercial Daily*) were broadly pro-Government; *Daguang bao* (*The Everbright Daily*) was a centrist newspaper; and *Xianggang xinwen bao* (*Hongkong News*) was a radical newspaper that often expressed anti-Government sentiment (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 96). Indeed, Chen Qiulin, who was a leading figure in the strike and led some important educational and propaganda activities coordinated by the Strike Committee, was editor of *Xianggang xinwen bao*.

In 1900, the first revolutionary Chinese newspaper, *Zhongguo ribao* (*The China Daily*) was published in Hongkong; it was radical and nationalistic. Between 1900 and 1911, thirteen different revolutionary papers and periodicals were published in Hongkong, including *Guangdong ribao* (*Guangdong Daily*), *Dongfang ribao* (*Oriental Daily*), and *Shaonian ribao* (*Youth Daily*). The *Shishi huabao* (*Truth Pictorial*), originally founded in Guangdong, moved to Hongkong to escape persecution by the Qing regime. Hongkong papers boasted their willingness "to speak up on what others have dared not" (Fok 1990: 54-58). Occasionally the Hongkong Government suddenly started censoring the press, for example, during the anti-French protests in 1884. Such censorship was not due to the Hongkong Government's reluctance to allow the Chinese community a "free hand to run its own affairs," as Chan Ming-kou claims (Chan Ming-kou 1990: 136); rather, it was a temporary reaction to political unrest. The Hongkong Government's restrictions on press freedom were generally aimed at preventing attacks on the Chinese state (*Hongkong Hansard* 1907: 55-60).

Some CCP revolutionaries make generalisations about racial oppression in Hongkong and claim that such oppression was a primary cause of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. For example, one CCP activist claims non-elite Chinese thought they were constantly in danger of arrest and being flogged (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 95-96). Originally, police meted out floggings for such offences as "committing a nuisance" and "idleness" (Welsh 1993: 259) and the proportion of prison floggings in Hongkong to the population far exceeded the ratio in the British Isles. Floggings per person from 1871 to 1876 were forty-eight times higher in Hongkong than in Britain. Floggings were even more unpopular among the Hongkong coolies because of the widespread abuse of this form of punishment. However, evidence suggests that Hongkong society and government was becoming progressively more humanitarian

and just, for, despite opposition from Hongkong's European population, Governor Hennessy abolished public floggings in 1880 (Tsai 1993: 116-118).

Some legislation in Hongkong has been branded as racist, for example, the Peak Reservation Ordinance passed by Governor Sir Francis H. May in 1904. According to Welsh, the ordinance was meant to exclude Chinese from living on the Peak, although the governor had power to exempt any individual (Welsh 1993: 342). The Peak Reservation Ordinance did not explicitly exclude Chinese, but effectively did so by creating a district for expensive European-style housing. Sir Robert Ho Tung, exempted from this law in 1906, was the only Chinese to live on the Peak. Apparently, Ho and his family suffered discrimination from their neighbours (Gittins 1969: 11-15). Other discriminatory laws appear to have been promulgated partly due to Chinese aversion to state interference and welfare. For example, brothels used by Europeans were supervised to prevent syphilis, those used by Chinese were not (Chan, W. K. 1991: 121). However, the Hongkong Government excused the lack of scrutiny of Chinese brothels by saying it was due to opposition from Chinese and in sympathy with "Chinese sensibilities" (Welsh 263-264). Such laws added to the structural division between Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population and the Hongkong Government that I described in chapter 3, and allowed the CCP revolutionaries to use patriotic slogans to garner non-elite support. However, such racist laws hardly seem harsh enough to be the main motivation to strike against the Hongkong Government when compared with the compelling reasons that union leaders had to support some of the revolutionaries' political ideas.

Revolutionaries sometimes simply used patriotic calls to coerce Hongkong workers into supporting them - revolutionaries frequently backed up their patriotic calls with intimidation. In 1858, when British and French troops captured Guangzhou, Hongkong's Chinese coolies and some skilled workers went on strike to protest the Western aggression (Leung P. L. 1982a: 1). The Government of Guangdong was instrumental in leading the movement; it called upon every Chinese person working for the British to return to their homes in Guangdong. It threatened those who did not obey it with the confiscation of their possessions; those who had no possessions risked having their families or clans killed. As a result, twenty thousand Chinese returned to Guangdong (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 33).

Strikes and riots engulfed Hongkong in 1884 during the Sino-French war and spread across the boundaries of different professions. First, ship-repairers refused to service French ships and dockyard coolies refused to unload cargo from French ships. Soon, transport workers, shopkeepers, sedan-chair carriers, rickshaw-pullers, and seamen all refused to work for the French. The strike began on Hongkong but soon spread to Kowloon (Leung P. L. 1982a: 2). According to some writers, the

strike spread partly because of Guangzhou politicians' patriotic calls to the Hongkong population and partly because the Hongkong Government exacerbated the situation (Tsai 1984: 2-14) by prosecuting Chinese newspaper editors who issued patriotic proclamations, and imposing fines on boat people who refused to work for the French. Thus, claim some writers, the strike became more popular because it mixed patriotic feeling and resentment against the Hongkong colonial authorities (Chan, W. K. 1991: 160-161). In reality the politicians in Guangzhou successfully sought the help of triad organisations to discourage Chinese from working for the French. Chinese politicians' patriotic proclamations were mostly threats against "traitors" who refused to strike (Tsai 1993: 132-135) or warnings to Hongkong's Chinese to guard their homes and families against French attacks (Tsai 1984: 2-14).

Hongkong workers' professed patriotism was sometimes due to sectional interest, such as during the anti-American boycott of 1905-1906, which was led by the subregional associations of Hongkong that had links to Chinese communities in America. America had a large Chinese, mostly Cantonese, population. Between 1849 and 1860, sixty thousand Chinese workers emigrated to America and between 1871 and 1880, another one hundred thousand Chinese workers entered America. According to one account, this influx of Chinese labour sparked prejudice and racial intolerance on the part of poor Americans in California, which flared up into an anti-American boycott (Chan Ming-kou 1982a: 5-6).

However, merchants and subregional associations had specific interests in carrying out an anti-American boycott. In 1904, the American Government acted to halt the immigration of Chinese. Between 1905 and 1906, some of Hongkong's Chinese workers participated in an anti-American boycott, which arose from a protest against the exclusion of Chinese immigrants by America and the maltreatment of Chinese nationals in the United States. The Chinese merchant community of the United States had an interest in promoting the growth of a strong Chinese community in the United States and promoted the anti-American boycott in Hongkong through their connections with the colony's elite (Pomerantz 1984: 27). Since large numbers of Chinese in America were natives of Xinning and Dongguan, associations for these two subregions made much money from transporting workers to America, a business that America's new anti-immigration proposals threatened. Hongkong's Xinning merchants organised collections to send Xinning natives back to their hometowns to propagate the cause of the strike (Tsai 1993: 192). Dongguan workers, too, were active in the boycott movement and "persuaded" Hongkong cargo coolies not to handle American goods. Xinning and Dongguan workers forced shopkeepers to submit to the boycott through a series of small, targeted strikes (Ding You 1958: 18-19).

Some historians claim that the anti-American boycott was an example of the power of patriotism to cement a united front between workers, merchants, students, and peasants (Chan Ming-kou 1982a: 8). In reality, subregional organisations maintained an independent stance that represented their particular interests and merchants were split in their support for the strike. Those who traded extensively with America did not support the boycott as readily as those who conducted little or no American trade. Some members of Hongkong's Chinese elite refrained from fiercely promoting a strike and boycott because they wanted a stable political environment in which to conduct their business; others supported the boycott because they wanted to sell more cigarettes and cosmetics (Tsai 1993: 182-206).

The anti-Japanese boycott of 1908 was another patriotic movement inspired by merchants, which subregional associations joined to promote their own interests. Merchants called the boycott in response to the humiliating climb-down of the Chinese Government over their seizure in disputed waters off Macao of a Japanese vessel, the *Tatsu Maru*. Starting in March 1908, the boycott lasted nine months and was led principally by the Guangzhou Merchants' Self-Government Society. However, it won the support of organisations representing workers in the fishing industry, who sought to profit from a boycott of Japanese seafood. It was these workers' organisations, pursuing their own interests, that called for a stringent enforcement of the boycott. Patriotic calls during the boycott were, as in past movements, threats against anyone who did not support the "patriotic" movement (Tsai 1993: 207-232).

The effect of the 1911 Revolution on Hongkong is further evidence that subregional associations used patriotic movements to further their individual interests. The Siyi Association, for example, had many members belonging to Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary Tongmenghui. In 1911, the Hongkong Government, unnerved by the association's participation in anti-Qing demonstrations, passed an ordinance compelling subregional associations and workers' organisations to register with the Government.

The Chinese revolution of 1911 in fact had a greater impact on Hong Kong than is commonly assumed, and directly affected the development of [sub]regional associations in a number of ways. First, it boosted the status of the Siyi Association whose support for Sun Yat-sen continued after the Wuchang uprising in October 1911. With it procuring men from Hongkong, Sun's party was able to declare independence in Guangzhou. Li Yutang became Provincial Treasurer, and the Hongkong Governor observed that with almost all the important positions in the Provincial Government given to Siyi men, the Association "practically ruled Canton." He also believed that when the Chinese in Hongkong from other counties saw power in Guangzhou drifting into their hands, they began to organise their

own societies to prevent the Siyi Association from monopolising political influence (Sinn 1990a: 166).

The Hongkong Government, eager to curb the power of the Siyi Association, tried to encourage the establishment of an umbrella organisation to coordinate the regional associations of Hongkong. Such an organisation, the Chinese Commercial Union, already existed in Hongkong, but the Hongkong Government reorganised it and brought it under government supervision. Lau Chu-pak from Bao'an and Yuan Yingshan from Dongguan became the Union's leaders. As this organisation grew in prestige, many other merchants decided to form their own subregional organisations in order to gain representation on the Union (Sinn 1990a: 168). In Hongkong, small-scale organisations such as subregional associations attached themselves to powerful political authorities as a way of furthering their own interests. To generalise about the character of "patriotic" movements in Hongkong, it is not excessively cynical to say that individuals were normally only "patriotic" when the goals of Chinese politicians suited their own interests.

Because patriotic movements could not guarantee mass support, Hongkong's boycott movements, particularly patriotic movements that tried to create a unified response, typically used intimidation and triad societies to ensure Hongkong workers' participation. Revolutionaries and Guangdong authorities used triads in nationalistic movements because they were an effective way of ensuring a united movement. Unions could, for the most part, mobilise only one section of the Hongkong working population. In 1884, Guangdong authorities planned to use triad societies in the anti-French movement (Guangdong Xinhai geming ziliao 1981: 98). In 1895, Sun Yat-sen recruited Hongkong triads to participate in the 1895 Guangzhou Uprising. Individual triad members earned large amounts of money for their actions and triads promised coolies ten dollars a month to become soldiers (Fok 1990: 39-44). Guangdong politicians used triad societies to resist the British seizure of the New Territories in 1898 (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 48). In the anti-Japanese boycott, a Dare to Die Society posted bills threatening to mutilate all those who refused to cooperate (Tsai 1993: 226). Tongmenghui revolutionaries used triads to make connections with workers' groups - both Sun Yat-sen and the GMD labour leader Ma Chaojun enrolled in triad organisations (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 33-34). In 1900, Hongkong triads participated in the Huizhou uprising (Borokh 1972). In 1911, Nationalists used restaurant workers recruited through Hongkong triads to support the 1911 Revolution (Hsieh 1972: 148). Intimidation was used in "modern" workers' movements like the 1922 seamen's strike too: Chinese servants from European houses were intimidated into joining a sympathy strike (*Hongkong Telegraph*, March 2, 1922, quoted in Chan, W. K. 1991: 177).

Typical of the intimidation used by triads is a bill posted during the Hongkong tramway boycott:

The Electric Tramway Company has adopted a new law refusing to accept dragon coins. A boycott must be put up. The five races must come together. Those who take no notice of my word will be exploded to death. All brethren must look out, avoiding my bomb (*Hongkong Daily Press*, November 29, 1912).

So Chinese-led patriotic movements in Hongkong had two characteristics. First, politicians defined what patriotism was and used organisations such as triads to try to enforce their will. Second, local Hongkong political groups and wealthy individuals joined patriotic movements either through fear or because they felt able to advance their own sectional interests. In later chapters, when I describe the events of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, I show that revolutionaries created an authoritarian movement and sometimes clashed with Hongkong union leaders.

Revolutionaries and mass movements

In chapter 4, I described how revolutionaries sought to establish links to Hongkong's unions, without revolutionising the unions' structure. In chapter 1, I suggested that revolutionary ideas that were closest to existing ideas were more likely to win acceptance among the ordinary population. In this chapter, I now consider how successfully the revolutionaries communicated their views to the workers and whether or not their revolutionary ideas transformed Hongkong's non-elite politics. In Guangdong, workers' organisations first came into contact with the Socialist Party, but Hongkong workers had by far the longest contact with anarchists (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 427-428). In 1906, the anarchists Li Shizheng and Wu Zhihui joined Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui along with Zhang Jingjiang, who had funded the activities of the New World Society, an anarchist study group in Paris. In 1912, the Tongmenghui reorganised to form the GMD. Li and Wu retained close affiliations throughout to Sun and the GMD; by the mid 1920s, they were among the most revered GMD members. Because of their anarchist convictions, they were opposed to the GMD united front with the CCP and were recognised as leading members of the GMD right-wing. Li and Wu were the most prominent political patrons of anarchist labour organisers within the GMD; they had done much to spur the earliest efforts to organise workers in Hongkong and Guangzhou. Chen Duxiu is reported to have opposed the idea of transferring the CCP Central Committee from Shanghai to Guangzhou partly because of the influence of the anarchists there (Dirlik 1989: 214).

Following the GMD's reorganisation of 1924, Li Shizeng and Wu Zhihui held posts in the anti-Communist Central Supervisory Committee, responsible for internal

party affairs. In Guangzhou, two distinct camps of anarchists operated - those who collaborated with the GMD and those who maintained a purist non-political stance. For example, influential anarchists such as Liang Bingxian and Ou Shengbai continued to oppose cooperation with the GMD (Dirlik 1991: 252).

Anarchism was popular in the Mechanics' Union and the Seamen's Union - according to one of the CCP cadres in Hongkong at the time, many anarchists were members of these two unions (Luo Zhu 1962n: 89-90). In 1912, anarchists such as Liu Shixin, Liang Yiyu, Liang Bingxian, Huang Yibo, and Li Zhanbiao, and right-wing labour organisers like Xie Yingbo, encouraged Guangdong mechanics to form a workers' union (Chen Bagui 1964: 108 and Dirlik 1991: 170).

However, anarchism hardly revolutionised Hongkong workers, for many anarchists, and particularly the anarchists in Guangzhou under Liu Shifu, opposed all participation in politics. Shifu's belief even brought him into conflict with Wu Zhihui, one of the patrons of anarchism in China and a GMD politician. Liu Shifu opposed political action and advocated abolishing politics (Dirlik 1991: 129). Some anarchists, as temporary members of the GMD in Guangzhou, kept alive strains of anarchism opposed to strong government. These beliefs reinforced workers' proclivity towards small-scale clubs and kinship-based unions. Xie Yingbo, the GMD labour organiser who had been influential in the establishment of the Mechanics' Union, had been associated with Liu Shifu in the China Assassination Corps and later influenced the creation of other unions and set up a Mutual-Aid Society, which claimed a membership of more than one hundred thousand workers from more than one hundred affiliated unions (Chan Ming-kou 1975: 50).

Syndicalist activities of the Guangzhou anarchists spearheaded labour activities in Guangdong. In 1917, anarchists organised barbers and tea-house clerks into labour unions and, in 1918, anarchists held China's first May Day celebration (Chan Ming-kou and Dirlik 1991: 32). Anarchist principles of organisation, typified by the Mechanics' Union, were to establish a central executive committee, but to devolve power to individual workers' clubs and mutual aid societies. Anarchists encouraged unions to exclude capitalists from their organisations, but eschewed class struggle. Anarchist influence on workers' organisations was not particularly revolutionary. Anarchists encouraged workers' groups centring around kinship ties, individual factories, or city districts to preserve their independence, while retaining links to a central executive body. Anarchist politicians within the GMD, however, did succeed in creating links between mainland politicians and small-scale workers' organisations that aped ties between the Chinese state and subregional organisations.

So anarchism's only real transformation of Hongkong non-elite politics was to establish contacts between Hongkong workers' leaders and GMD revolutionaries. The influence of anarchism and the GMD right wing in Hongkong was not seriously

challenged by the CCP before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Workers remained nationalistic and were still encouraged not to engage in politics. Eventually, in 1924, the CCP decided that it needed to expand its own influence among the Hongkong workers. The CCP Guangdong Regional Committee sent Yang Yin, Luo Zhu, Liang Furan, Huang Ping, and Chen Richang to the colony (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87).

The scale of CCP organisation in Hongkong was tiny (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 610). CCP activists had to use personal contacts to develop their organisation: Luo Zhu made contact with former masters of his from the time of his Hongkong apprenticeship. These workers, Gan Zhoutang, Peng Songfu, Huang Xiahun, Li Zhi, Xu Wenchang, Xu Wenjian, He Xiang, Tang Ju, Xie Mosheng, Lin Zhi, He Tai, Huang Cheng, Liang Handong, Li Hong, and Fang Wenxing, met with Luo every evening in a downstairs flat at 6, Nanyu Road, Hunghom (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87-88).

This flat became the base for CCP activities among the working class of Hongkong before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Because of its size, Yang Yin named it the Small Society (Xiaoshe). From this flat CCP activists infiltrated the Masses' Enlightenment Society (Xingyiqun), a workers' club whose members were mostly mechanics, to try to create some mass support among the Mechanics' Union. The CCP was already fairly confident of limited support from the Seamen's Union, but was aware that the Mechanics' Union had been created by anarchists and that it was still heavily influenced by the right wing of the GMD (Luo Zhu 1962n: 88).

Huang Ping confirms that the early CCP organisation in Hongkong by 1925 was small and not very ambitious:

The Hongkong Party Branch Office only had a little over ten members (at that time I was Secretary of the Party Branch Office and concurrently working to prepare the International Seamen's Club). Party members together numbered only about twenty, among them intellectuals, several shipyard workers, and two dockers. The everyday work was to develop the party organisation and propaganda (Huang Ping 1961: 1).

CCP activists made contacts with workers and union leaders, but their work among workers was negligible in comparison to the importance of winning the support of union leaders. At this time, the CCP had already targeted Su Zhaozheng from the Seamen's Union for recruitment. Deng Zhongxia chose Su Zhaozheng to follow Sun Yat-sen to Beijing to participate in GMD meetings. In Beijing, Ga Lahan and Li Dazhao introduced Su to the CCP (Liang Furan and Guo Shouzhen 1961b: 111).

In the spring of 1925, Huang Ping, an important CCP activist, went to Hongkong in the guise of a GMD special envoy to work with Su Zhaozheng; he soon established Hongkong's CCP Branch Office. Core CCP members in Hongkong at this

time were Li Yibao, Lin Changchi, Li Lian, Luo Zhu, Yang Kai, Liang Furan, Chen Richang, and Yang Yin (who spent a lot of time travelling between Hongkong and Guangzhou). Two more Hongkong workers, Xu Wenchang and Xu Wenjian, soon joined the CCP organisation in Hongkong. The CCP's main influence remained the contacts and friendships that Yang Yin had with union leaders such as Su Zhaozheng of the Seamen's Union, Chen Qingpei of the Tallymen's Union (Hailu lihuo gonghui), and Zheng Quan of the Carpenters' Union (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87-91).

Contacts with Hongkong workers were made through township affiliations and personal friendships. Luo Zhu and Li Lian had both been dockyard apprentices in Hongkong, and so were well known among the dockers. They carried out their CCP activities among the workers of the Qingzhou Cement Works, the Biwan Shipyard, and the Guangdechang Shipyard (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87). Chen Richang was from Bao'an county and so was asked to work in the Seamen's Union, where there were many of his fellow townsmen, and also among the fishmongers, almost all of whom came from Bao'an (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87).

Liang Handong and Huang Cheng were sent to work among the Chinese Workers' Industrial Association (Huaqiao gongye lianhehui), where they recruited a friend, Guo Moxi (a sand worker). Through Guo, the Small Society had links to the Sand-Workers' Reform Society (Shamo weixinshe). Other CCP activists were sent to work in specific factories: Li Lian and Xu Wenjian infiltrated the Steamship-Repairers' Union; Huang Xiahun was active among the workers of the Swire Dockyards; He Tai, Peng Songfu, and Luo Zhu used the Masses' Enlightenment Society as their base and invited Chen Richang, Liang Furan, and Yang Yin to make speeches to mechanics. The CCP activities began to widen in scope, but the scale of their operations was still small (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87-91).

Not only was the CCP's Hongkong organisation small, but they had difficulty making Hongkong workers understand the difference between the GMD and the CCP. Since the 1924 reorganisation of the GMD under Bolshevik influence, the CCP had easy access to the GMD mass base (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 520), however, CCP activists had great difficulty in distinguishing themselves from the GMD:

[M]ost seamen supported the GMD. Though few had enrolled in the Tongmenghui, after the restructuring of the GMD, many joined the GMD. At the time of returning [to Guangzhou] after the strike, they joined *en masse*. The masses reckoned that the GMD and the CCP were more or less the same; even believed that the GMD was the CCP because Sun Yat-sen had said the Three People's Principles was Communism. They also believed that Wang Jingwei, Chiang Kai-shek, Tan Pingshan, and Liao Zhongkai were all Communists (Fang Cai 1962c: 4).

The CCP aimed their propaganda activities at GMD right-wing strongholds, such as mechanics' unions and workers' clubs. The CCP specially targeted workers in the Chinese Workers' Industrial Association for recruitment. This union was a large, powerful, and strategically important organisation in Hongkong. The complicated nature of its structure and the loyalties of its members typified the problems facing the CCP: the majority of the association's members were mechanics, and they included a significant number of anarchists. The association was allied to the GMD right wing and its leaders were strongly nationalist in sentiment. Within the organisation was another more secretive grouping, organised along the lines of a secret society, called the Overseas-Chinese Iron and Blood Corps (Huaqiao tiexuetuan), which had once organised a bodyguard for Sun Yat-sen (Luo Zhu 1962n: 89).

The CCP organisation was not strong enough to make an impact on GMD strongholds in just one year. Because workers were strongly nationalistic and supported the GMD, CCP activists, particularly in the Seamen's Union, were often unwilling to try to distinguish themselves from the GMD for fear of seeming unpatriotic (Fang Cai 1962a: 2). In all its activities among Hongkong workers before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, the CCP did not create a sharp distinction between itself and the GMD; in reality its attempts to do so were half-hearted. So for Hongkong workers, the GMD and the CCP were indistinguishable: they perceived the GMD-CCP alliance as a patriotic, nationalistic power and CCP revolutionaries' anti-imperialist views enhanced this perception. For the CCP revolutionaries in Guangdong, Hongkong workers were one of their most important strategic weapons in the anti-imperialist movement. In 1924, Deng Zhongxia claimed:

As soon as the Hongkong seamen go on strike, they can put a halt to transportation from Europe; once the miners strike, they can prevent the steamships at Qinhuang Dao from leaving port; when the workers on the Jing-Han railway strike, they can separate into two the whole of China between North and South (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1924b] :67).

How successful were the revolutionaries in communicating their anti-imperialist beliefs? Evidence from CCP activists in Hongkong before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike suggests that the revolutionaries were more concerned with generating mass support for their political movement than in emphasising the "modernity" of their views. As a result, the activists replicated many of the propaganda activities of past movements without radicalising Hongkong workers in a new way. The CCP activists consciously revamped old triad slogans to suit their own ends: "Down with the Qing, reinstate the Ming!" became "Down with the imperialists!" "Cut down the strong, support the weak!" became "Down with the comprador capitalists!" or "Down with the pig-heads!" CCP activities became less of

a revolution among the workers of Hongkong and more like a reworking of old complaints and strains in Hongkong (Luo Zhu 1962n: 89). The CCP was intent on creating a mass base as quickly as possible. However, its eagerness to use existing political structures and political slogans to win support meant that it did not distinguish its ideology from that of the GMD.

CCP activists, like nationalistic politicians before them, linked up with existing non-elite political organisations to create a strong mass base for its political party. Connections to triads were a vital part of the CCP's network of power in Hongkong as it had been for Nationalists in the past. The CCP consciously utilised the old power networks in Hongkong to try to gain some political control over the workers' movement. Any purist approach was sacrificed to the needs of pragmatism, due to the weakness of CCP organisation and the strength of local political groups. As a CCP activist writes:

Because we wanted to get progressive elements from within the triads to link up with our party, the Party Branch Office adopted organisational methods appropriate to the contemporary situation. With the Small Society members as the core, every five members set up a separate group. Each group member took on the responsibility of creating another group. Moreover, we adopted a semi-public form to attract those progressive elements.... Under the organisational education of the CCP, many elements later became party members. Furthermore, in many revolutionary struggles, they sacrificed their lives for the sake of the revolutionary business of the working class (Luo Zhu 1962n: 89).

While they were working for the CCP in Hongkong before the strike, Yang Yin met with Luo Zhu and explained to him the nature of the Hongkong working class. His most emphatic point was that the role of the triads was very important among the Hongkong workers. Luo recalls what Yang told him:

He spoke to me of a great many things and explained to me that secret societies (triads) had a rather powerful position among the workers. If we could get them to understand us, it would greatly help our activities. He also told me about the organisation of the secret societies and their jargon, and told me to get to work in the factories as soon as possible and that the closer I got to the workers the better (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87).

Luo Zhu presents further evidence of the importance that high-level CCP leaders placed on cultivating triad links. He talks of a visit Yang Yin made to the Small Society:

Yang Yin saw our work, encouraged us, and afterwards told me to go to the Flowers of Happiness Tea-House immediately after work. I delegated work to everybody and then went to the Flowers of Happiness Tea-House, where I saw Yang Yin and Li Lian in a room talking with three men who had the appearance

of workers. I called to them and joined them. Only then did I realise why Yang Yin had invited me.... Apparently those three workers were all leaders from the Kowloon Wo [Sing(?)] Wo triad, which had tremendous influence among dockyard workers. They had come at the invitation of Li Lian. During the conversation, Yang Yin acted as an old uncle of the Hong Men come to instruct them. He said that the old "Oppose the Qing and revive the Ming" was out of date, and that the guiding principle was now anti-imperialism to achieve national independence. He also uttered a great many pleasantries about the bravery of the Hong Men brothers and how we should fight and make sacrifices to achieve national independence. He urged them to take up the duty of leading their comrades and the ordinary workers to join the strike. Only by so doing could they consider themselves brothers of the Hong Men. The three Hong Men disciples all said that they would act according to the guidance of the old uncle. Then I was introduced to them, and I was told that when I needed their help, I could go and discuss it with them (Luo Zhu 1962: 1-2).

Several historians have identified what they see as an increase in working-class consciousness among Hongkong workers. W. K. Chan suggests that the mechanics' strike of 1920 boosted class consciousness and stimulated the growth of workers' organisations (Chan, W. K. 1991: 161). Tsai believes that the increasing militancy of workers' organisations indicated an increasing labour consciousness as the economy of Hongkong developed (Tsai 1993: 95-96). However, in my opinion, the increase in the militancy of workers' organisations in Hongkong did not reflect a new class consciousness, but was the result of the growth in influence of patriotic revolutionaries over Hongkong workers.

In Hongkong, CCP propaganda was in the hands of a dozen or so new party members who used contacts with leaders of existing political groups among the Hongkong workers to expand the CCP's tiny party organisation. CCP activities concentrated on building a power base not on creating a working-class consciousness or developing awareness of the CCP's more radical policies to transform unions and society. The CCP was gradually enlarging its power base among the workers through personal connections with union leaders and compromises reached with existing political groups and political platforms. Because of its haste, the CCP failed to revolutionise Hongkong workers. On the contrary, the revolutionaries were being drawn into the long-established power structures and politics of Hongkong society. A Western eye-witness account supports this view:

One must not think of [the struggle of the Chinese labourers] in terms of collective bargaining and legal safe guards, as in the framework of stable, democratic government, but rather in terms of street barricades, the sans-culottes or the

various uprisings against Czarism in 1905. There were never any Terence V. Powderlys or Samuel Gompers in China; the pace was too rapid (Wales 1945: 8).

Conclusion

Before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population fought hard to keep its distance from the colonial authorities. Welfare provision was made by small organisations such as trade unions and subregional associations and these organisations defended their independence and autonomy in the face of attempts by the Hongkong Government to expand its influence over Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. These organisations sometimes joined patriotic or anti-foreign movements led by merchants and mainland Chinese politicians. Such movements frequently used boycotts as a means of protest; on many occasions, Hongkong workers used Guangzhou as a shelter or refuge.

"Patriotism" was the glue that held various classes together in joint protest. However, such patriotism had two characteristics. First, political groups chose to be "patriotic" when they thought that they might gain from it. Second, Chinese politicians had links to triad groups and used them to force Hongkong's population to join "patriotic" movements. When politicians in Guangdong wanted to lead a mass movement in Hongkong, they ordered Hongkong workers to return to Guangzhou and sometimes intimidated and threatened workers to obey them. In most cases, Hongkong mass movements were well-organised, authoritarian movements.

The revolutionaries in the 1920s used Hongkong workers because of these workers' strategic importance in the anti-imperialist struggle. The contacts formed between revolutionaries and the non-elite population of Hongkong were similar to the links between mainland leaders and the Chinese population in patriotic movements throughout Hongkong history. The CCP had not the time to revolutionise Hongkong workers, nor had the Hongkong workers, even though living in a capitalist society, radically altered their own views or organisation. Anarchism influenced the Hongkong workers only in so far as it reinforced workers' existing tendency to organise in small syndicates and encouraged workers to settle political disputes within workers' organisations. The impact of revolutionary thought in Hongkong before 1925 was generally to consolidate long-held beliefs and, at the same time, provide political backing in Guangdong for Hongkong workers.

Like the mechanics' strike, the seamen's strike shared many of the characteristics of previous mass protests in Hongkong: refuge in Guangzhou, support from the provincial authorities, and the involvement of triad and secret-society groups. With so many similarities between the mechanics' strike, seamen's strike, and

past Hongkong strikes and boycott movements, why are the mechanics' strike and seamen's strike seen as "modern" movements? The answer is that revolutionary parties that led these strikes have emphasised the "modern" nature of the strikes to present their movements in a favourable light.

Revolutionaries' interests were sometimes different from those of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. Revolutionaries wanted to build a "modern" state, yet in no case before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike did Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population launch a mass movement to fight for community-wide political demands such as representative government, government welfare provision, or labour laws. Unions already offered workers many of these rights in small-scale organisations. Movements against the Hongkong Government focused on preventing the Government from increasing taxes or its authority over non-elite social groups. In later chapters, I explore the conflicts that arose between revolutionaries and Hongkong unions as revolutionaries sought to increase their power over unions and transform society in a revolutionary way.

Part 2

The Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike

In part 2, I start by describing the role of revolutionaries and Hongkong union leaders in calling the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. I go on to show how the CCP built a strike bureaucracy and launched mass education and propaganda campaigns to shore up popular support for the strike and to groom unionists for official posts. I then examine the CCP's most conspicuous attempt to impose its revolutionary vision of "modern" society on Hongkong workers: the trade-union unification movement. Finally, I describe how the strike ended. Throughout part 2, I present the strike as an organised, authoritarian, political movement, led by a revolutionary elite that clashed with Hongkong union leaders that it considered "backward." My view rebuts more romantic descriptions of the strike as a glorious, patriotic upsurge of mass discontent.

Chapter 6

The Outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike

In this chapter, I examine the outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. I detail the activities of CCP organisers in Hongkong as they tried to mobilise Hongkong workers and identify which individuals and organisations were most influential. The strike immediately followed a wave of anti-imperialist protest in China. I try to explain what motivated the Hongkong union leaders to strike - patriotism, demands for social change, coercion, or political ambition? Although almost all Hongkong unions swiftly agreed to call a strike and establish a unified strike organisation, each union maintained its autonomy and chose its own time to strike. Some struck immediately, others dithered out of concern for the provision of welfare for their members, and yet others refused to strike at all. When the unions returned to Guangzhou, long-existing rivalries and factionalism between them continued, exacerbated by splits in the Guangdong Government. I address in particular a question of a more theoretical nature: was the strike a "volcanic" eruption of mass anger or an order passed down to workers from union leaders and revolutionaries?

An organised response to the May Thirtieth Incident

On May 15, 1925, Japanese shot dead Gu Zhengong (a worker at a Shanghai cotton mill) and wounded more than ten other rioting workers (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 576). The factory had been short of raw material; its owners, refusing to pay even a fraction of the workers' wages, had locked out the workforce, who then rioted (Li Chien-min 1986: 21). On May 30, students demonstrated in the streets of Shanghai's foreign concession to protest against this killing and to oppose proposed changes in municipal bylaws that threatened to increase foreign control over Chinese activities in the International Settlement. The students clashed with Chinese and Indian police under British command. When police opened fire on the students, they killed four Chinese instantly; at least eight more died later from their wounds (Wilbur and How 1989: 149). Intellectuals, trade unionists, and merchants began to spread anti-British propaganda through public meetings, speeches, theatre, songs, and weeping troupes.²⁰ People throughout China protested against the cruelty of the British - banners adorned buildings and hastily printed propaganda leaflets littered the streets (Li Chien-min 1986: 33-37).

Though propagandists succeeded in leading a wave of strikes and protests in China, Hongkong workers were unresponsive - Hongkong workers held one public meeting to demonstrate their anger over the May Thirtieth Incident (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 610). Past Hongkong strikes had the support of local union leaders and provincial authorities, but at the time of the May Thirtieth Incident, the GMD was fighting warlords from Yunnan and Guangxi (Wilbur and How 1989: 595).²¹ As a result of this political turmoil, Hongkong workers were unable immediately to use Guangzhou as a refuge as they had done in past strikes and no one led them in political protest against the Hongkong Government.

Chung (1969: 80-82) and Chan Lau Kit-ching (1990: 178) describe the non-committal attitude of Hongkong unions to the May Thirtieth Incident as "pathetic." However, one leading CCP activist in Hongkong, Huang Ping, suggests that labour organisers, too, had little thought of instigating a strike.

After the May Thirtieth Tragedy, the work of the CCP remained unchanged. Nobody considered organising demonstrations, much less implementing a Hongkong strike. Early one evening, Deng Zhongxia arrived in Hongkong. He told me that he and Su Zhaozheng wanted to organise a strike in Hongkong in

²⁰ In 1925, weeping troupes were perhaps a new invention. Members of weeping troupes were trained how to weep; propaganda organisers then sent them into the city to arouse the anger of Chinese on the streets (Li Chien-min 1986: 32).

²¹ On June 6, the GMD evacuated Guangzhou, leaving the city in the hands of the Yunnanese. GMD troops recaptured Guangzhou on June 13.

order to respond to the May Thirtieth Incident. This proposal was like a bolt from the blue. It liberated me from the small scope of everyday work (Huang Ping 1961: 1).

At a meeting in Guangzhou in early June, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions²² decided to prepare a strike in Hongkong. Its Executive Committee sent Deng Zhongxia, Yang Yin, and Yang Pao'an²³ to Hongkong to organise a strike (Luo Sheng 1962b: 105-106). Because leaders of the Seamen's Union and Tram Workers' Union were members of the Executive Committee, these two unions played an important role in organising the strike. The apparent radicalism of these two unions in organising the strike, as we shall see, was due to the political connections and the ambitions of some of their leaders, not to radical views common among workers. The Executive Committee's envoys held secret meetings to persuade Hongkong unionists to strike.

After arriving in Hongkong, Deng Zhongxia chaired a series of secret meetings with CCP activists and then with local union leaders. At the first meeting, held at the Lianyi Society, Deng Zhongxia instructed the four or five activists present to contact every workers' organisation, including workers' clubs and triads. Zheng Quan, a CCP activist, printed leaflets announcing that Deng Zhongxia had called a meeting of all workers' representatives at the Apricot Flower Restaurant²⁴ (Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 7-8). Existing workers' organisations prepared for the meeting - the Rebuild China (Xing Zhong) secret society held a meeting, which Yang Yin ordered Zheng Quan to attend, and the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates and the Workers' Friendship Society, too, held a preparatory meeting. This meeting was chaired by Su Zhaozheng (Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 8).

CCP activists chaired two meetings of union leaders at the Apricot Flower Restaurant on Hongkong Main Road (West) to discuss calling a strike (Liang Mei 1962: 1). One hundred people took part in the first meeting on June 6, at which the chairman, Su Zhaozheng, tried to raise the patriotism of Hongkong union leaders. He proclaimed that:

22 The Second National Labour Congress established the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in Guangzhou in May 1925. The twenty-five committee members included prominent Communists such as Deng Zhongxia, Li Lisan, and Liu Shaoqi and Hongkong union leaders, for example, Lin Weimin, Su Zhaozheng, and Tan [Huaze?] (Seamen's Union), He Yaoquan (Tram Workers' Union), and two other Hongkong unionists called Guan [Chongping? - Printers' Union] and Zheng [Quan? - CCP activist in Hongkong] (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 566). Some names on Deng Zhongxia's list are incomplete. From information in the Guangdong Provincial Trade Union Archives, I have guessed probable names and therefore union affiliation and indicated them in square brackets.

23 Yang Yin and Yang Pao'an were Cantonese Communists with particular influence in the Seamen's Union, see Luo Zhu (1962n).

24 According to Luo Zhu (1962a: 1), this was the address of the Tailors' Union.

After the May Thirtieth Incident, people from all over China have shown their support, are we just going to stand back with folded arms? (Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 8).

Su Zhaozheng wanted a unified leadership structure to control the activities of the various unions, and claimed: "We need one name under which to unite" (Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 8). According to Deng Zhongxia, at this meeting, union leaders agreed to pass a strike manifesto and set strike demands (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611). According to Huang Ping, this agreement was simply to support their Chinese compatriots. Hongkong unionists at the meeting formulated no specific demands (Huang Ping 1962c: 5-6).

Five hundred union leaders attended the second meeting at the Apricot Flower Restaurant, which began in chaos. Some participants identified suspected Hongkong Government agents at the meeting; a scuffle and commotion ensued as unionists threw the agents out. With order restored, Su Zhaozheng introduced Deng Zhongxia to the meeting as the representative of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Deng made a simple speech which, because he spoke Mandarin, was translated into Cantonese (Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 9). Deng Zhongxia's attendance was crucial in convincing sceptical union leaders. As a high-ranking representative of the GMD,²⁵ his status was higher than that of Su Zhaozheng. Some influential Hongkong union leaders had met Deng at the Second National Labour Congress and were impressed by his ability and prestige (Huang Ping 1962l: 3).

Some union leaders opposed taking strike action because of their political convictions. Many of these leaders were connected to the anarchist-influenced GMD right wing. They included leaders of Hongkong's two "modern" unions: Tan Huaze, leader of the Seamen's Union (Luo Zhu 1962a: 1) and Han Wenhui, leader of the Hongkong Mechanics' Union. Han, seeing that the mood of the second meeting was turning in favour of a strike, abruptly left before the unionists present took a vote (Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 9).

Other leaders wavered on more practical grounds in their support for a strike. According to Deng Zhongxia, some union leaders,²⁶ particularly leaders of handicraft unions and the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, asked him to address three problems. First, because of the turmoil in Guangzhou, it would be difficult for strike leaders to find board and lodging for Hongkong workers. Hongkong union leaders demanded that arrangements be made before workers went

²⁵ Although Deng Zhongxia was a CCP cadre, he operated mostly under the banner of the GMD. According to the agreement between the GMD and CCP, Communists had joined the GMD as individuals, not as a party.

²⁶ Deng Zhongxia refers to these unions as "yellow" or "scab" unions (*huangse gonghui*) (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611-612).

on strike, and that they be allowed to send representatives to Guangzhou to check those arrangements. Second, some union leaders were concerned as to how Deng expected their members to travel to Guangzhou. Third, these union leaders wanted to be allowed to choose their own time to strike (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611-612). Other union leaders were concerned for the future of their organisations, many of which were short of money. Most unions had no contacts in Guangzhou; only a few unions took the decision to move to Guangzhou "lock, stock, and barrel" (Zhang Guoliang 1961b: 103). A payment of tens of thousands of Chinese dollars by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions to pay for the strike call was crucial for persuading many union leaders to support the strike (Zhang Guoliang 1962f: 104).

Deng was adamant that each union had to strike simultaneously. Eventually, Hongkong unionists reluctantly agreed. Union leaders decided that Hongkong workers should form a united organisation called the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates (Quan Gang gongtuan lianhehui) (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611-612). The call to strike was passed by leaders of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, and they, too, made the official order to strike (Huang Ping 1962c: 3).

These meetings show that the CCP had minimal contact with Hongkong union members; it used contacts with union leaders to initiate a strike. The work of the CCP in Hongkong was unchanged by the May Thirtieth Incident. A few high-level CCP cadres arrived in Hongkong from Guangzhou. They stressed the patriotic duty of Hongkong union leaders to call out their workers and echo the protests of other Chinese.

Radical union leaders, hesitant workers: Hongkong mechanics refuse to strike

Radical CCP labour organisers successfully persuaded Hongkong union leaders to agree to a strike after only two secret meetings (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 611-612). Apart from two notable union leaders with strong GMD connections, who led Hongkong's most "modern" unions, union leaders objected to the strike on pragmatic grounds, or were uneasy about handing over too much control to the revolutionaries. Were union leaders forced into agreeing to strike by the radicalism of union members? Deng Zhongxia says that they were (1983 [1930]:611-612). Chen Weimin's account (1991) is typical in that it claims that years of colonial government oppression had radicalised Hongkong workers. However, even as Hongkong's union leaders met to discuss a strike, workers in the street squabbled over whether or not a

strike was wise. Zheng Quan recalls overhearing an argument between workers while they played mah-jong outside the Seamen's Union headquarters.²⁷

Some workers said: "We are Chinese, we should protest. Have we not already suffered enough at the hands of the foreign devils? We must rise up to fight the devils. If they can kill our Chinese compatriots in Shanghai, they can do it here, too. We must strike, then we will see how foolish he [the foreign devil] looks."

However, other workers disagreed, and retorted: "You're the fool, not them!"

(Zhang Guoliang 1962d: 8).

Cement workers, hesitant about going on strike, were berated by the wife of one worker, who came to the factory shouting and sobbing: "Why aren't you going on strike?" (Liang Furan 1983: 169). CCP activists challenged the Mechanics' Union leader, Han Wenhui, to call a vote on whether or not to strike. Han Wenhui accepted the challenge and his deputy Zheng Long announced that a full union congress was to decide the matter. CCP activists attended the congress, but, by a large majority, union members refused to call a strike. On a show of hands, the only ones in favour of a strike were the CCP activists and a few workers with whom they had already established contact. Luo Zhu recalls the defeat and outlines the discussions CCP activists held on how to proceed, saying:

Afterwards, we returned to the Small Society, and immediately discussed our counter policy with progressive workers (these workers all later on became CCP or Communist Youth League members). Many workers, particularly Li Lian (alias Li Feng), proposed that Han Wenhui be assassinated (Luo Zhu 1962k: 2).

CCP activists decided to persuade mechanics to rebel against their union's leadership, and adopted the method of "spreading branches and sprouting leaves," i.e., each person persuaded five others to strike, which five persuaded five more (Luo Zhu 1962k: 2). However, the CCP's activities among mechanics were unsuccessful - few workers decided to strike. The CCP next targeted the union leadership and decided to assassinate Han Wenhui. CCP cadres gave grenades to some Kowloon mechanics to kill Han, but Hongkong police uncovered the plot (Luo Daming 1962a: 4). Yang Yin ordered Zheng Quan to take a pistol to a seaman at the Seamen's Club (Haiyuan julebu) to assassinate Han. Zheng handed over the pistol and relayed details of Han's movements to the assassin, but the plan failed - Han was lying low (Zheng Quan 1961: 2). Hongkong mechanics' refusal to strike demonstrates two features of the strike's outbreak. First, when given a free choice about whether or not to strike, many workers preferred not to strike. Second, the CCP was correct to concentrate

²⁷ At the same instant, inside the Seamen's Union, Deng Zhongxia was giving the first orders to call a meeting of union representatives.

its activities on union leaders because it failed to radicalise mechanics to shame the leadership of the Mechanics' Union into calling a strike.

Some Hongkong mechanics did strike against the wishes of the leadership of the Mechanics' Union. However, these workers struck when the leaders of individual unions or of workers' groups took the initiative. One example is the Watermasters' Kinship Friendly Society (Shuishi qinshanshe), which, for the sake of clarity, I call the Navy Dockyard Workers' Union. This union's leaders were all labour contractors. Its chairman, an officer on a British ship, refused to agree to the strike, but Xiao Hong, another leader of the union, saw the strike as his chance to seize control. Xiao asked CCP activist Zhang Guoliang to go to Guangzhou and report on the arrangements being made to receive strikers. On Zhang's return, Xiao Hong supported the strike call and helped persuade some workers to strike (Zhang Guoliang 1962c: 99). As Zhang Guoliang recalls:

We held a secret meeting of the union.... I explained to the workers how the Guangzhou people were welcoming the workers with much ceremony, how the Guangdong Government was taking care of workers, and how it was arranging board and lodging for workers.... Xiao Hong spoke at the meeting, saying that the strike was a good thing.... Following this, we held another meeting at the Navy Dockyard Workers' Union and finally decided to issue the strike call (Zhang Guoliang 1962c: 99).

Some historians, for example, Cai Luo (1980: 31-36), suggest that the outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was caused by a wave of anger among most Hongkong workers. He Jinzhou (1991) claims that Hongkong workers were eager to strike, held back only by hesitant leadership (He Jinzhou 1991: 331). My examination of the memoirs written by Hongkong-based CCP activists reveals that the success or failure of the strike call was dependent on CCP activists mobilising union leaders and not on stirring the passions of workers. Workers in the only large union to hold a ballot of its members, the Mechanics' Union, refused to strike. In general, Hongkong workers did not persuade their leadership to strike, rather it was that union leaders led their membership out on strike. Deng Zhongxia was confident that union leaders controlled their membership, and he felt able to concentrate the propaganda activities of CCP cadres on to union leaders (Huang Ping 1962l: 3). Through these leaders CCP activists could rapidly influence a large number of Hongkong workers.

Many workers were hesitant to strike because they had much to lose. Many union leaders were eager to strike because they had much to gain. In chapter 4, I described how revolutionaries' efforts to win the support of Hongkong unions created political factions between unions. For the leaders of each faction, alliance with revolutionary parties in Guangzhou presented the opportunity to follow a

political career. The attitude of many union leaders was far from revolutionary - they were looking precisely to pursue such political careers. Many Hongkong union leaders exhibited this job-seeking attitude. One worker, who was doing CCP propaganda work in Hongkong before the strike, recalls a conversation between Liang Ziguang, leader of the Tailors' Union, and Deng Zhongxia that took place in Guangzhou after the strikers had left Hongkong:

[Liang Ziguang] said: "I have made such a big contribution to implementing the strike, some good must come of it" (i.e., an official post). Deng Zhongxia told him: "You organised a Strike Implementation Committee. If any good does come of it, you will be the first to enjoy the benefits" (Luo Daming 1961: 3).

Luo suggests that other Hongkong union leaders, including Huang Jinyuan, Lan Zhuoting, and Yuan Xin, all wanted political careers (Luo Daming 1961: 2). In their memoirs, none of the workers accuse leaders like Su Zhaozheng, Lin Weimin, and He Yaoquan of cynical career politics. Perhaps this is simply because such union leaders were all staunch CCP supporters.

Finally, one should note that although CCP activists were largely responsible for motivating Hongkong unionists to strike, they needed the backing of the GMD left wing to convince many of them. Leaders of unions belonging to the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, for example, Huang Jinyuan and Liang Ziguang, were unwilling to strike until they were sure that the GMD left wing supported Deng Zhongxia (Huang Ping 1962: 3). These leaders could seek this reassurance when they sent representatives to check arrangements for housing workers in Guangzhou. Huang Ping suggests that Deng Zhongxia discussed the possibility of a strike with Su Zhaozheng and Borodin in Guangzhou. According to Huang, Borodin later relayed the contents of their discussion to Liao Zhongkai (Huang Ping 1962: 6). Thus for both Deng Zhongxia and the Hongkong union leaders it was important to know that the GMD left would support a strike call.

The outbreak of the strike: the seamen stop work

I now describe the strike's outbreak and identify which unions were most active in calling out Hongkong workers. I argue that the most active unions were those with the strongest connections to revolutionaries and that the strike was an organised political movement rather than a spontaneous outburst that spread from one union to another. Many leaders in unions representing seamen, public-transport workers, and printers had strong links to the CCP. Because the CCP labour organiser Deng Zhongxia was eager to start a strike, he tried first to mobilise the workers under the leadership of those unionists whom he knew. This process was the beginning of a

hierarchy of unions in the strike, as those unions that struck first won prestige and, later, political influence (Luo Zhu 1962a: 1). The Seamen's Union, because of its large membership and its influence over dockers and tallymen, was important in the strike. As I mentioned in chapter 4, many writers regard it as the most progressive of the Hongkong unions; Deng Zhongxia's own account of the strike preparations suggests that the main procrastinators were leaders of Hongkong's smaller unions. In fact, the leaders of smaller unions refrained from immediately supporting the strike because they were concerned about the provision of board and lodging in Guangzhou for their members. However, the leader of the Seamen's Union wavered in his support for the strike, too; only when powerful CCP-influenced officials of the Seamen's Union threatened his position, did he finally agree to strike.

At the two secret meetings held in Hongkong by revolutionary labour organisers and Hongkong union leaders, Tan Huaze, the head of the Seamen's Union and a GMD loyalist, did not immediately agree to issuing a strike call (Luo Zhu 1962a: 1). Deng Zhongxia claims that the leadership of the Seamen's Union changed its mind because of the anger of ordinary seamen who ridiculed Tan Huaze (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 613). In truth, the reason Tan Huaze changed his mind is that he faced a challenge from CCP-influenced leaders. Important figures in the Lianyi Society, a centre of political activities in the Seamen's Union, were CCP members Lin Weimin (who was not in Hongkong at the time), Su Zhaozheng, Chen Xinglin, and Dai Zhuomin. These activists were the CCP's most reliable allies and were capable of manipulating the Seamen's Union and influencing the feelings of workers (Luo Zhu 1962a: 1). Eventually, Tan Huaze was forced to acquiesce to the general feeling that the Lianyi Society stirred up among leaders of seamen's associations; he notified every seamen's association in Hongkong and union branches in Shantou, Shanghai, and Tianjin and telegraphed union branches in Southeast Asia and Japan to announce that Hongkong seamen were about to strike (Luo Zhu 1962a: 1).

When any ship came into Hongkong's Victoria Harbour, no matter which country it came from, the Chinese crew walked out on strike and returned to their associations. Company officials tried to combat the growing strike by sending police and representatives to deliver speeches to seamen as they disembarked, thereby attempting to persuade them that the May Thirtieth Incident had nothing to do with Hongkong. These efforts were unsuccessful (Zhang Guoliang 1962f: 100). By the following day, two thousand seamen had left Hongkong for Guangzhou (Cai Luo 1980: 31). Deng Zhongxia decided that crews on the Chinese-owned Tong'an Co.'s ships Hade'an, Bobao, Dong'an, and Xi'an, and the Siyi Shipping Co.'s Ruitai and Quanzhou, together with various ships running from Hongkong to Jiangmen, Shiqi, and Wuzhou, should remain at work temporarily to take strikers to Guangdong (Luo Zhu 1962a: 2).

Leaders of the Tram Workers' Union had close connections to the CCP - He Yaoquan was an executive of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. In the early morning of June 20, tram drivers struck. The strike halted traffic in Kowloon and almost brought public transport on Hongkong Island to a complete standstill. At a meeting on June 19, Qu Guowei, chairman of the Tram Workers' Union, and activists He Yaoquan, Bai Jiezhi, and Zhen Chuncheng had decided that drivers should take their trams out of the stations and abandon them on the roads in Kennedy Town, Sheung Wan, Central, and Wanchai. The cessation of public transport and the abandoned trams had a brief, but dramatic effect on the colony as storekeepers, clerks, and other Hongkong citizens suddenly became aware of the strike (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962j: 1-2). On June 23, the Bus Drivers' Union (Qiche gonghui) struck. Drivers of a total fleet of some fifty buses from the Kai Tak, Kowloon, and Chung Wah Bus Companies all went out on strike. Drivers of lorries carrying freight and drivers of private and government-run vehicles also struck. On June 27, ferry workers went out on strike as the Shipmasters' Union (Chuanzhu siji gonghui) answered the strike call. All services from Tsimshatsui, Yaumadei, Samshuipo, and Mongkok were cancelled (Luo Zhu 1962a: 6-7).

On the evening of June 19, Ma Chaofan and Guan Zhongping, CCP-influenced leaders of printers' unions, left their offices and went on strike (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962k: 1). Communist Youth League member Huang Tianwei, too, mobilised the printers to strike (Cai Luo 1980: 32). Some Hongkong newspapers closed down the next day. The information services of the colony were effectively brought to a halt and rumour and gossip became the medium of news circulation (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962k: 1). The CCP had previously printed pamphlets exhorting the public to strike and hidden them in the basement of the Peak Hotel. Various workers, including Zheng Quan, distributed these leaflets to every union and every workers' association; they handed out other leaflets to the public; and scattered others wide from high buildings, "like goddesses scattering flowers" (Luo Zhu 1962a: 8).

On June 20, foreign-employed workers went out on strike. The Foreign-Employed Workers' Union (Yangwu gonghui) was split into two organisations: the Leisure and Brotherhood Union (Xuyi gonghui) and the Harmonious and Progressive Union (Xiejin gonghui), representing workers in the four large British Hotels, Western-style chefs and florists, odd-job workers, and domestic staff. Direct CCP links to the leadership of these unions were an important factor in encouraging foreign-employed workers to strike. Much of the mobilisation was performed by Communist Youth League member Zhang Rendao and activist Su Qide. Workers at the Queen's Hotel, Hongkong Hotel, Peak Hotel, and Repulse Bay Hotel struck first. Even Chinese maids in foreign homes, who were mostly from Gaoyao or Dongguan

and had no union organisation, decided to strike. Unionised male foreign-employed workers had long since given news of the strike plans to Chinese maids, who decided to take the opportunity to return to Guangdong and visit their relatives. In the early hours of June 20, when Chinese maids from foreign-owned houses on the Peak left to go to the market, they had no intention of returning (Luo Zhu 1962a: 8 and Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962l).

The importance of persuading the seamen to strike is demonstrated by the effect of the seamen's decision on other unions. On June 20, stevedores and dockyard coolies jointly decided to strike, even though these two organisations were often at each other's throats, principally over arguments concerning the demarcation of jobs between the two unions. Once the seamen had struck, however, neither unions' workers could work and so they struck too (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1962m: 1). It was a similar story with the Tallymen's Union, whose workers were predominantly warehouse clerks. Members of these three unions relied on seamen in their daily work and so it was natural that they should all go out on strike after the seamen. The Coal Coolies' Union (Meitan gonghui), which had some eight thousand members, struck, too. Its main strike leaders were Chen Jinqun and Wen Ting. However, the decision to strike was far from unanimous; another Coal Coolies' Union leader, Zeng Xue, was already spreading anti-strike propaganda (Luo Zhu 1962a: 9).

Postal workers, hygiene workers, and hospital staff struck in unison because leaders of the Government Workers' Happiness Alliance called them out. As was the case with the other unions that were quickest to strike, its leaders had contact with the CCP's radical labour organisers. The work of persuading the postal workers to strike was undertaken by union leaders Lin Bin, Huang Kai, and Tan Botang. The Government Workers' Happiness Alliance struck because of the CCP links of their leadership, not because of worker radicalism (Luo Zhu 1962a: 10).

The strike was not an explosion of mass frustration. Hongkong union leaders played an important role in bringing out their members on strike. In so doing, leaders were following individual union interests, for although under the leadership of the CCP the three factions of Hongkong unions had temporarily become the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates, the leadership of individual unions was still very important in trying to bring about the strike. Huang Jinyuan of the Pork Butchers' Union and Liang Ziguang of the Tailors' Union wanted to use the strike to advance both their own personal interests and the interests of their union. For this reason, they were in favour of the strike action (Luo Zhu 1962a: 12). This analysis is contrary to other suggestions made by Deng Zhongxia that the leaders of Hongkong's smaller unions were lukewarm towards the strike action (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 612). Huang Jinyuan told Hongkong workers: "We must react to the

May Thirtieth Incident. We must strike and the strike must be led by the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates" (Lu Lan 1962b: 152).

Considering that Hongkong's smaller unions had participated in the 1922 seamen's strike and that, in early June 1925, the headquarters of the Tailors' Union was used for the secret meetings in Hongkong to plan the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, it seems wrong to suggest that leaders of these unions were anything but major contributors to the implementation of the strike. The testimony of some CCP cadres in Hongkong at the time supports this view.

Although each had their own plans and wanted to use this strike as an opportunity to raise their leadership status, they were, however, unanimous in approving the implementation of the strike; therefore they participated actively in the launch of the strike. After the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates, the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, and the Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union had issued the strike call, from June 20 onwards, workers from every industry responded to the strike call one after another, and joined the strike wave (Luo Zhu 1962a: 12).

Hongkong union leaders played a vital role in mobilising worker support for the strike. Although many leaders were concerned at the high costs of a strike, they were determined to join. Deng Zhongxia is wrong when he characterises many Hongkong union leaders as "reluctant" and forced to strike by the patriotism of the Hongkong workers.

Some writers claim that the Shaji Massacre was an important cause of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. The Shaji Massacre happened as follows: on June 23, workers, peasants, soldiers, students, and merchants held an anti-imperialist demonstration opposite the foreign concession of Shamian Island in Guangzhou. Both sides fired shots: one Frenchman died; more than 170 Chinese suffered injuries (117 serious) and 52 Chinese died. Because historians such as Chung (1969) were unaware of the role of Hongkong union leaders in calling the strike, they emphasise the effect of the Shaji Massacre on Hongkong workers and claim that it inflamed the workers' patriotic fervour (Chung 1969: 463). The leaders of many Hongkong unions were already mobilising their workers to join the strike even before the Shaji Massacre took place. Hongkong was already in turmoil before June 23: eighty per cent of Hongkong's shops had already closed and a run on Chinese banks in the colony was at its most acute on June 21. Delays in striking were mostly due to difficulties of finding lodgings and financing the mass return to Guangzhou. The Shaji Massacre made little impression on workers compared to the activities of the CCP among union leaders (Huang Ping 1962c: 1-4).

Li Fu recollects leading a number of Hongkong workers from the Stevedores' Union and the Dockyard Coolies' Union in the march at Shaji (Li Fu 1961b: 2). This

evidence shows that not only had Hongkong workers decided to strike before the Shaji Massacre, but that some even took part in the demonstration opposite Shamian. The following unions had already begun to strike on June 20 and had transported their membership to Guangzhou by early July: the Inland Waterways Seamen's Union; Hongkong Brotherhood Federation of Landing-Stage Workers (Xianggang dunchuan gongyi lianheshe); Hongkong Steamship-Repairers' Union (Xiuzao tielunchuan gonghui); Hongkong Federation of Chinese Construction Workers' Unions (Qiao Gang jianzao gonghui lianhehui zongbu); Hongkong Toonwood Workers' Righteous and Peaceful Union (Xianggang dachun yi'an gonghui); Hongkong Chinese Cement Industry General Union (Qiao Gang nishui gongye zonghui); Hongkong Chinese Builders' Union (Qiao Gang tumu gonghui); Hongkong Carpenters' Harmony, Peace, and Fortune Union (Qiao Gang jiemu xiehexiang gonghui); Hongkong Chinese Carpenters' Union (Qiao Gang muye gonghui); Hongkong Sour Plumwood Carpenters' Union; Hongkong Ironworkers' Union (Xianggang tieye gonghui); Hongkong United Will Union, representing brass-smiths, (Xianggang tongyi gonghui); Hongkong Lead, Brass, and Iron Piping Union (Xianggang qiantongtiehou gonghui); Hongkong Oil Industry Union (Xianggang youye gonghui); All-Hongkong Leather-Shoe Cobblers' Union (Quan Gang gelü gonghui); Hongkong Wooden-Clog Cobblers' Union; Hongkong Beef and Lamb Butchers' Union (Xianggang niuyang gonghui); Pork Butchers' Union; Hongkong Grocers' Union (Xianggang guocai gonghui); Hongkong Restaurant and Tea Room Workers' Union (Xianggang jiulou chashi gonghui); Hongkong Tea-House Employees' Union; Hongkong Virtue and Peace General Union, representing Chinese cooks, (Xianggang dehe zonggonghui); Chinese Western-Style Biscuit Union (Zhonghua xican binggan gonghui); Hongkong Tailors' Union; Hongkong Chinese Seamstresses' Union (Qiao Gang fengye gonghui); Hongkong Laundry Workers' Union (Xianggang xiyi gonghui); Hongkong Barbers' Brand New Society; and Hongkong Night-Soil Industry Union (Xianggang yexiangfenye gonghui) (Luo Zhu 1962a: 12).

The student strike in Hongkong

The student strike that accompanied the workers' strike was also a well-organised, CCP-led operation: the CCP used its contacts among Hongkong students to organise a student strike. Deng Zhongxia contacted the Hongkong Branch of the Communist Youth League, whose members Lin Changchi, Li Yibao, Peng Yuesheng, and Zhang Rendao were also active in the workers' movement. Deng Zhongxia instructed them to use three intellectual groups to organise their propaganda activities: the Hongkong

China Education Study Group (Xianggang Zhonghua jiaoyu yanjiuhui), the Hongkong Branch of the Guangdong New Students' Society (Guangdong xinxueshengshe Xianggang fenshe), and the Confucius Society (Kongshenghui). The Guangdong Communist Youth League and the Guangdong New Students' Society authorised Chen Zhiwen and several other cadres from Guangzhou to assist the Hongkong activists (Luo Zhu 1962a: 16).

Lin Changchi organised the Hongkong China Education Study Group. CCP activist Lin Changchi was a school inspector employed by the Hongkong Government. Using his personal connections, he assembled a group of teachers and headmasters to lead the strike movement, particularly intellectuals who ran or taught in small private schools. Lin's group consisted of the following individuals: Chen Zhongheng from the Victorious Contacts School (Kailuo xuexiao); Chen Junping and Wang Yiya from the Roll of Honour School (Yunbang xuexiao); Liao Yuequ from the Ploughing-a-Course School (Gengdao xuexiao), Li Yibao from the Illiterates' Training School (Mengyang xuexiao), and Wang Shangliao from the Esteemed and Virtuous School (Shangde xuexiao). This group operated openly from an address in Stanley Street; it was an official organisation of progressive intellectuals established under the Hongkong Government. By 1925, it had become an active, CCP-affiliated organisation used to recruit members of the Communist Youth League (Luo Zhu 1962a: 16-17).

The Guangdong New Students' Society organised radical students from Hongkong's most prestigious schools into the Hongkong Branch of the Guangdong New Students' Society. These students included: Mo Cangbai, Yuan Zhanyu, and Huang Jianying (Queen's College); Deng Zhanzhi (College of Education and Talent (Yucui shushe)); Lai Qingfa, and Liang Xiaohai (Chinese College); and other students from various schools, such as Lai Ziyun, Zhou Yihua, Lai Jinghuai, Deng Zhaolan, Li Weicai, Peng Zuolin, and Lu Guohua (Luo Zhu 1962a: 17).

The CCP used the Confucius Society, too, to organise the student strike. The Confucius Society was situated on Hollywood Road; next door to it was an affiliated organisation called the Confucian Youth Society. The aim of these organisations was to attract ordinary students and scholars to participate in propaganda activities. The head of the Confucius Society was Li Buxie. Lin Changchi had persuaded him to establish the Confucius Society to oppose the activities of the Young Men's Christian Association. The Confucius Society published a popular student newspaper called *Zhenshanmei (Truth, Good, and Perfection)* (Luo Zhu 1962a: 17).

The Communist Youth League, led by Li Yibao, directed the strike movement. There were no Communist Youth League members at the University of Hongkong, so the CCP concentrated its activities in local schools (Wang Ke'ou 1962a: 169). Representatives from the Queen's College, Chinese College, College of

Education and Talent, St. Paul's College, and St. Steven's College took part in secret meetings with Li Yibao, held in parks, hills, and sometimes caves. However, Hongkong's students could not agree on who should strike first. Li Yibao chaired countless meetings to try to decide a way ahead without reaching a final conclusion (Luo Zhu 1962a: 18).

The students' strike used tactics similar to those of the workers' strike. Different schools wanted to act independently and student leaders in some schools wavered in their support for the strike, so the CCP decided to start a strike at the most respected school in Hongkong - Queen's College.²⁸ The CCP felt that if it could succeed in bringing out Queen's College, then students from schools all over Hongkong would join the movement. The CCP hoped that students would respond to the prestige of Queen's College as workers would respond to the prestige of the Seamen's Union (Wang Ke'ou 1962: 169-170).

Mo Cangbai and Yuan Zhanyu first distributed the propaganda leaflets of the Hongkong Branch of the New Students' Society. Afterwards, they sent a letter to the school addressed: "To all the students of the slave school Queen's College, for them to read." Communist Youth League activists succeeded in persuading a meeting of students' representatives to organise a boycott of classes and to send a telegram to the Guangdong Government expressing sympathy with the victims of the May Thirtieth Incident (Luo Zhu 1962a: 19).

The boycott of classes started on June 18, one day before the first workers struck. The news of the strike at Queen's College spread quickly; it reached the Chinese College on the morning of June 18, where student leaders called a mass walk-out. Other schools' student representatives, for example, those at the College of Education and Talent, responded to the news by calling a strike. St. Paul's College had organised a Strike Group under the supervision and encouragement of the Hongkong Branch of the New Students' Society and carried out a boycott of lessons on June 18 (Luo Zhu 1962a: 20). Fearing a backlash from the Hongkong Government, the Strike Committee of Queen's College left for Guangzhou. On June 21, St. Paul's College sent representatives to Guangzhou. News of the boycott of lessons continued to spread. Students at St. John's College, St. Steven's College, Wanchai College, and Yaumadei College all struck one after the other (Cai Luo 1980: 32-33).

Triads and the strike

²⁸ Queen's College had a kind of revolutionary prestige because, in 1883, Sun Yat-sen had studied there. (At the time it was called Central School) (see Stokes 1962).

In chapter 5, I discussed the use of triads in past Hongkong "patriotic" movements and described CCP contacts with Hongkong triads. To launch its movement, the CCP relied on existing workers' organisations like triads that it opposed in theory. According to Liang Furan and Guo Shouzhen, the CCP used "exceptional methods" to ensure the success of the strike call (Liang Furan and Guo Shouzhen 1961b: 112). Secret societies played an important role in the push to get the strike movement under way in Hongkong. Yang Yin used his contacts in the Hongkong triads to mobilise sections of the Hongkong workforce (Huang Ping 1962c: 3).

The secret societies were a great help in starting the strike. At that time, quite a few secret-society figures were also leaders of unions, such as Huang Jinyuan of the Pork Butchers' Union. Secret-society leaders, such as the Button-head's [(kouzitou)] Zeng, and the Golden-head's [(Jinzitou)] Courageous Liang, used their vast influence and great ability to mobilise people (Zhang Guoliang 1962f: 103).

Intimidation was rife in the colony. Bombs were placed on tram lines, the Blood and Iron Society and the Dare to Die Corps mailed threatening letters, and other intimidators sent telephone threats to workers in newspapers and government offices. Hongkong's Chinese population took these threats seriously; even powerful people - like Mo Kanxin, Butterfield and Swire's comprador - decided to retreat from their duties (Chung 1969: 97-98). CCP activists' use of triads helped to create an atmosphere of fear and confusion among Hongkong's population. Liang Furan, a CCP cadre in Hongkong, recalls the violence and rumours that turned Hongkong into chaos.

Everyone in Hongkong was alarmed. The city streets were full of people who were confused and flustered. More and more rumours spread daily, saying: "Soviet warships are blockading Hongkong" and "The revolutionary Guangdong Government is going to attack Hongkong." Some people said: "People are being beaten and killed in Central." In Central, other people said: "There were killings in Sheung Wan." In fact, people were indeed beaten up, all caused by secret societies and the Hong Men (Liang Furan 1983: 168).

The chaos and fear caused by triad activities that the CCP encouraged created an atmosphere of instability in Hongkong. Triads directly intimidated workers to strike, but the heavy-handed measures of the Colonial Government to control the unrest caused resentment among Hongkong's Chinese, too. As a result, the work of the CCP in calling a strike became easier as Hongkong appeared to Chinese to be a more and more dangerous place. The CCP's use of triads and intimidation persuaded many reluctant workers to join the strike.

When Hongkong workers went on strike, it was partly because of their anti-imperialist feelings and partly because everyone in Hongkong was nervous. Food was in short supply and union pickets were saying: "If you don't go back to Guangzhou, you'll starve to death." People were terrified (Zheng Quan 1961: 2).

CCP members used intimidation and terror to force workers to strike. Chen Jianfu, a member of the Lianyi Society, persuaded seamen to strike by waiting for their ships to dock and shouting: "Strike now, all of you. Anyone who doesn't strike, I will deal with them with my pistol!" (Liang Furan and Guo Shouzhen 1961a: 2). Zheng Quan gave grenades to two seamen to blow up Central Market and a bus station. When the plan failed, he took responsibility for the next attack himself. Zheng blew up a tram, injuring the driver and himself (Zheng Quan 1961: 4). The widespread use of intimidation is further evidence that the strike call was a command from above - an authoritarian movement, rather than an eruption of mass anti-imperialist sentiment.

The CCP used coercion in the students' strike, too. Cai Luo (1980) attributes the spread of the student strike to the work of CCP activists, in particular Lin Changchi and Li Yibao (Cai Luo 1980: 33). However, as in the workers' movement, CCP activists could influence only a limited number of student leaders through propaganda activities. To create a broader movement, the CCP had to use force and intimidation. Queen's College quickly expelled some of its students for belonging to the Dare to Die Society, which the CCP was using to intimidate workers and students into going on strike (Stokes 1962: 322). Luo Zhu corroborates the claim that the CCP used intimidation to start the students' strike. He writes:

The backbone cadres of the Hongkong Communist Youth League-led Hongkong Branch of the New Students' Society, Mo Cangbai and Yuan Zhanyu, swiftly set about organising student pickets to patrol every college and school whose students had not gone out on strike and provoke those students into joining the strike. At that time, each college and school joined the strike one after another, totalling more than thirty schools and ten thousand people (Luo Zhu 1962a: 20).

Leadership of the strike

According to one view of the outbreak of the strike, the CCP was the sole leader of the movement; its cadres worked with workers and students to persuade hesitant union leaders and teachers to join the protest movement in sympathy with massacred Chinese in Shanghai and Guangzhou.²⁹ This view infers that the Guangzhou-

²⁹ This is the stance taken by Cai Luo (1980), Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi (1980), and Chan Lau Kit-ching (1990).

Hongkong strike was a radical, democratic movement in which the CCP by-passed pre-modern forms of leadership to reach out directly to the workers and students.

The memoirs of CCP activists in Hongkong suggest otherwise. In 1925, the CCP organisation in Hongkong was still small. In their activities among the workers, CCP activists were unable to distinguish themselves from the GMD, whose activities among Hongkong workers had not revolutionised the structure of Hongkong workers' organisations. The CCP had to motivate union leaders and student activists to strike because it knew that it had to focus its propaganda campaign and that local leaders could carry their membership with them. The CCP lacked the strength to combat existing leadership structures in Hongkong (Huang Ping 1962a: 1-4). The weakness of the CCP in Hongkong caused it to appeal to worker and student patriotism to strike. Mirroring past patriotic movements, the CCP used triads to intimidate workers and students into striking.

The CCP allied with existing political groups in order to build a power base strong enough to mobilise Hongkong workers and tempted union leaders with promises of political careers if they persuaded their membership to strike. In short, the CCP allied itself with all manner of political groups in Hongkong, neglecting its own political platform and allying with triads and local union leaders. Huang Ping recognises that the successful outbreak of the strike was dependent not upon the leadership of the CCP or the radicalism of the masses but the support of local political leaders. The CCP had not yet established sole leadership of the strike.

Although the strike erupted under the leadership of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, there had been no fundamental resolution of the leadership question. After returning to Guangzhou, we still had to undergo a struggle with Hongkong union leaders for leadership of the strike (Huang Ping 1962l: 8).

Evidence of the potential conflict between the CCP and local union leaders over the question of leadership of the strike can be seen in the way the strike demands were issued. Huang Ping recalls that no strike demands were made on the Hongkong Government before the strike started (Huang Ping 1962c: 6). On July 3, *Gongren zhi lu (Workers' Road)* published the strike demands. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions formulated the demands in Guangzhou and issued them in the name of the Committee of the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates. As a result, the demands more closely reflected the political platform of Communist labour leaders rather than demands of Hongkong unionists. Apart from calling a boycott of foreign trade, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions made the following strike demands: 1) That the workers continue the resistance movement against imperialism until the demands of the Shanghai Alliance of Workers, Merchants, and Students be accepted. 2) That the Hongkong Government must grant to Hongkong's Chinese residents: freedom of assembly, association, speech,

publication, and industrial strikes; equal treatment for all Hongkong citizens, Chinese and Western, under the law; democratic elections to secure representation in the legislature for Hongkong workers; labour laws, including an eight hour day, minimum wage, an end to the labour-contractor system, and better treatment for apprentices; a repeal of the July 1 rent rise; and the right to live on the Peak.³⁰

Hongkong union leaders were not widely consulted when the All-China Federation of Trade Unions drafted these demands - they had to add their own concerns later, on July 14. Then, Huang Jinyuan demanded of the Hongkong Government that: 1) Workers permits should continue to be valid when strikers return to work. 2) Workers should receive pay for the duration of the strike. 3) After the strike, strikers should not be sacked, nor should union officials be deported. 4) Everyone arrested during the strike should be released.³¹

Conclusion

The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was a well-organised movement. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions had long planned to hold a strike. The May Thirtieth Incident provided it with the spark of patriotism with which it could create a strike movement in Hongkong. CCP labour organiser Deng Zhongxia was prominent in organising the strike; so, too, were Seamen's Union leader Su Zhaozheng and the CCP's activists in Hongkong. Hongkong union leaders also played an important role.

Hongkong union leaders were not as reluctant to strike as Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) claims. They agreed to strike after only two meetings with CCP activists - their reluctance to strike stemmed mainly from concerns for the provision for strikers in Guangzhou. Union leaders were not swept along by a wave of mass patriotic fervour after the Shaji Massacre as some writers have claimed - most unions had already agreed to strike before June 23. Hongkong union leaders were interested in the chance to follow political careers, not in patriotic gestures, and workers never vociferous or spontaneously demanded strike action.

The strike call was a well-organised, authoritarian movement in which the CCP used links to Hongkong union leaders and secret societies that the revolutionaries normally considered "reactionary" and "conservative." As such, the start of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike bore many similarities to that of previous mass movements in Hongkong led by Guangdong politicians. For union leaders, the movement was a chance to raise their own prestige and enhance the power of

³⁰ See *Gongren zhi lu* no. 10 for the full demands.

³¹ See *Gongren zhi lu* no. 20 for the full demands.

their unions. For the CCP, the strike was an opportunity to launch its political program of anti-imperialism. CCP cadres planned the strike and formulated the strike demands in Guangzhou. Workers responded to the strike call out of a mixture of obedience to union leadership and fear of triad intimidation. The outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike did not represent a novel, unprecedented form of social movement in Hongkong; on the contrary, it aped past Hongkong social movements. The CCP had as yet been unable to establish sole control over the movement; local power-holders, such as Hongkong's union leaders, led the workers out on strike.

Chapter 7

The Strike Bureaucracy

In chapter 6, I showed how Hongkong union leaders were crucial to the calling of the strike and that CCP revolutionaries had little contact with Hongkong workers. In chapter 1, I suggested that revolutionaries are likely to build large bureaucracies to establish control over political movements and impose their visions of society. In this chapter, I examine to what extent the CCP established strike institutions that reflected the wishes of Hongkong workers and allowed strikers to control the strike leadership. A close examination of the memoirs of CCP activists shows that revolutionaries were unwilling to give much control to existing workers' organisations. CCP cadres and CCP-influenced union leaders carefully constructed a Strike Committee and Strikers' Congress that passed their initiatives quickly and diluted the power of many non-CCP Hongkong union leaders. As a consequence, the institutions that the strike leadership set up did not reflect the wishes of all strikers; on the contrary, they were the cause of conflict between unions and the strike leadership. Isaacs (1961 [1938]) represents the 1925-1927 revolution as a time when the CCP was close to China's workers. My study shows that although the CCP led the workers, it was rarely close to them.

Political groups in Guangzhou

Before examining the bureaucracy of the strike, I describe the competing political groups in Guangzhou. The party in power, the GMD, was beset by factional infighting. Sun Yat-sen, its founding father, had died in March 1925, causing political rivalry in its leadership. The most powerful figures in the power struggle were Wang Jingwei, Hu Hanmin, Xu Chongzhi, Liao Zhongkai, Liu Zhenhuan, Wu Zhihui, and Chiang Kai-shek.³² Such political rivalries gave Hongkong leaders the opportunity to rebel against the strike's leadership by playing one faction against another, but they were not the sole cause of Hongkong union leaders' protests.

On June 20, 1925, Chiang moved to increase his power. At a GMD Central Executive Committee meeting, he insisted that he be made a committee member and Generalissimo of all the armed forces. No one dared to refuse his demands. While the meeting was still in progress, he declared martial law, ready to set about the task of centralising the GMD under the Central Executive Committee with himself as Commander-in-Chief (Chen Jieru 1992: 208-209). GMD politicians regarded Chiang as an outsider - he was not one of the GMD's founder members - and they began an anti-Chiang movement, with slogans such as: "A new warlord has emerged," "The rise of the Ningbo Napoleon," "Guangzhou has been turned into a police state," and "If you want to be arrested, stay in Guangzhou." Some GMD cadres took their advice and left for Beijing (Chen Jieru 1992: 209). Chiang represented a centrist faction, trying to build state power and military support and willing to ally temporarily with all GMD factions, the CCP, and Soviet advisers.³³ Chiang was an ambitious dictator too, his ultimate goal was to launch a Northern Expedition to unite China by military force.

Aside from Chiang, the GMD had two other powerful factions: a right wing and a left-wing. The GMD right wing opposed the alliance with the CCP and detested the influence of Soviet advisers (Wilbur and How 1989: 140). This right-wing faction included established GMD politicians such as Hu Hanmin, Lin Zhimian, Zou Lu, Deng Zeru, Feng Ziyou, Zhang Ji, Sun Fo, and Wu Zhihui, and veteran GMD labour organisers and anarchists, who feared the growing influence of the CCP in the labour movement, including Ma Chaojun, Xie Yingbo, and Chen Binsheng. The GMD right wing openly advocated the expulsion of Communists from the GMD and plotted their assassination (Deng Zeru 1948: 323).

³² For an account of Chiang Kai-shek's political scheming to get to the top, see Chen Jieru (1992: 180-216).

³³ Issacs (1961 [1938]) describes Chiang as "like cerebus, the three headed guardian at the gates of Hell" (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 89).

Liao Zhongkai was a prominent figure in the GMD and a leader of its left-wing faction. Of all GMD politicians, Liao supported the strike and Soviet advisers most strongly. At the beginning of the strike, CCP leaders believed Wang Jingwei, too, to be a leftist, and thought that the GMD left wing controlled Guangdong (Ma Xingguang 1991: 115-129). In 1924, Liao became head of the Government Labour Department and chose Feng Jupao as his deputy. Liao's choice caused arguments: Feng was a Communist and unpopular with the right-wing Guangdong Mechanics' Union. In his office, Liao hung a red flag with the hammer and sickle on it; rumours spread that he had joined the CCP (Chen Fulin 1990: 217). In May 1925, when the Shantou Conference met to elect Sun Yat-sen's successor, Liao led a successful campaign to block Hu Hanmin and promote Wang Jingwei, who continued policies of alliance with Communists and Soviets. The right wing's reaction to the defeat of Hu Hanmin started just as the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike erupted.

The presence of Soviet advisers divided the GMD because of GMD politicians' conflicting attitudes towards the alliance with these advisers and the CCP. At the beginning of the strike, with the GMD left wing in power, Soviet advisers had authority. Michael Borodin, the senior Soviet adviser in Guangdong, had arrived in Guangzhou on October 26, 1923, and had soon become a close adviser to Sun Yat-sen (Wilbur and How 1989: 6). When Hongkong workers struck and returned to China, Guangzhou, under the GMD Government, became a centre of revolutionary activity. Guangzhou was Borodin's base but not the main centre of the CCP, so Borodin turned the CCP Regional Committee in Guangzhou into his own sphere of influence.

Borodin had long been unhappy about the location of the CCP headquarters in Shanghai. In 1924, he complained that their work did not affect Guangzhou. He once proposed moving the headquarters to Guangzhou, but Chen Duxiu refused. Chen Duxiu complained that once the Guangzhou Regional Committee had Borodin's opinion, it ignored the CCP Central Committee (Zheng Xuejia 1992: 580). Chen Duxiu's son Chen Yannian, who was head of the Guangzhou Regional Committee, was displeased with the situation, too. He complained that:

One must always run round to Borodin's home, only then can one get hold of the tiniest morsel of political news. Nor is it good to disregard Borodin's instructions, this situation causes many problems with work. The CCP Central Committee often feel that they [the Guangzhou Regional Committee] do not promptly report the situation in Guangzhou; to tell the truth, there are some things of which even they [the Guangzhou Regional Committee] do not know (Quoted in Zheng Xuejia 1992: 580).

Borodin created an autonomous, independently functioning unit in Guangzhou in order to push through the policies of the Soviet regime as he understood them. Much power rested with Borodin and the CCP Regional Committee, but Borodin tried to control his CCP allies. His position as an autonomous actor in the political arena gave him great power.

With the beginning of the reorganisation of the GMD in 1923, the Chinese revolution had two lines: the Shanghai line, i.e., the Chen Duxiu line, and the Guangzhou line (Zheng Xuejia 1992: 580).

Borodin had close political links to Liao Zhongkai. Liao was a respected politician; his support was vital to guarantee the success of the strike at its outset (Chen Shanguang 1991: 8). Because of Borodin's secrecy and his links to Liao Zhongkai, CCP leaders had regularly to consult with him to discuss strike policies.

CCP control and the strike bureaucracy

Now I go on to examine how the CCP quickly tried to establish institutions to manage the strike and centralise control over the movement in its hands. The CCP was careful to ensure that strikers' institutions were structured according to its plans. Before establishing any part of the strike bureaucracy, leading cadres of the CCP in Guangzhou met with CCP activists to explain the party line. After the May Thirtieth Incident, the CCP established two groups to take charge of propaganda activities. Deng Zhongxia led one group of five, established by the Guangzhou Party Centre Temporary Committee, to mobilise Hongkong unions to strike. Chen Yannian led another group of six, organised by the Guangdong Regional Committee, to mobilise support in Guangzhou (Lai Xianpeng 1991: 61).

After Hongkong strikers arrived in Guangzhou, the two groups merged to form a single large group. By July, Chen Yannian informed the CCP Central Committee that Deng Zhongxia led the new Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee Party Group (Strike Party Group for short), which included in its membership Huang Ping, Su Zhaozheng, He Yaoquan, Chen Quan, Luo Zhu, and Peng Songfu (Lai Xianpeng 1991: 61-62). The Strike Party Group represented a pro-CCP faction that controlled the Strike Committee (Wilbur and How 1989: 163). The Strike Party Group had close control over all party cells and formed the leadership of a well-organised, independent structure within the GMD.³⁴

³⁴ See Wilbur and How (1989: 548-552) for a description of the structure and duties of party cells under the control of the Strike Party Group.

The CCP wanted to form party groups in every union, peasant association, and student group. Such groups had few members and internal discussion was not encouraged, they had only to carry out the orders of superiors and use contacts with sympathetic union leaders to shore up support for CCP policies in the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee and the Strikers' Congress. During the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, the CCP Guangdong Regional Committee had direct control over party groups (Lai Xianpeng 1991: 63-64).³⁵

The CCP tried to establish direct control over the strike from its outset. Because of the need to make arrangements for strikers returning to Guangzhou and because the CCP wanted to create a long-lasting movement, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions set up a Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Temporary Committee on June 13, six days before Hongkong unions called the strike (He Jinzhou 1991: 331).³⁶ The address of the Temporary Committee was the Seamen's Club at 45, Taiping Road South, Guangzhou; this location reflected the political importance of the Seamen's Union (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 2).

The Temporary Committee was under the leadership of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions; Lin Weimin and Li Sen were its leading cadres, but in effect Li Sen was in control. The Guangdong Communist Party Regional Committee despatched the following labour and student movement cadres to participate in the work of the committee: Feng Jupao, Liu Ersong, Shi Bu, Liang Jiu, Cao Junrui, and Luo Zhenxing. Feng Jupao, Shi Bu, and Liang Jiu were all Communists operating in the guise of GMD members (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 2).

After the strike began on June 19, a large number of Hongkong workers' leaders arrived in Guangdong. On June 20, the Temporary Committee called a meeting of representatives from more than thirty unions to discuss strikers' accommodation. This meeting decided to set up reception stations at Shenzhen, Qianshan, Jiangmen, and Hekou. Because the Temporary Committee lacked staff, it asked the Guangdong Government to order peasant, township, and ancestral organisations in each region to receive strikers and asked the Guangdong Government to order every local political group to give its support (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 3-4).

35 Chen Yannian, Deng Zhongxia, and Borodin discussed important issues of strike policy in secret (see Huang Ping 1962a).

36 According to He Jinzhou, the Temporary Committee started work on June 13. However, other sources suggest the date could have been June 15 (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 1).

The GMD left wing, through Liao Zhongkai, arranged finance for the Temporary Committee³⁷ and asked the Public Security Bureau to allocate the Changti area for strikers' dormitories. Lodging houses were situated in gambling halls, opium dens, brothels, city temple halls, and workers' associations. The Temporary Committee furnished each lodging house with beds, mats, and wooden utensils bought from local stall-holders (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 2).

The Temporary Committee sent Shi Bu and Liang Jiu to set up a reception office at Xihaokou near the Guangdong customs office to meet strikers arriving from Hongkong. Once the Hongkong unions had agreed to strike, CCP activists, including Li Fu and Li Xiantao, returned to Guangzhou from Hongkong to help the Temporary Committee (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 2).

The Temporary Committee divided strikers' lodgings into Eastern, Western, Southern, and Central Districts. Workers' temporary lodgings were of a standard comparable to that in Hongkong. Every day, workers received forty cents to buy food; local restaurants were always busy (Li Xiantao 1961a: 1). Hongkong workers, not used to having to protect themselves against mosquitoes, were provided with mosquito coils (Li Fu 1961b: 1).

However, the Temporary Committee was too weak to have any influence over the strikers; it had only a few members and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions consisted of only a handful of high-level leaders. The Temporary Committee enlisted the help of university and high-school students to receive the strikers, but the Hongkong unions dealt with most problems themselves (Luo Zhu 1962m: 1). The Temporary Committee allocated lodgings according to union size, as calculated in Hongkong, and billeted workers from the same union together. For example, lodgings in Guangzhou's Western District were for the Dockyard Coolies' Union, Stevedores' Union, and Gunnysack Workers' United Happiness Union (Mabao lianle gonghui). As a result, unions continued to be responsible for day-to-day supervision of their membership (Li Fu 1961b: 1). Because workers were lodged in their unions, union organisation took charge over everyday activities and many CCP activists left the Reception Office to rejoin their own union (Li Fu 1961a: 1-2).

The CCP wanted to create a permanent committee to run the strike. The original impulse to create a permanent Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee came not from the aim to construct a workers' government but from the intent of the CCP-influenced All-China Federation of Trade Unions to impose its leadership on the strike by transforming the Temporary Committee into a stronger executive

³⁷ Liao Zhongkai was concurrently head of the Government Labour Department and Provincial Finance Secretary.

organisation (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 8). In mid-June, the Strike Party Group met to hear how they should organise the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee (Strike Committee for short). They decided that the All-China Federation of Trade Unions must control the Strike Committee (Lai Xianpeng 1991: 64). To ensure this control, the Strike Party Group decided that it must make certain that two members of the Strike Committee were executives of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and that a majority of members were loyal to the CCP (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 8).

On June 26, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions called the First Congress of Strikers' Representatives. The Congress passed the Strike Committee Constitution, deciding that it should be composed of nine Hongkong unionists, four from Shamian, and one each from the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates and the Hongkong Chinese Workers' General Union (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 615). On June 29, representatives met to decide the structure of an armed picket corps and to discuss implementing a boycott of Hongkong. The meeting decided to reconvene on June 30 (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 9).

However, Hongkong leaders, already nervous about losing their leadership positions, were planning to set up an independent Strike Committee of the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates to control strike finances. Liang Ziguang, chairman of the Communication Department of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, had long-term links to the GMD, first with Chen Qiulin and then with Wu Tiecheng. Liang set up a club behind the Xitidaxin Company in Guangzhou (now the Nanfang dasha), where he chaired frequent meetings of twenty to thirty Hongkong union leaders to discuss maintaining independence from the leadership of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Liang complained that the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was neglecting the member unions of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates in favour of pro-CCP workers, for example, Guangzhou's foreign-employed workers.

Liang said that the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates was a large organisation with a large membership and had contributed much to starting the strike. Since returning to Guangzhou, however, it had not received its due deference; it had been neglected. Liang said that there were only a few foreign-employed workers in Guangzhou and that whether they struck or not had no bearing on the strike; the whole of Guangzhou, however, admired them and people took them seriously (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 8-9).

Huang Jinyuan, who that year was by rotation the chairman of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, was also nervous about the CCP creating a unified strike body and thereby usurping his power over his own union. Many other Hongkong union leaders shared the concerns of Huang and

Liang (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 9). Deng Zhongxia had not foreseen that Huang Jinyuan, Liang Ziguang, and Feng Jing might hold a Meeting of the Representatives of Hongkong Striking Workers' Organisations at the Huizhou Association.³⁸ More than one hundred representatives of the member unions of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates took part. They decided immediately to organise their own Strike Committee of seven Hongkong union leaders and four Shamian union leaders. They decided to establish a picket corps, officially under the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee, but with military authorisation, and elected Huang Jinyuan as its general. This action stopped Deng Zhongxia from holding a third meeting as planned and was intended to ensure that the Hongkong workers' organisations would lead the strike (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 9-10).

The Strike Party Group met immediately to determine a course of action. It reaffirmed that the Strike Committee had to be under the leadership of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and that the composition of the Strike Committee that it had proposed must not change. The Strike Party Group was adamant that the Strike Committee must be named the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee. To placate the opposition of Hongkong union leaders, the Strike Party Group decided that high-level leaders of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates could hold positions in any of the Strike Committee's departments and agreed that Huang Jinyuan should be the Picket Corps General, but, to maintain the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' power, suggested Deng Zhongxia should be Huang's deputy in charge of political education. Above the Strike Committee, a Strikers' Congress was to be set up as the strikers' highest authority, with one representative for every fifty strikers (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 11).

After discussions with Chen Yannian, Deng Zhongxia met with Hongkong union leaders and persuaded them to agree to a Fourth Congress on July 4. This Fourth Congress recognised the Huizhou Association meeting as the Third Congress and accepted Huang Jinyuan as the Picket Corps General. Hongkong union leaders expressed support for the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and accepted Lin Weimin and Li Sen as Strike Committee members. The meeting elected Deng Zhongxia as the Picket Corps General's Commissar of Political Education and agreed formally to set up the Strike Committee on July 3 (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 12-13). The Strike Party Group decided that the seven members of the Hongkong side of the Strike Committee should represent the

38 The Huizhou Association was the GMD headquarters in Guangzhou. It later became the headquarters of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

seven unions that had first brought the Hongkong workers out on strike. In this way, the CCP ensured that sympathetic union leaders held important positions in the strike bureaucracy. The Strike Party Group decided that these representatives should be elected by the unions in order to avoid any suspicion that the All-China Federation was taking over. The seven leading unions were the Seamen's Union, Tram Workers' Union, Dockyard Coolies' Union, Rattan Splitters' Union, Foreign-Employed Workers' Union, Coal Coolies' Union, and Tailors' Union. The make-up of the Strike Committee finally agreed was as below:

The Strike Committee³⁹

Su Zhaozheng	(Seamen's Union)	Chairman
He Yaoquan	(Tram Workers' Union)	Vice-Chairman
Zeng Ziyang	(GFWU)	Vice-Chairman
Li Sen	(ACFTU)	Executive
Li Tang	(Dockyard Coolies' Union)	Executive
Chen Jinqun	(Coal Coolies' Union)	Executive
Mai Boyang	(Rattan Splitters' Union)	Executive
Mai Jiancheng	(HFWU)	Executive
Lin Weimin	(ACFTU)	Executive
Lai Fuchou	(GFWU)	Executive
Chen Ruinan	(GFWU)	Executive
Liang Deli	(GFWU)	Executive
Feng Yunan	(Tailors' Union)	Executive
Yang Shikai	(Guangdong University)	Secretary
Wang Jingwei	(Nationalist Government)	Adviser
Liao Zhongkai	(GMD Labour Department)	Adviser
Deng Zhongxia	(ACFTU, CCP)	Adviser
Huang Ping	(ACFTU, CCP)	Adviser
Yang Pao'an	(CCP)	Adviser

The CCP succeeded in dominating this Strike Committee. Of the seven Hongkong Committee members, only two were pro-CCP: Su Zhaozheng and He Yaoquan. Both these leaders were CCP members and executives of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. However, the four delegates from Shamian, Zeng Ziyang, Lai Fuchou, Chen Ruinan, and Liang Deli, were all members of the Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union and all pro-CCP. Along with Li

³⁹ For the membership of the Strike Committee and other important committees in the strike bureaucracy, see Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi (1980: 157-162).

Sen and Lin Weimin, the official All-China Federation of Trade Union representatives, the CCP had eight staunch supporters on the thirteen-man Strike Committee. The Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen were all CCP supporters and three of the advisers to the Strike Committee were CCP members (Deng Zhongxia, Huang Ping, and Yang Pao'an).

The other members of the Strike Committee were all Hongkong unionists, but not from a single anti-CCP faction - opposition to the CCP was split. Chen Jiquan, the leader of the Coal Coolies' Union, was an independent, suspicious of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Also suspicious were Li Tang (head of the Dockyard Coolies' Union) and Mai Jiancheng (leader of the Hongkong Foreign-Employed Workers' Union. Mai Boyang (Rattan Splitters' Union) was a GMD right-wing loyalist). Feng Yunan, who defeated Liang Ziguang in the Tailors' Union election, was not a solid GMD supporter like Feng and he followed a more independent line.

Once the CCP had succeeded in gaining control over the Strike Committee, it started to build a bureaucracy to implement and monitor strike policies, control every major aspect of workers' lives, and diminish the influence of individual union organisations. The Strike Committee of the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates continued to exist as a separate organisation. In theory, it was under the leadership of the Strike Committee; in practice, it was an independent body dominated by the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates and contained many leaders hostile to the Strike Committee. The Federation of Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Unions (Guangzhou yangwu gonghui lianhehui), too, continued as an independent body under Strike Committee leadership, but supported the CCP.

The Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee controlled a huge bureaucracy. Directly under the supervision of the Strike Committee were the following departments: Secretariat, Finance Committee, Accounts Office, Warehouse and Auctions Office, Trial Hearing Office, Workers' Hospital, Propaganda Schools, Picket Corps, Road-Building Committee, Legislature, Audits Office, Land and Sea Inspection Teams, Office for Soliciting Contributions, Boat Inspection Teams, Workers' and Merchants' Committee for the Inspection of Enemy Goods, Office for the Preparation of Cotton Clothes, Striking Workers' Inspection Office, Workers' and Merchants' Goods Inspection Office, Vehicle and Ship Services Inspection Office, Education and Propaganda Committee, Northern Expedition Transport Committee, Workers' Summer-Clothes Tailoring Office, and a Price Committee for the Auction of Seized Ship-Freight.

Under the Secretariat were the following organisations: Reception Department, Inspection Teams, Department of Internal Affairs, Department of

Communications, Department of Transport, Department of Leisure, Department of Propaganda, Department of Culture, and Department of Registration.

The Picket Corps Committee controlled a Training Office, Picket Teams, Picket Corps Secretariat, Military Office, Requisitions Office, Military Law Office, Investigation Office, Exemplary Picket Team, Additional Exemplary Picket Team, Land and Sea Detection Team, Special Training Office, Low-Level Cadres' Team, Non-Commissioned Officers' Team, and Anti-Smuggling Merchant Protection Corps (Cai Luo 1980: 39-40).

So large and powerful did the Strike Committee and its bureaucracy become that it was known as "Government no. 2" (Chesneaux 1968: 293) or the "Dongyuan Government"⁴⁰ (Luo Zhu 1962d: 1). According to Chesneaux, the activities and responsibilities of the Strike Committee "went far beyond the normal field of activities of a union organisation dealing with a work stoppage" (Chesneaux 1968: 293). Deng Zhongxia boasted that the Strike Committee "had every power, save the power to kill" (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 616).

After private discussions, Deng Zhongxia and Chen Yannian selected individuals for all important positions in the strike bureaucracy: for example, the Chairman of the Strike Committee, the Chairman of the Secretariat, and the members of the Picket Corps Committee. Deng and Chen did not consult the GMD; power was in their hands alone (Huang Ping 1962a: 4). As the strike bureaucracy grew, so did the power of the CCP, and the position of the GMD labour leaders weakened.

Hongkong union leaders resist central CCP control

In chapter 5, I described how Hongkong's small-scale organisations such as subregional associations and unions used patriotic movements to pursue sectional interests, yet tried to maintain their autonomy and independence. Hongkong union leaders, too, used the strike bureaucracy to further their own interests, yet they tried to resist CCP attempts to centralise control in revolutionaries' hands.

According to CCP activists, the reaction of many Hongkong union leaders to the establishment of the strike bureaucracy was to try to follow a career as an official. Although the Strike Party Group had scant regard for many of the Hongkong union leaders, it was unable to deny them access to the bureaucracy because, first, it needed help in the form of personnel and, second, because it was not initially strong enough to block them.

⁴⁰ The Strike Committee offices were situated at Dongyuan, Guangzhou.

Hongkong scab-union leaders wanted to win promotion and get rich. At first, our organisation was not totally in order and our power was still weak. Hongkong scab-union leaders, however, were relatively strong; if we did not compromise with them, they could create chaos (Luo, Peng, and Zhang 1962a: 2).

Huang Jinyuan was unable to get on the Strike Committee because his union was not one of those nominated to put forward a representative. However, he had already succeeded in becoming Picket Corps General and was later selected for the Finance Committee. These official posts increased his prestige and satisfied his ambitions to start a career as an official: "He often stroked his belly and laughed, saying: 'Ha! Ha! A pork butcher promoted to General!'" (Lu Lan 1962a: 1).

Liang Ziguang failed in the Tailors' Union election for the Strike Committee; he had no other recourse than to complain to Deng Zhongxia, who consoled him, saying: "We will certainly find a way to get you a post." Later, on July 4, the second meeting of the Strike Committee approved Liang Ziguang's appointment as head of the Reception Department (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 14). Now that he had an official post, Liang was content (Luo, Peng, and Zhang 1962: 2). Other leaders of unions in the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates won posts in various Strike Committee departments.

The CCP tried to bring Hongkong union leaders into the bureaucracy to lessen their feelings of alienation. However, the CCP was careful never to lose control, and tried to prevent Hongkong union leaders from gaining unfettered control over their departments. The CCP made certain that it was represented on all the important committees under the Strike Committee. Although CCP loyalists chaired only three offices controlled by the Secretariat, the CCP had in each department cadres that it used to supervise Hongkong non-CCP union leaders. If these leaders committed the slightest irregularity, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions urged the Strike Committee to remove them and put CCP cadres in their place (Luo, Peng, and Zhang 1962a: 1).

The following lists give the membership of the most important strike organisations and show a CCP presence on each committee:

Membership of the strike's important committees

Secretariat

Li Sen	(ACFTU, CCP)	Chairman
Li Tang	(Dockyard Coolies' Union)	Vice-Chairman
Hu Yin	(Tailors' Union)	Vice-Chairman
Lai Fuchou	(GFWU)	Vice-Chairman

Finance Committee

Su Zhaozheng	(Seamen's Union, CCP)	Chairman
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Li Sen	(ACFTU, CCP)	Executive
Huang Jinyuan	(Pork Butchers' Union)	Executive
Deng Boming	(GFWU, CCP)	Executive
Jian Yuan	(Shipmasters' Union)	Executive
Accounts Office		
He Lai	(Seamen's Union, CCP)	Chairman
Picket Corps Committee		
Huang Jinyuan	(Pork Butchers' Union)	Executive
Xu Chengzhang	(Military Committee)	Executive
He Qinghai		Executive
Shi Bu	(CCP)	Secretary
Deng Zhongxia	(ACFTU, CCP)	Executive
Lin Bin		Executive
Lai Dongyuan		Executive
Liao Zhusan		Requisitions

CCP conflict with union leaders

In chapter 6, I argued that Hongkong union leaders struck partly to advance their own political ambitions and enhance their union's political power and prestige. Were non-CCP Hongkong union leaders more guilty than CCP-affiliated leaders of cynicism and pursuing political careers at the expense of their members? Probably not. In chapter 4, I showed how leaders like Huang Jinyuan were close to their members. Such leaders were hostile to the CCP because they feared that their unions might lose influence to large, bureaucratic organisations like the Seamen's Union. CCP-influenced leaders like He Yaoquan were better educated, with a good chance of succeeding in an official career. Some, including Su Zhaozheng, were already at the helm of large union bureaucracies. These union leaders, many of whom were members of the Strike Party Group, closely followed the CCP Guangdong Regional Committee's political directives. CCP efforts to centralise power and create a large strike bureaucracy put these leaders in positions of power over all strikers - not just the members of their own unions.

When Hongkong union leaders clashed with CCP leaders, it was not always because they were excluded from the strike bureaucracy. Once inside the strike bureaucracy, many Hongkong union leaders resented central control, which they regarded as alien. This conflict was particularly serious inside the Secretariat.

The Chairman of the Secretariat, Li Sen, came from outside Guangdong; its Department Heads were all Cantonese. The Secretariat had several problems

caused by language difficulties and Hongkong union leaders' aim to control the Secretariat (Luo, Peng, and Zhang 1962a: 2).

Hongkong union leaders were determined to limit the control of the CCP over the strike bureaucracy. They were as resistant to the growth of a Chinese centralised revolutionary (and, by implication, future state) structure as they were to attempts by the Hongkong Government to increase its power. Hongkong union leaders neglected Li Sen's orders and obstructed the CCP's attempts to control this part of the strike bureaucracy (Luo, Peng, and Zhang 1962a: 2).

The greatest conflict between the CCP and Hongkong union leaders occurred when the CCP began to build a workers' parliament - the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strikers' Congress (Strikers' Congress). In early June 1925, the CCP's Guangdong Regional Committee decided to set up the Strikers' Congress. Soviet advisers designed the Strikers' Congress along the lines of Russian workers' soviets (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 20) and suggested that the Strikers' Congress meet every other day and have the following composition: every fifty union members should elect by ballot one representative, unions with fewer than fifty members should elect one representative and unions with more than fifty should have a correspondingly higher allocation of seats (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 614-615).

In theory, the Strikers' Congress was the highest authority in the strike bureaucracy (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 614-615). Some CCP activists have claimed that the CCP established the Strikers' Congress because it wanted a truly democratic organisation (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 21). Huang Ping, a high-ranking CCP activist, suggests otherwise. According to Huang, the idea to establish a Strikers' Congress originally came from Borodin, in his Bolshevising mode, during a private meeting with Deng Zhongxia, Lin Weimin, Li Sen, Zhang Tailei, and Huang Ping (Huang Ping 1962d: 2). The CCP agreed to establish a Strikers' Congress not in order to grant to strikers the power to control the strike leadership but to increase its influence over Hongkong workers at the expense of Hongkong union leaders.

The Strikers' Congress was established purely and simply to organise the masses, to educate the masses, and to ensure that scab-union leaders could not deceive the masses (Huang Ping 1962a: 4).

Deng Zhongxia called a meeting of strikers' representatives for June 26 to explain his plans for a Strikers' Congress.⁴¹ The leaders of the Hongkong General

41 Almost every account of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike suggests that the date of the First Strikers' Congress was June 26, 1925. This date is accepted in chronologies of the strike, for example, *Guangdong zhixue shchuike xue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi* (1980: 1-22). However, the June 26 meeting was simply to discuss the establishment of a Strikers' Congress. According to the

Union of Workers' Syndicates opposed the planned structure of the Strikers' Congress. They suggested that every union, regardless of its size, should elect one member. The Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates represented many small unions, which feared that large unions might monopolise the Strikers' Congress, whereas leaders of smaller unions like Huang Jinyuan, Li Ziguang, Feng Jing, and He Zhouquan would be able to influence only a small number of representatives (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 21).

As soon as the CCP realised that Hongkong union leaders opposed the structure of the Strikers' Congress, the Strike Party Group met. The Strike Party Group was mobilised with the following orders:

- 1) To begin persuading and educating leaders of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates and people under their influence and to explain the role of the Strikers' Congress and the logic of creating a broad-based movement.
- 2) To tell the masses that the strike belonged to everybody; everybody had to be consulted. To tell workers that the strikers' representatives must be elected by the workers to prevent a monopoly by a few union leaders.
- 3) To urge the Strike Committee to announce regulations for the structure of the Strikers' Congress and the election process. To send cadres to help unions hold elections and to crush the hopes of the opposition faction (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 22).

Deng Zhongxia, Su Zhaozheng, Li Sen, Lin Weimin, and Lin Changchi all started propaganda activities to gain support for the CCP's policy. In reality the CCP's propaganda activities stressed using personal contacts with influential union leaders to gather support for its policy. CCP leaders sent Chen Quan, a seaman, to contact the Tallymen's Union which, although small, had influence over the large dockers' unions such as the Stevedores' Union, Dockyard Coolies' Union, Coal Coolies' Union, Dockyard Workers' Union (Chuanwu gonghui) and various cargo-workers' unions (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 23).

The head of the Tallymen's Union, Chen Qingpei, was the son-in-law of Wang Yingong, the radical editor of Hongkong's *Huazi bao*. He spoke fluent English and stood out among the warehouse clerks as an intellectual (Luo Zhu 1962a: 9). The Tallymen's Union was an independent union, but the CCP quickly won it over. Chen Qingpei was regarded by the CCP as a relatively progressive person. The Strike Party Group sent Yang Yin to consult with him, after which meeting he supported the CCP's platform. Chen's influence over the other trade unions meant that the Stevedores' Union, Dockyard Coolies' Union, Coal Coolies' Union, Cargo Coolies' Union (Xiehuo gonghui), Barge Union (Gechuan gonghui),

memoirs of CCP activists, the date of the First Strikers' Congress was July 15 (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 23-24). Their evidence is supported by articles in *Gongren zhi lu* nos 22 and 29.

and Landing-Stage Union came out in favour of the CCP's plans (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 24).

The number of delegates for the main blocs of votes in the Strikers' Congress was as follows:

Delegates to the Striker's Congress

Seamen's Union	80
Mechanics' Federation of Affiliated Unions ⁴²	80
Government Workers' Happiness Alliance	60
Dockyard Coolies' Union	60
Hongkong Foreign-Employed Workers' Union	50
Coal Coolies' Union	40
Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union	40
Tailors' Union	10
Fishmongers' Union	10
Grocers' Union	10

Of a Strikers' Congress of 450 representatives, the CCP controlled some three hundred.⁴³ At the First Strikers' Congress, many of the delegates had been selected rather than elected. On July 16, 1925, the Strike Committee instructed each union to hold elections within two days. On July 18, some five hundred representatives attended the Second Strikers' Congress. By the Third Strikers' Congress, on July 22, more than six hundred elected representatives were present (*Gongren zhi lu* 25, 29). The Strike Party Group paid close attention to the workings of the Strikers' Congress because every important policy of the Strike Party Group concerning the strike went to the Strikers' Congress for discussion. The CCP established a Preparatory Meeting for Representatives in the Party (Preparatory Meeting for short), which reported to the Strike Party Group. Before each meeting of the Strikers' Congress, the CCP called a Preparatory Meeting to discuss in detail each duty assigned to it by the Strike Party Group and to decide how to pass each measure through the Strikers' Congress. After the Preparatory Meeting had come to a decision, it sent activists to every union to try to win representatives over to support the CCP's policy at the Strikers' Congress. If the CCP activists could not win outright support for the CCP's policies, they could at

42 This organisation included the Tram Workers' Union, various shipyard unions, Steamship-Repairers' Union, and Shipmasters' Union (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 37). In pinyin it is called the Jiqi gongren shike lianhehui.

43 The delegates of the Seamen's Union, Mechanics' Federation of Affiliated Unions, Dockyard Coolies' Union, Coal Coolies' Union, and Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union.

least persuade unions not to oppose the CCP's choice for chairman, the order of speaking, methods to be adopted against temporary problems, or even representatives' seating arrangements (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 23).

The CCP worked hard to manipulate the Strikers' Congress. For example, it tried to ensure pro-CCP people held important posts in the Strikers' Congress, such as that of chairman. If someone wanted to speak, they had to raise their hand or stand up, and would then (if they were lucky) be selected by the chairman. Votes were taken by a show of hands, whose outcome the chairman determined. He could, in the words of CCP cadres, "direct and manipulate the proceedings." At first, Hu Yin, Feng Jing, Gao Zhan, and Liang Deli were chairman one after the other. Because these people were anti-Communist, the CCP had difficulty in passing its policies. Afterwards, the Strike Party Group managed to control the Strikers' Congress and gave its chairmanship to He Yaoquan (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 25).

The CCP was always wary of allowing the Strikers' Congress too much freedom. Even after securing the chairmanship of the Strikers' Congress, the CCP worked hard to strengthen its control.

Before each Strikers' Congress opened, we [the CCP] had already made secret preparations to select speakers, the order of speakers, the election of the chairman, how best to arrange the seating of our representatives, and how to get the support of the masses, as well as tactics to combat the opposition. In addition we arranged for the election to the chairmanship group of any potential speakers who would be difficult to control. These speakers would then forfeit their right to speak.

Naturally, we supported any favourable speeches and opposed unfavourable ones (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 30).

At the one hundredth meeting of the Strikers' Congress, Liang Jiasheng extolled its virtues, saying:

This Strikers' Congress is built on the principle of democratic centralism. The questions we discuss are passed to the Strike Committee for implementation. Since the beginning of the strike, what has our work been? There are three main elements to it: we have decided the policies of our struggle, oppressed corrupt elements, and unified our revolutionary line (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 204).

Liang's comments reveal the CCP's motive in setting up the Strikers' Congress - to rubber stamp its policies. The Strikers' Congress was not a forum for debate but a public platform from which the CCP expounded its policies. The strike's chain of command was as follows: Chen Yannian, Deng Zhongxia, and Borodin decided policies in private, then the Strike Party Group mobilised cadres to win support for these policies by using personal contacts to union leaders, and

finally, the CCP pushed its policies through the Strikers' Congress and the Strike Committee. Throughout this process, the CCP was determined to keep dissent and debate to a minimum.

Many opponents of the CCP in Guangzhou were unhappy at the increase in the CCP's power. Hongkong union leaders, too, particularly those who led Hongkong's smaller unions, were disgruntled. After the establishment of the Strike Committee and the Strikers' Congress, the political power of the CCP, the GMD left-wing under Liao Zhongkai, and the Soviet advisers increased dramatically. The policies of the strike and boycott, which affected the whole of Guangdong, were decided at secret meetings between Deng Zhongxia, Chen Yannian, and Borodin (who reported to Liao Zhongkai). The leadership of the strike soon came into conflict with GMD right-wing politicians and officials in the Guangdong Government.

For example, Yang Xiyan, a former head of the Provincial Finance Department, was detained by pickets for travelling to Hongkong without the Strike Committee's consent. Wu Tiecheng, the head of the Guangzhou Public Security Bureau, once opened fire on the Picket Corps in Guangzhou and regularly ignored *sub poenas* from the Strike Committee served on officials of the Public Security Bureau (Huang Ping 1962a: 6). Guangdong's Chief Procurator, Lu Xingyuan, organised anti-strike propaganda (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 3). A commando force attached to the Guangdong Army at Dongjiang under the command of Liang Tufeng pointed the muzzles of its rifles towards the Strike Committee headquarters in Dongyuan from their command post overlooking it at Dongti (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 3-4).

In July, GMD right-wing politicians met regularly at the house of Hu Hanmin and at the Culture Society (Wenhuatang) to discuss the growing strength of the CCP (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 3). The Culture Society was situated on Changxing Street (now Zhongshan no. 5 Road). People from the right-wing political community gathered there to chat, drink, gamble, and spread rumours.⁴⁴ Rumours that the CCP was going to confiscate private property and take over the Guangdong Government, probably originating from the Culture society, spread through Guangzhou (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 6); so, too, did rumours that Liao Zhongkai and Huang Jinyuan had joined the CCP (Lu Lan 1962a: 2). At one Strikers' Congress in August, someone publicly warned Liao to "take a rest or face the consequences" (Chen Fulin 1990: 223).

44 Some Guangzhou citizens called the society "The Madmen's Club." Club members were all anti-CCP, its most prominent member being Hu Yisheng. Through the activities of the "Madmen's Club," the armies of Liang Hongkai received modern weapons with which to oppose the institutions of the strike (comments by a "democratic person" in Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 5-6).

Political opposition to the Strike Committee from the GMD right wing offered to Hongkong union leaders, particularly some high-level leaders within the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, the chance to rebel against the strike leadership. Many union leaders began to plot against the Strike Committee and against CCP manipulation of the Strikers' Congress. Liang Ziguang held a series of meetings at his society headquarters. Leaders taking part included Feng Jing (Tea-Box Makers' Union (Chahuoxiang lianyuan gonghui)), Tan Botang (United Happiness Club), Tan Jianhu (Inland Waterways Seamen's Union), Tang Libo (Restaurant Employees' Union), Yuan Xin (Mutual-Aid Union (Xiezhu gonghui)), Yuan Rong (Dockyard Coolies' Union), Wen Gongbo, Ye Du, He Zhouquan, and Lan Zhuoting.

On August 8, Liang Ziguang and Feng Jing took the opportunity offered by the Tenth Strikers' Congress to disrupt the strike's unity. The CCP intended to use the Strikers' Congress to launch a purge of all anti-CCP elements (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 8). Hongkong union leaders were angry at the CCP's control over the Strikers' Congress and at the power of large unions, which power meant that many Hongkong unions lost prestige and authority. Now they feared that they might be the victims of a purge. Hongkong union leaders made ferocious attacks against the Strike Committee. At first, Liang Ziguang and Feng Jing accused the Strike Committee of taking bribes, sending out private smuggling-ships, and organising a secret, corrupt picket corps (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 26-27). They yelled at the platform: "We're making sacrifices, they're making money!" (Huang Ping 1962c: 7).

The attack on the Strike Committee was relentless and, according to CCP activists, premeditated:

Liang Ziguang, Feng Jing, and others spoke one after the other, each speaking more viciously than the one before. They said that there was no organised movement. Who believed that? They said they were not out to overturn the Strike Committee and take over the leadership. Who believed that? They said their actions were without the encouragement of their patron Wu Ticheng. Who believed that? (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 9).

However, CCP officials realised that the Hongkong union leaders were using their GMD links only to add political weight to their own grievances. According to these activists, Hongkong leaders were unhappy at the unified leadership of the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee and the shame that they felt from the defeat of their plans to control the Strikers' Congress.

They took the opportunity to show their strength, to raise their own authority by diminishing that of the Strike Committee, and to attack the status of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in order to split the strikers (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 9).

Huang Ping, who was acting as adviser in place of Deng Zhongxia, accused them of "blackleg running-dog behaviour," whereupon Liang and Feng started shouting "kill him" and "beat him." Dozens of people rushed the platform to attack Huang Ping. The rebellious union leaders and workers left the meeting screaming and shouting; the remaining representatives were "chattering like a cage full of birds" (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 26-27).

Hongkong union leaders were acting out of self-interest not as stooges of the GMD. That evening, the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates called a meeting in the Strike Committee Reception Department.⁴⁵ The Hongkong union leaders were still intent on imposing their authority on the strike. Wen Gongbo opened the meeting with the following words:

Now the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike has a nine out of ten chance of failing. With our workers' present strength, not only can we oppose the Strike Committee but the Nationalist Government may even be brought down (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 27-28).

Feng Jing, too, had complaints to make. He called the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee "corrupt," accused Su Zhaozheng of taking bribes, and labelled Huang Ping a "fake worker" and "unfit to be an adviser." The representative of the dockyard workers present at this meeting, Peng Songfu, who was a CCP activist, defended the Strike Committee. He tried to reiterate what Huang Ping had said the day before.

However, before Peng Songfu had even finished speaking, people started yelling wildly that he was Huang Ping's running dog, and beat him with a stick. Peng Songfu only escaped the lion's den after being rescued by some other workers. Following this, they [the anti-Strike Committee workers] tried to attack the representative of the Shipmasters' Union, Shen Runsheng, and the meeting became even more chaotic, causing some workers who had originally sympathised with them to feel that they were no good; these workers left. Even some of [the anti-Strike Committee faction's] staunchest supporters felt that they had gone over the top (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 10).

On August 10, the Eleventh Strikers' Congress opened, and Peng Songfu and Shen Runsheng reported the events of the above meeting. The Strikers' Congress decided to punish Wen Gongbo, Liang Ziguang, Ye Du, Tang Libo and Lan Zhuoting by denouncing them as blacklegs. Representatives passed a resolution to arrest Liang Ziguang, Ye Du, Wen Gongbo, and Feng Jing. Liang Ziguang attended the meeting at one point, but, seeing that things were going badly for himself, left immediately. Delegates from the Seamen's Union and the

⁴⁵ Liang Ziguang was the Department Head.

Mechanics' Union volunteered to perform the arrests (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 30). After the meeting, representatives of the Seamen's Union and the Mechanics' Union left immediately for the Haizhu Hotel at Changti to arrest Liang Ziguang and take him to the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee.

Compromise and consolidation

In chapters 2 to 5, I described the growth in power of small-scale organisations in Hongkong and argued that such organisations, for example, unions, joined patriotic movements to further their own interests. In this chapter, I have shown that revolutionaries and union leaders clashed over the question of who should control the strike. However, I now go on to examine how the turmoil and conflict between Hongkong union leaders and the strike bureaucracy resulted in the consolidation of the Strike Committee's authority. In chapter 1, I suggested that many revolutions are conservative movements and that the need to build a strong power base means that revolutionaries sometimes compromise with existing political groups. The CCP consolidated its leadership over the strike not by defeating Hongkong union leaders but by compromising with them. It failed to achieve a purge of anti-CCP elements as Deng Zhongxia had originally intended.

After Hongkong union leaders openly opposed the Strike Committee, the Strikers' Congress sent workers to arrest Liang Ziguang in his room at the Haizhu Hotel and lead him through the streets to the Strike Committee at Dongyuan. On the way, some workers beat him and tore to shreds the cotton clothes he was wearing. After arriving at Dongyuan, he suffered further abuse. The CCP realised too late that its treatment of Liang was "a little excessive." According to CCP activists, many workers felt that, although Liang had been wrong to disrupt the Strikers' Congress and beat up delegates, so, too, had the representatives of the Strike Committee been wrong to subject Liang to similar treatment (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 13).

Liang Ziguang was a powerful figure among Hongkong strikers. He was a leader of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates and had played an important part in persuading Hongkong workers to go on strike. He was the head of the Strike Committee Reception Department and leader of the Tailors' Union, and he had links to right-wing leaders such as Ma Chaojun and Wu Tiecheng. The Strike Party Group feared that any sense of shame suffered by Liang and other union leaders might lead to more disputes and fighting among some Hongkong workers (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 13).

After Liang's arrest, powerful Hongkong union leaders came to the Strike Committee to investigate. Huang Jinyuan met with Deng Zhongxia and Liao Zhongkai to plead Liang's case. Some Hongkong union leaders and workers accused the Strike Committee of over-reacting and of abusing its power (Huang Ping 1962c: 6-8). Liao Zhongkai intervened swiftly, saying that Liang had devoted himself to organising the strike call and that, although his disruption of the Strikers' Congress was wrong, Liao hoped that Liang could be forgiven. On the evening of August 10, the Strike Party Group, headed by Deng Zhongxia, met to hear the reaction of CCP leaders to the turmoil. The Strike Party Group heard that the CCP wanted to consolidate its power and that it felt that the turmoil had worked out to its advantage, but they were wary of causing a split in the workers' movement. The CCP decided to compromise (Wang, Luo, Peng 1962a: 14).

The Strike Committee released Liang Ziguang in order to deny the right wing a propaganda opportunity and to calm the disquiet of many leaders of Hongkong's smaller unions. The Strike Party Group thought that some Hongkong union leaders would use the events as an excuse to lambaste Huang Ping for insulting Liang Ziguang and might try to rescind his position as adviser. The Strike Party Group decided to ask Huang Ping to offer his resignation to the Strikers' Congress, but to have the Strikers' Congress refuse to accept it (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 14).

On August 13, the Strikers' Congress sat for the twelfth time. Liao Zhongkai attended and told the Strikers' Congress about Liang's past good record. He asked workers to forgive Liang his mistakes. Liang apologised to the Strikers' Congress, Deng Zhongxia asked the Strikers' Congress to rescind the detention order on Liang, and the Strikers' Congress dutifully refused Huang Ping's resignation (Wang, Luo, and Peng 1962a: 14). The meeting was stage-managed - the Strikers' Congress was seen to act in a magnanimous way and the CCP tried to consolidate its power by means of this compromise.

Liao Zhongkai's assassination further spurred compromise between CCP revolutionaries and most Hongkong union leaders. On August 20, gunmen shot Liao Zhongkai three times on the steps of the GMD Central Party Offices. Liao died on the way to hospital (Chen Fulin 1990: 223). Evidence pointed towards veterans of the GMD right wing and the Culture Society as the perpetrators (Wilbur and How 1989: 167-168). Borodin's closest GMD ally was now dead and Chiang Kai-shek took the opportunity to increase his power (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 84-87).

Without a strong GMD left wing to support it, the CCP was vulnerable. However, it could now count upon the support of Hongkong union leaders who feared that they might become the assassins' next target. After he received death

threats, bodyguards began to escort Huang Jinyuan to the Strike Committee daily. The Communist Extermination Party (Miegongdang) sent Huang a message, warning: "Today we killed Liao Zhongkai; tomorrow it will be you, Huang Jinyuan!" (Lu Lan 1962b: 154).

The atmosphere in Guangzhou became dangerous for almost all union leaders. Huang Jinyuan, the most powerful non-CCP Hongkong union leader, realised that his only security was his position in the strike bureaucracy. Huang Jinyuan moved closer to the CCP and formed a centrist faction among Hongkong union leaders that tried to dilute the attacks of many anti-CCP unionists. The support of Huang Jinyuan's centrist faction consolidated the power of the strike bureaucracy (Xia Mingyou 1962: 4).

The CCP did not succeed in achieving sole authority over the strike after Liao's murder. Within the strike bureaucracy, a delicate balance of power emerged that bestowed authority on many Hongkong union leaders. These leaders, previously united in the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates, now split into three factions. Leaders like Liang Ziguang, Feng Jing, Wen Gongbo, Ye Du, Tan Botang, and Tang Libo maintained an anti-CCP stance, and resisted all attempts to impose a centralised leadership on the strike. Seamen's Union leader Tan Huaze, Strike Committee member Li Tang, and others disagreed with the separatist policies of Liang Ziguang's faction and were more sympathetic towards the CCP. A third faction, including Huang Jinyuan, Gao Zhan, and Zhou Shuyuan, was centrist - sometimes it supported Liang Ziguang, sometimes Tan Huaze. This centrist faction played a vital role in steering unpopular policies through the Strikers' Congress (Xia Mingyou 1962: 4-14).

According to Yang Jian (1991), the CCP quickly established its control over the strike and succeeded in uniting hundreds of unions from Hongkong and Guangzhou (Yang Jian 1991: 209). In fact, the opposite is true. It is ironic that the strike bureaucracy, built by the CCP to impose its will on the strike, unite Hongkong unions, and lessen the influence of Hongkong union leaders, created more divisions among Hongkong union leaders than had existed before the strike started. Union leaders fought to preserve their independence, using their positions in the bureaucracy to build power bases for themselves and for their unions. These splits have endured: political affiliations forged during the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike persist to this day (see Chan Ming-kou 1986a).⁴⁶ The institutions of the strike created a centralised leadership, but centralised does not necessarily mean unified.

⁴⁶ For an overview of political factionalism in Hongkong unions today, see England and Rear (1975: 12-13).

Conclusion

In chapter 1, I suggested that revolutionaries typically built large bureaucracies to exert their authority. The CCP built a large bureaucracy to control the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Although the CCP set up a Strikers' Congress, the main authorities in the strike were various CCP leaders and Borodin, who decided on policies in small secret meetings and then used strategically placed CCP cadres to control the Strikers' Congress, Strike Committee, and the entire strike bureaucracy.

Hongkong union leaders, however, demanded prominent leadership roles in the strike and even maintained separate institutions. Huang Jinyuan succeeded in holding the position of Picket Corps General (later changed to Chairman of the Picket Corps Committee) for the duration of the strike. Hongkong unionists used their positions in the bureaucracy to enhance the power of their individual unions and frustrated CCP attempts to create a unified leadership. Hongkong union leaders reacted thus because they were trying to resist central control by the CCP and wanted to stop the CCP from diminishing the power of leaders of small-scale trade unions.

Hongkong union leaders like Huang Jinyuan and Liang Ziguang feared that they were losing influence because the CCP was trying to centralise control in its own hands. They launched an organised campaign to establish their rights to hold positions in the strike bureaucracy and ensure some degree of political control over it. Later, Liang led some Hongkong union leaders in protest against the CCP's control over the strike and the Strikers' Congress. These conflicts between union leaders and the strike leadership reflect the conflict between central and local political leaders that I discussed in chapter 1 as an inevitable outcome of revolutionaries' attempts to seize power, consolidate their authority, and expand their influence during the strike.

Chapter 8

Mass Education, Propaganda, and *Gongren zhi lu*: Communication between Revolutionaries and Strikers

In previous chapters, I described the strike as an organised, authoritarian movement; in chapter 7, I showed how the CCP built a strong strike bureaucracy to enhance its control over workers. In this chapter, I examine the revolutionaries' propaganda and education campaigns during the strike and explore how the revolutionary leadership communicated its ideas to Hongkong strikers. In chapter 1, I argued that revolutionaries tend to build bureaucracies to impose their view of society. CCP revolutionaries wanted to replace pre-strike forms of worker organisation and Confucian beliefs with a "modern" workers' movement (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 424-426). Now, I examine whether the strike's education movement offered a radical, libertarian education that empowered the individual or simply reaffirmed pre-existing authoritarian and bureaucratic values. I examine, too, how unions tried to use the education movement to further their own interests, but show that the education movement remained firmly in the hands of an elite of revolutionaries, students, and intellectuals. Because the strike leadership stressed political propaganda and because the CCP needed to train cadres for the strike bureaucracy, the strike's education programmes were manipulative, authoritarian, and conformist.

Politics and education in China

In this chapter, I begin by describing briefly characteristics of Chinese education that radical Chinese thinkers in the early twentieth century wanted to abolish. I then go on to examine whether or not a revolutionary movement such as the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was a suitable way of achieving such an aim. The imperial Chinese education system groomed students for imperial office. Because education was the easiest way into the imperial bureaucracy, it stressed conformity, obedience to authority, and adherence to a set of truths.⁴⁷ Chinese educationalists exalted a set of high moral values and kept a "straitjacket on dissent" (Pye 1988: 30). Rituals, religious symbols, and legend represented the power of the imperial state in local society and propagated imperial orthodoxy (Duara 1988: 118-157). Examinations for bureaucratic posts gave rural and urban elites the chance to strengthen their local rule by increasing their power and prestige, and the perceived legitimacy of their local rule (Rankin 1986: 13). In 1905, after the abolition of the imperial state examination system, the link between education and China's state bureaucracy apparently dissolved: intellectuals could no longer achieve an official career through the education system alone. In the first issue of the radical paper *Xin qingnian* (*New Youth*), Chen Duxiu argued that science, not superstition, should form the backbone of China's new education. Chen linked superstition in education to the creation of dictatorship and outlined in the following terms the choices facing intellectuals in China:

The world now has two ways ahead: one is the bright path that leads to republicanism, science, and atheism; the other is the dark path that leads to dictatorship, superstition, and the supernatural (Quoted in Zheng Xuejia 1992: 181).

Anarchist revolutionaries, too, sought to remove authoritarianism from modern teaching (Chan and Dirlik 1991: 24-25). The May Fourth Movement included many attempts, particularly by anarchists, to popularise education by combining labour and learning in all schools and colleges, and to make sure education was no longer the preserve of wealthy would-be bureaucrats. Anarchists' plans were as follows:

With work and study combined, workers will become scholars, scholars will become workers, to create a new society that will realize the goal of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" (Dirlik 1989: 87).

⁴⁷ For an uncompromising attack on authority, conformity, and obedience to superiors throughout Chinese culture, see Jenner (1992). For the relationship between Confucian education and the state bureaucracy in late imperial China, see Dirlik (1991: 98-99), and Metzger (1977: 167-190).

One might assume that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, inspired as it was by GMD and CCP revolutionaries, would continue the move towards a common education that liberated and empowered the individual and embodied Western concepts of science and democracy. However, CCP revolutionaries, eager to seize political power and antagonistic towards many foreign powers, once more saw education as a means to win support for their policies, to oppose their foreign enemies, and to instil morality and political values, rather than to teach scientific concepts and spread democracy. Education during the strike was similar to the pre-1905 imperial education system in one respect: it was a routine form of schooling to groom cadres for the strike bureaucracy. In 1925, Hongkong's radical intellectuals that joined the strike movement even made calls for the reintroduction of a set of Confucian moral values for popular education. For example, one objective of Hongkong's popular student-journal, *Zhenshanmei*, was "to develop Confucianism's narrow sense of virtue and morality into a broader vision of mass virtue and morality" (Luo Zhu 1962a: 17). Revolutionary leaders in Guangzhou in the 1920s had long believed that education must act as a political "guide" for non-elite society. In 1920, Deng Zhongxia explained the aims of revolutionary education as "to explain the truth, to improve the intellect of our worker compatriots, to study some methods, and to guide the progress of the ordinary worker compatriots" (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1920]: 2).

According to Chan and Dirlik, China's labour movement "gave an unprecedented urgency to the need for an education that would help bring labourers and intellectuals together" (Chan and Dirlik 1991: 37). In previous chapters, I have shown how the beginning of the strike did not bring revolutionary leaders and labourers together, but established a new, powerful bureaucracy to control existing labour leaders. The CCP launched a mass education campaign for the same reason that it created the strike bureaucracy: to win control over the strikers rather than to empower individuals. With the establishment of the strike bureaucracy, education once more stressed authoritarianism and obedience to a set of truths: democratic centralism, Leninist truths of class consciousness, and economic determinism. CCP revolutionaries in Guangzhou replaced pre-strike bureaucratic values with a "modern" proletarian bureaucratic education led by the GMD Central Party Mass Education Committee (Mass Education Committee), which CCP activists controlled. Although many educationalists advocated education in everyday skills,

the guiding principle of the Mass Education Committee was different to most educationalists: it was not only concerned with eliminating illiteracy and developing mass education but also emphasised political education. On the one hand it developed everyday knowledge, on the other it spread political propaganda (Lin Zenghua 1962d: 102).

It would be foolish to expect cadre education in China's labour movement to embody the ideal form that Chen Duxiu and other intellectuals envisaged. In this chapter, I compare the ideals expressed by these intellectuals with utilitarian cadre education as practised in the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. I make this comparison in order to show that education in the strike was a stilted, routine, manipulative form of schooling that groomed people for predetermined roles rather than create a system of education that empowered the individual. Every trade-union movement needs cadre schools, but the education of workers during the strike lacked the intellectual enthusiasm that the May Fourth Movement sparked off among educationalists and intellectuals. This lack of radical enthusiasm and the consequent neglect of libertarian values, for example, the education of women, is understandable, since the revolution was not a broad-based libertarian movement but a narrow-based authoritarian one that revolutionaries led and organised. During the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, CCP revolutionaries used education to try to impose unity on a disunited labour movement.

Education bureaucracy

To use education to impose its vision of society the CCP needed to control the education bureaucracy. The CCP used the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike as an opportunity to seize control of Guangdong's revolutionary education system. This system was originally under the GMD's control: in 1924, the Guangdong New Students' Society (Guangdong xinxueshengshe), through the patronage of the GMD left-wing leader Liao Zhongkai and right-wing leader Zou Lu, set up the Mass Education Committee. The Mass Education Committee comprised bureaucrats and students⁴⁸ (Lin Zenghua 1962d: 101), however, before the strike, the political aspect of the Mass Education Committee's work was secondary to its educational aspect. The offices of the Mass Education Committee were located in a temple on Yuexiu Road South, but its daily meetings were held in the offices of the Provincial Education Department. The Mass Education Committee's work was chiefly to edit and compile textbooks; Xie Qing, the chief editor, had his office in the Guangdong University Department of Liberal Arts.

48 These bureaucrats included Xu Chongqing (Guangdong Secretary for Education) and Wang Renkang (Head of the Guangzhou Education Office). Students on the Mass Education Committee included Xie Qing, Lin Baisheng, and Wu Chongji (studying Liberal Arts at Guangdong University and members of the Society for People's Rights); Guo Shouhua, Lin Congyu, and Chen Yongnian (Guangdong University law students); and Chen Ziwen (Guangdong First High School). The last four were members of the New Students' Society and the Socialist Youth League (Lin Zenghua 1962d: 101).

At first, only a few propagandists and radicals used the Yuexiu Road South offices; it became a centre of activity for radical principals and professors and members of the Guangdong New Students' Society. The Alliance of Chinese Revolutionary Youth Soldiers and the Guangdong Association for the Liberation of Women later set up offices on the same premises. Youth leaders such as Wang Yifei, Li Zhilong, and Chen Youwei all held meetings there along with leaders of the women's movement such as Deng Laichao and Cai Chang (Lin Zenghua 1962d: 102). One of the Mass Education Committee's objectives was to extend the influence of the GMD throughout the province - it established branch offices in Guangzhou, Jiangmen, and Shantou. The Guangzhou office, under the leadership of Gan Naiguang, drew its membership predominantly from the Communist Youth League. It operated thirty-two different propaganda schools that were set up on the premises of existing schools, but run during the evenings after the normal classes had finished (Luo Zhu 1962g: 4).

CCP leaders were determined to gain control over the Mass Education Committee. In May 1924, the CCP Central Committee ordered Communists to strive to become leaders of GMD propaganda departments and Li Dazhao argued that Communists should attempt to change the programme of the GMD so that "a bond would be forged with the masses" (Wilbur and How 1989: 102). The outbreak of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike gave the CCP an opportunity to expand its influence in the GMD education movement. After the strike call, CCP-influenced activists stressed the Mass Education Committee's political work; the offices of the Mass Education Committee in Yuexiu Road South developed a more lively atmosphere. The Strike Committee, under the leadership of Communists, transformed the Mass Education Committee into a centre of revolutionary propaganda.

Apart from becoming a meeting point for CCP-influenced Hongkong students - Hongkong student activists Peng Yuesheng and Huang Jianying lodged there - the Mass Education Committee was right in the middle of the district where other administrative organs stood, for example, the Strike Committee and the headquarters of the GMD. Personalities such as Deng Zhongxia, Li Sen, Mu Qing, and Tan Pingshan frequently visited; Zhou Enlai used an office on the premises to write articles (Luo Zhu 1962g: 15). The education offices on Yuexiu Road South became an integral part of the administrative and political life of the strike. The GMD and CCP attracted few professional teachers to work on the strike's campaign of mass education. Pay for teachers taking mass education classes was low, so CCP cadres, Communist Youth League members, members of the Guangdong New Students' Society, or striking Hongkong students did the work (Lin Zenghua 1962d: 103-104).

The CCP used its increased influence in the Mass Education Committee to support the Strike Committee's Propaganda Department, a department that grew in

influence as the power of the Strike Committee increased. Holders of important posts in the Propaganda Department were all CCP loyalists: Deng Boming (Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union) was chairman, with Zhang Rendao (Hongkong Foreign-Employed Workers' Union) and Lai Qingyou (Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union) as vice-chairmen; Peng Yuesheng (Communist Youth League) and Guo Mingsheng (Hongkong Federation of Students) were in charge of the Strike Committee's lecture teams; and Lan Yuye (Guangdong University student and *Gongren zhi lu* editor) was chairman of the Editing Department (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 160).

Popularising education or grooming officials?

In chapter 7, I showed how the CCP built a pervasive strike bureaucracy; in both chapters 6 and 7, I described how unionists wanted to pursue political careers and to progress through the strike bureaucracy. Having established control over its own education bureaucracy and increased its presence and influence within the Mass Education Committee, did the strike leadership use education to teach scientific and democratic concepts, as Chen Duxiu had suggested, or did it simply enforce pre-strike educational values of bureaucratic conformity and use education to mould unions into the form that the strike's revolutionary elite envisaged? In one sense, the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike failed to realise a revolution in Chinese education: it established elite control over the education system. Students, who manned the education bureaucracy, were generally conservative. In 1926, a Soviet adviser called Naumov, disappointed by the conservative views of Guangdong students, described the students in Guangzhou in the following terms:

The students of Kwangtung [Guangdong], i.e., chiefly of Canton [Guangzhou], cannot be described as the most revolutionary students of China, as might and even should be expected. The majority of the students are the sons of local "gentry" and of merchants. The greater part of them are *active in politics*, but this very activity is of a *negative* nature (Wilbur and How 1989: 795).

Many students came to Guangzhou during the strike to find bureaucratic posts. For them, as for union leaders, the revolution offered the chance of a career in government. One eye-witness in Guangzhou makes the following criticism of such an attitude among some revolutionaries:

What distressed me most was the attitude towards revolutionary work which I found in [Guangzhou]. It was considered as a means of entering the bureaucracy, and those people who wished to participate in the revolution were looked upon as job-seekers (Wang Fan-hsi 1991 [1957]: 23).

The strike leaders, for the most part intellectuals, maintained their control over the strike bureaucracy and used education not as a means to empower individual workers but as a way of training government cadres in a new orthodoxy. Education during the strike was a means of climbing the ranks of the strike bureaucracy.

The Party selected people with a degree of education from among the strikers, nurtured and trained them, turning them into propaganda teams, culture teams, and revolutionary cadres (Wang Ke'ou 1962: 173).

Because education during the strike stressed a political orthodoxy, political groups such as local rural elites used the "modern" education to follow political careers much as they had used the imperial education system. Evidence suggests that rural lineages sent their educated sons to the Peasant Training Institute in Guangzhou. In the Institute's second class, two possible lineages stand out. Nine out of sixteen students from Nanhai shared the same surname: Wu Qinben, Wu Songyao, Wu Jinhong, Wu Jianben, Wu Jinan, Wu Chengjiu, Wu Zhaoquan, Wu Guihua, and Wu Yanglin. Whereas the evidence for a Wu lineage is by no means conclusive, stronger evidence suggests the presence in the same class of a Tan lineage. Four students from Guangning shared the same surname and middle name: Tan Hongzhen, Tan Hongxiang, Tan Hongtian, and Tan Hongzhi. The third class included ten students from Heshan, four with the surname Song and six with the surname Feng. Only one of these Heshan students was a peasant; the others were all educated and described themselves as students (Guangzhou nongmin yundong jiangxisuo ed 1987: 95-121). Evidence suggests that some of these students supported local political groups at the expense of CCP control. For example, when one student from Heshan, Song Zhongxing, took over the chairmanship of the Heshan Communist Youth League, the Guangdong Communist Youth League complained that the Heshan local offices never reported to the centre ("Tuan Yue zuzhibu baogao" 1982 [1926]: 289).

The case of the strike's Labour College shows that the CCP used education programmes to train revolutionary cadres and increase its political control and shows, too, how unions used the same programmes to further their own prestige. The Labour College was the most important centre of learning established during the strike. In June 1926, the Mass Education Committee decided to set up an institute for the study of the labour movement (Bai Jiezhi 1961: 106). Deng Zhongxia was the chancellor of the Labour College and Li Yaoxian was its principal. The Mass Education Committee ran the Labour College and reported to the Strike Committee, which the All-China Federation of Trade Unions controlled (Liang Haizhi 1962: 96).

The Labour College was the first Chinese institute of higher education for workers and received support from other student-organised groups. The first intake of students was limited to one hundred and fifty (Bai Jiezhi 1961: 106). At the end of the term, students sat an examination on the courses they attended. Some 119

workers completed the first course and earned diplomas (Luo Zhu 1962g: 44). The Labour College accepted 271 union members for its second intake, including fifty who had graduated from workers' schools run by the Strike Committee. The Strike Committee formulated the entrance exam to attract high-level officials from trade unions. The rationale for the Labour College was to develop loyal cadres in top positions in a variety of unions: "The people that the Party wanted for students were Party members, revolutionary cadres, and progressive elements in trade unions" (Liang Haizhi 1962: 96).

Union members wishing to enter the Labour College had to sit the following examination, which the CCP designed mainly to identify how important they were in their union's organisation:

- 1) What is your official post in your trade union?
- 2) How many years have you held your post?
- 3) What difficulties do you find in carrying out the work of the trade union?
- 4) What is the reason for the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike?
- 5) Why is the Northern Expedition necessary?

(Luo Zhu 1962g: 44)

The Labour College's course lasted three months. Its classes were no more advanced than propaganda disseminated by ordinary propaganda schools but the status of the lecturers was higher (Bai Jiezhong 1961: 106). The Labour College was an exercise in elitist streamlining to groom prospective officials and loyal bureaucrats for a new "democratic" government. An internal CCP report mentioned: "Strict screening... is necessary in selecting union officers to join our Party" (Wilbur and How 1989: 743).

The Labour College offered the following courses (lecturers names are in brackets):

- 1) The political situation in China (Xiao Chun).
- 2) History of the world revolution (Xiong Rui).
- 3) History of imperialist invasion (Tan Zhitang).
- 4) The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike (Deng Zhongxia).
- 5) Tactics of the strike (Deng Zhongxia).
- 6) Rules of trade-union organisation (Liu Shaoqi).
- 7) The international workers' movement (Huang Ping).
- 8) Problems of Guangdong's trade unions (Feng Jupao).
- 9) History of China's National Revolution (Yun Daiying).
- 10) The peasant movement (Ruan Xiaoxian).
- 11) The Chinese workers' movement (Li Sen).
- 12) Decisions of the Third Labour Congress (Zhang Ruicheng).
- 13) Socialism (Yu Shude).

14) The Three People's Principles (Gan Naiguang).
(Luo Zhu 1962g: 44).

Further evidence that the strike's education movement was aimed merely at training loyal cadres is the strike leadership's neglect of women's education, presumably because few women held high-level union posts. Xie Yanzhang (1991) takes the opposite view and contends that the strike promoted women's education. However, although Deng Zhongxia's vision was to ensure that women, too, had union organisations and that women and children should enjoy equal access to education (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1925b]: 123-124), the CCP's need to build a revolutionary bureaucracy and staff it with loyal, high-ranking union officers caused it to overlook women's education. Only as a result of campaigning by the Women's Liberation Association, the GMD Central Women's Department, and He Xiangyi, did the Nationalist Government and the Strike Committee provide funds for a Women's Propaganda Institute. The Institute was set up officially after the death of He's husband, Liao Zhongkai. However, the Institute was hardly revolutionary - it was split into three departments: laundry, shoemaking, and tailoring. During the day, the women worked; in the evenings, they attended a few political classes. The Strike Committee placed little emphasis on educating women workers - it reviewed the progress of the Women's Propaganda Institute as follows:

The shoemaking department's achievements have been the most outstanding. The grass sandals that they stitched were good enough to be worn for a long time and, apart from supplying the Picket Corps, every military unit came one after another to make a bulk order (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 99).

In November, the Women's Liberation Association proposed the establishment of a Women's Labour Institute and asked the Strike Committee to supply a grant of eighty-five dollars to set it up. The Strike Committee agreed to the proposal, however, courses run at the Women's Labour Institute were different from the Workers' Labour Institute. Every day women workers spent four hours stitching grass sandals and four hours studying cultural classes - Mandarin Chinese, arithmetic, general knowledge, character recognition, religious services, and political speeches - up to a total of 24 hours each week (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 291).

In July 1926, Gao Tianbo, a CCP member of the GMD Women's Department, made another attempt to set up a women's institute of learning. She planned a Women's School, but an address could not be found for the new school and so the plans lapsed (Luo Zhu 1962g: 46). Later, under the initiative of Cai Chang, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the GMD Women's Office jointly founded a Striking Women-Workers' School of Learning. The school, situated at the Chongjian Women's Union, had two principals: Zheng Xuzhen and Chen Tiejun. Only in October 1926, when the strike was almost over, did the All-China Federation of

Trade Unions' Education and Propaganda Committee take over the management of the School and Chen Tiejun became the sole principal (Luo Zhu 1962g: 46).

The Strike Committee and propaganda schools

As the CCP-built strike bureaucracy grew, the CCP placed more emphasis on setting up propaganda schools to train more cadres. The CCP initially organised a small number of schools. Immediately after the strike call and the return of workers to Guangzhou, the CCP decided to launch a propaganda campaign to increase its mass support. On June 29, The All-China Federation of Trade Unions announced the opening of the Strike Propaganda School under the leadership of Feng Jupuo and Peng Yuesheng (Luo Zhu 1962g: 54). During July, before the CCP had established a strong strike bureaucracy, the school made little progress. Later, Hongkong unions' fight against the centralising tendencies of the CCP caused a change in the leadership of the Propaganda School: on August 5, CCP cadre Feng Jupuo left office as head of the school and the Strike Committee appointed Chen Qiulin, a Hongkong-Chinese, in his place (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 44).

However, the CCP established greater control after the assassination of Liao Zhongkai. The Strike Committee increased its propaganda programme and more closely supervised propaganda schools' classes. Classes studied at propaganda schools were as follows:

- (1) Why strike?
 - (2) The history of the imperialist invasion of China.
 - (3) The working class and political struggle.
 - (4) The working class and economic exploitation.
 - (5) Why the workers' movement must be unified.
 - (6) The international history of red labour and labour movements in the Far East.
 - (7) The labour situation around the world.
 - (8) Soviet Russia's labour laws and Soviet workers.
 - (9) Why the workers and peasants must unite.
 - (10) How to carry out propaganda work among the workers.
 - (11) The Nationalist Government and the workers.
 - (12) The Chinese labour movement.
 - (13) The history of social change.
 - (14) The capitalist system.
- (Luo Zhu 1962g: 43).

Successful students won places in the strike bureaucracy. The most successful students from propaganda schools won a place on a Propaganda Team for the

Strikers' Picket Corps. The Strike Committee assigned only less successful candidates to the Hongkong Federation of Students (Xianggang xuesheng lianhehui) to teach in workers' propaganda teams (Su Qide 1962: 143). The CCP organised secret advanced training classes for the most outstanding candidates who also became CCP members. These classes took place every week over a period of six months. Senior-ranking CCP leaders, for example, Chen Yannian, Zhang Tailei, Yun Daiying, Deng Zhongxia, Mu Qing, and Huang Ping, lectured at these classes and distributed leaflets for workers to study (Su Qide 1962a: 145).

In mid-November 1925, the Strike Committee considered plans to increase the number of schools that the Mass Education Committee managed. By early 1926, the CCP widened the scope of the propaganda schools - soon propaganda schools were teaching some three thousand students. Students were sons and daughters of workers or poor peasants, with ages ranging from seven to sixteen. Most had either never been to school or had had to end their studies when their fathers had lost their jobs. The school charged no tuition fees and provided all textbooks, abacuses, and slates. Because the schools opened during the evenings, many of the students could work during the day and study at night (Luo Zhu 1962g: 14).

The education, however, concentrated on not only basic literary skills but also political indoctrination. The CCP regarded unions as "the schools of communism" (Wilbur and How 1989: 739). CCP propagandists and educationalists tried to instil political lessons into every type of class.

Textbooks were edited so that on the one hand they instilled everyday knowledge, and on the other hand propagandised political policies. For example, the textbook for the elementary character recognition class used the following texts: "The Three People's Principles - Nationality, Sovereignty, and Democracy;" "Controlling Capital, Equalising Rights;" and "Down with the Imperialists, Rescind the Unequal Treaties." These lessons were all common slogans of the time (Luo Zhu 1962g: 14).

CCP control of education and Hongkong unions' autonomy

So far in this chapter, I have shown how the CCP used the strike to expand its own propaganda activities, rather than offer to workers the "scientific" and "democratic" education that intellectuals had called for before the strike. I have shown, too, how Hongkong unions used the strike bureaucracy and the CCP's most elitist education programmes to follow political careers. Now, I shall show how Hongkong workers and some students tried to retain their autonomy from the Strike Committee and to organise independently. Some of the one hundred students who left Hongkong at the

start of the strike became a pool of resources for the Strike Committee to draw on and later joined the propaganda activities of the Strike Committee. However, Lin Changchi set up a Hongkong Chinese Education Study Society dormitory to look after those society members who arrived in Guangzhou after the strike. Although some of these students, too, joined either the Strike Committee or Picket Corps Propaganda Teams (Lin Zenghua 1962a: 105) and participated in various of the Strike Committee's demonstrations and marches (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 160-164), they maintained an independent organisation that later grew into the Hongkong Federation of Students, led by Lin Changchi, which had about 250 members.⁴⁹ Although the Hongkong Branch of the Communist Youth League claimed that it influenced some of the Federation's students, the Federation remained independent and grew in authority during the strike ("Tuan Xianggang diwei baogao" 1982 [1925]: 113-114).

Similarly, Hongkong unions ran their own schools and wanted to maintain some independence from the Mass Education Committee. Hongkong union leaders knew and trusted the Hongkong intellectual Lin Changchi,⁵⁰ so the Strike Committee permitted Lin Changchi to organise Hongkong students for work with Hongkong union leaders. Some sixty students drawn from the Hongkong Federation of Students worked as advisers to the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates to set up the Propaganda School of the All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates (Hongkong Unions' Propaganda School for short) (Luo Zhu 1962g: 38). On March 4, 1926, the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates announced the opening of the Hongkong Unions' Propaganda School (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 249). The first intake of students graduated on June 4, 1926. (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 345). The Hongkong Unions' Propaganda School gave the Hongkong unions some organisational independence from the Strike Committee and the CCP. This independence was, however, limited. At the beginning of September 1925, when the Hongkong Federation of Students organised a conference, it had to get the consent of the Strike Party Group. Later, Tan Zhitang, Luo Yiyuan, Peng Pai, Deng Zhongxia, Li Fuchun, Deng Laichao, and Tan Pingshan all spoke at the conference, which, although it catered for the striking students of Hongkong, had to admit students who were from the Strike Committee's schools (Luo Zhu 1962g: 29-30).

The CCP worked hard to spread its propaganda inside unions' own schools. The strike created no new union schools - before the strike, each union ran its own

49 The Hongkong Federation of Students was a temporary organisation made up of students from the Hongkong Communist Youth League, Hongkong Branch of the New Students' Society, Hongkong China Education Study Society, and the Confucian Society.

50 Lin Changchi had acted as adviser to the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates during the strike call.

evening classes and workers' schools. After the Third Labour Congress, according to the plans formulated by the Mass Education Committee to increase its education campaign, the Strike Committee decided to set up its own workers' schools. The Mass Education Committee coordinated and controlled the lessons and courses and arranged for instructors. The schools were set up in various locations, for example, temples and trade-union premises (Luo Zhu 1962g: 47). The main courses offered by such schools were the familiar ones of writing, rules regarding the organisation of trade unions, general knowledge, and tactics for the strike. Each school's classes were taught by one teacher from a text, and were held at workers' lodgings. If there were several unions in the same place then the Mass Education Committee assigned a number of teachers according to the number of members in each union (Luo Zhu 1962g: 47). Each school was required to set up a worker's club. A general club was organised in the Taiping Theatre. These clubs put on old and new plays, films and other entertainments, but each club had to listen to half an hour to an hour of speeches made by the school's lecture team. Once a week, someone from outside the club was invited to speak. The clubs also provided books, newspapers, and entertainments, and set up theatre troupes, football teams, and Chinese musical groups (Luo Zhu 1962g: 47).

However, as the strike bureaucracy strengthened and the strike's propaganda movement developed, the CCP tried to strengthen its control over workers' education. After the first class of students had graduated from the Labour College, the Strike Committee reorganised workers' schools to give important propaganda positions to newly trained unionists (Luo Zhu 1962g: 47-48). The reorganisation further centralised control over union schools for the Strike Committee, but left the organisational structure of individual unions unaffected. The CCP allowed Hongkong trade unions to continue to run their own schools, but tried to use union schools, theatre groups, and workers' clubs to spread propaganda. The CCP used contacts in many of these clubs to propagandise its political views and to develop a power base among the workers. An official CCP document, issued in December 1925, made the following pronouncement: "The most important tasks of educational propagandists of Party cells consist of the work of political education and ideological propaganda" (Wilbur and How 1989: 551). Although the document cautioned against simply reciting propaganda "word for word," proclaiming "stereotyped theories," and making "injection-type" reports, it gave CCP propagandists the following orders: "Discipline action; oppose anarchist tendencies.... Collectivize life; oppose individualism.... Have absolute confidence in the Party; oppose all subjective points of view." The document calls for propagandists to uphold the "proletarian revolutionary philosophy" and "criticize" workers' points of view (Wilbur and How 1989: 549).

The CCP wanted to set up lecture teams to educate the workers. It had succeeded in establishing schools to train students as its agents or officials and it now needed to mobilise these agents to spread propaganda among strikers. During the early days of the strike, immediately after many Hongkong workers had returned to Guangzhou, Liu Ersong had organised temporary lecture teams, but they had no stable membership. On July 7, 1925, the Strike Committee decided to organise formal lecture teams. The Strike Committee ordered each union to send members to become lecture team cadets. The CCP wanted these cadets to spend the day among the striking workers and the evenings lecturing to the ordinary citizens of Guangzhou.

The content of the lectures was mainly taken from *Gongren zhi lu*, CCP propaganda leaflets, and Strike Committee announcements (Luo Zhu 1962g: 3). Two former lecture team members, Zhang Rendao and Su Qide, recall the experience:

During the day, we studied propaganda issued by the Strike Committee Propaganda Department or news from *Gongren zhi lu*. In the evenings, four or five people formed a small group and went to a pre-arranged place (somewhere workers used to gather or workers' lodgings) to carry out our propaganda. When we reached our destination, we organised dancing, singing, and poetry to attract the workers' attention. Then we rang a bell and the lecturing started. We lectured on the meaning of the strike, the alliance of workers and peasants, and the great union of workers, peasants, merchants, and students. We spoke of the importance of the boycott of Hongkong and the need to defeat the warlords (Luo Zhu 1962g: 4).

The CCP sanctioned the activities of several workers' theatre groups to perform in workers' dormitories. These theatre groups included the Iron and Flowers Theatre Society (Tiehua jushe), organised by some Guangzhou-Hankou railway workers; the Iron and Blood Theatre Society (Tiexue jushe), organised by some workers on the Guangzhou Delta Railway; the Labourers' Magical Images Theatre Society (Gongren huanying jushe), organised by the Strike Committee's Picket Corps Training Office; the Blood and Flowers Theatre Society (Xuehua jushe), organised by the Whampoa Military Academy; and a student theatre group run by the Guangdong New Students' Society (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 168). The Strike Committee trained cadres in several theatre societies run by seamen, too (Luo Zhu 1962e: 2-3).

The CCP tried to extend its propaganda activities to workers' children. Many strikers had arrived in Guangzhou with their wives and children and individual unions organised their own primary schools to teach the children. The first unions to organise schools after the strike call were the Seamen's Union, Metal-Workers' General Union (Jinshuye zonggonghui), Dockyard Coolies' Union, and Guangzhou

Foreign-Employed Workers' Union. Unions managed the school premises, fees, and organisation themselves - the Seamen's Union Primary School was set up in a workers' dormitory. Huang Zequan acted as the principal and Deng Song and Zhang Su as aides to the teachers, who were selected from among the ranks of the seamen. The school had no desks and the children sat on benches with their books on their laps and listened to the teacher talk. The Strike Committee's Mass Education Committee took over the management of some unions' schools and mobilised Communist Youth League members of the Mass Education Committee to teach in them (Luo Zhu 1962g: 49).

However, unions' primary schools, which organised a great deal of recreational activities and classes for children, remained largely under the management of the individual unions, with the Education and Propaganda Committee acting as an umbrella organisation. Hongkong unions frustrated the Strike Committee's attempts to create single, unified organisations. For example, on April 30, 1926, the Strike Committee held a Congress of Youth Workers' Representatives to announce its intention of organising a Strike Committee Playgroup for Workers' Children (Strike Committee Playgroup for short) and asked prospective members to sign up in May. The All-Hongkong Federation of Workers' Syndicates, too, organised a children's playgroup, keeping individual union structures intact. When a meeting of the official Strike Committee Playgroup took place on September 29, the delegates to the congress, unwilling to give up individual union control, remained divided along union lines (Luo Zhu 1962g: 51).

Organisational control over playgroups remained within individual unions, but the official strike leadership was successful in achieving a certain measure of leadership. With the agreement of union leaders, propagandists were allowed to teach the children simple propaganda phrases, provided that they were in Cantonese. Soon all workers' children could say the follow slogans:

We all know that we are workers. We must all understand the duties of the working class. We must know this truth if we want to understand and study hard (letter from Su Baonan to Xia Ming, quoted in Luo Zhu 1962g: 50).

CCP propaganda in primary schools was part of a long-term strategy to develop a working population in Hongkong loyal to the CCP and China. The mood of preparing children to become future revolutionaries is captured by one of the songs that CCP propagandists taught the children to sing.

Comrades!

We will sing with all our hearts:

We are prepared.

We will always be prepared.

We are the children of workers and peasants.

We will be the flowers of the future.

We will be the masters of the new world!

(Luo Zhu 1962g: 51).

However, CCP leaders placed less emphasis on educating women and children than they did on educating union leaders. This emphasis is because the CCP's education programmes aimed not so much at bridging the gap between intellectuals and workers as at training loyal cadres for the trade-union movement and enabling various union officials to further their own individual prospects and raise the profile of their own individual unions. The cells and propaganda teams that the CCP set up in workers' clubs and lodgings were an important part of the development of CCP mass organisation among Hongkong workers. The CCP had little success in winning over workers in Hongkong's smaller unions that belonged to the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates before the strike because many of these unions tried to remain independent of the Strike Committee. Some measure of the CCP's failure can be seen in the fact that the CCP managed to recruit mainly union leaders from unions which already had strong CCP or GMD links.⁵¹ Fang Cai (1962c) records that almost one hundred cadres from the Seamen's Union joined the CCP. The Hongkong Branch of the Communist Youth League claimed to have recruited sixty-eight mechanics, forty-four seamen, forty stevedores, twenty-six foreign-employed workers, and fourteen printers. It listed the other seventy-six workers that it had recruited as members of the Strike Committee but had recruited none from the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates ("Tuan Xianggang tewei zuzhi gongzuo baogao" (1982 [1926]: 162).

The strike's newspaper: *Gongren zhi lu*

In this chapter, I have so far focused on the strike's education and propaganda programmes. I have demonstrated that the CCP launched these programmes to enhance its political control and to train cadres for the strike bureaucracy and shown that unions used the programmes to develop their political prestige within the strike bureaucracy. I now examine the strike's newspaper, *Gongren zhi lu*. In chapter 1, I argued that to communicate their revolutionary vision to others, revolutionaries had to establish powerful bureaucracies to centralise power in their hands and sometimes had to compromise with existing "conservative" powers. In a similar way, the CCP maintained strict control over *Gongren zhi lu*; many aspects of the newspaper, such as its writing style and vocabulary, were old-fashioned.

⁵¹ As I showed in chapter 5, most workers were unaware of the distinction between the two parties.

Gongren zhi lu played an important role in the strike. By studying the strike leadership's control over news, one can better understand the nature of the strike movement and assess its democratic credentials. One strikers' demand, formulated by the CCP, was for a free press in Hongkong. What was the CCP's real attitude towards press freedom? During the strike, the CCP used loyal unionists to influence other newspapers and manipulate their editorial stance. For example, in July 1926, CCP-controlled printers' unions called out their members from various newspapers that had criticised the Strikers' Congress (*South China Morning Post*, July 28, 1926). To the CCP revolutionaries, newspapers were another weapon that they could use to build control over the strike. Some accounts, such as Xia Zhuojing and Chen Wu (1991), describe *Gongren zhi lu* as the "voice of the workers."⁵² I have thus far shown the strike to be an organised movement that the CCP wanted to control and manipulate. Now, I examine memoirs written by intellectuals who worked on the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' newspaper, *Gongren zhi lu*, to provide an insight into the work of the newspaper and show that it was not the "voice of the workers" but the "voice of the Strike Committee."

Originally intended as a weekly newspaper, the CCP transformed *Gongren zhi lu* into a daily covering the strike, local news, and international politics. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions had originally planned the first issue for May 31, 1925, but delayed it because of political turmoil in Guangzhou. On July 1, *Gongren zhi lu* proclaimed its intention to show "correct leadership in stormy times" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 8). The CCP launched *Gongren zhi lu* not as a forum for debate but rather as a manual that propaganda cadres and workers might consult to discover the policies of the Strike Committee and the "proper" aims of the revolutionary struggle (Xia Zhuojing and Chen Wu 1991: 91-93).

The CCP used *Gongren zhi lu* to propagate the decisions of the Strike Committee and the Strikers' Congress. *Gongren zhi lu* launched propaganda campaigns to stir up support in advance of CCP and Strike Committee policies. These propaganda campaigns attempted to strengthen support for the Strike Committee and to attack political opponents, using slogans such as "maintain strike order," "arrest running-dogs," and "put down scabs" (Xia Zhuojing and Chen Wu 1991: 100). Cadres in the CCP Department of Propaganda wrote and edited almost all *Gongren zhi lu's* articles.

The paper was controlled by a revolutionary elite of intellectuals who were CCP members. Its first editor was Guo Shouzhen, a graduate in law from Guangdong University. He was transferred from the Guangdong Peasant Training Institute to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' Department of Propaganda in

⁵² Wang Ke'ou, too, uses this phrase in his memoirs (Wang Ke'ou 1962: 175).

May 1925. At first, his tasks were to collect paper cuttings dealing with the domestic workers' movement, the international workers' movement, domestic politics, foreign politics, and news of the revolution in Guangdong. Lan Yuye was the second editor of *Gongren zhi lu*; he was Deng Zhongxia's protégé. Before Lan became editor, Deng Zhongxia had asked him to write more for the paper; when Guo fell ill, Lan took his place. Lan was a fellow townsman of Guo's from Dapu. He had attended the same high school - Chaozhou Jinshan High School - two classes lower than Guo. Lan, too, was a graduate of Guangdong University, where he read literature. Deng Zhongxia, of course, had studied at Beijing University under Li Dazhao. Such was the background of the main editorial staff; they were graduates from some of the best further-education establishments in China.

Strong central control as a feature of *Gongren zhi lu* was evident from its first issue. On the day of the Shaji Massacre, Chen Yannian ordered Guo Shouzhen to investigate the events at Shamian first-hand, but Guo was not permitted to write the editorial. Deng Zhongxia presented Guo with a set of drafts that he had personally written and instructed Guo to go to the CCP Regional Committee offices and report to the CCP Propaganda Department (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 148). All important events were reported to the CCP Regional Committee and editorials were tightly controlled by Deng Zhongxia. The CCP set up the newspaper's editorial office in the CCP Department of Propaganda at 75, Wenming Road. Under the supervision of Deng Zhongxia, Guo took charge of the editing the newspaper. Every morning, Guo went to Yuexiu Road South to the Writing Department of the Strike Committee to pick up the draft news reports. The reports were edited in the afternoon and sent the same evening to the Propaganda Department for final editing and approval (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 149).

In its eighth issue, *Gongren zhi lu* announced that it wanted to reflect the views of all members of the public and asked for submissions to the newspaper of articles of between three and six hundred characters (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 8). However, the CCP and its intellectual supporters maintained strict control over the contents of the newspaper. According to Guo Shouzhen and Luo Zhu, *Gongren zhi lu's* reports from the Strikers' Congress were no more than "eight-legged essays" copying the chairman's speech and ignoring any responses from the floor (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 156, Luo Zhu 1962g: 29).

The Strike Party Group regularly discussed what the content of the following day's *Gongren zhi lu* editorial should be (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 149). Most of the editorials and commentaries were written by Deng Zhongxia. However, after Strike Party Group discussions, Guo was sometimes asked to write them. Later, Lan Yuye wrote some editorials. Although Deng Zhongxia felt that certain topics might best be written up by others, he often wrote the articles himself and put another person's

name to them. Many of Su Zhaozheng's articles in *Gongren zhi lu* were in reality written by Deng Zhongxia or the newspaper's second editor, Lan Yuye. Lan Yuye wrote articles using various pseudonyms, including Re Xue (Righteous Ardour), Yu Re (Undefeated Ardour), Nong Gu (Peasant Valley), Liao Zheng (Talking Politics), Qun Zhong (The Masses), and Da Ren (Heavy Responsibility) (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 152). Each pseudonym presented a different image: revolutionary cadre, worker, peasant, politician, democrat, or government official.

So *Gongren zhi lu* could hardly claim to be "the voice of the workers." The paper was edited, written, and supervised by CCP cadres and Guangzhou intellectuals. The CCP used *Gongren zhi lu* to present the policies of the Strike Committee to workers. In many cases Su Zhaozheng's name could lend legitimacy to the newspaper's editorials because of his popularity among Hongkong workers. For the first few months of the publication's life, Deng Zhongxia insisted on seeing any commentaries or special reports himself before they were even drafted. When Lan took over the editorship, his commentaries had to be passed to Deng Zhongxia for "correction" (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 152). The CCP was a party of intellectuals and *Gongren zhi lu's* writing style reflected this intellectual elite's control over the paper. According to Guo Shouzhen, *Gongren zhi lu* had a distinctive writing style; it did not use "pure" baihua as was common in Shanghai.⁵³ Guo gives two explanations for the newspaper's style. First, Guangzhou and Hongkong workers were not used to reading baihua. Second, Deng Zhongxia's personal writing style, which was "semi-classical and semi-colloquial," strongly influenced other writers on the paper. According to Guo, "Lan Yuye studied Deng Zhongxia's style; it was sometimes difficult to tell who had written the editorials" (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 154-155).

In its propaganda and educational work, the CCP stressed: "Great care must be exercised" in selecting the language used in order to "properly convey" the CCP's message. On the subject of using correct language, a CCP internal document on education and propaganda methods said: "If this is not done, it would not be easy to make our worker comrades really understand and take interest in these problems" (Wilbur and How 1989: 551). In some respects, *Gongren zhi lu* compromised the CCP's ideological views in favour of writing effective propaganda, for example, the newspaper used some colloquial terms to replace new words that had little meaning for strikers. For example, the phrase "red-haired devils" often replaced the word "imperialists." After the strike call, "imperialist" had become a general term of abuse with no specific meaning. "Imperialist" became a common insult - even among squabbling children.

⁵³ Baihua was a new vernacular writing style intended to make literature and political writings more accessible to Chinese with little education.

Deng Zhongxia used the colloquialism "red-haired devils." When most people heard the words "red-haired devils," they immediately became incensed at the thought of the past years of suffering and remembered the British invasion of Sanyuanli and the Shaji Massacre. Workers easily understood phrases like "Down with the red-haired devils!" (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 154).

The newspaper's writing style was classical compared to other papers. This style represented the official status of the paper and the personal style of Deng Zhongxia. The newspaper's use of colloquialisms, although they represented the strike's policy of a boycott of British trade and opposition to the British in Hongkong, corrupted the communication of ideas from revolutionary leaders to the strikers. *Gongren zhi lu* was a dour paper controlled firmly by the CCP Regional Committee and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Tight control was kept over all the material printed and editorial control resided almost exclusively in the hands of Deng Zhongxia. While the bureaucratic institutions of the strike grew in size and power, the CCP needed to expand its propaganda activities to train cadres for official posts. *Gongren zhi lu* became an official strike propaganda organ which the CCP gave to members of its lecture teams and teachers at propaganda schools for use in the training of a new generation of cadres (Guo Shouzhen 1962a: 149).

Propaganda, bureaucracy, and class alliances

In chapter 2, I showed that many rural areas around the Zhujiang Delta traded with Hongkong and had become prosperous through that trade. In chapter 4, I argued that Hongkong workers were mostly not of immediate peasant origin. The CCP, however, believed that workers and peasants could unite to enforce the strike and its boycott of Hongkong trade. They believed that such an alliance was "natural." In this chapter, I argue that CCP propaganda created the so-called "natural" alliance of workers and peasants. I have looked at the CCP's use of education and propaganda to expand its political control, shore up the strike bureaucracy, and guide the revolution. The CCP took its education and propaganda into Guangdong's subregions, too. I now explore how the CCP used its propaganda campaigns to win support for the strike from local powers in Guangdong. This exploration shows that the strike was an authoritarian movement, not an eruption of mass discontent, and that the CCP needed the support of various "conservative" local powers to extend its control and impose an alliance between peasants and workers.

The CCP believed that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike could realise a revolutionary alliance between workers and peasants. Deng Zhongxia believed that the workers and peasants could unite to defeat imperialism. He wrote:

Peasants are really the natural allies of workers. They suffer exploitation and oppression by landlords, we suffer exploitation and oppression by capitalists. So our economic sufferings are no different from theirs (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 34).

An editorial in *Gongren zhi lu* called for government based on working-class values, as perceived by the CCP, to lead the peasantry: "Because of their economic difficulties and low cultural level, the peasantry need the leadership of workers who possess class consciousness" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 298). The Strike Committee subordinated peasant interests to the bureaucracy's ideals: Deng Zhongxia condemned peasant trade outside the rules of the boycott as "following narrow self-interest" and decided to organise Hongkong workers into Rural Propaganda Teams to impose the Strike Committee's policies (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 34). The CCP's view of the Chinese worker led it to believe that there was a natural affinity between Hongkong workers and Guangdong peasants. The CCP targeted the rural areas of Dongjiang, Chaozhou, Meixian, Sanjiao, Xijiang, Nanlu, Yuebei, and Nanhai, from where many peasants smuggled food to Hongkong and clashed with the Picket Corps. In August 1925, some strikers enrolled in the Peasant Movement Training Institute to train for Rural Propaganda Teams. In addition to hearing individual reports from each locality, candidates sat the following classes (the lessons' author follows in brackets):

- 1) The Nationalist Revolution's peasant movement (Xiao Chunu).
 - 2) Imperialism and the peasant movement (Yun Daiying).
 - 3) The workers and the peasant movement (Deng Zhongxia).
 - 4) Lessons of the peasant movement in Hailufeng (Peng Pai).
 - 5) The constitution of Guangdong peasant associations (Luo Qiyuan).
 - 6) The state of the Guangdong peasant movement (Ruan Xiaoxian).
 - 7) The Nationalist Revolution and Guangdong unification (Tan Pingshan).
 - 8) Political report (Liao Zhongkai).
 - 9) A speech on politics (Borodin).
 - 10) A speech on arming the peasants (Galen).
 - 11) A speech on the worker and peasant alliance (Mamaev).
- (Luo Zhu 1962e: 1).

Some workers successfully communicated with the peasantry. In chapter 4, I described how the Seamen's Union, the most loyal to the CCP of all unions, had strong subregional influences in its organisation. Consequently, some groups of Hongkong seamen, unlike many handicraft workers and skilled workers, had close relatives working on the land in Guangdong (Luo Zhu 1962n: 87) and seamen became the CCP's main source for rural propaganda cadres. The CCP approved certain workers' theatre troupes to tour rural Guangdong. Most theatre troupes were organisations of seamen, for example, the China Entertainment Theatre Society,

which consisted of crew members from the Canada Queen. In August and September 1925, the China Entertainment Theatre Society went to Gaoyao, Panyu, Zhongshan, and Bolo (Luo Zhu 1962e: 2-3). In December 1925, Ta Rong, Liang Zhensan, and Liang Lian, three members of the theatre group, returned to their home county of Enping in order to set up peasant associations. According to Ta, the exploitation of the peasants by the three clans of Wu, Liang, and Feng was particularly bad in this region. They called a meeting of workers and peasants and disseminated propaganda against imperialists and landlord-bullies, propounded policies of resistance against the local merchant-volunteer corps and bandits, and spoke in favour of lowering rents and taxes. Once the peasants had been organised and armed, they could be mobilised against the local landlord Liang Yuanyin. The peasant association seized the local law court and collected funds to run a school (Luo Zhu 1962e: 3).

These successes of the alliance between the workers and peasants were due to the political organisation and backing of organised propaganda teams and officially sponsored workers' organisations. The peasants received copies of ready-made constitutions on which to build their associations; with the backing of the Picket Corps and the Nationalist troops, they could maintain their independent organisation. But how far these new peasant associations differed from old lineages is unclear. It is unlikely that strong, rich lineage groups reorganised. More likely, weaker lineage organisations that could less ably defend themselves or to stamp their authority on local politics reorganised with CCP support to fight old enemies. The efforts to "educate" the countryside ran foul of some local leaders who were unwilling to allow the CCP to infiltrate their organisations. In Zhongshan County, the peasant associations were particularly opposed to radical reorganisation, as many of them were simply old lineage structures slightly reformed:

The Zhongshan situation had parallels in every other county - the internal structure of the peasant associations was impure, and the propaganda of the worker and peasant alliance in such villages ran into difficulties (Luo Zhu 1962e: 8).

The CCP propaganda movement sought not only to groom workers into loyal cadres but also to spread the prestige and influence of the Strike Committee and the CCP throughout Guangdong's subregions. The CCP trained workers for its propaganda activities. Some workers, mostly seamen, could use lineage and kinship ties to make contact with villages, peasant associations, local bandits, and village headmen in order to carry the CCP's propaganda into rural society. Workers underwent training at the Peasant Training Institute for two weeks before joining rural propaganda teams. At the end of the first month, more than fifty graduated. The Strike Committee organised graduates into units of three people and the Provincial Peasant Association assigned a special envoy to lead each unit. Carrying with them

copies of the peasant associations' constitution, propaganda leaflets, banners, flags and other miscellaneous propaganda tools, they were sent to Bao'an, Danshui, Dongguan, Bolo, Zhongshan, Shunde, Nanhai, Panyu, Xinhui, Taishan, and Luoding counties to begin their propaganda duties. In each locality, propaganda teams spent at least three or four days and at most a week (Luo Zhu 1962e: 2-3).

The problems of taking the new education to the countryside were many. However, even some local bandit leaders had no hesitation in backing the Strike Committee's propaganda efforts in the countryside if CCP activists had the right sort of political connections. Ruo Qide's experiences show how lineage connections played an important part in taking the CCP's propaganda into rural Guangdong. Ruo describes some of the events of his propaganda team in Guangdong as follows:

I, along with another member of the lecture team, Kuang Zhixiong, was sent to Conghua County. We went into the countryside to carry out our propaganda without an armed guard. While travelling through Panyu, we met the local bandit boss Kuang Yi. Kuang Zhixiong and he were kinsmen. We explained the meaning and aims of our propaganda activities and boss Kuang gave us his support, saying: "On this journey there are many bandits, but I will give you a pass that you may rely on. Show it to them and you will pass safely." Sure enough, on our way we met several bandit groups. After we showed them our pass, they all passed on peacefully without incident (Luo Zhu 1962e: 4).

In the villages, Ruo and the propaganda team spoke to "modern" peasant associations and "conservative" village civil defence corps and local militia to win their support for the strike. The tone of their speeches was nationalistic and intended to stir the audiences' patriotism. Ruo's account is as follows:

When we reached the villages, the peasant associations or the mintuan^[54] both received us and assembled the masses to listen to our speeches. Once the peasants had heard our speeches, they detested the imperialist red-haired devils, and expressed support for the strike (Luo Zhu 1962e: 4).

CCP propaganda teams relied on local political groups in order to gain access to the countryside and garner support for the strike. Just as the CCP had to compromise with existing Hongkong union leaders that it regarded as backward in order to build the strike bureaucracy, it used its education and propaganda programme to build as much support as possible for the strike from various local political groups.

Conclusion

54 Mintuan were militia run by local political leaders.

Many May Fourth thinkers, such as Chen Duxiu, upheld the values of science and democracy as the basis for an ideal education in China. Such an education could empower individuals and develop a culture of open criticism essential for the creation of a democratic society. If the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike and the 1925-1927 social unrest in China was indeed an eruption of mass discontent and a violent airing of grievances against imperialist and colonial oppression, one might expect the strike's education programme to display such democratic credentials. However, the education policies of the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee generally lacked the values of science and democracy that Chen Duxiu promoted.

In many ways, the need to support the strike bureaucracy and train workers for official posts dictated that the mass education movement that the Strike Committee launched reflected authoritarian values and was geared towards educating a body of bureaucrats. The growth of a strike bureaucracy, built to control workers' power and extend the influence of the CCP in an environment where contrasting political parties competed for power, corrupted the revolutionaries' pre-strike intentions to offer "scientific education." The CCP maintained close control over the official strike newspaper and reports of decisions made by the Strikers' Congress and the Strike Committee. During the strike, the most important influence of the revolution in Guangdong on education was to create a new system of schooling based on political dogma and designed principally to groom officials for the strike bureaucracy.

As in other areas of the strike, Hongkong unions tried to maintain as much independence as possible from the centralising policies of the CCP. Unions retained control over their own schools, but nevertheless allowed CCP and Strike Committee lecture teams to address their workers. Some Hongkong unions preferred to employ students from Hongkong who belonged to the independent Hongkong Federation of Students that Hongkong union leaders knew and trusted. Workers in member unions of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates appeared to remain relatively free of the influence of the CCP's propaganda in comparison with workers and leaders in the Seamen's Union.

The CCP tried to use propaganda and education to unify workers and peasants and create a mass base of support for the strike leadership. Peasant associations, lineages, and labour unions all appeared to use propaganda programmes and political education as a new bureaucratic orthodoxy with which to further their own long-held interests rather than to revolutionise their beliefs. Although the CCP considered that its political propaganda and education was new, revolutionary, and radical, the fact that the CCP used such propaganda and education to serve the

interests of an incipient and growing bureaucracy meant that in crucial ways its propaganda and education was old, conservative, and stagnant.

Chapter 9

The Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike's Trade-Union Unification Movement

In previous chapters, I showed that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was an authoritarian movement. In chapter 7, I showed the growth of a pervasive bureaucracy; in chapter 8, I described how the CCP used political propaganda and education generally to serve the revolution's bureaucracy. In this chapter, I examine how the CCP used its authority to try to implement one of its radical policies, i.e., to unify Hongkong trade unions. Few accounts of the strike have considered its trade-union unification movement in any detail. Works that ignore the trade-union unification movement or cover it only superficially include both old accounts and new ones, for example, Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), Gan Tian (1956), Cai Luo (1980), and Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi (1980). In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I have already argued that the structure of Hongkong unions showed little sign of labour consciousness and that unions joined the strike to enhance the prestige of their own organisation rather than out of any sense of class unity. The CCP wanted to establish a durable unified trade-union federation to control Hongkong trade unions after the strike and that would be under the leadership of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. In this chapter, I examine the trade-union unification movement and ask whether the CCP created a new class consciousness and solidarity among Hongkong workers or whether existing organisational structures simply remained largely unaltered.

Aims of the trade-union unification movement

In chapters 3 and 4, I showed that subregional politics became more important in Hongkong and divided Hongkong workers. In chapter 4, I suggested that Hongkong unions were strong, independent, autonomous organisations that shared many of the characteristics of subregional organisations and described how Chinese revolutionaries sought to win political control over Hongkong's unions. In chapter 5, I argued that unions and subregional associations used patriotic movements to follow their own individual interests and further claimed that, apart from establishing a sort of "patriotic" political leadership, revolutionaries' ideas left Hongkong workers' politics generally unchanged. In this chapter, I argue that divisions between Hongkong workers remained strong throughout the strike and hampered CCP aims to unify Hongkong trade unions.

CCP cadres, encouraged by their success in calling the strike and establishing a high degree of control over the strikers, believed that the Chinese labour movement was entering a new phase. Liu Ersong described the revolutionaries' mood in a report on the state of the Guangdong labour movement:

The Guangdong labour movement is now leaving behind a period of division and gradually entering a period of unity. It is moving from a time of conflict and chaos to a time of order (quoted in Huang Zhousheng 1991: 189).

CCP cadres first suggested unifying Hongkong trade unions at the Second National Labour Congress in Guangzhou on May 1, 1925, but the political situation at the time was unstable, for the warlords Yang Xiwen and Liu Zhenhuai were attacking Guangzhou. When the strike broke out and the Nationalist Government took control over Guangzhou, stable political conditions provided an opportunity for radical labour organisers to start a trade-union unification movement. On July 26, 1925, Deng Zhongxia and Tan Pingshan addressed a meeting of more than eight hundred workers' representatives in Guangdong University to lecture on the unity of the working class. Afterwards, the CCP mobilised propagandists to kick-start the trade-union unification movement. *Gongren zhi lu* daily published exhortations to workers to unite. Yet the trade-union unification movement did not proceed immediately because of the problems confronting CCP efforts to set up the Strike Committee and the Strikers' Congress.

Throughout the strike, the CCP was intent on unifying Guangzhou's and particularly Hongkong's trade unions. The trade-union unification movement's aims were to try to eliminate all the conflicts and internal contradictions within the Hongkong trade-union movement by establishing a centralised, all-powerful body to coordinate union activity and by restructuring unions' internal organisation to bring them "up to date" with "modern" concepts of labour organisation. CCP leaders had

another reason, too, to launch the trade-union unification movement: the Strike Committee had already faced dissent from within the ranks of the workers and was experiencing problems in Guangdong's rural areas while trying to enforce the boycott of British goods and trade with Hongkong. The Strike Committee wanted to strengthen its own leadership to maintain the unity of the movement and the success of the strike.

Some two hundred thousand Hongkong workers had returned to Guangzhou and split into hundreds of separate, independent unions and workers' groups. However, CCP labour organisers felt that the political tide was turning their way; they were confident that, owing to the outcry that followed the May 30 killings in Shanghai and the June 23 Shaji Massacre in Guangzhou, patriotism might provide the necessary glue to hold the working class together. However, the same Hongkong unions that opposed the establishment of a Strikers' Congress that would give too much power to the big unions objected to the proposed establishment of an all-embracing centralised organisation to govern the labour movement. These Hongkong unions feared at least the loss of their special privileges and power that they jealously guarded, and at worst foresaw the destruction of their unions.

The CCP wanted to use the trade-union unification movement to diminish the authority of anti-CCP union leaders and to transform Hongkong's many small unions into a few large industrial unions. As a CCP resolution on the labour movement reveals, the interests of the revolutionary Party meant that the CCP targeted unions and workers in industries that it regarded as strategically important.

The labour movement in Guangdong has two shortcomings: (1) a portion of industrial workers is still under the influence of a small number of reactionary leaders; (2) the long-standing traditions of the old unions are still strong in labour unions. In our Party's work in the labour movement in Kwangtung [Guangdong], primary attention should be paid to enlisting the support of the masses of workers of arsenals, railways, postal and telegraph, and waterworks (Wilbur and How 1989: 743).

The beginning of the drive towards unification started after the battle to establish the Strikers' Congress was finally over. One evening towards the end of July, the Strike Party Group met on the third floor of the CCP Regional Committee offices on Wenming Lu. Taking part were Deng Zhongxia, Su Zhaozheng, Li Sen, He Yaoquan, Xu Chengzhang, Shi Bu, Lin Changchi, Chen Quan, Luo Zhu, and Huang Ping. At the meeting, Deng Zhongxia expressed his opposition to the small-scale unions and subregional associations that proliferated in Hongkong, his disapproval of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates for the reason that most of its member unions (the Seamen's Union being the only exception) were old-style unions, and his dismay at the weakness of the Hongkong Chinese Workers'

General Union. Most Hongkong unions had few CCP members, but the strike provided an ideal opportunity to rally the workers under the banner of "anti-imperialism." The announced intentions of the movement expressed at the meeting were, according to Luo Zhu:

- 1) To unite trade unions, eradicate factionalism among the workers, establish proletarian class unity, and decrease unnecessary friction and elitism among workers.
- 2) To facilitate a centralised leadership, use propaganda and education to train the backbone cadres for a workers' movement, and develop the CCP's organisation.
- 3) To elevate the workers' recognition of struggle, destroy workers' ideas of obedience to superiors, change unions' old structures into democratic-centralist systems, and end the authority of "bad elements" (Luo Zhu 1962h: 1).

Deng Zhongxia held a meeting of CCP cadres and trade-union branch secretaries. Li Sen chaired the meeting; other CCP figures present included Deng Zhongxia, Feng Jupao, Liu Ersong, Zhou Wenyong, Zhang Duancheng, Huang Ping, Liang Zushi, Chen Quan, Luo Zhu, Huang Tianwei, and Zhang Guotao. The meeting decided that, although the leadership of the revolution must be the role of the working class, the working class had a woefully inadequate organisation and the CCP must first create working-class unity before the revolution could succeed. The CCP decided to launch an extensive propaganda campaign. Deng Zhongxia suggested establishing a small group of CCP members (the Unification Party Group) to take over the responsibility of the unification process. Deng Zhongxia assigned the leadership of the unification campaign to Li Sen, with Huang Ping as his deputy. The Unification Party Group decided to adopt the following course of action: 1) To persuade unionists in any industry or trade that was split into various organisations to merge individual unions into one general union. 2) To persuade unions representing Hongkong workers in different industries to form alliances and create a general organisation called the Hongkong General Trade Union (Xianggang zonggonghui) (Luo Zhu 1962h: 2).

The trade-union unification movement

I now consider whether the trade-union unification movement attempted to unify unions through direct links to workers or by using political authority and contacts with union leaders to form a political alliance. The trade-union unification movement started slowly: CCP politicians carried out few propaganda activities - they concentrated on making political speeches. Deng Zhongxia and Liu Ersong made speeches to the Strikers' Congress throughout July and August 1925 and explained

the need to create a united federation of "pure" workers' organisations. Deng published an article that proclaimed "unity is the weapon of the working class" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 34). However, the movement could not start unless the CCP put down Hongkong unions' rebellion against the Strike Committee and the Strikers' Congress. Later, the CCP temporarily postponed the trade-union unification movement so as not to obstruct military expeditions to unite Guangdong under GMD rule (Wilbur and How 1989: 173-175).

On October 15, Liu Ersong addressed the Strike Committee with plans for the trade-union unification movement. His speech called for worker unity:

Workers must unite. Only then can they be led in unison to fight the capitalists.

Only then can they achieve revolution. Only when Guangdong has but one trade union can we lead a provincial workers' movement (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 113).

From November 19 to 22, the CCP used *Gongren zhi lu* to publish a series of articles intended to launch the trade-union unification movement and "purify" Hongkong's unions (Huang Qiushi 1961d: 177). On October 17, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions published a document titled "Opinions on the Question of the Unification of Hongkong Trade Unions" that called for the creation of a united Hongkong working class (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 155). The All-China Federation of Trade Unions published a set of regulations for the unification of trade unions. According to these regulations, any two different organisations representing workers in one industry should merge to form one and any two federations of trade unions in one city should merge to form one. The aim of the trade-union unification movement was to dispel all divisions among workers created by professional, native place, and union loyalties (Huang Zhousheng 1991: 191).

The CCP had some early success in unions with which it already had strong political links and high-level leadership contacts. Guangdong-Kowloon railway workers, who were previously split into different unions for drivers, cabin staff, and railway workers, began preparations for a single union structure on September 1, 1925 (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 69). In November, four printers' unions merged to form one union of printers from Guangzhou and Hongkong (Huang Zhousheng 1991: 191). The Chinese Language Print Workers' Society (Hanwen paizi gongshe), Source of Respect Print Workers' Society (Jingyuan yinwu gongshe), Machinists' Union (Jixie gongshe), and the Print Workers' Society (Yinshua gongshe) set up a preparatory committee for the establishment of a general union. On November 21, the Guangdong-Hongkong Print Workers' General Union (Guangdong Xianggang yinshua zonggonghui) was officially established and the four original printers' organisations disbanded. The printers elected an executive committee of thirteen people with Deng Qipu (a Hongkong delegate) as chairman and Huang Tianwei (from Guangzhou) as his deputy (Huang Zhousheng 1991: 191). On December 11,

Guangzhou's foreign-employed workers issued a joint statement supporting unification; two days later, they announced preparations for a unified Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers' Union (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 172).

Li Sen then attempted to unify striking mechanics in an organisation to oppose the Hongkong Mechanics' union in the future. The Hongkong Mechanics' Union had refused to join the strike; only a few individual workers affiliated to the Mechanics' Union had struck, including machinists, polishers, and some dockyard coolies. Li Sen proceeded with the unification of mechanics by talking collectively to leaders of these workers along with leaders of other Hongkong unions which had a high proportion of machinists as members. The CCP intended to organise a Mechanics' Union under its own control to oppose the anarchist-influenced Hongkong Mechanics' Union. Li Sen, Jian Yuan (Shipmasters' Union), Chen Jijie (Lead, Copper, and Iron Piping Union), Du Yijing (Electricians' Union (*Dianqi gonghui*)), Yuan Chaode (Steamship-Repairers' Union), and Guo Zunxi and Chen Lan (these latter were both from the Sand-Workers' Reform Society) held a meeting at the Shipmasters' Union headquarters to discuss creating a new Mechanics' Union (Luo Zhu 1962h: 3).

Li Sen told the union leaders: "Brothers, you must take this message to your union members. I want every representative to strive to create a strong fortress for Hongkong workers to fight imperialism and capitalism. Long live the alliance of Hongkong mechanics! (Luo Zhu 1962h: 3).

Li Sen wanted to create a single organisation and to disband individual unions. However, many union leaders were wary of losing their identity in a federation of mechanics. The leader of the Lead, Copper, and Iron Piping Union, Chen Jijie, was particularly reluctant to forfeit his union's independence. He claimed that his union had won a glorious reputation because of its success in fighting for higher wages and its support for the campaigns of many other unions. Li Sen finally agreed to allow individual unions to keep their names, reputations, and structure distinct and intact (Luo Zhu 1962h: 4).

A second meeting of these Hongkong union leaders decided to form a Federation of Hongkong Mechanics. Each union was allowed to select a representative to attend the Congress of the Federation of Hongkong Mechanics, thereby preserving the influence and prestige of individual unions. Member unions elected an executive committee and a powerful standing committee comprising the leaders of the largest and most influential unions.

Federation of Hongkong Mechanics Executive Committee

Jian Yuan	(Shipmasters' Union)	Chairman
Yuan Chaode	(Steamship-Repairers' Union)	Standing Committee

Peng Songfu	(Dockyard Workers' Union, CCP)	Standing Committee
Yuan Song	(Bus Drivers' Union)	Standing Committee
Chen Jijie	(Piping Union ⁵⁵)	Standing Committee
Du Yijing	(Electricians' Union)	Executive
Guo Zunxi	(Overseas-Chinese Mechanics' Union ⁵⁶)	Executive
Chen Xi	(Sand-Workers' Reform Society)	Executive
Chun Shan	(Ironworkers' Union)	Executive
Fan Zhong	(Navy Dockyard Workers' Union)	Executive

(Luo Zhu 1962h: 5).

Rather than create a single unified industrial trade union, the CCP created a federation of existing unions and linked the new federation to the revolutionary bureaucracy by creating a CCP party group attached to the federation's Executive Committee to act as an advisor and supervisor. This pattern of "unification" was repeated throughout the course of the trade-union unification movement as the CCP organised different groups of unions into federations. In each case, the power of the new federation's committee rested on its links to the revolutionary elite and the strike bureaucracy.

The CCP next tried to unify transport unions. On December 1, 1925, Hongkong Unions, led by the Seamen's Union, agreed to issue a joint proclamation in support of the trade-union unification movement. The CCP-dominated Congress of Guangzhou Workers' Representatives publicly supported the trade-union unification movement on December 11 (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 170). On January 3 and 5, 1926, the Seamen's Union held a conference at Guangdong University. The conference called for an end to subregionalism in workers' organisations.⁵⁷ Seamen's Union representatives at the conference resolved to purify the union's structure by getting rid of seamen's associations and creating a single, unified structure. The conference elected a new executive committee for the Seamen's Union as follows:

Seamen's Union Executive Committee

Su Zhaozheng	Chairman
Tan Huaze	Vice-chairman
Chen Quan	Executive
Chen Jianfu	Executive

⁵⁵ Short for Lead, Copper, and Iron Piping Union.

⁵⁶ In pinyin, Qiao Gang jiqi gonghui.

⁵⁷ CCP labour organisers first tried to reorganise the Seamen's Union in this way in 1924 (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1924a]).

Feng Yongyuan	Executive
He Lai	Executive
Zhu Baoting	Executive
Zhu Mingjiang	Executive
Chen Xingling	Executive
Li Jinfu	Executive
Zhou Fu	Executive
Kang Rong	Executive
Lu Yuetang	Executive
Zhang Xianhao	Executive
Deng Zhongxia	Adviser
Huang Ping	Adviser

(*Gongren zhi lu* nos 192, 194).

This reorganisation completed a CCP takeover of the Seamen's Union.⁵⁸ However, the CCP's objective was to achieve centralised control over all Hongkong unions. As a first step towards achieving this objective, the CCP directed the Seamen's Union and CCP activists who were influential members of other transport unions to form an alliance. On January 15, the Seamen's Union called a meeting of representatives of the Bus Drivers' Union, Postal Workers' Union, Inland Waterways Seamen's Union, Stevedores' Union, Dockyard Coolies' Union, Sampan Union (Fanchuan gonghui), Freight Ship Workers' Union (Huochuan gonghui), Landing-Stage Workers' Union, Coal Coolies' Union, Tram Workers' Union, Shipmasters' Union, Telegraph Workers' Union (Dianbao gonghui), and Telegram Workers' Union (Paibao gonghui) in order to prepare the establishment of a Hongkong Federation of Transport Unions (Xianggang yunshuye gonghui lianhehui) (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 204).

On March 19, the Hongkong Federation of Transport Unions announced its establishment. The Hongkong Federation of Transport Unions telegraphed the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the All-China Railway Workers' Union and proposed a general alliance under CCP control of the two transport-based unions (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 264). The Federation claimed over two hundred thousand workers under a leadership of a committee of seven people:

Hongkong Federation of Transport Unions Executive Committee

Su Zhaozheng	Seamen's Union
Xia Zuoqian	Coal Coolies' Union

⁵⁸ According to Fang Cai, all of the members of the new committee were CCP cadres, with the exception of Tan Huaze, who remained a member of the GMD left-wing. Fang does not give the political affiliation of Kang Rong, Li Xianhao, or Li Jinfu (Fang Cai 1962c: 1).

Che Xing	Shipmasters' Union
Yuan Rong	Dockyard Coolies' Union
Li Jia	Tram Workers' Union
Yi Tieshi	Stevedores' Union
Zhou Genquan	Stevedores' Union

However, among many Hongkong unions, the trade-union unification movement had ground to a halt. Leaders of Hongkong's smaller unions, who opposed the CCP's attempts to control the strike and build a strike bureaucracy to centralise power in its hands, prevented the CCP from reorganising their unions. To prevent conflict within the movement, the CCP temporarily backed away from unifying all Hongkong unions, as a CCP report admits:

At the start of the strike, we planned to unify trade unions. Then, reactionary leaders feared that they might lose their positions. First they hesitated; then they opposed us, causing bad repercussions on the strike. We stopped the trade-union unification movement to put their minds at rest (Zhonggong Guangdong quwei 1982 [1926]: 91).

The second strike and the Hongkong General Trade Union

The CCP restarted the movement to unify all Hongkong unions in February 1926. The main reason for restarting the trade-union unification movement was not to create a sense of labour solidarity but to maintain CCP influence over a large number of unions in Hongkong. In January and February 1926, many GMD politicians were eager to end the strike. The Hongkong Government had decided to take stronger action against the strikers (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1989: 207-210). Chiang Kai-shek was preparing to launch the Northern Expedition and had clashed with the GMD left wing. The GMD left wing no longer gave the strike its full support and the GMD right wing was increasingly hostile to it (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 626). CCP leaders feared that the strike was about to end and wanted to "take the opportunity to create a unified Hongkong trade-union organisation" (Luo Sheng 1962b: 116).

In February 1926, the Strike Committee launched the second Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, temporarily relaxing its boycott against Hongkong to allow for the return of some strikers from the colony to Guangzhou (Chan Lau kit-ching 1990: 208). The CCP instigated the second strike for two reasons: first, it wanted to force the Hongkong Government to accede to the strikers' demands. Second, the CCP wanted to instil new impetus into the trade-union unification movement and win the Hongkong Mechanics' Union (Xu Huidong 1960: 26-30) and the Navigators' Club to its side (Guangzhou gongren yundongshi yanjiu weiyuanhui bangongshi 1988: 152).

The second strike, like the original one, was well organised. The CCP sent small groups of workers to persuade workers to strike, to stir up confusion in the colony, and to intimidate workers into supporting the Strike Committee. The second strike was meant to be the climax of the anti-imperialist movement. Its declared aims were

to increase the influence of the revolutionary powers, to consolidate the revolutionary government, to unite Guangdong so that its industry may develop peacefully, to achieve the independence of the Guangdong economy, and to cut off all links to Hongkong (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 227).

In fact, the CCP wanted to show the power of the strike bureaucracy so that it could sweep away opposition to a unification of all Hongkong unions. The CCP launched the second strike at a time when the Strike Committee's power was still fairly strong but under threat from politicians within the GMD and directed the new strike against what the CCP regarded as "scabs." Consequently, some of the methods employed by the Strike Committee to stir up support in Hongkong were brutal. In order to coerce Hongkong mechanics into joining the strike, mechanics affiliated to the Hongkong Federation of Metal-Workers' Unions (*Xianggang jinshuye gonghui lianhehui*) sent a small group of workers to Hongkong. This group comprised Lai Sheng, Xie Qi, and Xu Huidong.⁵⁹ Along with other strikers, this group travelled from Guangzhou to Shenzhen, where the local branch of the Strike Committee gave them the latest political report on Hongkong and their contacts in the CCP's underground network in Hongkong.

The CCP ordered Lai, Xie, and Xu to target workers at a Wanchai freight company with links to Japanese merchants that was transporting food from China to Hongkong. Lai, Xie, and Xu warned a driver from this company that he was breaking the boycott, but the worker's township association protected him. Disguising themselves as truck drivers and loaders, Lai, Xie, Xu, and a Hongkong driver called Chen Wu followed the driver on one of his trips to "teach him a stern lesson" (Xu Huidong 1962: 2). The "lesson" that the strikers decided to teach the driver was severe indeed. The following is Xu's own account of the events of that day:

Once we reached Chaiwan, Lai Sheng shouted for the truck to stop. A comrade ran round to the front to keep watch. I also told my taxi driver to stop so that I could stand watch. Then, Lai Sheng and Xie Qi went to the driver's cabin, took out that blackleg, angrily declared his crimes, demanded that he consider the interests of his nation and his class, and ordered him to leave Hongkong immediately and return to China. We were surprised when that blackleg suddenly

⁵⁹ Xu Huidong is sometimes known by his alias Xu Shouguang (Xu Huidong 1962: 1).

pointed at Chen Wu and impetuously blurted out: "Old Chen Wu, you have a nerve! What effrontery, joining up with strikers to put me down!"

Lai Sheng was enraged, and could bear it no longer. With one hand, he beat him to the ground. Then each person drew out razor blades, wildly slashed his body, and rolled it around - he was dead. We all put the corpse back into the driver's seat. Combining our strength we pushed the truck and tipped it over the edge of the hill (Xu Huidong 1962: 2-3).

This story illustrates the methods used by the Strike Committee to create the second strike. The Strike Committee, hostile towards workers who remained in Hongkong breaking both strike and boycott, used intimidation to create an atmosphere of fear and chaos in Hongkong. Strikers working as CCP agents in Hongkong treated strike-breakers as national traitors. The second strike acted as a spur to the trade-union unification movement as the Strike Committee, under CCP control, became increasingly antagonistic towards pre-strike union leadership in Hongkong.

The CCP was determined to unify all Hongkong trade unions. It felt that the existing unions were backward and politically ineffective. Worse still, in some cases they felt that the unions were tools of the Hongkong capitalists. To the CCP, the unification of all Hongkong unions was important to guarantee the interests of the working class and overturn the capitalist class. The working class was furthermore crucial to the anti-imperialist struggle. Finally, the unification of all Hongkong trade unions was necessary to guarantee the success of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike and boycott. The Second All-China Labour Congress had announced that

The division of Hongkong workers' organisations into several groups is strongly against the ethos of modern trade-union unification movements. Moreover it is against the ethos of the national independence movement (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 155).

Hongkong delegates to this congress made their own proposal for the creation of a unified Hongkong trade-union organisation. A draft constitution followed that suggested a structure consisting of a secretariat, propaganda department, organisation department, department of internal affairs, accounts department, and relief-fund department. However, the Hongkong unions were represented only by CCP loyalists at this congress, which, therefore, by no means reflected a consensus among Hongkong unions regarding unification. Other Hongkong union leaders blocked early CCP plans to transform the structure of their organisations and establish a unified federation governed by committee (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 16).

By December 4, 1925, however, even anti-CCP union leaders such as Liang Ziguang were speaking in favour of unifying all Hongkong unions (*Gongren zhi lu*

no. 162). Why was this? Hongkong union leader and high-level strike leader Huang Jinyuan did much of the work of persuading Hongkong union leaders to back the unification policies of the CCP.

At that time, Huang Jinyuan was the most senior leader of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates. His political views influenced most scab-union leaders. After Huang Jinyuan led the support for the trade-union unification movement, these scab-union leaders accepted the calls of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions; the work of setting up the Hongkong General Trade Union Preparatory Committee continued smoothly (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 16).

A declaration agreeing to the unification of all Hongkong trade unions had already been drafted by unions under the CCP's control on December 10, 1925. On December 14, Guangzhou Foreign-Employed Workers had also agreed to a declaration of intent to unify and the next day Hongkong's transport unions had announced an alliance. However, it was not until April 4, 1926 that the process to unify all Hongkong unions began to move forwards again. On April 4, 1926, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions held a meeting to discuss the unification of all Hongkong unions and to elect a preparatory committee. Many independent-minded and anti-Communist union leaders won a place on the committee. Zhou Shuyuan, Feng Jing, Huang Jing, Huang Jian, Feng Yunan, Liang Ziguang, Xiong Zhenwen, Zhao Mei, Lin Jianting, Gao Zhan, Huang Jinyuan, Guan Kezhen, Liu Yuquan, Huang Kai, Pan Hengshi, Zhang Kaide, Huang Tianwei, Shen Runsheng, Peng Songfu, Tan Qiyong, Luo Zhu, Zhou Songnian, Zhou Genquan, Zhou Richu, Chen Quan, Yuan Rong, Xia Zuoqian, and Che Xing were all chosen to sit on the Hongkong General Trade Union Preparatory Committee.

On the same day, the Hongkong General Trade Union Preparatory Committee held its first meeting. The personalities who made the decisions were Chen Quan, Shen Runsheng, Huang Ping, Xu Gongxia, and Feng Jing. With the exception of Feng and Shen, these people were strongly pro-CCP. Feng was elected secretary, a post that was to alternate every day. A loan of two hundred dollars was given by the Strike Committee, to be repaid once union fees had been collected. The Strike Committee decided to allow only industrial and professional unions to join the organisation. Friendly societies, clubs, and township organisations were barred.

On April 8, the Preparatory Committee met for the second time. Feng Jing chaired the meeting, with Peng Yuesheng as the secretary. The requirements for member unions were:

Representatives should be produced on the basis of the original trade-union members, every trade union with 250 members or less should select one representative. Those with over 250 and up to and including five hundred

members could elect two delegates. Those with more than one thousand members should select a representative for each five hundred members and those with over five thousand members should select a representative for every one thousand members. When selecting people for official posts the individual union should be used as a unit and no union should have more than one representative as an officer of the General Trade Union (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 285).

So the bias towards the larger unions that was reflected in the Strikers' Congress was not mirrored in the structure of the plans for the Hongkong General Trade Union. Union leaders who had been most antagonistic towards the CCP's strike policies played a leading role in preparing the organisation. They were obviously able to preserve their own positions of power despite the fact that the CCP regarded many of them as counter-revolutionaries.

The Hongkong General Trade Union was finally established on April 15, 1926. The event was greeted with much pomp. A special edition of *Gongren zhi lu* celebrated the occasion. Luo Zhu wrote a rousing article on the aims of the new organisation:

The strike has been going for ten months. Our policies have surrounded Hongkong, cut off its communications, interrupted its economy, halted its commerce, and turned it into the rubbishy island it was sixty and more years ago. In fact, this has proved that our policies have already been successful, but we must prepare for greater policies in the future that will acutely diminish the power of British imperialism in the Far East. Everybody knows its power is concentrated in Hongkong, so before the strike ends, we are immediately implementing another policy to organise a Hongkong General Trade Union, which will return to Hongkong and launch a direct attack on imperialist capitalism (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 291).

However, the Hongkong General Trade Union was not an organisation with this kind of anti-imperialist fervour. The leadership of the new Hongkong General Trade Union comprised all the pre-strike union leaders and many of the leaders that the CCP had found extremely troublesome and hostile during the strike. The election of the chairmanship group of the first Hongkong General Trade Union Representatives' Congress produced the following representatives: Huang Jinyuan, Feng Jing (anti-CCP), Su Zhaozheng (CCP), Zhou Shuyuan, Xu Gongxia (CCP), Lu Hanxiang, Chen Wei, Zhou Genquan, Shen Runsheng, Yuan Chaode, Huang Juzhou, Xiong Zhenwen, Xia Zuoqian, Zhao Mei, Liang Yao, Lin Binfei, Chao De, Zhou Yihua, Feng Cai, Deng Xian, and Feng Yunan. The committee had to decide on the applications of several unions to join the Hongkong General Trade Union. Unions representing grocers, fishmongers, and cobblers were asked to make a public application to join. Other unions were accepted, but several were rejected on the

grounds that they did not constitute proper worker organisations (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 293).

The continuing popularity of the pre-strike Hongkong union leadership and the determination of union leaders to represent their individual union's interests can be seen in the composition of the Hongkong General Trade Union Executive Committee that was elected on the seventh day of the First Congress: the Executive Committee was large (it had eighty-seven members) and reinforced the status of its many individual member unions. Union leaders like Huang Jinyuan maintained, even strengthened, their pre-strike leadership positions and "stood firm like Mount Taishan" (*Guangdongsheng zonggonghui* 1983: 17). The following table shows those union leaders elected to the Hongkong General Trade Union Standing Committee by delegates to the Hongkong General Trade Union Representatives' Congress. It shows that even the CCP's greatest enemies, such as Feng Jing and Liang Ziguang, kept their positions of power, along with other pre-strike union leaders.

Hongkong General Trade Union Standing Committee

Name	Union	Votes
Feng Jing	Tea-Box Makers' Union	333
Shen Runsheng	Shipmasters' Union	319
Huang Jinyuan	Pork Butchers' Union	311
Gao Zhan	Restaurant Workers' Union	292
Chen Quan	Seamen's Union	252
Huang Jian	Tallymen's Union	252
Liang Ziguang	Tailors' Union	249
Xu Gongxia	Brand New Barbers' Union	234
Zhou Genquan	Inland Waterways Seamen's Union	219
Zhao Mei	Tea-House Employees' Union	213
He Yaoquan	Tram Workers' Union	203
Yuan Rong	Dockyard Coolies' Union	195
Zheng Xian	United Happiness Union ⁶⁰	191
Yuan Zhaode	Steamship-Repairers' Union	180
Xia Zuoqian	Coal Coolies' Union	176
Yang Shaochi	Foreign-Employed Workers' Union	144
Huang Tianwei	Printers' Union	143
Zhou Richu	Stevedores' Union	140
Xiong Zhenwen	Seafood Union	125

(*Gongren zhi lu* nos 299, 301).

⁶⁰ Formerly the United Happiness Club, but as a "club" not a union it would have been ineligible.

Patriotic organisation

In 1925, the strike's trade-union unification movement was hurried. The speed of the movement and the strength of Hongkong union leaders meant that the CCP was unable to by-pass the upper structure of Hongkong workers' organisation, so pre-strike leaders remained in positions of power. The only transformation that the CCP achieved was to set up an authoritarian, patriotic structure above Hongkong's existing trade-union leadership. The CCP wanted to create such a patriotic organisation to seize control of broad sections of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. Deng Zhongxia announced to a meeting of workers his views of the need for the Hongkong General Trade Union:

To preserve the victory of this strike we need to build two fortresses. One fortress will be the base of the revolutionary government, the other fortress will be the vanguard of the Hongkong General Trade Union (Luo Sheng 1962b: 117).

According to CCP propaganda, the unification of all Hongkong unions not only guaranteed the success of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike but also created a unified trade-union movement in Hongkong:

Some people say, "We only need Hongkong to agree to our demands and sign a treaty, then victory is assured." In fact, we cannot rely on this, you just have to look at the 1922 seamen's strike. Others say that all we need is for the revolutionary Guangdong Government to hold firm and use its international contacts, then victory is assured. In reality this, too, is uncertain.

Hongkong unions have given the job of creating a unified trade union (which was called for by Sun Yat-sen) to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Now the enemy is about to submit and the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike will soon be resolved. We must quickly build our fortress, the Hongkong General Trade Union, to be the guarantor of our victory. Moreover, the Hongkong Federation of Transport Unions and the Hongkong Federation of Metal-Workers' Unions have already been set up, and have already laid a strong foundation for the Hongkong General Trade Union (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 288).

However, in reality the CCP's efforts to transform the Hongkong trade unions had largely failed to transform internal union structures. The leadership of the Hongkong General Trade Union was more or less indistinguishable from the leadership of the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates that had existed before the strike. The Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates had been an effective umbrella organisation in the past and had proved strong enough to withstand the attack launched on it by the CCP. Small Hongkong unions had followed a policy of playing the GMD right wing and the CCP against one another

during the strike. The divisions in the political fabric of Guangdong allowed these small unions to continue to survive as independent organisations.

The establishment of the Hongkong General Trade Union meant that the power of Hongkong union leaders increased. Although union leadership remained mostly unchanged from before the strike, many union leaders now held important positions in the strike bureaucracy and in national institutions. After his selection as Picket Corps General and election to the Hongkong General Trade Union Standing Committee, Huang Jinyuan was chosen as a supplementary committee member of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 17). In October 1925, the CCP Central Committee had issued a resolution, in which it addressed the question of the trade-union unification movement in Guangzhou and Hongkong and set out a policy of alliance with non-CCP Hongkong union leaders. The CCP Central Committee advised its cadres in Guangzhou as follows:

As for the trade-union unification movement in Guangzhou and Hongkong, in Guangzhou we must expel all reactionary leaders. In Hongkong, however, we can sometimes cooperate with leaders of a reactionary nature. Guangdong and Hongkong must be united in order to support the National Revolution. However, in every struggle we must make the masses understand the different political platforms of the CCP and GMD (Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui 1985: 97).

Throughout the strike, Hongkong union leaders succeeded in forging stronger links to the GMD and CCP politicians in China, so their patriotic credentials were enhanced. Nevertheless, there was no great reform of the internal structure of the Hongkong unions or of their leadership. The CCP had been unable to infiltrate the unions' membership. The increase in power of many Hongkong union leaders and their positions in the strike bureaucracy distanced them from their members. An internal CCP report on the movement complained of the following weakness:

We only carry out our work in unions' offices: we have not done any work among the masses and made no great effort to make contact with the masses. Even those comrades with prestige and authority among the masses have become distant from them ("Guangzhou gonghui yundong de baogao" 1982 [1926]: 345).

CCP political power and trade unions in Guangdong's subregions

I now show how the trade-union unification movement aimed at drawing not only Hongkong unions but unions throughout Guangdong into the strike bureaucracy. The Strike Committee wanted to use the Hongkong unions as the spearhead for a provincial trade-union unification movement. During the trade-union unification movement, workers formed unions throughout Guangdong, including in Foshan,

Shantou, Xinhui, Jiangmen, Dongguan, Shilong, Taiping, Chencun, Chaozhou, Taishan, Sanshui, Xining, Bao'an, Zengcheng, Longmen, Huaxian, Qingyuan, Yingde, and Shunde (Huang Zhousheng 1991: 191).

Chen Huayan (1929) gives information on 234 unions throughout Guangdong, excluding Hongkong. Ninety-one of these unions reported the year of their establishment as either 1925 or 1926. The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike's trade-union unification movement established thirteen new unions in Guangzhou, fifteen in Chao'an, thirteen in Nanhai, ten in Xingbei, eight in Shantou and Xinning, and twenty-four in other subregions of the province. Only one sixth of the unions studied by Chen existed before the strike (Chen Huayan 1929: 42-46).

A brief look at the situation in Dongguan may explain the apparently rapid growth of unions in Guangdong's subregions. In Dongguan, an area rich in light industry and with many trading links promoting economic growth, local workers had formed organised labour groups before the strike.⁶¹ Workers in Dongguan City, Taiping, and Shilong, established unions for straw workers, tailors, barbers, barge workers, carpenters, peanut growers, and restaurant and tea-house employees. Many of these unions appear to have been of the nature of craft guilds ("Dongguanshi gonghui zhi" 1993: 42).

Soon, many unions formed federations of workers' syndicates. For example, from 1924 to 1925, the Chinese cobblers of Dongguan, Taiping, and Shilong formed a federation called the Universal Society (Daquantang) to form an alliance to prevent cobblers in any of the other two cities giving work to strikers from the other in the event of a strike in that city. The federation formulated laws to ensure high wages and better working conditions, to protect workers from unfair dismissal, to prohibit any "unauthorised" trade in leather shoes from outside Dongguan, and to impose a union tax of twenty cents on quantities of leather stored in masters' shops ("Dongguanshi gonghui zhi" 1993: 43-44).

In November, the CCP set up a CCP Special Branch Committee in Dongguan City. Special Branch Committee member Chan Zhaokui led a reorganisation of the local GMD Government and installed a new local GMD Committee, five of whose seven members were Communists. After consolidating their power, the CCP Special Branch Committee, in the guise of GMD cadres, launched a local trade-union unification movement. In the spring of 1926, the Special Branch Committee established institutions imitating the Guangzhou central strike bureaucracy, including a local federation of unions, workers' schools to train CCP cadres, picket corps, and

⁶¹ Dongguan's Chinese shoemakers held a well-organised general strike in 1923 under the leadership of locals Zhou Kang, Li Xi, Lai Shui, Chen Ri, and Feng Hua.

a branch of the Communist Youth League ("Dongguanshi gonghui zhi" 1993: 42-43).

The development of the trade-union unification movement represented attempts by the CCP to increase its power and impose its ideals of organisation. However, the Strike Committee clashed with local groups who did not share their views. Liu Ersong raised concerns about clashes between the strike leadership and new unions in Guangdong's subregions during the unification movement in a report to the strike leadership. Liu's report showed clashes between handicraft workers in subregions of Guangdong and local Strike Committee branches throughout Guangdong that were trying to absorb handicraft workers into unions controlled by the strike bureaucracy. Deng Zhongxia decided to compromise with local leaders and allow some handicraft workers to organise themselves separately (Liu Ersong 1925: 12).

Strike institutions in Guangdong's subregions used pre-strike centres of local authority as their headquarters. The Dongguan County General Union had its headquarters in a local temple; Lai Chengqi and Tan Ming, executives of the General Union, used a local shop and a family estate as their headquarters. The Dongguan strike institutions protected local autonomy by absorbing local leaders into their committees. Local unions, like many Hongkong unions, preserved their independence while at the same time joining the new bureaucracy. Dongguan, Shilong, and Taiping retained separate general unions. The Dongguan City General Union comprised thirty-five unions with a total of 8,034 members. The Shilong City General Union had forty member unions and a total membership of 5,060 workers. Taiping General Union consisted of fifteen unions with an aggregate membership of 1,817 workers ("Dongguanshi gonghui zhi" 1993: 43). The strike's trade-union unification movement created the Dongguan County General Union: a committee-led local association that controlled three local federations of handicraft unions and whose leading cadres were all CCP-trained and later became CCP members. The trade-union unification movement failed to transform the structure of workers' organisations in Guangdong's subregions; it simply established a centralised bureaucracy to control individual workers' groups.

Freedom of association and the strike

In chapter 8, I considered how far the strike's education movement reflected the supposedly liberal, democratic demands of the strike and the visions of the radical thinkers that inspired it. I argued that the CCP's attempts to support its strike bureaucracy undermined these visions and created a manipulative, authoritarian style

of education. In chapter 5, I suggested that what appears to some writers to be patriotic unity often occurred because individual political groups joined patriotic political movements to seek sectional advantage. In this chapter, I use these arguments to show that the trade-union unification movement was an authoritarian movement rather than a libertarian one; the unity that it achieved was weak and based on individual unions using the Strike Committee's power to further their own interests. I show this in two ways: first, by demonstrating that the CCP did not allow the sort of freedom of association that was one of the strike's demands; second, by showing that unions' pre-strike disunity and fights between unions continued, and sometimes worsened, during the strike.

The CCP perceived any other federation of Hongkong workers organised outside the strike bureaucracy as a threat to its control and even went so far as to refuse to cooperate with them and insist that they join the Hongkong General Trade Union. Similar to its programme of mass education, the CCP organised, nurtured, and manipulated the trade-union unification movement to establish central political control in its own hands. Even though the new Hongkong General Trade Union contained workers' leaders of different political orientations, for example, Liang Ziguang (GMD right wing), Chen Quan (CCP), and Huang Jinyuan (centrist, independent), the CCP barred workers' organisations that did not fit in with its vision of "modern" trade-union organisation. Far from wilting under this kind of pressure, these barred workers' groups set up another umbrella organisation called the General Federation of Hongkong Chinese-Workers' Syndicates (Xianggang huagong gongtuan zonggonghui). On April 1926, they posted leaflets outside workers' lodgings proclaiming the establishment of the Federation. The CCP reacted angrily:

Although the manifesto explains again and again that there is no antagonism towards the Hongkong General Trade Union and moreover expresses the wish "sincerely to support the progress of the Hongkong General Trade Union," we can see from this institution's name, "The General Federation of Hongkong Chinese-Workers' Syndicates," that it presents itself as a general organisation of Hongkong unions and thereby detracts from the Hongkong General Trade Union. Moreover, the manifesto says: "The Hongkong General Trade Union is controlled by three monopolist elements and these monopolistic scabs must be defeated." This is nonsense. The Hongkong General Trade Union Representatives' Congress is an organisation of representatives elected by we Hongkong workers - no one can monopolise it. These idiots claim that two or three elements are monopolising it, and want to do down these worker-criminals. This is grave: how it sullies the workers of Hongkong! (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 303).

On June 8, the CCP criticised the published manifesto of another newly established Hongkong workers' organisation, the Overseas-Chinese Hongkong

Federation of Free Workers (Qiao Gang ziyou gongren lianhehui) (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 343). The Overseas-Chinese Hongkong Federation of Free Workers announced its intention to join the Hongkong General Trade Union. On June 11, the Hongkong General Trade Union refused to grant them membership because the name of the new federation too closely resembled its own and because the internal structure of member unions did not satisfy the Hongkong General Trade Union's regulations. However, the Hongkong General Trade Union called on member unions of the Overseas-Chinese Hongkong Federation of Free Workers to transform their internal structure and join the Hongkong General Trade Union as individual unions (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 346).

The Overseas-Chinese Hongkong Federation of Free Workers included several workers' groups that the Hongkong General Trade Union had barred from joining, such as the United Officials' Love-the-Masses Society (Lianqing aiquanshe); Five Districts' Support Society (Wuyi weichishe); Ambitious Masses' Union (Zhiqun gonghui); United Masses' Frugal and Virtuous Union (Hequn jiandehui); Support Society for the Aftermath of the Massacre (Canshahou yuanhui); and the Chinese Education and Lecture Group (Zhonghua xunyu jiangtuan) (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 293). Some of these organisations comprised owners and capitalists or had a broad mixed-class membership. Others were not trade unions, but clubs or kinship organisations.

The CCP's trade-union unification movement exacerbated existing divisions and disputes between Hongkong unions. In Foshan, in 1925, CCP attempts to "modernise" the local Chinese Cobblers' Union caused fighting between union members, the division of the union into two, and the death of a worker, Xie Dengpo (Ma Chaojun 1959: 349-350). Disputes between trade unions during the strike were common. Revolutionaries complained: "It seems as if daily one hears news that workers have been injured in fights" ("*Guangzhou gonghui yundong de baogao*" 1982 [1926]: 341.) Such disputes intensified as the CCP attempted to transform the internal organisation of Guangdong trade unions. In April 1926, disputes between Hongkong unions showed the fragility of the "unity" that the CCP had forged. On April 3, unions representing Hongkong's foreign-employed workers squabbled over old union rivalries (*Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui* 1985, 1: 216-218). Coolies and stevedores argued over issues of job demarcation. In February 1926, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions had resolved a dispute between the Dockyard Coolies' Union and the Stevedores' Union, but on April 6, another, more violent dispute broke out, in which some workers died. *Gongren zhi lu* protested, saying:

The main reason for this dispute was the problem of competition for work. We should know that in the capitalist system we workers suffer the same hardship; we divide our strength if we fight among each other and we will suffer more

oppression from our enemies - life will become even harder (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 283).

The formation of a formidable strike bureaucracy emboldened the CCP to carry out limited class struggle among the trade unions, but in many cases this further divided Hongkong workers. Some CCP-led workers from the Hongkong Navy Dockyard Workers' Union engaged in a struggle against its leader Xiao Hong. Xiao Hong was a labour contractor in charge of several hundred workers. However, he had worked closely with Zhang Guoliang to defeat other elements of the union leadership who had been against a strike. After leaving Hongkong, disputes began between Xiao Hong and some workers under his control. CCP activists had much power among the union's officials and the Strike Party Group allowed them to attack Xiao publicly. Zhang Guoliang and Guo Rongzhang, both CCP members and high-level union officials, gathered together union members from the Picket Corps loyal to the CCP to attend two union meetings to oust Xiao. The atmosphere at the meetings was tense.

Union leaders loyal to Xiao Hong waved their arms and stamped their feet and tried to intimidate us by shouting "beat them" and "kill them." However, since we were in the majority (we held five out of nine positions on the union committee), the majority of the masses came over to our side. Xiao Hong could neither shout us down or beat us up. Finally, Xiao Hong could only say, "Right, we are leaving!" This was how we brought him down. After these events, he wrote to the Strike Committee to complain, saying that we were splitting the union. At that time Guo Rongzhang was already a Party member. After his report, the Party agreed to our split (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 99-100).

However, many workers decided to side with Xiao Hong and form a new organisation called the Overseas-Chinese Water Masters' Kinship Friendly Society (*Huaqiao shuishi qinshanshe*), which then joined the Hongkong General Union of Workers' Syndicates. The CCP-led break-away workers joined the Federation of Mechanics (*Jiqi gongren lianhehui*), a temporary organisation which was made up of eight unions and later became the Federation of Hongkong Metal-Workers' Unions. Two factors are evident in the success of the reorganisation of the Navy Dockyard Workers' Union. The first is the strong presence of CCP activists inside the union, and the second is the fact that the union leader Xiao Hong, although characterised by CCP activists as a labour contractor who exploited the workers through 'squeeze' and tributes, could lead a significant number of workers to form a new union. From these accounts, it appears that the trade-union unification movement achieved little in the way of creating a unified working class, rather it split unions and deepened some political divisions within the movement.

Conclusion

The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike's trade-union unification movement did not result in an effectively organised working class movement in Hongkong. Trade unions retained their individual organisation and leadership. Some unions split, reflecting their different political affiliations. The CCP never achieved the "modernisation" that it had intended the strike to embody. According to Jones (1990), the only effectively organised grassroots population in twentieth-century Hongkong remained the "notably un-modernized New Territories" (Jones 1990: 67).

The trade-union unification movement launched by the CCP was, in many ways, an attempt to widen the scope of CCP power over the population of Guangdong. It was an opportunity for the CCP to develop grassroots support for the strike bureaucracy and for the CCP to extend its propaganda campaign throughout the province. Foreign trade had caused the dissolution of the Chinese state bureaucracy in Guangdong. By launching the trade-union unification movement, the CCP established a new, strong bureaucracy that centralised political power in the hands of CCP revolutionaries.

The CCP was unable, however, to transform unions according to its "modern" values. Unions remained small in scale; their pre-strike leadership stayed intact. In previous chapters, I described how the CCP compromised with pre-strike political groups among Hongkong workers and in Guangdong's subregions. At first, the strike's trade-union unification movement tried to revolutionise workers' organisations and worker politics - revolutionaries started it in an atmosphere of optimism. However, Hongkong's unions frustrated the revolutionaries' attempts to centralise their political control and radically alter the unions' internal structure. The conflict between the revolutionaries' radical visions and the Hongkong unions' self-interest shows, as I suggested in chapter 5, that some of the revolutionaries' aims in calling the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike were incompatible with the interests of many of the Hongkong unions that supported the strike initially.

The trade-union unification movement created instead strong centralised political leadership, in the form of executive committees, to run large federations of Hongkong unions. In the CCP's propaganda movements and its trade-union unification movement, its cadres made direct contact not with the workers themselves but with union leaders. Consequently, many of these union leaders, who won positions in the strike bureaucracy, became distant from the workers under their control.

Chapter 10

The End of the Strike and Boycott: Opposition in Hongkong and Guangdong

In this chapter, I explain why the strike ended and examine opposition to the strike leadership and its boycott of Hongkong trade. First, I briefly describe past studies' analyses of the end of the strike. Next, I describe opposition to the strike by various parts of Guangdong's population. In chapter 2, I suggested that foreign trade had positive effects on Guangdong's subregions and that many people benefited from the export trade with the colony. In this chapter, I show how those people who were able to organise effectively to protect their trading interests came into conflict with the Strike Committee. In chapter 3, I described how Hongkong was jointly administered by British and Chinese. In this chapter, I show the resolute stance of the Hongkong Government and many of Hongkong's Chinese elite in the face of the strike. I explain how all these forms of opposition to the strike combined to weaken it and how politicians opposed to the CCP took their chance to end the strike. Finally, I consider briefly the effects of the strike on Hongkong trade unions.

Past studies' views on why the strike ended

Writers disagree on why the strike ended. Some stress conflict within the GMD-CCP alliance and between it and external forces as the main cause. For example, Ma Chaojun says that the GMD ended the strike in order to improve foreign relations (Ma Chaojun 1959: 587). Deng Zhongxia claims the CCP stopped the strike because the boycott of Hongkong trade provoked conflict between the Strike Committee and Guangdong peasants, and thus undermined national unity during the Northern Expedition (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 636). Chesneaux suggests that the Strike Committee decided to call off the strike to prevent British military intervention in China as GMD troops victoriously entered the Yangzi region, a "traditional British sphere of influence" (Chesneaux 1968: 333). Isaacs, however, attributes the end of the strike to internal conflict in the revolutionary movement. He accuses Chiang Kai-shek of treachery and Borodin and the CCP of meekness. Of the strike and boycott, Isaacs says: "A weapon of immense power had been forged" that "raised the Kuomintang [GMD] nationalist leaders on [its] shoulders" (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 73, 88).

Although Isaacs' account is the most convincing, because it stresses political opposition to the strike as the crucial factor, Isaacs assumes that the Strike Committee remained popular among workers and peasants. In this chapter, I describe how support for the strike ebbed and how opposition to the boycott of Hongkong grew among sections of the population whose interests the Strike Committee had claimed to represent. The Strike Committee, which, in previous chapters, I have shown was always an elitist organisation, continuously lost mass support and became politically more and more isolated. The real interests of some peasants and merchants contradicted their interests as perceived by the logic of anti-imperialism, which logic the Strike Committee's boycott of Hongkong embodied. The number of strikers in Guangzhou gradually dwindled, too. Soon, the real power of the Strike Committee lay in its support among union leaders and its control over armed pickets.

The boycott, nationalism, and anti-imperialism

Many writers characterise the strike as a patriotic movement; for example, Chan Ming-kou (1975), Kwan (1986), Chen Shuang (1991), and Feng Jianzhong (1991) make such claims. Kwan maintains that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike represented the success of Chinese nationalism over foreign imperialism (Kwan 1986: 251). One must examine the boycott of Hongkong, which was the strike's main anti-imperialist

weapon, to understand how the strike leadership defined such nationalism or patriotism.

For Guangzhou's revolutionaries, the boycott of Hongkong trade represented a national struggle against foreign powers. On July 10, 1925, when the All-China Federation of Trade Unions announced in *Gongren zhi lu* the imposition of a boycott of Hongkong trade, it called for "individual sacrifices to achieve national liberation" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 16). In October, Lan Yuye called for a "Great Alliance of Workers, Peasants, Merchants, Students, and Soldiers" to "fight together with the Government" against Hongkong imperialists (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 106). The CCP defined patriotism in terms of anti-imperialism - people who traded with Hongkong were "running dogs" of the imperialist powers and were national traitors.

The CCP wanted to sever the link between Guangdong and Hongkong. At first, it seemed to believe that it could easily do so. In *Gongren zhi lu*, the CCP claimed: "Hongkong is dependent on South China, but South China is not dependent on Hongkong" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 36). The CCP believed that the boycott of Hongkong was consistent with defending the economic interests of workers, merchants, and peasants, who all suffered from "exploitation" by British imperialism (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 106). Only a minority of warlords and comprador capitalists would suffer from the boycott. For the CCP, an individual's attitude towards imperialism defined his or her class consciousness. For example, scabs were workers who did "not oppose imperialists" (Chen Duxiu 1984 [1925]: 46).

At first, the CCP had strong allies in the GMD. In August 1925, Wang Jingwei stressed the similarities between the CCP and the GMD's left wing. He said that there was no need to create the issue of Communism versus anti-Communism; the only issue was between imperialism and anti-imperialism (Wilbur and How 1989: 171). Liao Zhongkai stressed that the aims of the strike were political rather than economic and that these aims were to achieve the "liberation and independence of the Chinese state and the Chinese people" (Liao Zhongkai (1983 [1925]: 276). Isaacs describes a growing anti-Communist movement in Guangzhou that Dai Jitao led. He claims that a rising tide of anti-Communism was responsible for ending the strike (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 89-90). However, in his analysis of the social unrest in China between 1925 and 1927, Fitzgerald (1990) emphasises the similarities between the GMD and CCP and stresses that conflict in the revolution was between local powers and the state as newly defined by revolutionary anti-imperialism. Fitzgerald writes:

For Gan Naiguang and the Communists, as for Dai Jitao, class conflict entered the Nationalist Revolution in 1925 and 1926 through the logic of a revolution built around a state definition of the nation: that is, through resistance in society to the demands of overthrowing imperialism and warlords and creating a viable Nationalist state (Fitzgerald 1990: 337).

Guo Shouzheng, too, thinks that opposition to the strike as viewed by Dai Jitao was not due to ideological clashes between the GMD and CCP. He claims:

The opposition of Dai Jitao's followers to class struggle was in reality opposition to the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike and the Picket Corps' boycott of Hongkong. Confiscation of food cargoes was not a pure ideological struggle but a severe political struggle (Guo Shouzheng 1962a: 161).

In this chapter, I go on to study whether or not the boycott of Hongkong trade realised an alliance of workers, merchants, and peasants. I ask what caused the growth in political opposition to the Strike Committee - an anti-Communist *coup d'état* or a growing dissatisfaction in the GMD and throughout Guangdong with the boycott of trade and the CCP's definition of patriotism as anti-imperialism.

The economy of Guangzhou and the Zhujiang Delta during the strike

To set the context of opposition to the boycott, I now consider the effects of the boycott on Guangzhou's trade and the economy of the Zhujiang Delta. First, I address the question of whether or not Guangdong prospered during the strike. Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]: 624) cites the following customs revenue figures as evidence that the Guangdong Government at least grew richer:

Guangdong's customs revenue, 1924 to 1926

1924		1925	
July	229,523	July	70,711
August	281,816	August	150,180
September	289,623	September	232,407
October	242,078	October	306,125
November	319,835	November	337,532
December	282,564	December	304,838

1925		1926	
January	257,541	January	422,971

Figures are in haikwan taels.

These figures suggest that Guangdong's economy suffered in the first two months of the strike, but that trade later recovered and Guangzhou customs reported monthly incomes consistently and significantly higher than the previous year. However, when the above figures for 1925 and 1926 are compared with the corresponding averaged figures for 1922-1924, Guangdong's customs revenue during

the strike appears ordinary, despite the fact that import tariffs increased during the strike (Deng Zhongxia 1980 [1926a]: 596-597).

Guangdong's average customs revenue, 1922 to 1924 and 1925 to 1926

1922-1924 average		1925-1926	
July	256,167	July	70,711
August	299,205	August	150,180
September	317,662	September	232,407
October	319,602	October	306,125
November	333,490	November	337,532
December	301,099	December	304,838
January	306,494	January	422,971
February	263,691	February	233,676

Figures are in haikwan taels and are from Cheng Hao (1985: 205).

Figures on the quantity and value of imports and exports through the port of Guangzhou show that exports of waste silk, mat-making materials, tobacco leaves, cassia, and locally produced cloth declined; exports of fans, firecrackers, fireworks, medicines, and silk embroidery showed little or no improvement; and only exports of silk, woven mats, silk cocoons, and pipe tobacco increased (Cheng Gao 1985: 208-209).

Figures for Guangzhou's foreign trade show that trade at Guangzhou declined sharply.

Guangzhou's foreign trade, 1919 to 1927

Year	Imports	Exports	Balance
1919	31,121,914	64,676,057	+33,554,143
1920	32,509,218	59,221,881	+26,712,663
1921	41,496,668	71,333,835	+29,837,167
1922	54,232,571	89,016,601	+34,784,030
1923	73,846,423	90,228,494	+16,382,071
1924	54,019,748	82,777,970	+28,756,222
1925	40,430,586	49,832,293	+ 9,401,707
1926	67,174,985	45,229,330	- 21,945,655
1927	43,474,751	69,981,148	+26,506,397

Figures are in haikwan taels and are from Cheng Hao (1985: 188 and 210).

Guangzhou's trade surpluses between 1919 and 1924 gave way to a deficit during the strike. In 1925, the value of imports plus exports was only marginally

greater than the value of exports for 1924. Exports fell further in 1926, although the volume of imports slightly surpassed average pre-strike levels. Only in 1927, after the end of the strike, did trade recover. The above figures show that, during the strike, trade in Guangdong declined, while the Guangdong Government increased its taxation.

Independent development and merchant opposition

The strike and boycott lasted for sixteen months, during which time revolutionaries claim that the economy of Guangdong developed independently. Motz (1972), Chung (1969), and Chan Ming-kou (1975) agree that the boycott allowed such independent development. Recent Chinese writers believe that the boycott had positive effects on Guangzhou's economy because it concentrated trade at Guangzhou (Cheng Hao 1985: 195). One Chinese historian analyses the strike thus:

Before the strike, few people from places like Dongjiang and Nanlu came to Guangzhou to buy in bulk. After the strike and the victory of the Eastern and Southern Expeditions, Dongjiang and Nanlu recovered and people from these areas came to Guangzhou to buy the produce they needed. One could say that this opened up a new sellers' market in Guangzhou. Because of severed transport routes between Hongkong, Macao, and Guangzhou, people from places like Siyi, Jiangmen, Ximen, Wuzhou, Sanshui, and Xin'an, who travelled to Hongkong and Macao to buy goods before the strike, began to buy in Guangzhou. The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike destroyed the "warehouse policy" of Hongkong and allowed the commerce of Guangdong to develop independently (Chen Shuang 1992: 292).

The "independent development" of Guangzhou simply meant that traders from Guangdong's subregions had to buy and sell in Guangzhou, even though, before the strike, they preferred to do business with Hongkong. Even if the strike allowed the economy of Guangzhou to develop independently of Hongkong, it did so at the expense of the Zhujiang Delta's smaller ports. Although Guangzhou's merchants could defend their interests, traders in Guangdong's smaller ports, whose trade was dependent on Hongkong, suffered during the strike. To illustrate this point, I now show the opposition to the boycott from merchants in Guangzhou and in the Zhujiang Delta.

Guangzhou's merchants opposed the strike almost from the outset. Because Guangzhou merchants were typically shopkeepers, traders, and craftsmen who ran small-scale businesses (Rhodes 1974: 101), they suffered severe financial burdens during the strike. Merchant support for the strike weakened when merchants had to

pay a property tax and a tax on trading permits to support the strikers (Kwan 1986: 188-189). Merchants had other grievances too - the Strike Committee encouraged workers to form new unions and urged shop assistants to demand better pay and work conditions. Because of increased costs, some businesses closed. While some merchants lost their family businesses, most workers prospered; merchants became increasingly antagonistic towards the Strike Committee. Restaurants took down signs saying: "Welcome home to the anti-imperialist strikers" and "Special discounts to strikers." Guangdong merchants began to spread rumours that the Strike Committee regarded the workers as their "inseparable allies," and that the boycott of Hongkong was just an "excuse for blackmail" (Luo Zhu 1962i: 3).

However, it was the loss of foreign trade that galvanised merchants into organised opposition to the Strike Committee. Soon after the start of the strike, the patriotism of the merchants died down and their support for the strike started to evaporate as they had no business to conduct (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 622). The GMD and CCP debated whether the revolution should oppose all imperialist powers or concentrate its energies against Britain only. Many CCP cadres in Guangzhou strongly opposed the idea that any one imperialism was less terrible than another (Luo Zhu 1962i: 3-4), but Borodin took a more pragmatic stance. In a secret meeting, he persuaded Deng Zhongxia and Chen Yannian to relax the boycott of trade and told them:

The boycott is like a double-edged sword. One edge cuts the enemy; the other edge cuts us. The boycott harms Britain, but it harms us, too. When we place an embargo on Hongkong and lock it out, we lock ourselves in (Huang Ping 1962c: 13).

On August 14, 1925, the Strike Committee instituted a special permit system to allow merchants to trade non-British goods only and banned the use of British warehouses and ships or the trade in any goods that had passed through Hongkong (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 51). The Strike Committee was reluctant to implement a system that allowed any trade. According to Huang Ping, after hearing that all imperialism endangered China, strikers found a policy targeting only Britain "hard to swallow" and they "could not straighten it out in their minds" (Huang Ping 1962c: 13).

Merchants continued to protest against the Strike Committee's boycott. On August 16, representatives of Guangzhou's merchants held a meeting of thirty to forty merchants and invited the Strike Committee to attend. Some merchants present demanded an immediate and complete end to the boycott; others asked for certain goods to be exempted from import controls. The Strike Committee's representatives repeated calls for cooperation between workers and merchants and explained that the boycott was "not for the benefit of workers only but a fight for the independence of the state and for national liberation" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 55). On August 18, the

Fourteenth Strikers' Congress recommended that the special permit system be maintained (Luo Zhu 1962i: 8). The next day, the Strike Committee wrote to the Guangdong Chamber of Commerce claiming that it had already made enough concessions to Guangdong's merchants.⁶²

Merchants approached the problem of the boycott separately from that of the strike. They feared that the special permit system might continue even after the end of the strike. The Strikers' Congress made a commitment to the merchants that the boycott would not outlast the strike (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 56). To try to calm the suspicions of the merchant community in Guangzhou, the Strike Committee organised a meeting to exchange views. GMD politicians Hu Hanmin, Wu Chaoshu, Liao Zhongkai, Chen Mingshu, Gan Naiguang, and Song Ziwen participated in the meeting with Li Langru, Hu Songtang, Lu Zhuoxiang, and Liang Peiqi, who represented Guangdong's merchants.

Hu Hanmin expressed the importance of the strike as a "fight for the independence and freedom of the nation state" (Luo Zhu 1962i: 4-5). At the same meeting, Liao Zhongkai, too, stressed the need for a united front. He said:

"Everyone must share the hardship and steadfastly make great sacrifices. In business, when merchants count every penny and dare not make sacrifices, they limit their possible development" (Luo Zhu 1962i: 5).

Li Langru stated the merchants' support for the strike, but warned the Strike Committee to reform the permit system. He complained:

Merchants must frequently wait for one week before collecting the permits for which they apply. By this time, their goods may have already spoiled or they must extend the hire of their boat. Various other losses mount up, too (Luo Zhu 1962i: 6).

After the meeting, Guangzhou's merchants created a more effective political organisation. Guangzhou's separate chambers of commerce united to form the Four Chambers of Commerce (*Sishanghui*). Guangzhou's merchants launched a campaign against the Strike Committee's special permit system. According to one CCP activist, the real goal of the merchants was, however, to free all foreign trade.

The campaign's real intentions were to end the boycott of Hongkong, to break the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, to attack the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike Committee, and to impugn the GMD left wing led by Liao Zhongkai (Luo Zhu 1962i: 7).

62 The Strike Committee made a further small concession, waiving the requirement for permits to carry the Department of Trade's official seal and reducing permit charges by a small amount. Permits still had to carry the seals of the Public Security Bureau, Foreign Office, and the Strikers' Congress (Luo Zhu 1962i: 8-9).

The special permit system was bureaucratic and caused severe problems. For the first time, CCP activists felt that merchant pressure, backed by the GMD right wing, threatened the strike (Luo Zhu 1962i: 1). Guangzhou merchants' opposition to the boycott became increasingly vociferous. They accused the Picket Corps of misconduct, in particular of confiscating goods illegally and taking bribes. Because the Strike Committees' courts failed to keep up with the number of cases awaiting trial, vessels and goods seized by the Picket Corps stayed stranded in port. More than one hundred seized ships laden with confiscated goods were moored in Guangzhou. Some cargoes rotted and the relevant court cases never went to trial. This situation increased tension between merchants and the Strike Committee and angered the Picket Corps. On one occasion, some pickets surrounded the courts publicly to voice their suspicions that the courts were operating illegally. However, the Picket Corps itself was corrupt. Some pickets illegally confiscated goods; other rogue pickets convened illegal, impromptu court sessions to confiscate merchants' goods and punish them. In other miscarriages of justice, pickets arrested workers moving house from Hongkong to Guangdong and confiscated their possessions (Luo Zhu 1962c: 2). Merchants began to ignore the permit system and came up with "hundreds of schemes" and spent much money to move secretly to and from Hongkong and to import goods from Hongkong and Macao. If caught, these merchants risked severe punishment from the Strike Committee. Some offenders arrested by the Picket Corps were whipped, tied up, and left to burn under a blazing sun (Luo Zhu 1962c: 2).

The merchants' campaign partially succeeded. One week after the assassination of Liao Zhongkai and the first climax of open hostility to the strike, the CCP persuaded the Strikers' Congress to rescind the bureaucratic special-permit system and establish in its place some conditions of trade reaffirming the embargo on British goods and Hongkong trade (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 87). From this time on, according to Deng Zhongxia, the Four Chambers of Commerce became far more supportive of the strike (Deng Zhongxia 1980 [1926a]: 68-80). In fact, Guangzhou's merchants had been strong enough to force the Strike Committee to free most trade, except that through Hongkong. Because the Zhujiang Delta's smaller ports had become reliant on Hongkong for their export markets, Guangzhou's merchants effectively established a monopoly of foreign trade for the duration of the strike. Some Guangzhou merchants, for example, Liang Peiqi, became high-profile supporters of the Strike Committee (Liang Shangnong and Liang Shangbo 1962: 158). The strike leadership had retreated from its anti-imperialist stance - the boycott was now an anti-British movement.

Merchants in Guangdong's subregions generally opposed the boycott. The cessation of trade with Hongkong caused them severe losses. Warlords and wealthy merchants had the military backing to keep some small ports open to Hongkong

trade. For example, in Qianshan, Chen Lianbo⁶³ exported food to Hongkong. The Nationalist Government agreed to the Strike Committee's demand for troops to blockade the area (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 106). In August, the warlord Deng Benyin, "ignoring the nation's anger," opened shipping lanes to Hongkong on receipt of a payment of eight hundred thousand dollars from the Hongkong Government (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 276). In Jiangmen, local merchants offered the Picket Corps fifteen thousand Hongkong dollars to open the port for three hours (Wei Jianxian 1962b: 137).

The Strike Committee's reaction to these conflicts was to tighten the boycott. On September 12, the Guangzhou Government decided to lay mines in the waters off the port of Humen, a busy trade area between the province and Hongkong (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 303-304). On October 5, the Guangzhou Government's Military Committee ordered reinforcements to Qianshan and Wanzi to help the Picket Corps blockade local ports (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 314). Throughout October and November, the Picket Corps clashed with traders in Taiping and Humen (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 318). On November 11, the Picket Corps announced that it could, in the wake of the defeat of local warlords, extend the boycott of Guangdong's ports to Shantou, Shanwei, Aotou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Taiping, Shiqi, Qianshan, Chencun, Rongqi, Daliang, Jiangmen, Taishan, Guanghai, Yangjiang, Shuidong, Leizhou, Beihai, and Haikou (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 154).

The Picket Corps' enemies in Guangdong's subregions were not just warlords and wealthy merchants. Soon after the imposition of the boycott, small traders in Guangdong's subregions clashed with the Strike Committee and the Guangdong Government. On July 27, Liao Zhongkai sent a telegram to Chen Zhaoying in Humen requesting him to investigate eight local people who had pooled five hundred dollars to finance a company for "smuggling food" (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 272). In Danshui, a merchant called Shun Xing exported food and imported foreign goods to Hongkong (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 164). In September, in Huangmayong Village, Shunde, a group of traders fought with the Picket Corps to protect grain exports to Hongkong (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 309). In Shajin, on November 11, militia led by the merchant Chen Binnan attacked the local Picket Corps. At Shayuyong, Xiayong, and Yutou, traders continually imported foreign goods. In Huiyang, too, locals constantly broke the boycott (Luo Zhu 1962e: 6).

Picket Corps' battles against peasants and villages

63 Chen Lianbo (Chan Lin-paak) was the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank's comprador in Guangzhou. From 1923 to 1924, he led the Merchant Corps in opposition to Sun Yat-sen's Soviet-influenced policies of increased taxation and anti-imperialism (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1989: 159-167).

People in Guangdong's subregions did not divide along class lines in support for or opposition to the boycott. The battles that the Picket Corps fought in rural Guangdong did not reflect a struggle between workers and peasants on the one side and "traitor merchants" on the other. Evidence suggests that in many cases lineage groups and entire villages fought the Picket Corps to protect their trade.

For example, at Shajin, in Bao'an, a large well-organised group imported and exported goods to Hongkong and transported people to Hongkong and Macao. The group used three large boats and twenty other vessels (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 330). It exported ginger, pigs, chickens, and ducks; transported workers to Hongkong; and imported gasoline, matches, and cigarettes. An armed force led by Chen Xierong, a native of Shajin, attacked the Picket Corps, when pickets intercepted a boat carrying goods and people to Hongkong. On August 2, locals again clashed with the Picket Corps, when Chen Yaozai and Chen Pei ordered two boats to leave the river-mouth at Fuyong and go to Hongkong. *Gongren zhi lu* names those ultimately responsible for breaking the boycott as Chen Binnan, Chen Bosu, Chen Shoukang, Chen Bodong, and Chen Xierong. A report in *Gongren zhi lu* complained: "If we cannot solve the problem of this village, the strike will be totally ruined" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 144).

The Picket Corps identified the problem as one of the whole village. All the people involved in breaking the boycott shared the same surname. The resistance of local people in Shajin against the Picket Corps was large in scale and well organised. *Gongren zhi lu* calls only one of the boycott-breakers a "traitor merchant" and describes the others as "evil gentry" and "local despots" (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 144). Chen Qi and Chen Yao used the village's defence corps and "a gang of local bandits" to protect the operation (Lu Zhongqi 1985: 330-331).

The Picket Corps were not always locked in combat with local bandit groups. While the strike continued and opposition to the boycott of Hongkong trade grew, the Picket Corps clashed more and more frequently with peasants and allied with any military force willing to support the boycott. Class distinctions had little meaning - what counted was whether or not one supported the boycott of Hongkong; as the boycott continued, fewer and fewer people did. To enforce the boycott, the Picket Corps sometimes formed alliances with strong local political groups to fight weak ones. For example, in order to prevent shipments between Hongkong and Shiqi, the local Picket Corps leader, Chen Zhuo, relied on the bandit chief "King Zhang." Chen recalls:

After the Zhongshan bandit chief "King Zhang" crossed over to the side of the Government, I frequently met him in Shiqi to improve my local knowledge, to smooth my way, and to ask for help. He welcomed me warmly. Once, when our

sea-going inspection team spotted a heavily armoured smugglers' vessel, I let out one short, one long, and three short blasts on the ship's horn to call for help from "King Wang," whose ship was passing. When he saw it was me, "King Wang" came to my assistance (Chen Zhuo 1962: 4).

Although Chinese accounts of the strike, including recent accounts, emphasise cooperation between the Strike Committee and peasants,⁶⁴ in fact the boycott often hampered the Strike Committee's plans to win peasants' support because it prevented peasants from selling food or handicrafts in Hongkong. During the autumn and winter months, conflicts between peasants and the Picket Corps decreased, but by May 1926, when many crops were ready for market, the Picket Corps clashed frequently with peasants in Guangdong's coastal areas. Hongkong was the biggest market for raw silk, vegetables, livestock, and fish from Guangdong's coastal subregions. When all trade between Guangdong and Hongkong ceased, these coastal regions began to suffer unbearable economic losses. In February 1926, the Picket Corps fought villagers from Futian, whom it suspected of exporting salted fish to Hongkong. The villagers captured four pickets, whom they later released (Luo Zhu 1962e: 11). On April 17, *Gongren zhi lu* published measures to supervise the trade in salted fish near the Hongkong border to stop peasants breaking the boycott (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 293).

On the border between Hongkong and Guangdong, at Futian, Huanggang, Shatou, Liantong, and Shatoujiao, peasants and pedlars carried grain, vegetables, and fruits into British territory. In Qianshan's fifth, sixth, and seventh districts, most peasants exported agricultural produce, fruits, and vegetables to Macao (Luo Zhu 1962e: 13-14). In July 1925, pickets killed two women who were carrying baskets of lychees into Hongkong territory (Great Britain Colonial Office CO 129/489: 1-2). On April 9, 1926, the Strike Committee issued a set of conditions that allowed Bao'an peasants to cross into British territory to cultivate their fields. The Strike Committee intended to end a long-running conflict between the Picket Corps and peasants close to the border with the New Territories (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 285). At a peasants' congress in Bao'an, half of the peasants present showed no support for the strike because strike pickets prevented them from exporting food. In Qianshan, peasants requested that strike pickets allow the export of taros, sweet potatoes, and ginger. In Haifeng, peasants complained that they could not export swine, cattle, or fruits to Hongkong (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 668-669).

64 Such studies include Xiao Chaoran (1956), Gan Tian (1956), Liu Likai (1957), Cai Luo (1980), and Zao Ping (1985). Evidence shows that sometimes peasants helped the Picket Corps maintain the boycott (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 490-494). However, such reports are limited mostly to the winter months between September and March.

Deng Zhongxia admits that cooperation between peasants and the Picket Corps had never been whole-hearted. In battles against merchants, the peasants had "sometimes helped the pickets, or at least remained neutral." However, while the boycott continued,

peasants opposed the pickets, as in Bao'an, where peasants from a good many villages bordering on British territory took up arms against the pickets (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 636-637).

Widespread opposition to the boycott

Although the Strike Committee reached a compromise with Guangzhou's wealthier merchants, opposition to the boycott continued as peasants and traders in Guangdong's smaller ports suffered economic losses. The boycott imposed tough conditions on the citizens of Guangzhou, and other cities, too, because these people relied partly on rice imported from Southeast Asia by way of Hongkong. As the boycott continued, the lack of food in Guangdong's cities became more and more serious. Fuel, too, was in short supply - Guangdong's railways ran on coal from British merchants and oil for city lighting was imported mainly through the British-owned Asiatic Petroleum Company Ltd.⁶⁵ Before the strike, Guangdong people enjoyed access to a vast range of foreign goods.⁶⁶ People's livelihood suffered as foreign goods and Western medicine could not reach Guangdong. Huang Ping recalls the situation in the early months of the strike:

People gradually realised the strike's cost. After one hundred years of imperialist invasion, Guangdong relied on Southeast Asia for rice and coal; now it was beginning to feel the scarcity. Many other daily products, all foreign goods, were also in short supply (Huang Ping 1962f: 1).

Workers, too, became increasingly disenchanted with the boycott. A constant stream of workers and peasants tried to travel to Hongkong to find work. On September 7, in Xidizhou, Bao'an, pickets intercepted a junk as it shipped eighty-five peasants to Hongkong. Many workers walked from Guangzhou to Hongkong by way of Shilong, Huizhou, and Shayuyong. Shayuyong became a major point for trade and contact between Chinese and foreigners (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 109). The Guangzhou Tea-House Employees' Union broke the boycott by selling foreign cigarettes to its

⁶⁵ For a study of foreign firms in Guangzhou, see Wang Wenquan ed (1992).

⁶⁶ As Mao demonstrates, the most popular foreign goods in South China were toothbrushes and tooth powder, rubber overshoes and boots, woollen towels, mufflers, torches, matches, leather shoes and sports shoes, soap, socks, batteries, envelopes and letter paper, lamps and lanterns, dyes and indigo, and nails (Mao 1990: 69-70).

workers (Li Fu 1961a: 5). The Strike Committee arrested Lin Heji, who was trying to persuade seamen to go back to work (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 326-327). As early as December 1925, the number of strikers left in Guangdong had dwindled to about one hundred thousand, of which only forty thousand remained in Guangzhou (Wilbur and How 1989: 595-596). The Hongkong Government calculated that 250,000 people left Hongkong at the start of the strike, including "a large number of ordinary residents, especially women and children of the middle class," who soon returned to Hongkong. On February 5, 1926, the Hongkong Governor told the Hongkong Legislative Council that the strike of Hongkong had for some months "been a thing of the past, and that almost the whole body of labourers was again at work" (Great Britain Foreign Office FO 405/252: 18-19). In February 1926, the Strike Committee launched the second strike in Hongkong to try to rekindle support for the movement, but won little support.

The strike movement, which had been built on political contact with union leaders, gradually lost its mass support. The boycott continued because of the Strike Committee's control over the Picket Corps. The rationale for the boycott changed subtly. Now, the boycott of Hongkong was necessary not to defeat British imperialism and save China but to ensure the continuation of the strike.

But for the Picket Corps, the unscrupulous actions of traitor merchants, compradors, running dogs, and foreigners' slaves would soon have defeated the strike (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 407).

Powerful people who suffered during the boycott, in particular, Guangzhou's merchants, won concessions from the Strike Committee and could make money at Guangzhou. In Guangdong's subregions, the GMD launched successful military campaigns against warlords and enabled the Strike Committee to extend its boycott to smaller ports. Those people who suffered most during the boycott, traders and peasants in Guangdong's coastal regions, faced an alliance of strike pickets and local political groups, sometimes bandits, who enforced the boycott. These traders and peasants were not strong enough to unite against the Strike Committee, but their opposition to the boycott caused some concern among CCP leaders like Deng Zhongxia.

The Hongkong Government and the response of Hongkong's Chinese elite to the strike and boycott

While the support for the boycott of Hongkong dwindled, Hongkong mounted a well-organised defence of the colony that stressed cooperation between the colonial authorities and Hongkong's Chinese elite. Sir Shouson Chow and Kotewall worked

closely with the Government in advisory and administrative positions and involved other members of the Chinese elite in formulating anti-strike measures and governing the colony. Ma Xuchao, Li Yuchuan, Huang Deguang, Li Yimei, Lu Xiangqu, and others met regularly with Kotewall (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 193).

The colony's anti-strike measures were a mixture of liberalisation and authoritarianism. Immediately after the strike call, the Hongkong Government allowed the free hawking of groceries on the streets to diminish the problems caused by the stallholders' strike. The Tung Wah Hospital set up stalls selling cheap rice and other foods to the colony's poorest inhabitants. Many directors of the Tung Wah Hospital, including Ma Xuchao, assisted personally at the food stalls. The Hongkong Government arranged with farmers in the New Territories to supply it with food, which the Government sold to the population at fixed low prices (Kotewall 1925: 10-11).

The Hongkong Government set up a Labour Control System to deal with the sudden shortage of labour. By June 1924, G. M. Young, manager of Butterfield and Swire and head of the Labour Control System, had recruited two thousand volunteers to operate essential services. His assistant, Dr Cao Shanyun, took charge of a Chinese Labour Office, which enlisted five hundred men and one hundred former policemen to help run a variety of public services (Kotewall 1925: 11-12). The Hongkong Government formed a Police Labour Bureau along the lines of a similar organisation set up during the seamen's strike of 1922. The Police Labour Bureau organised the work of twenty-five thousand coolies (*Hongkong Administrative Report* 1926: k19). A Transport Control System worked hand in hand with the Police Labour Bureau to maintain services in Hongkong. The tram service resumed after only nine days and the navy provided a limited ferry service for European season ticket holders, which the Hongkong Government later expanded to cater for the Chinese population (Chung 1969: 90).

Other sections of Hongkong society cooperated, too. Many workers remained in Hongkong, at least for a while. Some barbers continued to work; tram drivers, including Peak Tram drivers, who complained that they had been coerced into joining the strike, trained volunteers to replace them. The Government launched a campaign to stop the intimidation of workers who wanted to continue working in the colony. It offered compensation in case of death or injury to workers who refused to join the strike. Sir Shouson Chow and Robert Kotewall advised the Government to announce that it would pay two thousand dollars to the family of any person killed as a direct consequence of carrying out his or her normal work (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 187-190).

The Hongkong Government, with the cooperation of Hongkong's Chinese elite, initiated a number of authoritarian measures. In July 1925, Liang Weichen,

introduced to the Government through Ma Xuchao of the Tung Wah Hospital Committee, established a secret army of "dubious types" to intimidate the strike's intimidators. Kotewall launched an effective counter-propaganda organisation to calm the temper of Hongkong's Chinese population. Called the Firm to Reassure Chinese (*Anhua yanghang*),⁶⁷ it fed information to the colony's newspapers, organised lecture teams to speak publicly to Hongkong people, and published its own propaganda. The Firm to Reassure Chinese despatched telegrams to Overseas Chinese on behalf of Hongkong's Chinese elite - it received a positive reply from the San Francisco Chinese Association offering its support (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 190-192). The Hongkong Government cracked down on dissent. Hongkong police carried out street searches and the Hongkong Government scrutinised the local press for anti-Government articles. The Hongkong Government ordered newspapers to submit every issue to the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs for approval. The Government provided a subsidy to set up a newspaper, the *Gongshang ribao* (*Labour and Commercial Daily*), which launched an anti-Communist campaign and emboldened private newspapers in the colony to follow an anti-Bolshevist editorial line (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 189).

Hongkong's self-defence evinced a degree of community spirit. Members of Hongkong's Chinese elite and the leadership of the Tung Wah Hospital, through their assistance to the Hongkong Government, showed that a settled Hongkong community existed and was willing to defend itself. In a speech to the Legislative Council on July 9, 1925, Governor Stubbs praised Kotewall and Sir Shouson Chow for their help (*Hongkong Hansard* 1925: 46) and portrayed the strike as a campaign against both British and Chinese in Hongkong:

[The strike] is aimed against all law and order as may be seen from the fact that the respectable Chinese here are as much the object of attack as the European community, even more so it would seem for it is difficult to see in what way any anti-government or anti-European sentiment can be involved in a strike of Chinese barbers, tea-house attendants or pork butchers (*Hongkong Hansard* 1925: 45).

Cecil Clementi, who replaced Stubbs as Governor, continued the robust stance against the Strike Committee and members of Hongkong's Chinese elite continued to work well with the Hongkong Government. Such cooperation undoubtedly allowed Hongkong to remain resolute in its negotiations with the Strike Committee for an end to the strike.

⁶⁷ Chan Lau Kit-ching calls the *Anhua yanghang* the "Comfort the Chinese Company" (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 191).

Negotiations to end the strike

Negotiations to end the strike continued on-and-off from December 1925 to October 1926. As each round of negotiations failed, the costs of financing the strike, the excesses of the Picket Corps, and the threat to unity and trade posed by the boycott generated increasing political opposition by all wings of the GMD. From June to August 1925, the Strike Committee and the Hongkong Government obstinately refused to negotiate - the Strike Committee pressed for all the strikers' demands to be met and the Hongkong Government refused to negotiate. The Hongkong Government considered military action against Guangzhou, but the Foreign Office refused. Hongkong merchants funded an attempted *coup d'état* against Guangzhou and the Hongkong Government turned a blind eye, but the plan failed (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 197-202).

The GMD began to fear that a prolonged boycott might threaten revolutionary unity. In August, anti-strike feeling came to a head with the assassination of Liao Zhongkai and merchants' demands for freer trade regulations. On September 22, 1925, the first signs of impatience in the GMD left wing began to surface. As the GMD Central Committee met to discuss launching the Eastern Expedition against Chen Jiongming, Wang Jingwei and Borodin suggested to the Strike Committee that the strike be ended to "help the National Revolution" (Wilbur and How 1989: 172). On September 23, representatives of Hongkong merchants arrived in Guangzhou to discuss how to end the strike and negotiated directly with the Strike Committee. On October 2, after it presented the merchants with demands from Hongkong strikers, Guangzhou and Shamian strikers, and striking students (Ye Wenyi 1991: 212), the Strike Committee tried to persuade Hongkong merchants to support the strike. It declared: "Hongkong's Chinese merchants are powerful. If they can be resolute, it will be easy to force the Hongkong Government to bend to the will of Chinese workers and merchants" (Luo Zhu 1962i: 15).

Gongren zhi lu ran a series of articles written by Lan Yuye and Deng Zhongxia asking the Hongkong merchants to back the strikers. They claimed that Hongkong merchants suffered from exploitation by British imperialists and that support for the Hongkong Government came from "a minority of imperialist merchants." They called for Hongkong's Chinese elite to "do their duty, rise up, and put a stop to their treacherous behaviour" (Luo Zhu 1962i: 16). Both the negotiations and the Strike Committee's attempts to win over Hongkong's Chinese elite failed.

On October 1, the GMD launched the Eastern Expedition against Chen Jiongming, and, on October 26, it launched a Southern Expedition against Deng

Benyin. Chen Jiongming attacked Shantou on October 6, forcing strikers there to return to work (*Gongren zhi lu* no. 111). For nearly three months, the revolutionary movement concentrated on defeating its military enemies; internal political squabbles between the GMD and CCP were less intense. On December 17, the GMD retook Chaozhou and Shantou. The Strike Committee tried once more to bring the strike to an end. On December 30, the Strike Committee met with Hongkong merchants in Guangzhou and demanded that the Hongkong Government accept responsibility for the Shaji Massacre, grant political freedoms to Hongkong workers, and allow strikers back to work. The Hongkong merchants refused to discuss political matters; on January 4, 1926, the Strike Committee called off the negotiations (Wilbur and How 1989: 221).

The strike and boycott had now continued far longer than the GMD had expected. The GMD left wing no longer enthusiastically supported the strike. In February, Wang Jingwei wrote to Sir Shouson Chow and Kotewall and asked them to meet with Fu Bingzhang, his representative, in Macao (Wilbur and How 1989: 222). There, the two Hongkong representatives learned that the strike was becoming an increasing burden on the Guangdong Government's finances and Fu Bingzhang expressed his regret that he had not met with Sir Shouson Chow and Kotewall "three months ago" (Great Britain Foreign Office FO 405/251: 61). The Strike Committee had had to deal with political opposition from many GMD right-wing politicians and anarchists ever since the start of the boycott. While the strike continued, its costs increased and widespread opposition to the boycott strengthened. The Strike Committee, however, remained obstinate. In Hongkong, Governor Clementi, who sensed that the boycott was becoming increasingly unpopular, began to take a tougher stance against the Strike Committee (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 207-212). Clementi was confident that the strike and boycott could not last long. He derided the "awful tyranny" of the Strike Committee and challenged it to "withdraw all the strike pickets, abstain from all forcible interference with trade in the Kwangtung [Guangdong] Province, and note the result" (*Hongkong Hansard* 1926: 1).

In March, political conflict between the right and left wings of the movement flared in Guangzhou. Wang Jingwei was seeking to ally with GMD moderates against the right wing and came into conflict with Chiang Kai-shek (Wilbur and How 1989: 251-252). On March 20, Chiang Kai-shek executed a *coup d'état*, placed Wang Jingwei under arrest, and temporarily arrested the Strike Committee. Apparently, Chiang anticipated a plot by the GMD left wing and the CCP to kidnap him and force him to go to Russia.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Wilbur and How (1989: 252-254) examine the theories about Chiang's reasons for his *coup d'état*.

Chiang Kai-shek distrusted the CCP and the Strike Committee that had been its main source of power. Political opposition to the strike became stronger and more public. Huang Ping recalls the political atmosphere in Guangzhou thus:

One day the Picket Corps was branded as illegal; the next they were said to be starting a revolution. The loyal servants of the strike had become the villains of the revolution! First the GMD rightist Wu Tiecheng, then Wu Chaoshu, started daily to slander the Picket Corps at political meetings (Huang Ping 1962g 1-2).

On April 15, Governor Clementi reported to the Secretary for the Colonies that Su Zhaozheng, Huang Jinyuan, Zeng Ziyang, Liang Ziguang, Deng Zhongxia, He Qinghai, and two other strike leaders had offered to call off the strike immediately on payment of three hundred thousand Chinese dollars (Great Britain Foreign Office FO 405/251: 186-189).⁶⁹ This offer further emboldened Clementi, who wrote:

[T]he mere mention of such a figure shows how badly the Canton [Guangzhou] Strike Committee was shaken by the *coup* of General Cheung Kai-shek [Chiang Kai-shek]. It gives an air of unreality to the whole attempt at a money bargain for calling off the boycott, and it throws a lurid light on the professions of "patriotism" made by the strike leaders (Great Britain Foreign Office FO 405/251: 189).

According to Isaacs, from Chiang's March 1926 *coup d'état* onwards, the Strike Committee no longer enjoyed the firm backing of the Guangdong Government (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 89-110). However, the support of the Guangdong Government had weakened progressively since September 1925. Even the CCP Central Committee had become increasingly exasperated with the Strike Committee. According to Deng Zhongxia, the CCP Central Committee complained that the Strike Committee was "too leftist" and was "running wild!" (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 636).

However, the real significance of Chiang's *coup d'état* was that it brought military interests to the fore, and Chiang demanded unity within the revolutionary alliance and loyalty to his authority from all factions. Chiang wanted to launch a Northern Expedition to unify China under his control; he wanted to uphold national unity. The strains created by the boycott and chaos in the labour movement threatened the unity of Guangzhou and Guangdong. Overnight, it seemed to the CCP that the GMD's left wing had stopped behaving as an independent faction. According to Huang Ping, Chen Yannian and Zhang Tailei complained:

⁶⁹ The British Consul in Guangzhou, Sir James Jamieson, who received the offer, did not believe that these strike leaders could have "delivered the goods," but thought that the offer showed how severely Chiang's *coup d'état* had shaken the Strike Committee (Great Britain Foreign Office FO 405/251: 189).

The Central Committee wants us to ally with the GMD left wing, but who are the GMD's left wing? Chiang Kai-shek is not, nor is Gan Naiguang or Chen Gongbo. There is no left wing (Huang Ping 1962c: 12).

At the same time as the GMD launched the Northern Expedition, it pressured the Strike Committee into attempting once more to resolve the strike. From June 1 to July 26, Hongkong Government representatives and the strike leaders held five rounds of talks to negotiate an end to the strike. The talks failed as the British side made no concessions. Deng Zhongxia's reaction to the end of the talks was to exhort the Picket Corps to increase their efforts, saying: "Patriotic workers, peasants, merchants, and students must be of one will and unite strictly to enforce the boycott and support the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike" (Deng Zhongxia 1980 [1926b]: 632). However, Deng's exhortations to tighten the boycott of Hongkong could only cause increasing conflict between the Picket Corps on the one hand and traders and peasants on the other. By this time, the Strike Committee was totally isolated. Months of dissatisfaction with the boycott of Hongkong had alienated people in Guangzhou, peasants in coastal areas, and merchants in Guangdong's small ports. Although none of these groups on their own could translate its grievances into organised political opposition capable of ousting the Strike Committee, the strike bureaucracy had become little more than a bureaucratic shell that lacked mass support and the GMD under Chiang Kai-shek was more and more intolerant of the CCP.

The end of the strike

On October 10, 1926, the Strike Committee officially declared that the boycott of Hongkong was over. The Strike Committee called upon the remaining strikers in Guangzhou to support the Northern Expedition, resist imperialism, and exterminate domestic counter-revolutionary powers. In addition, it called for a reorganisation of the Guangzhou Government and development of the infrastructure at Guangdong's main ports and railway lines (Guangdong zhixue shehuikexue yanjiusuo lishi yanjiushi 1980: 704-705). However, the Strike Committee dropped its demands against Hongkong. Huang Ping recounts the choices faced by the CCP leadership in the final days of the strike:

[W]e had only two options: first, allow the strike to continue, despite the contradictions between it and the GMD; second, bend every effort to find a resolution to the strike. The first option would inevitably cause conflict between the Strike Committee and GMD to worsen daily. Under the line set out by the

Party at the time [cooperation with the GMD], that was impossible, so we chose the second option (Huang Ping 1962g: 1-2).

The only reward that the Hongkong workers received for their strike was a share of the money raised by the imposition of a two-and-a-half per cent customs tariff. The Strike Committee advised workers to return to Hongkong to look for work (Deng Zhongxia 1983 [1930]: 637). Parts of the strike bureaucracy, including the Strike Committee, persisted after the end of the boycott, but they had no real power. After the strike, the Strike Committee recalled all units of the Picket Corps to Guangzhou. Few pickets appear to have returned to their original work. Some joined the Northern Expedition, others became instructors for peasant self-defence corps, yet others took money from the GMD to form an Anti-Smuggling Trade-Protection Corps (Liu Yongda and Chen Yongjie 1991: 231-232).

On April 21, 1927, after the arrest of leading CCP cadres, the Strike Committee went underground (Cai Luo 1980: 131). Seamen's Union cadres Su Zhaozheng, Chen Yu, and He Lai, who were CCP activists, were the mainstay of the depleted organisation (Cai Luo 1980: 153). These CCP cadres reformed some remaining members of the Picket Corps into a Red Defence Corps and, in December 1927, led the Guangzhou Uprising with Yang Yin, Huang Ping, Zhou Wenyong, and Zhang Tailei (Zhonggong dangshi ziliao weiyuanhui ed. 1988: 400, 126).

The longest-lasting effects of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike appear to have been the boost that the bureaucracy's propaganda and political connections gave to some union leaders' political careers. Many seamen and pro-CCP unionists went on to follow political careers. Lin Jiangyun became a Vice-Provincial Minister of Guangdong; Feng Xin became Guangdong Chairman of the All-China Labour Federation; in 1961, Chen Yu became Provincial Minister of Guangdong (Kwan 1986: 252); and Huang Jian, a leader in the Tallymen's Union, later became Guangdong Party Secretary (Luo, Peng, Wang, and Zhang 1962: 33).

The CCP and GMD neglected leaders from Hongkong's smaller unions. For example, Huang Jinyuan, unable to return to Hongkong, spent a short time on Huaxian County's Construction Committee, but after the GMD's anti-Communist campaign in Guangdong around April 15, 1927, he lost his position. Living in poverty and forgotten by the CCP and GMD, he died of starvation during the anti-Japanese war (Guangdongsheng zonggonghui 1983: 17-18).

Other CCP activists perished in April 1927, when the GMD arrested and executed Communists in Guangzhou. He Yaoquan, Li Sen, and Liu Ersong were arrested together and quickly executed (Luo Sheng 1962a: 127). Other activists and pickets, including Zhang Tailei, died in the 1927 Guangzhou Uprising⁷⁰ (Wilbur and

⁷⁰ For an account of the Guangzhou Uprising, see Zhonggong dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui ed (1988).

How 1989: 419). In 1928, the GMD arrested and executed Lan Yuye in Shantou (Guo Shouzheng 1962b: 161). Yang Yin was killed in 1929 and Yang Pao'an in 1931 (Wilbur and How 1989: 420).

Survivors who held minor positions in the strike bureaucracy gained minor positions of responsibility in the Communist state after 1949. In 1962, Wang Ke'ou, Lin Zenghua, Guo Shouzheng, and Lai Xiansheng were working in the Guangdong Research Institute of Culture and History;⁷¹ Li Fu was working in the Guangzhou Labour Office (Li Fu 1962b: 83); Liang Haizhi was manager of the Yuexiu Hotel (Liang Haizhi 1962: 97); Chen Qiuzhou was Head of Catering at the Aiqun Hotel (Chen Qiuzhou 1961b: 89); Zhang Guoliang was chairman of a medicine-factory trade union (Zhang Guoliang 1962e: 100); and Gan Lai was working as curator at the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' old headquarters (Gan Lai 1962b: 131). In 1962, one other former striker, Luo Sheng, was languishing in a labour-reform camp (Luo Sheng 1962b: 121).

After the end of the boycott, Clementi desired to see relations between Hongkong and South China return to normal. On October 15, 1926, in a speech to the Legislative Council, he said:

[A]bove all else, the Colony of Hong Kong desires to see in Kuang-tung [Guangdong] and Kuang-hsi [Guangxi] a strong, stable and enlightened Government. Of such a Government we should gladly be close friends and staunch supporters (*Hongkong Hansard* 1926: 59).

Clementi closed his speech by saying:

[W]e, no less than our friends at Canton [Guangzhou], are animated by an earnest desire to see throughout China good government instead of chaos, peace instead of civil war, prosperity instead of havoc, commercial security instead of piracy and brigandage. We are very close neighbours of Canton [Guangzhou]. We wish also to be very close friends (*Hongkong Hansard* 1926: 59).

The strike was not without effect on Hongkong society. In 1926, the Hongkong Government appointed the first Chinese member of the Executive Council and established the Rural Consultative Council (Heung Yee Kuk) (Jones 1990: 58). Governor Clementi supported the creation of a Department of Chinese at the University of Hongkong in 1927. Eager to promote a closer understanding between the colony and Guangdong, Clementi made an official visit to provincial authorities in 1927 (Chan Lau Kit-ching 1990: 240-250). Clementi felt that the strike and boycott had strengthened commitment on the part of some Chinese to the territory. He called for new means to enable any Chinese in Hongkong "publicly to divest himself or

⁷¹ This information is given in Wang Ke'ou (1962: 176), Lin Zenghua (1962c: 99), Guo Shouzheng (1962a: 166), Lai Xiansheng (1962: 129), and Huang Qiushi (1961d: 178).

herself of Chinese nationality and declare their allegiance to the British Crown" (Great Britain Colonial Office CO 129/501: 3).

In effect, the strike was brought to an end without any great strides forward in democratic rights, reform of the political or educational systems of Hongkong, or any profound impact on the organisation of Hongkong workers. The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike caused no increase in labour consciousness or class action in the colony. After the strike, Hongkong unions reverted to carrying out welfare provisions for their members as they had before the strike. Unions launched a few labour disputes within individual trades but none against the colonial authorities or Hongkong's Chinese elite. In 1939, a Hongkong Government report claimed that

the surviving Hong Kong unions became little more than friendly societies concerned more with the provision of funeral expenses for the dead than the improvement of labour conditions for the living. Since 1927, there had been no major labour dispute in Hong Kong. The Boycott of 1925-26 left the unions impoverished and unpopular (Quoted in Ho 1985: 75).

Conclusion

Isaacs (1961 [1938]) is right to emphasise political opposition to the strike as the cause of its failure. The economic strains that the boycott undoubtedly created on sections of Guangdong's population were not in themselves a threat to the Strike Committee's revolutionary organisation. However, months of growing opposition to the boycott of Hongkong gradually eroded mass support for the strike and weakened the political legitimacy of the Strike Committee in the eyes of workers, peasants, and merchants in Guangdong. Merchants in Guangzhou soon changed the boycott from an anti-imperialist boycott to an anti-British boycott. The Strike Committee's great alliance of workers, peasants, and merchants further weakened as the Picket Corps clashed increasingly with peasants in rural Guangdong and workers gradually returned to Hongkong to look for work.

Hongkong defended itself well during the strike. Such concerted opposition in the face of the boycott ensured that the strike continued far longer than the GMD had expected. While the strike continued, the Guangzhou Government became increasingly unwilling to pay for the upkeep of the strikers and more and more eager to end the strike. Chiang Kai-shek's *coup d'état* was not the single event that signalled the end of the strike. Isaacs analysis assumes that the mass support organised by the Strike Committee remained in place throughout the strike movement and created a "sharply rising curve of popular struggle" (Isaacs 1961 [1938]: 84). In reality Isaacs overlooks the many compromises that the strike

bureaucracy made with existing powers to enforce the boycott and create mass support. There was no rising tide of popular struggle, only increasingly severe clashes between the Picket Corps and people who suffered under the boycott of Hongkong trade.

The CCP constructed the strike movement through alliances made with union leaders. It never successfully reached its mass base or gained exclusive control over Hongkong workers. The Strike Committee simply controlled a centralised bureaucracy that had the military backing to enforce its one main weapon, i.e., a boycott of Hongkong trade. As the Strike Committee's mass support dwindled and the Government became unwilling to pay the costs of the strike, anti-Communist forces took their chance to seize power. When Chiang Kai-shek temporarily arrested the Strike Committee in April 1926, the movement was already weak. As it became increasingly isolated, it called off the strike.

Chapter 11

Conclusion

In this chapter, I conclude my study on the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike by returning to the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 1. In chapter 1, I set out as my goals: to identify specific causes of the strike rather than excessively abstract and general causes such as colonial and imperial oppression; to describe the strike's organised, authoritarian, bureaucratic leadership; to describe how Hongkong unions pursued their own interests; to investigate in how far the strike was a conservative rather than a "modern" movement; and to highlight conflicts between the strike's leadership and Hongkong unions that other studies have overlooked. This conclusion consists of three sections, as follows: first, I reject excessively simplistic theories that describe the strike as a spontaneous mass protest and that overgeneralise about its causes. I depict the strike instead as an organised political movement, controlled, conceived, and manipulated by a political party. Second, I explore Hongkong politics and the specific interests of revolutionaries and unions in calling the strike. Third, I look at conflict between the revolutionaries' "modern" ideas of national unity on the one hand and some Hongkong unions' independence and sectional interests on the other. After considering these points, I briefly explore the relevance of a study of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike for understanding Hongkong history.

Excessively simplistic ideas of colonial and imperial oppression

In this study, I have challenged the view that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was a spontaneous, libertarian, and united mass movement against imperialist oppression, which view was recently expressed in Ren Zhenchi ed (1991b). I have tried to avoid one weakness of what I, following Aya (1990), have called "volcanic" theories of revolution: the failure to show how general oppression translates into collective action. I argue that one cannot convincingly show that, before the strike, the Hongkong Government behaved particularly oppressively towards its Chinese citizens. (It oppressed them certainly no more and probably far less than Chinese governments of the day.) Although during the strike the Hongkong Government naturally took some repressive measures, the strike was not an eruption of mass discontent or a unified patriotic movement of workers, peasants, and merchants targeted against colonial oppression. I rebut such arguments by presenting the strike as an organised political movement instigated, nurtured, and controlled by a political party. To support this view, I argue that foreign trade did not excessively disadvantage poor Chinese in Guangdong nor did Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population experience Hongkong as an unjust, alien, and unusually harsh place to live.

In chapter 1, I identified the weakness of theories of revolution that claim general oppression and exploitation of an entire mass population are the cause of revolutionary violence. Gan Tian (1956), Xiao Chaoran (1956), Liu Likai (1957), Cai Luo (1980), Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), Cai Changrui (1985), Zao Ping (1985), Kwan (1986), and Ren Zhenchi ed (1991b) share the "volcanic" view's weaknesses to a degree in so far as they either too simplistically describe the causes of protest or overemphasise workers' unity and shared experience of what they perceive to be colonial oppression. I went on to show that many writers have exaggerated such oppression or that it never existed in the precise forms they describe.

Writers such as Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) have identified the following sources of oppression: foreign trade, which exploited China's workers and peasants; colonial society, which oppressed Hongkong workers; and the class structure of Hongkong unions, which neglected workers' interests. In the 1920s, Guangdong's revolutionaries put the "volcanic" view of revolution into a national context and believed that foreign powers oppressed China as a whole. Consequently, they expressed unity and patriotism in terms of anti-imperialism and labelled as traitors all those who opposed their new ideology, which ideology they backed up with military force controlled by quasi-state organs such as the Strike Committee and the Picket Corps. To the CCP in Guangdong and the strike's leadership, the strike and boycott represented at once the class interests of various classes and the national interest.

The anti-imperialist views of the strike's leadership led them to believe that foreign competition had destroyed China's economy, impoverished its peasantry, and exploited its workers. In chapter 2, I rebutted these views by demonstrating the positive effects of foreign trade, which gave commercial opportunities to Guangdong's peasants and merchants. Small ports and subregional economies throughout the Zhujiang Delta prospered because of their links to Hongkong. Foreign trade spurred the creation of new products and allowed Chinese to sell existing products more easily on foreign markets. Hongkong held an important position in Guangdong's foreign trade because its busy port enabled many Chinese merchants, handicraft workers, and peasants to trade, manufacture, and grow goods for a larger market. Kinship ties between Hongkong merchants and Guangdong's subregions meant that merchants redistributed around the Zhujiang Delta much of the wealth that they earned.

Did Hongkong workers experience the colony as alien and oppressive? In chapter 3, I showed that Hongkong's Chinese population grew steadily from 1840 to 1930, became increasingly settled, and governed itself with little interference from the Hongkong Government. I showed, too, that the institutions that Hongkong's Chinese elite built were similar to existing forms of government in Guangdong. The Man Mo Temple and the Tung Wah Hospital were Chinese elite-run institutions that represented Hongkong's Chinese to the Hongkong Government and arbitrated between the many conflicting political groups among the colony's Chinese population, such as unions, merchant guilds, and township associations. So because the Chinese-run institutions that governed the colony's Chinese population were similar to institutions in China and because the Hongkong Government exercised little direct control over the colony's Chinese population, it is likely that Hongkong society, as Chinese workers experienced it in the 1920s, was similar to other Chinese communities at that time anywhere in the world.

It is wrong, too, simply to label Hongkong society "oppressive," for in many respects its laws were freer than those in China. Hongkong's press, labour laws, and trade were freer than in Guangdong. Hongkong newspapers operated more freely than those in China. Strikes in the colony met no oppression of the sort that strikes in China faced. Merchants enjoyed free access to international trade. In chapter 3, I described the degree of autonomy of the Chinese population in Hongkong in relation to the colonial authorities and showed how the Hongkong Government remained distant from the non-elite Chinese population and normally interfered little in everyday local affairs. The growth in the political power of subregional associations in Hongkong mirrored the relative shift of political power to Guangdong's subregions. Under colonialism and the influences of foreign trade, political power in Hongkong and Guangdong society devolved on to local leaders. Such local leaders,

who controlled small-scale groups, such as unions, organised through kinship ties and a strong sense of brotherhood, were not simply authoritarian bosses unaccountable to their members in the way that Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) describes them. In chapter 4, I presented evidence that showed how Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population exerted some limited democratic control over such groups' leaderships. Workers typically elected their own leaders and exercised close scrutiny over the union's administration. The ethos of harmony within unions meant that in mixed-class organisations a large number of workers could usually prevail over a small number of masters.

Some writers have suggested that, although the Hongkong Government was not as oppressive as some writers claim, it lacked legitimacy in the eyes of workers because it failed to perform the duties of a "modern" state (Chan Ming-kou 1990). However, this view, too, fails under close examination, for Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population appears to have preserved the autonomy of workers' groups. In chapter 4, I described the function of Hongkong unions and showed how the life of Hongkong workers revolved around the union organisation. Grassroots organisations, for example, kinship groups, subregional associations, and workers' organisations, met the non-elite population's welfare needs. Hongkong's Chinese population successfully opposed numerous attempts by the Hongkong Government to expand its control even slightly over the Chinese population.

I have argued in this study that it is excessively simplistic and over-abstract to argue that colonial oppression and imperialist oppression were in themselves primary causes of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike: indeed, such a theory, though often found in some sociological writing, makes the mistake of saying that social systems rather than revolutionaries make revolutions.⁷² To understand the causes of the strike, one must first understand the structural changes in Hongkong society that facilitated the mobilisation of mass support for the strike. Foreign trade promoted the growth in number and political power of small-scale subregional groups, including unions in Guangdong and Hongkong. Consequently, the relative power of elite-run community institutions like the Man Mo Temple and the Tung Wah Hospital declined. Subregional groups responded to patriotic calls as an opportunity to enhance their own prestige and further their own interests. By the 1920s, patriotic political forces based in China had usurped the political leadership of Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population by forging links to the leaders of Hongkong's township associations and unions.

The changes in the structure of Hongkong society explain the increased opportunity for revolutionaries to lead a mass movement of Hongkong's non-elite

⁷² See Coulson and Riddell (1977 [1970]: 16-17).

Chinese population. The will to instigate such a movement came not from some "collective will of the oppressed masses" but from a well-organised political movement spearheaded by GMD and CCP cadres. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions planned to hold a strike in support of the May Thirtieth Movement. CCP labour organiser Deng Zhongxia was prominent in organising the strike, as, too, were Seamen's Union leader Su Zhaozheng and CCP activists in Hongkong; but other Hongkong union leaders also played an important role.

Hongkong union leaders were not as reluctant to strike as Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) claims. They agreed to strike after only two meetings with CCP activists; their initial indecision about whether or not to strike stemmed mainly from their concern about whether or not the revolutionaries could provide sufficient food and lodgings for strikers in Guangzhou. Union leaders were not swept along by a wave of mass patriotic fervour in the wake of the Shaji Massacre - most unions had already agreed to strike before June 23, 1925. Workers never vociferously demanded strike action. For example, Hongkong workers had joined no spontaneous patriotic movements of any note in support of the May Thirtieth Incident. Workers in the only large union to hold a vote on the question of whether or not to strike, the Mechanics' Union, refused to join the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. Evidence presented in this study suggests that the strike was an organised political movement, led by the CCP and Hongkong union leaders.

The strike: Hongkong politics by other means

After rejecting the suggestion that the strike was in some way an upsurge of mass protest against general colonial and imperial oppression, I now go on to consider whether it was in every respect an innovative, unprecedented movement or simply an opportunity for long-established workers' organisations to fight for their own interests, in other words, a continuation of "Hongkong politics by other means." In my theoretical approach's discussion of relevant issues, I rejected the idea that revolution always and only embodies modernising impulses and described instead how the intentions of groups participating in revolutions may be conservative. What were the interests of revolutionaries and unions in calling the strike? In chapter 5, I argued that revolutionary leaders wanted to seize control of the Chinese state and implement a programme of radical reforms, whereas union leaders supported the strike to promote their own authority and enhance the prestige of their organisation. However, although revolutionaries and union leaders may have had slightly different motives for striking, their objectives were generally compatible. Unions, too, wanted to win many of the political rights for which the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike stood.

However, they wanted to do so without forfeiting their individual power and prestige.

Generally, patriotic elites led political protest in Hongkong. These protests had specific goals; elites used patriotism as a way of intimidating people into supporting their movements. Merchants and Chinese politicians led several patriotic boycotts before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike; the largest were in 1884, 1905-1906, and 1908. Each of these movements used patriotic calls backed by violence and intimidation to generate widespread support. Chinese revolutionaries used triad connections to intimidate Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population into supporting boycotts and strikes and used patriotic calls to demand the loyalty of Hongkong's entire Chinese population. However, workers responded to patriotic calls not as a unified, single mass but through the leadership of their particular workers' organisations, which typically sought their own sectional advantage. In chapter 5, I described how subregional associations and workers' organisations played important roles in patriotic movements such as the 1905 anti-American boycott and the 1908 anti-Japanese boycott. In 1905, Xining and Dongguan subregional associations, which transported many members to America, were seeking to liberalise American immigration laws. In 1908, workers in Hongkong's fishing industry sought to take advantage of a boycott of Japanese sea products. Patriotic movements in Hongkong were typically authoritarian movements which some of Hongkong's small-scale unions and subregional associations joined to further their own interests.

Some writers argue that changes in Hongkong society created new political forces and caused innovative mass movements such as the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike. For example, Tsai claims that the 1911 Chinese Revolution created a "new awareness" of Chinese politics (Tsai 1993: 296, 95). Other writers, for example, Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]), identify an increase in strikes during the 1920s and suggest that the Hongkong proletariat was becoming increasingly revolutionary. W. K. Chan argues that Hongkong strikes like the 1920 mechanics' strike and the 1922 seamen's strike boosted labour consciousness among Hongkong workers (Chan, W. K. 1991: 161-191). However, as I showed in chapter 4, the growth in trade unions that W. K. Chan identifies as a symptom of a new labour consciousness (Chan, W. K. 1991: 164) was in reality due to existing large unions splitting into structurally identical smaller ones. Although Hongkong unions remained unaltered in structure and continued to perform their usual religious duties, they organised on an increasingly localised scale. In chapter 5, I argued that revolutionary ideas such as anarchism, nationalism, and Communism also left Hongkong non-elite politics and the structure of workers' groups generally unchanged. Revolutionaries framed their ideology in terms of patriotism; Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population genuinely

could not distinguish between the GMD and the CCP, despite some CCP attempts to establish a distinct image for itself, although these attempts were half-hearted.

CCP revolutionaries used the same forms of mobilisation and forged the same contacts in Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population that past movements had forged. They used triads and contacts with local workers' leaders to call the strike just as leaders of past mass movements in Hongkong had done, even though revolutionaries normally considered such triads and leaders to be "reactionary" and "conservative." The start of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike bore many similarities to previous mass movements in Hongkong led by politicians in Guangdong.

During the strike, the revolutionary leadership compromised their radical revolutionary visions; to ensure support for its policies, the Strike Committee was willing to ally with various groups that it considered before the boycott to be "conservative" or even "anti-revolutionary." For example, the Picket Corps allied with bandits who were willing to support the boycott of Hongkong trade. The strike bureaucracy absorbed all manner of local leaders who were willing to remain loyal; it did not always revolutionise the structure of local society. The strength of some leaders, particularly some Hongkong union leaders, forced the strike's revolutionary leadership to accept them into important positions in the strike bureaucracy.

In other ways, too, the strike mirrored past Hongkong mass movements. Patriotism, or, more accurately, revolutionaries' definition of patriotism as anti-imperialism, was, as in the past, the glue that they used to try to hold the movement together. The CCP built a large bureaucracy to increase its power and led the movement by secretly making decisions in a small group at the head of this bureaucracy. Revolutionaries tried by authoritarian means to maintain the unity of their movement and to bolster "patriotic" support. The democratic control that the Strikers' Congress professed to offer was illusory and the strike's leadership built a pervasive bureaucracy to enhance its central control. From the start, the strike was an authoritarian movement. The CCP and Borodin controlled the strike bureaucracy, decided policies in secret, and manipulated the Strikers' Congress, even though they maintained that workers controlled the leadership and its bureaucracy.

One strike demand, for freedom of association and assembly in Hongkong, was not implemented in the internal structures of the strike itself, which excluded unions organised not according to CCP regulations. Other strike demands, for a free press, freedom of publication, and freedom of speech, contrasted with the CCP's strict control over *Gongren zhi lu*, its education and propaganda activities to imbue workers with the "modern" values of the revolutionary bureaucracy, and its use of strikes to weaken opposition newspapers. Revolutionaries controlled propaganda, education, and news during the strike so that they served the interests of the strike bureaucracy and educated a pool of bureaucrats.

For the CCP, the strike was an opportunity to launch a political program of anti-imperialism. CCP cadres planned the strike and formulated the strike demands in Guangzhou. Union leaders called the strike in order to further their own political ambitions and enhance the power and prestige of their individual unions. Workers responded to the strike call out of a mixture of obedience to union leadership and fear of reprisals by CCP-influenced triads. Hongkong unions responded to patriotic calls by mainland politicians as an opportunity to increase their prestige and defend their own interests; the revolutionary leadership never successfully communicated its ideals to Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population. The revolutionaries' only strong link with many Hongkong workers was through existing union leaders. GMD and CCP activists won over local workers' leaders to their side by offering them the chance to enter a new, incipient state bureaucracy, from where union leaders could fight for their own sectional interests. The difficulties that the CCP had in implementing its policies of modernisation are further evidence that the strike was a continuation of "politics by other means." The CCP's attempts to "modernise" Hongkong workers' organisations and politics met with resistance from existing unions and their members. I now consider this evidence and other evidence of clashes between the strike's leadership and local political groups.

Conflict between revolutionaries and strikers

By examining the process of the strike, I showed how the need to defend the strike bureaucracy and to maintain the purity of the revolutionaries' beliefs created an authoritarian, centralising movement that appeared to run counter to many of the movement's liberal demands. In chapters 7, 8, and 9, I described the process of the strike, including how the revolutionary elite built a strong bureaucracy to enforce its vision of the national interest and how it tried and failed to transform existing forms of non-elite organisation in Hongkong. Many accounts of the strike present it as a strong, unified movement for national independence. Feng Jianzhong adds that the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike encouraged individual sacrifice for the national good and built a "lively" proletarian government widely supported by the GMD, many social classes throughout China, Overseas Chinese, and the international proletariat (Feng Jianzhong 1991: 328-329). Yet I have shown that the strike, far from being "lively," was bureaucratic and authoritarian; the economic and political interests of people in Guangdong and Hongkong soon came into conflict with the strike leadership. Revolutionaries' attempts at "modernisation" also caused conflict between the strike's leadership on the one hand and strikers, merchants and peasants on the other. Even Western studies that analyse splits in the strike movement, for example,

Isaacs (1961 [1938]) and Chesneaux (1968), see such splits as a product of divisions between Guangdong's competing political parties and overlook conflicts between the strike leadership and Hongkong unions.

The CCP's radical political platform dictated the political demands of the strike. Hongkong workers supported the strike initially, but opposed the strike leadership's centralising tendencies and its attempt to transform union structures. Before the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population fought hard to prevent interference in its affairs by the colonial authorities and to defend its independence and autonomy in the face of attempts by the Hongkong Government to expand its control. During the strike, Hongkong unions fought to stop the CCP from expanding its influence over their membership. Hongkong unions fought to retain their pre-strike leadership and maintain their particular forms of organisation and political life. In so doing, they forced the CCP to compromise its vision of a "modern" society. In chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, I described how Hongkong unions tried to maintain their independence throughout the strike.

In chapter 7, I showed how Hongkong unions clashed with the strike's revolutionary leadership over the composition of the Strike Committee because these Hongkong union leaders wanted to control the strike. The revolutionaries won that battle, but had to allow many Hongkong union leaders to hold important posts within the strike bureaucracy. Hongkong union leaders then quarrelled with the CCP over the composition of the Strikers' Congress. Leaders of Hongkong's many small unions feared losing their autonomy to a centralised authority dominated by a few large unions. Some union leaders, notably Liang Ziguang of the Tailors' Union, even plotted to seize the leadership of the strike from the CCP.

The strike leadership reached an uneasy compromise with Hongkong union leaders. Hongkong union leaders used their positions within the strike bureaucracy to further their own political careers and to protect the independence of their unions. In chapter 7, I described how, in offices controlled by the strike bureaucracy's secretariat, union leaders used their official posts to obstruct the secretariat's policies. In chapter 8, I showed that, during the strike's education movement, unions preferred to maintain their independent workers' schools that existed before the strike rather than allow the strike's education bureaucracy to take full control over workers' education. During the CCP's attempts to unify all Hongkong trade unions, many Hongkong workers' leaders resisted revolutionaries' attempts to "modernise" the structure of their unions because the CCP's plans would have resulted in individual unions losing autonomy and prestige.

The social organisation that these Hongkong unions defended was not the "modern" vision of state and society that the CCP promoted; the Hongkong workers' organisations that pro-CCP writers like Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) call despotic

attempted to preserve their pre-strike organisation, which organisation, as I showed in chapter 4, contained some elements of accountability of leaders to their members. The CCP's attempt to unify Hongkong's unions failed to create a "modern" working-class movement in Hongkong because even small unions retained their individual organisation and pre-strike leadership. Yet why judge the movement as a failure by the CCP rather than a victory for Hongkong unions to preserve their individuality? Guldin criticises researchers who assume that Hongkong society in the early twentieth century was inevitably moving in the direction of "one standard of culture" from "another one standard of culture," i.e., "from a 'traditional Chinese' culture to a 'modern Western' one" (Guldin 1977: 228). Some writers judge as "backward" any opposition to such "modern" values and forms of organisation as labour consciousness, industrial unions, and the welfare state. The political programme of the CCP during the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was an attempt to transform Hongkong workers' ideals and organisation in "modern" ways. CCP revolutionaries labelled as "scabs," "blacklegs," "national traitors," and "running-dogs of the imperialists" those workers and unionists who objected.

The apparent failure of the non-elite Chinese population of Hongkong to stand up and fight for "modern values" indicates neither backwardness nor indifference to politics. During the strike, the CCP established over the heads of the existing workers' organisations a new superstructure of committees comprising union leaders that had links to revolutionary powers in China and served as a way for Hongkong unions to express their power and their autonomy. Today, many Hongkong unions fly either a Taiwan Chinese or a mainland Chinese flag outside their headquarters to display their political connections and to derive prestige from their individual history and identity.

I have demonstrated that, during the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, local political organisations like unions, though patriotic, retained their independence and autonomy from the central political leadership of GMD and CCP revolutionaries and tried to use the strike's central bureaucracy to further their own ends. Throughout Hongkong history before the strike, Chinese political organisations, including revolutionary parties and Guangdong governments, led and organised Hongkong's great social movements, but such leadership does not prove that Hongkong's Chinese were fiercely patriotic or fiercely anti-colonialist. As I argued in chapters 2 and 3, foreign trade may have diminished the political power of China's central state relative to local political groups, but it did not cause Chinese society to collapse. Trade increased the power of subregional groups in relation to the Guangdong Government and made it harder for the Guangdong Government to constrain subregional powers' interests that were incompatible with its new ideology. The strike called for national unity and created a new definition of the nation state; it was in that respect a

centralising movement. Although subregional institutions in Hongkong and Guangdong sought to enhance the prestige of their organisations by maintaining political links to Chinese revolutionaries who held political and military control over Guangdong, they were unwilling to support some of the revolutionaries' radical reform plans. Support from mainland Chinese politicians simply created the opportunity for local political groups among Hongkong's Chinese population to pursue their own sectional interests. Attempts by revolutionaries in mainland China to steer the policies of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike in a centralising direction met with firm opposition from many Hongkong unions.

The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike was an organised movement led by a revolutionary elite; it obviously needed to retain its mass support. However, months of growing opposition to the boycott of Hongkong from merchants, peasants, and workers gradually eroded such support. The strike was a financial drain on the Guangdong Government and the boycott led to increasing conflict between CCP revolutionaries on the one hand and some unions, workers, peasants, merchants, and GMD revolutionaries on the other. Increasingly serious clashes occurred between the Picket Corps and people who suffered from the boycott of Hongkong trade. The strike bureaucracy relied on its armed Picket Corps to survive; it did survive despite increasing opposition throughout the Zhujiang Delta and the steady return of strikers to Hongkong. However, the strike bureaucracy became a shell with little mass support. In addition to unions, other groups became more and more antagonistic towards the strike. Merchants in Guangzhou demanded that the Strike Committee rescind or revise its boycott of all foreign trade. Merchants in Guangdong's subregions remained opposed to the boycott of Hongkong trade throughout the strike. While the strike continued, peasants opposed the Strike Committee's boycott of Hongkong trade because it denied them access to markets in Hongkong and Southeast Asia. Workers' support for the strike appears to have dwindled, too: far fewer strikers remained in Guangzhou after three months of the strike than arrived when the strike began. In February 1926, the Hongkong Government claimed that most strikers had returned to work. While Hongkong unions continued to resist many of the revolutionaries' policies, the strike's mass support gradually ebbed away. The GMD, too, became ever more antagonistic towards the strike, because it feared that the strike was beginning to threaten national unity. When Chiang Kai-shek opposed the Strike Committee because its boycott of Hongkong trade harmed relations with Britain and thereby endangered the Northern Expedition, the Strike Committee and the strike movement were too weak to resist.

The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike and Hongkong history

Past studies of the strike and the history of Hongkong have produced a variety of views on the historical significance of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike for Hongkong today. Chinese accounts tend to stress the movement's patriotic nature and portray such patriotism as a unifying force shared by all of Hongkong's Chinese workers in their opposition to colonial authorities. Such views treat Hongkong merely as a product of conflict between China and Britain. However, Hongkong developed into a distinct society in its own right, albeit one divided into several plebeian communities with their own local leaders. In this study, I have presented the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike in terms of changes and developments in Hongkong society and have treated Hongkong's non-elite Chinese population in a more complex way than simply as a patriotic mass labouring in harsh conditions under alien rule.

Whereas many Chinese accounts of the strike, Cai Luo (1980) and Cai Changrui (1985) to name but two, emphasise China's role in the strike and stress its patriotic, anti-imperialist nature, I have shown that Hongkong unions used patriotism to further their own prestige and influence. Their patriotism differed from that of the strike leadership because unions resisted the growth of a powerful central authority.

Some writers have suggested that Hongkong's Chinese were uninterested in politics (Lethbridge 1978: 2). Jenner asks why Hongkong's Chinese population "did not even try" to get a measure of self-government under colonial rule until its "fate had been sealed" (Jenner 1992: 190-191). Views expressed in some recent writings centre on the significance of the strike for the development of representative government in Hongkong before the transfer of sovereignty to China in 1997. One view holds up the strike as an example of a liberating, democratic movement. *Xinhua xiangchuan* (*Keep the Fires Burning*)⁷³ emphasises the political demands of the Hongkong workers and the "progressive" attitudes of Hongkong workers and mainland revolutionaries. It argues that the strike represented a qualitative change from mere demands for better wages to support for a radical political platform of "national independence, equality, and liberty and opposition to foreign invasion" (*Xinhua xiangchuan*, June 4, 1992). Of the strikers' demands for representative government and free elections in Hongkong, this commemorative publication says: "They should make today's 'democratic faction' that speaks of 'democracy' blush with shame" (*Xinhua xiangchuan*, June 4, 1992).

In this study, I have argued that the strike was an authoritarian attempt by revolutionaries to build a powerful, pervasive bureaucracy in order to transform Hongkong non-elite society along the lines of their revolutionary vision of "modern" society rather than a democratic, libertarian movement. In Hongkong, the non-elite

⁷³ *Xinhua xiangchuan* was published on the third anniversary of the Chinese Government's massacre of students and workers who occupied Beijing's Tian'anmen Square and demanded democratic reform in China.

Chinese population's ideas of democracy, representative leadership, and politics did not generally transcend the confines of individual unions and workers' organisations. Hongkong workers were interested in politics, but the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike represented the antithesis of democracy: it centralised political power in the hands of an elite that wanted to use its political authority to forcibly transform workers' organisations and beliefs.

The strike leadership was reluctant to devolve political power on to Hongkong unions because these unions generally represented forms of social organisation that CCP revolutionaries like Deng Zhongxia (1983 [1930]) considered "backward" and "conservative." This elitist patriotism on the part of Chinese revolutionaries conflicted with the spirit of many of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike's professed libertarian aims, particularly the call for freedom of assembly and association. The strike failed partly because its leadership tried to impose its policies, made calls for sacrifices for the national good, and for a long time neglected the interests of workers, peasants, and merchants, which were damaged by the strike and boycott.

As a result of the strike, some union leaders who were powerful, popular people in the eyes of many Hongkong workers before it began and who later held positions in the strike bureaucracy, for example, Huang Jinyuan, became separated from the workers they had led. The strike ended without having taken any great step toward political freedoms in Hongkong or China in the form of representative government and the right to strike, associate, and speak freely. As I described in chapter 10, Hongkong unions returned to the colony to pursue their long-established activities. For at least a decade after 1927, Hongkong unions held no major strikes in Hongkong. The Guangzhou-Hongkong strike had impoverished unions and demoralised workers to such an extent that they were no longer capable of calling them.

Bibliography

In researching my thesis, I made extensive use of archives in the Guangdong General Trade Union, which previously only mainland Chinese scholars had been allowed to use. I was able to use the archives thanks to letters of introduction that I received from the Hongkong Federation of Trade Unions, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in Beijing, and the Guangdong Bureau of Higher Education. Although some of the information in these archives has been used in mainland Chinese accounts of the strike, such accounts omitted much interesting detail that they probably considered to be politically sensitive. Much of this archive material is hand-written; the rest is printed from ink blocks. The archives consist of memoirs, accounts of various events during the strike, and analysis of the strike by some of the CCP cadres who participated in it. The memoirs (SGDBGHYL below) are arranged in two volumes, the second of which has two parts. The accounts and analyses of the strike's main events (SGDBGLSZL and SGDBGLSZLHBCG below) are simply numbered. In the bibliography, I give the volume, archive number, and number of pages where appropriate.

Notes on sources from the Guangdong General Trade Union

The Guangdong General Trade Union Office for the Study of the Workers' Movement holds many memoirs and accounts of the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike written or dictated by workers and CCP activists. They are contained in the following collections, for which I have used abbreviations in the bibliography:

SGDBGLSZL: "Shenggang dabagong lishi ziliao" (Historical Materials on the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike). Compiled and edited by the Guangdong General Trade Union Office for the Study of the Workers' Movement.

SGDBGLSZLHBCG: "Shenggang dabagong lishi ziliao huibian chugao" (Historical Materials on the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike - First Draft). Compiled by the Guangdong General Trade Union Office for the Study of the Workers' Movement.

SGDBGHYL: "Shenggang dabagong huiyilu" (Memoirs on the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike). Compiled by the Guangdong General Trade Union Office for the Study of the Workers' Movement.

SGDBGRWZL: "Shenggang dabagong renwu ziliao" (Materials on Personalities in the Guangzhou-Hongkong Strike). Compiled by the Guangdong General Trade Union Office for the Study of the Workers' Movement.

I have listed these memoirs and historical accounts according to the author's name. When the author was anonymous, I have used Guangdong Sheng Zong Gonghui (Guangdong General Trade Union) instead. According to the Office for the Study of the Workers' Movement, Luo Zhu, a CCP activist during the Guangzhou-Hongkong strike, collated most of these unattributed accounts.

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