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UNDERGROUND

*The Shanghai Communist Party
and the Politics of Survival, 1927–1937*

Patricia Stranahan

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To Ed, with love

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Patricia Stranahan

*The underground was like a bamboo shoot—
cut it, and it grows again quickly.*

Wang Yaoshan

Introduction

Shanghai—that polyglot city of rich and poor, West and East, modernity and traditionalism—was the primary breeding ground of the young Communist Revolution. There in 1920, Chen Duxiu formed one of the first cells in China and began to organize unions among the city’s workers. There in July 1921, leading Communists met first at a girls’ school on Rue Bourgeat in the French Concession and then at the apartment of Li Hanjun to formally establish the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). There in the summer of 1925, the CCP played a leading role in the May 30th Movement, an anti-imperialist explosion that shook the city after a British inspector ordered shots to be fired into a group of unarmed Chinese protesters. There in March 1927, the Party-led Shanghai General Labor Union launched a successful general strike and armed insurrection, which resulted in the formation of a Party- and union-led city government. There a month later, on 12 April, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, Guomindang military leader and supposed ally in the fight to rid China of divisive warlord factions, brutally attacked the insurrectionists and devastated the city’s Party organization. Eventually in 1933, unable to regain its footing in the city, the CCP’s Central Committee abandoned its headquarters and the city that had been the central focus of its revolution to join Mao Zedong in his Jiangxi Province stronghold. From that point on, China’s Communist Revolution was rural-based.

Also from that point, the history of the revolution in Shanghai, China’s largest and most cosmopolitan city, has been largely lost in the profusion of Chinese and western scholarship on the rural revolution.*

*This is not to say that scholarship on the urban revolution is nonexistent. There are a number of studies available on various aspects of the urban revolution. See, for example Kenneth Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tianjin, 1949–1952* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980); Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Joseph Yick, *Making Urban Revolution in China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

What took place in Shanghai has been relegated to a supporting role, a bit player in Mao Zedong's brilliant conquest of China's countryside. In this Mao-centric interpretation of the revolution, only what he dominated mattered. Nevertheless, although events in China's rural areas were critical to the ultimate success of the Communist Party, the revolutions in China's urban areas must not be discounted. In this regard, it is important to take the idea advanced in Kathleen Hartford's and Steven Goldstein's excellent introduction to *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions*—that the Communist Revolution was made up of not one, but many, rural revolutions—a step further to argue that the Communist Revolution was made up of not one, but many, revolutions both rural and urban.¹

This study joins that trend by presenting a history of the Shanghai Communist Party—a Party organization that was not in China's hinterlands or influenced by Mao Zedong, and that made headway only when it transformed itself from a political group concentrating on a single issue and a single class to one centered on a broader range of issues and several classes.* I have chosen to look specifically at the Nanjing Decade (1927–1937) because I believe it was a pivotal period in the history of the Party when the CCP was in the process of defining itself organizationally and ideologically. It was the period when power lay in several hands, not just those of Mao Zedong and his supporters. It was also the period during which the CCP made the transition from a multi-interest organization catering to a broad-based national revolution to one focused on China's countryside. This is not to downplay other periods of Party history but rather to emphasize the important transitional nature of this period.

Studying Revolution in the Post-Mao Era

Since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, scholarship on China has moved into a new era, one no longer defined by the late Party chairman. Characterized by the release of documents, opening of archives, and broadening of scholarship, the post-Mao intellectual liberalization has allowed Chinese and foreign scholars to address many once-forbidden topics. The freer access to archival materials in Shanghai and Nanjing to historians of Shanghai and the CCP, and to former members of the Party underground, has provided an excellent opportunity to explore

*I call the CCP organization in Shanghai the “Shanghai Communist Party” because, even though until 1933 the story of the local Party organization is largely integrated into the story of the CCP, there was always a separate city Party organization. After the Central Committee left the city, the local organization operated as an independent organization.

what happened to the Party organization in Shanghai after the devastating coup of 12 April, 1927.

During Mao's lifetime, history was defined as "the never-ending combination of the general truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese Revolution as represented by Mao Zedong."² Consequently, a study such as this one was impossible because scholarship on aspects of the revolution he did not control were, for the most part, banned. A case in point was the proposed study of the CCP's New Fourth Army, an important military force in the war against Japan in the provinces surrounding Shanghai but one not directly controlled by Maoists. According to the story related to me by historians in Shanghai, shortly before Mao's death, a group of scholars proposed a history of the New Fourth Army and raised the funds necessary to carry it out. Despite the availability of sources, funds, and scholars, the undertaking was shelved because Party leaders in Beijing refused to grant permission for it. Times have changed, however. Since 1976, there have been studies of the New Fourth Army as well as other forces in Shanghai's revolutionary past as scholars work to open long-closed doors. Taking their lead from the Central Committee's 1981 "Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the History of the Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," historians have begun to undertake studies that examine segments of the revolution not related to Mao Zedong.

Nevertheless, the very fact that the Central Committee passed such a resolution shows that it still considers itself to be the only authoritative interpreter of Party history.^{*3} One way it exercises its authority is through its power to release Party documents to scholars. This kind of control means that many studies continue to be executed in what Elizabeth Perry terms the "orthodox" mold. By that she means they analyze events only in terms of the "more important" rural revolutions or only within the context of the CCP's Central Committee.† Any history outside of that mold continues to lack legitimacy in the eyes of many scholars and Party officials.

For example, it is widely accepted among historians of the CCP that when the Party organization in Shanghai was cut off from the Central Committee in the early 1930s, it disappeared. Such was not the case,

^{*}For a detailed analysis of Party historiography see Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "Party Historiography" in *Using the Past to Serve the Present*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 151–73.

†Elizabeth J. Perry discusses these and other aspects of post-Mao scholarship in her thought-provoking introduction to "Shanghai Social Movements, 1919–1949," edited by Elizabeth J. Perry and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, in *Chinese Studies in History* (Fall–Winter, 1993–1994).

however. Throughout that period, a fragmented but functioning Party organization did exist that implemented a course of action based in part on what was known of Comintern and Central Committee policy, learned third-hand from travelers, or read in foreign publications—and, in part, from local conditions. Despite the lack of direct communication, members of the local unit never saw themselves as anything but loyal members of the Communist Party following what they understood to be the correct Party line. It was indeed advantageous for both the local and national organizations that when the Shanghai Party regained contact with the Central Committee in the mid-1930s what had evolved in the ad hoc political reality of Shanghai fit in well with the Central Committee's emerging united front strategy. In fact, the Party's success in Shanghai during the late 1930s was due, in large part, to the merger of local and national strategies.

Even though they are important, little, if any, of the history of these "lost years" has been reported in standard histories of the CCP. Fortunately, the orthodox approach is increasingly giving way to a more liberal one as scholars examine the revolution in a broader framework than rural revolution, Maoism, class struggle, and the military quest for political power. While several of the conclusions reached in this study (such as the destructive nature of "leftist errors") fit into the orthodox mode, many of the other findings use the liberal approach to assess the Shanghai Party as part of a broader political experience.

The need to survive created a pragmatic quality to CCP policy development, and meant that long-term revolutionary goals frequently took a back seat to practicality. Nowhere is there a better illustration of adapting to reality than in the case of the Shanghai Communist Party. This is not a story of famous names (although legendary figures do pass through) nor is it one of heroic exploits (although some do exist). This is not the stuff of Le Carre or Ludlum. It is, rather, a story of survival—the tale of a political organization that found itself cut off from its ideological leadership in an extremely hostile world. Instead of abandoning the struggle and joining comrades in the countryside, the Party members who remained in Shanghai joined with men and women who shared common goals. Then, through collective action with discontented elements, the local organization created a place for itself in the evolving power structure of the city.

The fact that the city's Party organization made the revolution in Shanghai uniquely its own just as Mao put his stamp on the rural revolution, once again, underlines the inherent differences in the Communist revolutions. It also brings up the important issue of historical legacy. As this study will show, Shanghai cadres achieved their revolutionary seasoning in a much different manner than their rural counter-

parts. Urban cadres were political commissars, deputies of a remote leadership charged with unifying disparate forces and endowed with the authority to formulate operations and determine the rules for action.⁴ These different parameters for urban and rural cadres created serious long-term implications for Shanghai cadres. Many found themselves targeted in serious inner-Party rifts several decades later.

To a certain extent, the story of the Shanghai Communist Party could be the story of any political organization defining its place in the tumultuous world of Shanghai. During the Nanjing Decade, Shanghai citizens faced increased Japanese dominance in the city and throughout the country, and expressed an ever-growing distrust of the Nationalist regime, which had alienated many with its economic policies and its failure to stand up to the Japanese. Shanghai experienced what Lucian Pye calls an “identity crisis,” which occurred because people thought “that they [were] confronted not with merely another classical conflict with foreigners but with a significant turn in history that [called] for a re-evaluation of existing values and practices.”⁵ For the citizens of Shanghai, the events of the Nanjing Decade played a major role in dissolving the fragile balance of coexistence between Chinese and foreigners that had defined the city’s social, economic, and political life to that point. The key force in that dissolution was the National Salvation Movement, which produced in Shanghai citizens of all classes a rare sense of unity and a patriotism. In defining its own position during these chaotic times, the city’s Party organization recognized that change and prudently chose a revolutionary role not delineated by Marxism but by patriotism and moderation.

As a story of a communist party, what happened in Shanghai shows that, at least in one major city, a Party organization worked quite successfully when it adapted to its environment and adjusted long-term revolutionary goals to immediate local goals. During the Nanjing Decade when the Shanghai Communist Party lacked the strength to pursue political power, it was in its interest to ingratiate itself with potential supporters in preparation for the day when it did achieve that strength. In adapting to the environment and emphasizing local initiative, the city’s Party organization contributed not only to the anti-imperialist movement of the first years of the 1930s but also, more importantly, to the National Salvation Movement of the mid-1930s. It was the alliances that resulted from participation in these movements that created the basis of support upon which the Shanghai Communist Party built the revolution of the 1940s.*

*This adaptation to the local environment was not unique to Shanghai. In discussing the CCP in general and the rural revolution specifically, Tony Saich points out that the CCP was successful when it put down “local roots” and showed “flexibility in adapting

Shanghai and the CCP

China's urban revolutions followed different paths and different dynamics based upon the local conditions in any given city, and, while certain conclusions can be applied to the revolutionary experience in general, others apply only to the city in question. I chose to trace the course of the revolution in Shanghai for several reasons. In the rapidly changing world of China today, Shanghai is asserting itself economically as it becomes a major center of industry and commerce, and politically as its natives are reaching the top ranks of the national power structure. Therefore, it is all the more important to recognize the role of the Shanghai Party and its members in the revolution that resulted in the formation of the People's Republic.

Furthermore, as China's largest and most industrialized city, located at the mouth of the mighty Yangzi River, Shanghai played a critical strategic and economic role in the events of the period. More than any other Chinese city, it experienced the impact of Guomindang (i.e., the Nationalist Party) rule, imperialist exploitation, and Japanese incursion. Moreover, with its French Concession and International Settlement operated by and for the benefit of foreigners, Shanghai was in the front lines of Sino-western cultural contact. At times, the protection provided by these enclaves gave Party members a safe haven and, therefore, made Shanghai an attractive location for their activities. At other times, the same enclaves imposed a terror on the activists as brutal as anything inflicted by the Guomindang. Despite the changing political winds, however, the foreign concessions always provided Party members with a link to the outside world and the people and ideas that inhabited it.

Until 1927, Shanghai was the focal point of the Communist Revolution.* The Marxist Chen Duxiu traveled to Shanghai in early 1920 to try his hand at labor organizing. By year's end, he had succeeded in organizing two labor unions under Communist sponsorship and a Communist cell. A year after the formation of that cell, in July 1921, representatives of various Communist groups from all over China met at a girls' school in the French Concession to proclaim the formation of the Chinese Communist Party and to elect Chen Duxiu as general-secre-

policy to local circumstances." In contrast, it was unsuccessful when it attempted to "transform local environments to conform with predetermined ideological predispositions." See Tony Saich, *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), xlvii.

*Except where noted, the outline for the discussion on the CCP in Shanghai is taken from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao* [Materials on the organizational history of the CCP in Shanghai], (Shanghai: Renmin Chubanshe, 1991), 1-5, and Hans J. Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chapt. 2-4.

tary. At that First Congress, the delegates resolved: "The basic mission of this party is to establish trade unions" and, in September, the Labor Secretariat was established to lead organizing efforts among workers. The Party already had contacts among well-established artisan guilds, so its real challenge was to make contact with the general working masses particularly in the important Shanghai textile and tobacco industries.⁶

Even though the Central Committee established its headquarters in the French Concession out of the reach of Chinese authorities, it did not operate with impunity. Concession authorities had no intention of allowing "this sprout to grow large" and tried to suppress all Communist activity. In June of 1922, French Concession police closed down the New Youth bookstore, the dissemination point for Communist publications. Three months later, International Settlement authorities banned the publication and distribution of *Guide Weekly*, a Central Committee publication that called for the overthrow of imperialism and the warlords. Concession authorities also closed the Shanghai headquarters of the Labor Secretariat, which, on the surface, appeared to be just another trade union, but which had roused the ire of officials when it supported a strike of Hong Kong seamen. The secretariat was moved to Beijing. Nevertheless, the CCP persisted, and by 1923 it was operating an active underground in Shanghai.

While the CCP was attempting to expand its operations in the city, it was also defining its organization. At the Party's Second Congress held in a house on Chengdu Road in July 1922, the dozen or so delegates (representing 123 Party members) elected a Central Committee, adopted a more Leninist organizational structure, and decided to join the Comintern's Third International by accepting its demand for complete submission. The congress also discussed entering into some kind of cooperative effort with Sun Yat-sen's Guomindang in which it would maintain its identity as a separate party. But the Communist International (Comintern) had other ideas and immediately after the Second Congress began to push the young CCP to enter into an alliance with the Guomindang not as a separate entity but, on Sun's terms, as a "bloc within." A faction within the CCP bridled at the Comintern's demand but, in good Leninist fashion, acquiesced to its demands. The alliance went into effect in 1923 by the time of the Third Party Congress held in Canton. In June, many CCP members had joined the Guomindang and were actively cooperating with it. Nevertheless, CCP members did not relinquish their allegiance to the Party, forming "fractions" (*dang-tuan*) within the Guomindang organization to insure a uniformity of Party views and actions.*

*A fraction is a unit composed of CCP members within an organization that is itself not Communist but to which CCP members belong.

Becoming part of the Guomindang did not mean that the CCP abandoned its own recruiting and organizing efforts. At the end of 1921, the Central Committee organized the Shanghai Local Committee (Shanghai difang weiyuanhui) whose responsibility was building and expanding Party work in the city, and by the end of June 1922, Shanghai had fifty Party members. The work of the Local Committee was expanded at the Second Congress to include Party work in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai under a new name—the CCP's Shanghai Local-and-District Action Committee (Zhonggong Shanghai difang jianqu zhixing weiyuanhui). When the CCP-Guomindang alliance went into effect a year later, the committee, along with the Socialist Youth League, organized the Guomindang Reorganization Committee (Guomindang gaizu weiyuanhui) and the Guomindang Committee (Guomindang weiyuanhui) to mobilize Shanghai Party and Youth League members to enter the Guomindang under the slogans: "All mobilizing should become nationalist mobilizing" and "All work should be turned over to the Guomindang." In April 1924, the Local-and-District Action Committee was reorganized and the new Shanghai Local Action Committee (Shanghai difang zhixing weiyuanhui) was established to oversee work in the city and its surrounding districts. This was an underground organization that communicated through a system of some twenty "liaisons" appointed by the Central Committee. Communications between different organizations and their responsible members in Shanghai, contact with people coming into Shanghai, and all financial dealings were conducted through this system.

For the local Party organization, the work of recruiting members into the CCP went more slowly than did the work of integrating existing members into the Guomindang. In April 1924, there were 47 CCP members in Shanghai divided into five cells and by the end of the year there were eight cells with 109 members. One of those cells was located at Shanghai University, a joint Guomindang-CCP educational venture founded in 1923, which served as a training ground for young revolutionaries. The Shanghai University cell had 11 members including such Party elite as Qu Qiubai, who headed the Social Science Department, and Deng Zhongxia, who served as dean of students and was very active in organizing students and workers. Radical professors urged students to combine the theoretical study of Marxism with the practical work of organizing. By 1924, students were successful enough in their efforts to open the West Shanghai Workers' Recreation Club, a meeting place for progressive workers and students. Local authorities closed the university on 4 June, 1925 in response to the May 30th Movement but that did not end the Party's educational efforts. It continued its various underground schools in Shanghai until the late 1920s.⁷

The Party's Fourth Congress (11–22 January, 1925) held in the city called for a shift from what remained a narrowly based, primarily intellectual organization to a party of the proletariat. It demanded more lenient admission policies and broader recruitment to attract a wider range of urban and rural workers, and set about redesigning the Party's organizational structure to accommodate the anticipated new membership. Although not formally constituted until after 1927, an informal Politburo did exist within the Central Committee composed of Chen Duxiu, Zhang Guotao, Cai Hesen, and Qu Qiubai. There was a Central Secretariat headed by Chen Duxiu along with departments for organization, propaganda, and labor. Party finances fell entirely into the purview of Chen Duxiu who discussed them directly with the Comintern representative.

From the beginning, the democratic-centralism of the CCP created a complex and, according to Van de Ven, problematic bureaucracy.⁸ A decision regarding a strike action in Shanghai, for example, passed through discussions in the Shanghai Local Committee, the Labor Secretariat, and the Central Committee before any action was taken. For many in the CCP leadership, including Zhang Guotao, Cai Hesen, Qu Qiubai, Deng Zhongxia, and Li Lisan, this kind of centralization was unacceptable, and they blamed Chen Duxiu who they claimed had created the problem with his patriarchal attitudes. They advocated, instead, taking advantage of local and mass movement conditions to allow maximum latitude for base-level initiatives. As leader of the trade union movement and a man who dealt with problems requiring immediate solutions, Li Lisan was especially vocal in his support for local initiatives. He demanded that the various levels of Party organization meet jointly to discuss important topics, arguing that by the time all levels of Party organization had met separately, it was often too late for effective action.⁹ As we will see throughout the late 1920s, centralization of power and the denial of local initiative were a constant irritant for those actually working among the masses. It was not until the Internationalists (a Comintern-controlled faction of the CCP) took control in the early 1930s that such initiative was in fact promulgated.

For the Shanghai organization, the Fourth Congress's call for a broader organization meant a further reorganization of the Local Committee into the Shanghai District Action Committee (Shanghai qu zhi-xing weiyuanhui), which by August 1925 included, in addition to Shanghai, the adjacent provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui. The District Action Committee then established district committees (*qu weiyuanhui*) and branches (*zhibu*) in a hierarchical system with itself on top and cells (*xiaozu*) on the bottom. By January 1927, the District Action Committee had 273 branches with 4,602 members; of those,

143 belonged to the eight district committees of Shanghai with a total membership of 3,075.¹⁰ Concern over the future of the Guomindang-CCP alliance underlay the emphasis on Party building. Animosity between the CCP and the right wing of the Guomindang existed even as the continued inflation, rampant taxes, and increased foreign penetration of China contributed to a new surge of discontent and patriotism throughout the country.

The increased tension between the Guomindang and the CCP is well illustrated by events at the Second National Labor Congress (1 May, 1925) meeting in Guangzhou, which the Guomindang right wing boycotted. CCP delegates seized the opportunity to shape the agenda by sanctioning the establishment of the General Labor Union (*zong gonghui*). Ostensibly an organ of the Guomindang, the General Labor Union was, in fact, dominated by the CCP and driven by Marxist ideology. Party leaders Li Lisan and Liu Shaoqi directed its activities. Within a month of its founding, the General Labor Union found itself playing a leading role in the May 30th Movement. That crisis was sparked by a group of Chinese workers who had been locked out of the Japanese-owned Naigai cotton mill during a strike that had begun in February 1925. Violence ensued when Japanese guards killed a worker, who was part of an angry crowd that had broken into the mill and smashed some of the machinery. The death was followed by an outpouring of public outrage that culminated on 30 May when thousands of students and workers assembled outside of the Laocha Police Station on busy Nanjing Road in the International Settlement. They demanded the release of six students who had been arrested by the British. As more and more people joined the noisy throng, the British inspector in charge became nervous and shouted for the crowd to disperse. Before anyone had time to leave, he ordered his men to shoot, killing eleven of the demonstrators and wounding twenty. Anger and outrage over the incident engulfed the entire country as cities held solidarity demonstrations and strikes. In Shanghai, a general strike was called. A month later, after an even bloodier massacre in Canton, CCP and other labor leaders launched a seaman's strike in Canton and Hong Kong against the British, which lasted for sixteen months and was backed by a massive boycott of British goods.

To harness the power of the mass movement, the General Labor Union moved immediately to control the city's workers. Joining forces with the Guomindang and the gangster-dominated Shanghai Federation of Labor, it instigated a strike with over 200 enterprises and 200,000 participants. The alliance was a fragile one, however, and in late August, it dissolved when some 100 armed gangsters raided the offices of the General Labor Union. Under pressure from gangsters and disgrun-

tled workers, the General Labor Union negotiated an end to the strike with the Japanese.¹¹ Despite this setback, the May 30th Movement had an enormous impact on the Party and its policies. The power of this mass movement forced the Party to concede the value of mass organizing and military power.

The city's revolutionary movement was further helped by Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition begun in mid-1926 to rid China of warlords and to unify it under the Guomindang. Cheered by the prospects of a Guomindang takeover, the General Labor Union and the Shanghai Party organization redoubled their efforts to organize the city. Labor and Party forces launched two aborted uprisings in October 1926 and February 1927. A third uprising on March 21 (combined with a general strike implemented with gangster cooperation) successfully routed warlord troops and left a coalition of labor and Party leaders in control of the city. On 22 March, a government composed of nineteen people (nine of whom were CCP members) proclaimed the formation of the Shanghai Special Provisional City Government (Shanghai tebie shi lin-shi shizhengfu) and eagerly awaited the anticipated arrival of Chiang's liberating forces. At that time, Party membership in the city stood at about 8,000 people.¹² However, instead of supporting the revolutionaries who had taken control of China's largest city, Chiang Kai-shek turned against them. At 4:00 A.M. on 12 April, 1927, Chiang, with the aid of anti-union elements and with the knowledge of foreign authorities, attacked the revolutionaries and crushed the Party-dominated labor strongholds. The demonstrations that followed, which resulted in cruelty, produced a bloodbath that devastated the city's Party organization. In the weeks following, the Guomindang carried out similar strikes elsewhere in China. The alliance between the Guomindang and the CCP was dead as the CCP, now an outlaw organization, went entirely underground. Decimated in numbers, abandoned by those believed to be its allies, and blamed by Stalin for the failure of his policy, the CCP organization, badly in disarray, faced a bleak and uncertain future in the weeks following the Coup. It is here that our story begins.

Analyzing the Shanghai Communist Party

With the exception of Hans Van de Ven's recent work on the CCP from 1920 to 1927, there are few, if any, studies that focus specifically on the Party in its world. Most examine the CCP in terms of larger issues—be they intellectual and cultural continuity, or social and political

revolution.* While these works have added to our knowledge of the CCP and broadened our understanding of the events of the last century, they leave us with an incomplete picture of the mores, mechanisms, and organizational culture that governed the defining political force in China in the twentieth century. Examinations of the CCP as a whole or, in the case of this study, one local unit are essential if one is to appreciate the historical forces that shaped the political organization that, in a world where communism has almost completely disappeared, still maintains control over the world's most populous country.

With these larger concerns in mind, there are several ways to examine how the Shanghai Communist Party carved out a niche for itself as an important political player in the city during the Nanjing Decade. One way is to analyze its leadership but, because the city's Party organization never had a dominant leader until the arrival of Liu Xiao in 1937, that route is not a good one. A better tactic is to analyze the Party organization itself and the alliances that organization entered. The Shanghai Party never became the leadership-oriented charismatic party that evolved in China's countryside. Instead, it became a more orthodox Leninist organization. According to Frederick Teiwes and Warren Sun's definition, "The Leninist 'model' called for an institution where authority was vested in the organization itself, where the power of individual leaders was restricted by collective quasi-democratic procedures, where civilian party officials controlled the organization's coercive machinery, and . . . where the national party was a subordinate branch of the world party."¹³ Through a series of organizational reforms in the late 1920s and early 1930s and responses to factional infighting in the early 1930s, this was precisely the kind of Leninist organization that emerged in Shanghai. Kenneth Jowitt argues that if the Party was correctly structured—as this one was—then it possessed qualities compatible with the defining features of the society it wished to recast.¹⁴

Lenin believed that the broader the masses spontaneously drawn into the movement and participating in it, the more urgent it was to have a durable Party unit manned by highly trained professional revolutionaries. "It is," he wrote in *What Is To Be Done?*, "far more difficult to catch ten wise men than it is to catch a hundred fools."¹⁵ He believed that "without a party capable of watching and influencing the mood of

*In "Toward a Social History of the Chinese Revolution: A Review, Part II: The State of the Field," Jeffrey Wasserstrom argues that a major gap in scholarship on China is the lack of interest in the "mentalities" of those who made up contending political groups. He argues that more is known about formal ideologies than about how members of these groups lived and worked, and the social dynamics that comprised their organizational culture. His point is important and one that this study seeks to help remedy. See *Social History*, 17, no. 2(May 1992): 312.

the masses” it was impossible to conduct a successful struggle.¹⁶ There is no evidence that the CCP, under either Qu Qiubai or Li Lisan, was compatible with the society it wished to change—be it Shanghai or elsewhere. Consequently, the CCP was never able to integrate itself fully into that society and, therefore, was not a true Leninist organization. Under the heavy hand of Moscow and hopelessly committed to the idea of revolutionary immediacy, the late 1920s’ Party focused upon vague ideological tenets rather than the economic and political realities that defined the world of China’s underclasses. The intense factional conflict between Li Lisan and the Shanghai dissidents led by He Mengxiong was over exactly these issues.

What acting general-secretary of the CCP Wang Ming and the Internationalists did in the early 1930s was to take the Shanghai organization, devastated by the radical strategies of political action, and rebuild it into the kind of Leninist party defined above.* In its reconstructed state, the local Party unit was able to walk the fine line between its revolutionary goals and the need to gain support from a population that was capable of social mobilization but that, nevertheless, remained committed to traditional orientations and expectations. The organization endured the “white terror” of the early 1930s—a brutal witch hunt by the Guomindang and foreign authorities for Communists and fellow travelers—and the later occupation by Japan because of the foundation put in place in the early 1930s. At no time during this period, however, was the city’s Party capable of filling the political vacuum that existed in the city.

Here it is important to understand the “role of opportunities.”¹⁷ Whether in the rural hinterlands of Shaanxi Province or the crowded streets of Shanghai, what determined success was the ability of revolutionaries to recognize opportunities and to capitalize upon them.† In Shanghai, that meant allying with whatever group advanced the interests of the Party at any given time. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, these were groups exploited by the Guomindang; beginning with the

*While the Internationalists can be congratulated on redesigning the city’s Party organization into a more flexible and disciplined unit, they must be condemned for pursuing policies that exposed members of that unit to extreme danger. It was only after the Internationalists left the scene that the independent Leninist party in Shanghai began to pursue safer, less risky, policies.

†In *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), Andrew Walder, writing about the post-1949 period, argues that the CCP created a new kind of society in China by imposing social and economic institutions from above. While this may be true in the People’s Republic, my findings for the Shanghai Party during the Nanjing Decade reveal quite the opposite. There, the Party organization worked best when it incorporated existing institutions into its structure or adapted to what was already in place. Van de Ven reaches a similar conclusion for the Party during the period 1925–1927.

Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 and continuing throughout the anti-Japanese war, they were the economically oppressed and politically disaffected of all classes. Occasionally, such as in the period preceding the 12 April Coup or during the United Front with the Guomindang (1937–1941), these were public and open alliances. More commonly, however, Shanghai Party members either created front organizations for their activities or kept their Party affiliation secret when they joined groups with goals common to their own. Although Guomindang authorities often claimed that disaffected groups were Party led, there is no substantive proof that the Party actually controlled any of them. Certainly, it dominated individual student, labor, and literary groups, but these were part of larger movements whose courses were never determined by the Party. If one considers the Shanghai Communist Party as a formal organization—that is, one established for the explicit purpose of achieving a goal, and one that possesses both rules and a formal structure with clear lines of communication—then the alliances it formed were “conjunctive” relationships (i.e., those made in conjunction with others in order to achieve goals held in common with the formal organization).¹⁸

A Note on Sources

One of the goals of this book is to add to the growing body of literature on urban China during this century. In reconstructing the Shanghai Party organization and its role in Shanghai during the Nanjing Decade, I have consulted CCP and Guomindang documents, internal CCP publications, memoirs, and the files of the Shanghai Municipal Police. I have tried to use only data that I can cross-check and have avoided documents and incidents that appear out of sync with a given time and place. I have also avoided a heavy reliance on general histories of the CCP written in China because they generally fall into the orthodox mold described earlier. Nevertheless, there are a number of excellent articles, books, and edited editions, beginning with the ones published to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Shanghai, which now exist for the entire period. Chinese scholars of the CCP and of Shanghai are increasingly writing incisive, well-documented articles that bring new interpretations and new information to the study of the Party in Shanghai. Because it requires less “red tape” to publish an article than a book, journals are often the best source of substantive research and information. Not to diminish the importance of several recent scholarly monographs, journal articles are important additions to our knowledge of specific aspects of the Shanghai revolution.

Documents have been harder to find. There are published collections for the late 1920s and the 1930s widely available in the United States and China that include general CCP pronouncements on a variety of issues. While these proved useful, what I really wanted were documents that specifically pertained to the Shanghai Party. In the spring and summer of 1993, the Shanghai Municipal Archives allowed me free access to the documents they had on Party activity in Shanghai in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Those data combined with materials on the early-to-mid 1930s made available to me at the Bureau of Investigation in Taiwan proved to be extremely useful and I am indebted to the archivists who worked with me. From these, I was able to obtain important internal organizational materials and publications which helped me to reconstruct a picture of Party life in Shanghai.

Another useful source upon which I have relied heavily is the 1991 internal Party publication, *Materials on the Organizational History of the CCP in Shanghai* [Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao], a detailed history of the structure of the city's Party organization from August 1920 until October 1987. From it, I was able to determine the hierarchical linkage between different groups within the Party organization, various committees and periphery groups, and the names of those filling different positions of leadership.

Finally, I made use of memoir literature to complement what I found elsewhere. In some cases, like the several memoirs of city-Party leader, Wang Yaoshan, these are excellent sources of information on the day-to-day workings of the Party and are readily substantiated by information from internal Party documents. In other cases, they are reflections of Party history seen through rose-colored glasses devoid of scholarly rigor. The problem with memoirs is that they are written in hindsight in a political climate much different than that when the events took place.* In addition, people are often settling old scores or trying to enhance their own position in a new world. Although these drawbacks must be considered, they should in no way detract from the benefits of such sources. Through this kind of literature, dry Party history comes alive. Names, events, organizations, and affiliations are now people suffering the frustrations and reveling in the successes of pursuing their revolutionary dream. I have made ample use of memoir literature where I can corroborate it with documents because I believe that this kind of source breathes life into our story.

The story of the Shanghai Party underground is the tale of men and

*I am indebted to Joshua Fogel who discussed memoir literature with me in several correspondences. His article, "Mendacity and Veracity in the Recent Chinese Communist Memoir Literature," *CCP Research Newsletter*, 1(Fall, 1988) is a worthwhile analysis of this kind of historical source.

women who during years of terror and persecution attempted to carry out their revolutionary goals. Few lived, most died, and many abandoned the cause losing themselves in the crowded, chaotic world of Shanghai to start life anew elsewhere. Those who remained tried to live by the rules of a Party at times deeply divided, at other times almost without substance. What makes their story so powerful is that although they were eclipsed by the rural revolutions, these men and women did not give up the dream of revolution in China's largest city.

Chapter 1

Going Underground (1927–1928)

The period after the 12 April Coup was a time when the city's Party organization redefined itself and adjusted to life underground. It continued to follow the labyrinth of policy emanating from the Stalin-controlled Comintern and to organize among the city's working classes. But the 12 April Coup had devastated the CCP labor movement in the city and it was no longer a viable target of Party organizing. Having all but destroyed the Party's General Labor Union, Chiang Kai-shek's supporters moved quickly to substitute a system of government-directed labor unions. On 13 April, the Unification Committee for Shanghai Union Organization (Shanghai gonghui zuzhi tongyi weiyuanhui), a ruthless operation controlled by gangsters, was established. Part of its effort to reorganize labor was to round up suspected leftists and Communists and execute them. Some segments of the city's working class protested but it soon became evident that they were helpless against the committee's heavy-handed tactics.¹

There is no question that the coup and the subsequent reign of terror had struck a serious blow to the city's Party organization. In the nine months following, more than 5,600 people were arrested in the city and Jiangsu Province with more than 2,000 killed (850 of whom were revolutionaries).² Realizing the danger, the Central Committee evacuated to Wuhan where it sought the protection of the left wing of the Guomindang headquartered there. That wing had no love for Chiang Kai-shek but, recognizing his strength, was extremely reluctant to offer protection to the beleaguered Communists. In June, with no army of his own and reading the handwriting on the wall, the left wing's leader, Wang Jingwei, threw his support to Chiang Kai-shek and turned against the CCP. On 15 July, the Guomindang's left wing officially broke with its former ally, the Communist Party.

Stalin had no intention of accepting the blame for the failure of his policy of fomenting revolution while maintaining an alliance with the Guomindang. Hans Van de Ven argues that the defeats of 1927 were not, in fact, merely a result of Stalin's intervention but also resulted from the CCP's inept organizational skills and its failure to root itself firmly among the masses.* The period following the coup was a time of confusion and factionalism within the Party as everyone sought to deflect blame for the Party's failures from themselves. A special delegation from Wuhan of CCP and Comintern members traveled to Shanghai with a resolution blaming members of the Shanghai Special Committee, the leaders of the uprising, for its defeat. In response, the Special Committee sent a telegram to the Fifth Party Congress (April–May, 1927) in Wuhan acknowledging errors on its part but placing the blame for the coup's failure on the policies of Chen Duxiu. Quite apart from the Special Committee, Qu Qiubai (a longtime critic of Chen Duxiu), Mao Zedong, and Comintern adviser Mikhail Borodin also blamed Chen for the Party's defeats. Despite the vocal opposition and, perhaps, because there was no other viable candidate, the congress reelected Chen to the post of general-secretary and named him to the newly created Central Committee (the former Central Executive Committee), an eclectic group from all factions within the Party.

Sometime in early to mid July (the exact date is unclear), the Central Committee met and elected a new Politburo composed of Zhou Enlai, Zhang Guotao, Li Lisan, Zhang Tailei, and Li Weiham. Qu Qiubai was added later. The Politburo decided that Chen Duxiu would go to Moscow to hold discussions on the direction of the Chinese revolution. What is not clear is whether Moscow directed the CCP to relieve Chen of his duties or whether the Central Committee acted under its own initiative. Whatever the answer, the reign of Chen Duxiu was over and the new Politburo was in control. Claiming a continued alliance with the "truly revolutionary" elements of the Guomindang, that group initiated a policy of armed uprisings under the assumption that uprisings in China's countryside would lead to uprisings in its cities. Their affirmation of any kind of a relationship with the Guomindang, which had so brutally suppressed the CCP, created a real crisis of confidence among lower-level Party members.

Under Comintern orders to evaluate ideological errors, the new Central Committee hastily convened an emergency meeting in Hankou on 7 August, 1927. Qu Qiubai, Zhang Tailei, Ren Bishi, and Li Weiham

*Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of the Fifth Party Congress and the August 7th Emergency meeting are taken from Van de Ven, 220–39.

were among those attending the meeting, which affirmed Moscow's new line and punished those who were believed to oppose it. Chen Duxiu was made the principal scapegoat for errors of "right opportunism." In the "Circular Letter to All Party Members" (prepared prior to the meeting by the Comintern representatives and translated into Chinese by Qu Qiubai), the Central Committee criticized Chen's policies stating: "The working class was surging toward the realization of a true democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants but the [Party under Chen] used every means possible to prevent the workers' movement from progressing along the revolutionary path."³

Chen's mistaken policies were not the real focus of the meeting, however; asserting top-level control over all areas of Party life was.* The Emergency Conference was the first time Party leaders employed the concept of "correct Party line" to explain away ideological errors, an indication of how deeply Marxism-Leninism had infused Party life. To assure adherence to that new correct line, the meeting reorganized the Politburo (to include Qu Qiubai, Su Zhaozheng, Li Weiham, Zhang Tailei, Xiang Ying, Xiang Zhongfa, and Lu Futan) and named Qu Qiubai to replace Chen Duxiu as general-secretary.⁴ Shortly thereafter, the Central Committee returned to Shanghai where it set up headquarters on what is today Shimenyi Road. A year later, it moved to what is today Yunnan Middle Road where it remained until its evacuation to Jiangxi in early 1933.⁵

As the self-proclaimed interpreter of the correct Party line, Qu attacked what he saw as the theoretical and bureaucratic rigidity of the Chen Duxiu years. Nevertheless, as we will see in our discussion of Party reforms, Qu Qiubai did little during his short term as general-secretary to make the Party organization more flexible or responsive to its world. In fact, the CCP did not fare any better in the hands of Qu Qiubai than it had in the hands of his predecessor. Dominated by the Comintern, Qu's policy was based on the assumption that because of the Guomindang-CCP split, agrarian revolution would succeed where the national liberation movement had failed. Zhang Guotao wrote in his autobiography that Qu's plan for armed uprisings—dreamed up in an attic in Shanghai—was "really ridiculous."† Zhang argued that Qu pre-

*Van de Ven argues that the August 7 Conference (which some considered illegal because it lacked a quorum) signaled the end to the founding period of the CCP because it was there that the CCP leadership first used Marxism-Leninism as a "legitimation device" and to account for recent Party disasters. See Van de Ven, 201.

†In this chapter and the next, I have relied heavily on Zhang's two-volume *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1928–1938* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1972). Zhang was one of the most important early leaders of the CCP and a moving force behind the Party-sponsored labor movement. He exercised considerable power within the CCP and was considered one of Mao Zedong's principal rivals for control of the Party. Eventu-

sumed all people were revolutionaries and that the more they suffered, the more strongly they would react. Their anger would be such that the minute CCP cadres ignited them, uprisings would occur. Once rural areas were secured, Qu believed peasants would march on the cities; from the cities they would proceed to provincial capitals and finally to the national capital. The end result would be a Soviet government.⁶ Given the military might of the Guomindang and various warlords and the CCP's lack thereof, it was, indeed, a "ridiculous" plan. Nevertheless, the call for armed uprisings defined CCP policy during Qu Qiu-bai's short tenure as general-secretary.

This chapter examines the Qu Qiubai era when the CCP tried to build a new party in a new world. It focuses first on changes made in what was now an outlaw underground organization and then examines reforms implemented by the newly created leadership organ for Shanghai, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. Carried out in the midst of constantly changing policies from Moscow, the reform program sought to create an organization capable of rapid response to immediate problems. What resulted, however, was a rigid and complex bureaucracy incapable of decisive action in a dangerous and repressive environment. This will be examined when we look in detail at the makeup, the finances of, and the interactions between the Shanghai organizations and its governing body, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. We will also look at the relationship between the CCP and its associated organizations through the example of the Communist Youth League.

Rebuilding the Party

The Jiangsu Provincial Committee in Action

From the time of the 12 April Coup, it was clear to CCP leaders that if the Party was to survive under the new conditions, it had to be reorganized. At the Fifth Congress, the Politburo created a system of powerful supervisory institutions to enforce Party discipline and redesigned the Party's organizational structure to strengthen the bonds between the upper and lower levels. Van de Ven argues that these changes came about because Party leaders recognized the importance of a centralized authority and the need to run a large national organization with a diverse membership more efficiently.⁷ On a practical level, the

ally his challenge fell apart and, in 1938, he left the Party. While Zhang's memoirs are his own interpretation of events and therefore must be approached cautiously, they provide important information on the Party during a critical period. Many of the incidents he relates give us a valuable insight into the inner workings of the CCP.

changes also recognized that in those dangerous times, it was essential to create a buffer between the top level of leadership and the lower levels (those Party members at most risk of exposure) and to create a system that ensured absolute obedience to all upper-level directives. Changes occurred throughout the organization but the ones that concern our study are those that occurred at mid and lower levels. Below the Central Committee, regional committees were replaced with a hierarchy of provincial committees, city or county committees, and regional committees. On 26 June, 1927, the Central Committee established the Jiangsu Provincial Committee (Jiangsu shengwei) to direct Party work in Nanjing, Shanghai, and Yangzhou, forty county committees and five special branches. Simultaneously, it organized the Shanghai City Committee (Shanghai shiwei) to oversee Party work in Shanghai (see table 1.1). The City Committee technically fell below the Jiangsu Provincial Committee in the hierarchy but, in reality, they were one and the same organization. The hierarchy that governed Shanghai included the Jiangsu Provincial Committee/Shanghai City Committee, district committees (quwei), branches (zhibu), and cells (xiao zu).⁸ Party-directed labor associations and the Communist Youth League were independent entities with their own organizational structure and relationship to the Party hierarchy.

The newly formed Jiangsu Provincial Committee was not in place

Table 1.1 The Five-Level Party Hierarchy in Jiangsu Province and Shanghai (November 1927-June 1930)

- A. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee/Shanghai City Committee
 - B. Nanjing
 - Various Counties
 - Shanghai
 - C. Wusong District Committee
 - Central Shanghai District Committee
 - Pudong District Committee
 - Zhabei District Committee
 - Fanan District Committee
 - East Shanghai District Committee
 - West Shanghai District Committee
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells

Source: Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao, 84-202.

long before disaster struck. On the very afternoon it was founded, the committee's new general-secretary, Chen Yannian, son of the CCP general-secretary, and two other committee members were arrested. Chen was executed a month later. Commenting on his death, the English-language *North China Herald* wrote:

He is a young man of very radical tendencies and, being extremely wicked, he is a hundred times worse than his father. Li Lisan and other notorious Communists and agitators were educated by him and now his death will without a doubt frighten other members of the Communist Party and prevent them from committing further misdeeds.⁹

The Provincial Committee then had a rapid turnover of general-secretaries. Zhao Shitan replaced Chen but was himself arrested on 2 July and executed shortly thereafter. Wang Ruofei replaced Zhao and was replaced by Deng Zhongxia on 18 August. After Deng became general-secretary, the committee appears to have stabilized to the point where it could turn its attention to running Party operations in areas under its control. One of its first acts was to establish its own hierarchy consisting of the Organizational Bureau headed by Wang Ruofei, the Propaganda Bureau headed by Liu Baijian, the Workers and Staff Committee headed jointly by Deng Fa and Xiang Ying, and the Military Bureau headed by Rao Laijie.¹⁰

These men then set about directing Party activities in utmost secrecy. Although members of the Shanghai Party organization had to be circumspect in their organizing activities prior to the 12 April Coup, the existence and influence of the CCP had been widely recognized. Now the Party was an outlaw organization whose leaders had a price on their heads and whose members at all levels were being subjected to a Guomindang reign of terror that extended beyond the Chinese-controlled areas to the once-safe foreign concessions.¹¹ Describing the tension all Party members felt, Zhang Guotao later wrote:

At that time a slight act of carelessness could cause us Communists to be arrested and secretly executed without trial. Yang Hu and [Chen Chun], two notorious "executioners," were enforcing in Shanghai a terroristic policy of "it is better to kill a thousand innocent ones than allow one guilty one to get away." Ordinary people in Shanghai were living in fear of being suspected of being Communists.¹²

Deng Yingchao, wife of Zhou Enlai and an important revolutionary in her own right, echoed that sentiment: "Every day I went out never knowing whether I would be not [*sic*] be arrested. The police searched

my house in the international settlement. . . . Many good friends were arrested and our work became impossible.”¹³

All Party members, no matter what their rank or assignment, had to take extraordinary care to keep their activities secret and to prevent exposure. For Zhang Guotao, who spent the period from October 1927 until May 1928 in hiding, that meant masquerading as a sick school teacher.

Soon after my arrival in Shanghai I got hold of CCP Central Headquarters and began to experience the terror that existed in Shanghai after the [Guomindang's] April 12 purge. Li Li-san had also arrived in Shanghai, but I do not know whether he came by the same boat. He disguised himself as a wealthy businessman, looking somewhat like a playboy, apparently disguised as a richer man than I. . . .

Li Wei-han [chief of the CCP's Organization Bureau] told us that Central Headquarters had rented a flat for us in a small alley on [Chongqing] Road in the British Concession and that we should move into that house in the guise of travelers, because the lessee told the landlord that he was renting the house for friends of his from out of town. Therefore, we immediately discussed with each other the best ways of disguising ourselves. As I looked pale, I disguised myself as a sick school teacher who had come to Shanghai to see doctors. Li Li-san disguised himself as my younger brother, a senior bank clerk who had accompanied me to Shanghai and at the same time was taking care of some business. Li Wei-han commented, “Wonderful.”

So we moved into the CCP hostel for senior personnel. It was a two-story house. The landlord lived downstairs, and we occupied the upstairs. It was a spacious six-room flat which had already been equipped with some rented furniture. We acted our parts very well. Li Li-san asked me every day, “Brother, how are you feeling today?” The comrades who visited with us would also say something about my illness, as if they were relatives or friends of ours coming to wish me well.¹⁴

To ensure the formation of strong *and* secure underground units, the Central Committee issued the directive “Our Party Must Prepare the Whole Nation for Secret Work” on 24 July. All Party cells, branches, district committees, and communication stations were to be located in “safe” areas such as houses, stores, and hospitals. Moreover, each Party member from the highest level down was instructed to assume a believable cover and to perform his or her assignment without unnecessary contact with other Party members.¹⁵ Although well meant, the directive's aims were never achieved. As we will see later, the bureaucracy, as it was constituted under Qu Qiubai, provided little protection. Party members operated under a security system so lax that members had

contact with each other both horizontally (with members at the same level) and vertically (with those higher up the ladder).

Under this revised system, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee began to implement the Central Committee's policy of organizing workers and winning over the petty bourgeoisie—now considered an important urban revolutionary force. It issued a work plan for Shanghai and its suburbs that called for revolutionary victory, Party discipline, organizational rectification, and the expansion of Party membership.¹⁶ The plan targeted those among the petty bourgeoisie who still supported foreign imperialists and warlords. To convince them to join workers and peasants in the revolutionary cause, the Provincial Committee made Chiang Kai-shek—the chief representative of the evil “big bourgeoisie”—the central focus of its political agitation, propaganda, and demonstrations. If that scheme failed, the committee planned to resort to a propaganda campaign to oppose imperialism, the publication of an action plan that incorporated the demands of the petty bourgeoisie, and the formation of district representative meetings led by the petty bourgeoisie. Finally, the committee decided to intensify propaganda and agitation work among Guomindang soldiers in an attempt to persuade them to abandon Chiang Kai-shek and join the CCP in armed uprisings.¹⁷

The plan was unworkable and is a good example of the lack of realism that dominated Party policy in 1927 and 1928. What citizens of Shanghai looked for was relief from turmoil, not more of the same. Certainly there was anger at a municipal government that existed only in name while real power lay in the hands of Guomindang military strongman, Bai Chongxi. There was also anger at the heavy-handed labor organizing tactics of the new government-approved “yellow” unions. Added to this was the perpetual frustration at foreign economic control in the city and the continued existence of unequal treaties. But, to most of the targeted classes, opposing imperialism and the Guomindang did not matter as much as issues of better working conditions and a higher standard of living. Not only did the Party target the wrong issue, but also it advocated the wrong tactics to address that concern. Given the military strength of the Guomindang and warlords and the CCP's record of failed uprisings, it was no wonder that the Jiangsu Provincial Committee attracted few converts. This is not to say that the city's proletariat and petty bourgeoisie were the wrong groups to target. At that time, the bourgeoisie was, for the most part, still enamored of the Nationalist Revolution so the proletariat and petty bourgeoisie remained the most promising focus of Party organizing.

The chaotic world of the late 1920s presented opportunities as well as danger. Spontaneous rural and urban movements against a repressive government, exploiting capitalists and imperialists, and brutal landlords

all produced fertile fields for CCP organizing but only if it was done with extreme care. The objective was to lead people so they did not know they were being led. Actual struggle had to evolve voluntarily and independent of Communist control because too overt a Party presence would only result in a less effective movement because the participants would be too dependent on the CCP and, consequently, deny their own potential.¹⁸ As “Central Committee Communication #47” (18 May, 1928) pointed out, rallying the masses was done best through public associations and by cadres working through a top-secret organization.¹⁹ Striking the delicate balance needed to achieve this objective required an efficient and well-run organization of highly trained professional revolutionaries. In late 1927, there was no evidence that such a Party organization existed, nor is there evidence that the Party had made any attempt to turn this theory into reality.

The Swing toward Radicalism

Throughout the summer of 1927, the CCP’s Central Committee became militantly more radical. Resolutions issued at the end of the August 7th Emergency Meeting called for liberation from oppressive foreign capital, the creation of a unified national market, an end to feudalism, and improvement in the living conditions of the masses. That included an eight-hour day, wage increases, and greater freedom and security. Qu Qiubai later told Zhang Guotao that all of the resolutions that were passed were based on instructions from the Comintern.²⁰

The Jiangsu Provincial Committee revised its work plan to comply with the Party’s new direction. Its first order of business was to destroy all labor organizations not controlled by the CCP’s General Labor Union. Once those organizations were gone, the committee planned to assume command of the city’s labor movement by leading a broad-based mass struggle where, under its “correct” leadership, workers who had been dismissed from their jobs would be rehired, labor demands would be met, workers’ salaries would be raised, and everyone would recognize the leadership of the Party-led General Labor Union. The Provincial Committee also envisioned Party-led demonstrations where workers would march under the slogans “Strike down the Unification Committee” and “Restore the Shanghai Federation of Labor.”²¹ Finally, with labor firmly on the Party’s side, the Provincial Committee foresaw armed mass uprisings that would bring the revolution to a just conclusion. To that end, in a separate directive, the committee instructed lower-level operatives to prepare workers for the forthcoming revolution by training them in use of arms and self-defense tactics.²²

Despite its optimistic plans, the Provincial Committee never suc-

ceeded in taking control of Shanghai's labor movement nor did it ever attract a decisive number of workers to its revolutionary cause. In short, its labor organizing efforts were a failure. To understand the reasons behind this, it is important to depart from our story briefly and take a look at the labor situation in Shanghai at this time.

After destroying the CCP's General Labor Union during the 12 April Coup, the Guomindang reorganized the city's labor movement into a network of government-directed unions whose allegiance was to it and not to the men and women they represented.* The gangster-staffed Unification Committee mentioned earlier was one such group. Its tactics were so ruthless that it offended many in the Guomindang who, in mid-November 1927, created their own union, the Shanghai Workers' General Association (Shanghai gongren zonghui) from 120 different Shanghai unions. The formation of this competing group led to six months of warfare between the two for control of the city's labor movement.

CCP leaders were quick to capitalize upon the conflict. The 12 December, 1927 issue of the Party publication *Bolshevik* stated that both labor associations opposed the working class even though they supposedly represented their interests. "These are imitation workers' organizations whose sole goal is to compel workers to capitulate to imperialists and capitalists," it stated.²³ A week later, the 19 December issue argued that since the 12 April Coup, the lives of Shanghai workers had gotten significantly worse (a statement made without substantiation) and implored: "How can workers support their wives and children? What about sick pay? These workers have no protection! . . . Nothing has been done to solve the bitterness of their lives."²⁴ These outcries made for emotional reading but provided weak inducements to join the Party's labor organizations, which had also failed to respond to the economic demands of workers.

That spring, the Guomindang Party Central intervened in the conflict between the Unification Committee and the Shanghai Workers' General Association and dissolved both groups. To take their place, it created the Shanghai Unions' Reorganization Committee (Shanghai gonghui zhengli weiyuanhui). Six months later that, too, was disbanded. Responsibility for Shanghai's labor movement now rested with the People's Discipline Committee of the Shanghai Guomindang Party Branch and the newly established Bureau of Social Affairs of the Shanghai Municipal Government. The legislation coming out of these two groups, although revealing a more positive attitude toward labor by the Guomindang, still failed to better the lot of working people.

*Except where noted, the discussion of Guomindang and gangster labor activities is taken from Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, 92-97.

The failure of the Unification Committee convinced gangster chief Du Yuesheng to try his own hand at labor organizing. Because much of the city's unskilled labor force was gangster-controlled, he targeted it first but its authoritarian management structure made it unresponsive to reform. So, Du was forced to turn to other, more progressive, elements. He found them in a group of unions known as the Big Seven (qida gonghui) who had been active in the city's labor movement since before the 12 April Coup and who, since that time, had been the most vocal champions of workers' rights. Disillusioned with Guomindang labor organizing for failing to advance the cause of workers, the leaders of the Big Seven were ready to ally with someone who had the power to effect changes. That person was Du Yuesheng. Joining forces, Du and the union leaders used "yellow unions"—government-approved unions operated by officials with gang connections—to control labor. Despite their dubious affiliations, yellow unions succeeded in obtaining concrete benefits for workers where other labor organizations had failed.

Successful alliances such as this one did little to improve the already bleak state of CCP labor organizing in the city. After 12 April, what was left of the CCP's General Labor Union had gone underground.* The Jiangsu Provincial Committee put labor organizing at the top of its list of priorities and called for workers to join forces with the Party to destroy capitalism and the reactionary rule of the Guomindang, warlords, and imperialists. Ignoring the lessons of the spring of 1927, the Provincial Committee continued to promote the strike as its most prominent labor activity. In doing so, it adhered to the dictates of the CCP's August 7 Emergency Meeting: "The labor movement is the basic function of the Party. We must remedy the erroneous tendency which has prevailed hitherto to consider it only a part of our general activities. We must bend our total efforts to lead the workers."²⁵ But like its other plans, the Provincial Committee's plan for leading the city's labor movement ignored the political and economic realities of late 1920s Shanghai. Until the Party dropped its ideological and, to most workers, incomprehensible rhetoric that condemned foreign and Guomindang oppressors and called for revolution, and began to champion workers' demands for better wages and working conditions, its quest to control Shanghai labor was doomed to failure. Strikes in the cotton mills of East Shanghai and at the British Electric Company were among the Party-led strikes that failed that fall.

A committed Trotskyist with his own ax to grind, Wang Fanxi was,

*Except where noted, the discussion of the Party's labor activities is taken from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao*, 137–41, and from *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai (1921–1991)*, 100–109.

nevertheless, an active member of the CCP at this time and a keen observer of the revolutionary process.* Commenting on the Party's failure to rally Shanghai workers, he later wrote:

In the autumn of 1927 the Revolution was defeated on a national scale, and the counter-revolutionary bourgeois regime intensified its repression of the Shanghai workers. In 1928, however, the tramcar workers, post and telecommunications employees, and others, counter-attacked heroically, thus providing a justification for the putschist policies of the [Qu Qiubai] leadership of the Party. But the workers' struggles of that era (like the peasant movements in Hunan and [Hubei]) were not a "permanent ascent of the Revolution" (as [Qu Qiubai] and the Comintern described them), but were the dying flicker of the Revolution of 1925–27.²⁶

Its concentration on labor organizing caused the CCP to ignore other, potentially more successful, areas of organizing. On 3 May, 1928, for example, Japanese troops in Jinan, Shandong Province, massacred several thousand Chinese, among them the Chinese envoy. Their actions touched off a nationwide anti-Japanese movement. Qu Qiubai and other leaders of the CCP ignored the protests claiming that the task of the CCP at this point was to stage uprisings and that, if the Party participated in the anti-Japanese movement, it would be, in effect, helping Chiang Kai-shek because the actions of the Japanese were directed at the Guomindang. According to Zhang Guotao, most Party members in Shanghai opposed the CCP leadership's position and advocated taking advantage of the explosive situation.²⁷

The inability to see other promising areas of organizing was not the only problem in CCP policy at this time. In late September 1927, shortly after it returned to Shanghai, the Central Committee met to assess the state of the revolution. Rather than address specific conditions that defined the national environment, it relied once again on ideological justifications for the failure of the workers to rise up and lead the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie in a revolution. While the terminology differed, its reassessment of conditions in China was remarkably similar to previous evaluations. The Central Committee argued that, at this stage of the revolution, workers and peasants were the only reliable elements. Everything must be done to harness their revolutionary potential. To that end, the Central Committee decided to stop using the Guomindang flag—the symbol of "white terror"—and hoist a CCP banner.

*Like Zhang Guotao's autobiography, Wang Fanxi's memoirs are a valuable source of knowledge on the day-to-day workings of the CCP during the late 1920s and I have made ample use of them. I have, however, tried to avoid the sections where Wang's Trotskyist beliefs color his perception of events.

It reasoned that a Communist flag would inspire revolutionary elements to revolt against the oppressors and to establish soviets and revolutionary base areas where they would redistribute land to the landless.²⁸

Once again, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee revised its work plan to conform to the “new” policy. Because the Central Committee had provided only the vaguest guidelines for reform, the Provincial Committee could implement little more than what was already in place and that was an active propaganda war. In October, it announced yet another campaign, this one directed specifically at people who had been outside the reach of the Party and, therefore, believed to be easily influenced by counterrevolutionary forces. To convert unconverted elements, it raised the slogans “Restore the revolutionary Guomintang,” “Strike down imperialism,” “Return political rights to the peasants and implement the land revolution,” and “When cultivators have fields to till, workers have food to eat.”²⁹

This championing of an unworkable policy is indicative of the lack of understanding of Comintern orders and of Soviet policy in general at this time. As a result, Party leaders implemented the most general kinds of programs, which they hoped would satisfy orders from the top levels. To an extent, their confusion was understandable. Much of what emanated from Moscow was determined by the inner-Party struggle between Stalin, Trotsky, and Bukharin, and for most members of the middle and lower ranks of the CCP, it was of little relevance to the day-to-day struggles of the Chinese revolution. Instead of trying to alleviate the confusion and adapt policy to the environment, the Politburo became even more radical at its November Plenum when it issued a resolution officially dropping all pretense to an alliance with the Guomintang. Committing what Maoists would later call the “first leftist error,” it asserted that conditions in China were increasingly favorable to a revolution and promoted Trotsky’s notion of “unceasing revolution” (a phrase later criticized for encouraging adventurism). The Plenum called for an agrarian revolution and the formation of soviets. Nevertheless, before the revolution could succeed, changes had to take place in the Party’s structure. Most important, that meant eliminating the underrepresentation in Party membership of the proletariat and the overrepresentation of the petty bourgeoisie. (No figures were given to substantiate this claim.) The emphasis was to be on recruiting workers and peasants, not intellectuals.

Those already in the Party (along with Youth League members) would be imbued with the new spirit—and tested for their reliability—through a program of “purification.” Anyone who joined either organization before 1927 was to be investigated and reregistered in a process designed to expose traitors, dissidents, and the disloyal. To ensure con-

formity, the Central Committee instructed roving inspection teams to make unannounced visits to various Party units. The November Plenum, like the August 7 Emergency Meeting, had an enormous impact on Party organization at all levels. What the leadership was demanding was a mass-line organization in which cadres applied Marxist-Leninist ideology to local conditions. That meant taking instructions from upper levels and transmitting them to the masses in a manner compatible with the concerns and demands of the community, be it rural or urban. CCP goals were to be identified with community goals but, in an environment as repressive as that of Shanghai, theory was a lot easier than practice.

Life Underground

The Provincial Committee responded to the Plenum's demand for better disciplined, mass-line Party organizations in "The Jiangsu Provincial Committee's Draft Resolution on Rectifying the Party" (11 November, 1927), which stated:

There are a great many comrades who in their work have the most destructive viewpoints. That is, they are fully aware that they cannot allow the disappearance of branches but they fail to go and research the reasons for this disappearance and do not discover methods to solve the problems. Many responsible comrades are only rebuking branch comrades who do not have any knowledge of the Party nor any revolutionary sentiments. They are not [devising] a program for reform

Only when comrades understand the conditions [experienced] by the masses and the problems of struggle can they lead the masses in daily work in a detailed and practical way, establish new Party branches and reform old ones, organize the masses and lead their struggle.³⁰

Recognizing the need to create an adaptable organization capable of responding to community needs was one thing and actually building it was quite another. Even if Party members could count on the support of the working class (which they could not), it was still an impossible assignment. A strategy of radicalism could not work in an arena where the Party was so weak and the Guomindang so strong. The only viable recourse for the Provincial Committee was to continue its propaganda campaigns and hope to avoid government oppression. It established committees at all levels of the provincial hierarchy to do propaganda work both inside the Party and out.³¹ Inside the Party, propaganda committees published educational articles to be used as a basis for discussion of work methods, techniques, and Party discipline in branch and cell meetings. In select factories where the Party had established

branches and cells, organizers were encouraged to publish secret factory newspapers.³² Outside of the Party, propaganda campaigns took a creative turn to spread the message to the citizens of Shanghai. Under the leadership of Wang Ruofei, the Shanghai Party organization utilized wall newspapers, graffiti, and speeches. Party members worked primarily under the protection of darkness but one popular daytime activity was creating a distraction in a busy public area. While onlookers crowded around the diversion, a Party member would hurriedly paste up a wall newspaper or paint slogans on a nearby wall or street. Never lingering long enough for the police to arrive, Party members delivered the message and disappeared. Another popular technique called for activists to stand in long lines and do propaganda and agitation work among those waiting with them.

Each day the Provincial Committee published an information and propaganda outline for its lower levels. This, combined with separate propaganda materials supplied by each of the city's district committees, gave cadres fuel for their propaganda fires.³³ Workers and peasants were clearly the primary object of the Party's attention, and there was little subtlety in the message. One declaration in early 1928 ran:

The Chinese revolution is based upon the participation of the worker/peasant class. Guomintang troops have turned against workers and peasants and have become the tool of the capitalists and warlords. Workers and peasants must bravely carry on the spirit of February 7 and participate in anti-imperialist and anti-warlord struggles.*³⁴

Another implored:

Opposing the Guomintang is, at present, our principal work. We must cause the masses to strike down the Guomintang's hideous face. We must appeal to the broad masses to oppose the Guomintang. How are we going to do that? Certainly not with the empty slogans of "The Guomintang is a counter-revolutionary party," or "Down with the Guomintang." We must grasp the practical problems of mass gains and losses, and promote these for the masses to see so they just don't rest with "The Communist Party wants to oppose the Guomintang." This is the only way we can inspire mass class-consciousness and self-motivation.³⁵

The emphasis on propaganda revealed a level of sensitivity on the part of the Provincial Committee toward the city's political environ-

*February 7 refers to the anniversary of an incident on 7 February, 1923 when the troops of warlord Wu Peifu and his allies brutally suppressed a CCP-inspired strike along the Beijing-Hankou railway killing thirty-five strikers and severely damaging the work of the CCP's Labor Secretariat.

ment and the safety of Party members. Unfortunately, that sensitivity did not extend to the use of the demonstration—an activity that unnecessarily exposed Party members. While the Committee understood the value of covert propaganda work and gave lip service to the need to protect Party members from public displays, it never actually stopped its policy of sponsoring demonstrations. For example, following Party-sponsored May 30th anniversary protests on Nanjing Road, one of the busiest commercial streets in Shanghai, the Provincial Committee issued a report in which it recognized the danger inherent in this kind of display. It admitted that anti-imperialist sentiments had to be cultivated by activists through propaganda and did not arise spontaneously in mass demonstrations. The Committee also admitted that it was increasingly difficult to find branch and union members willing to expose themselves to arrest by participating in this kind of activity. Nevertheless, it claimed great advances for the Party as a result of the demonstration.³⁶

Although discussing his work in the CCP Organization Bureau in 1929, Wang Fanxi's observations on the futility of demonstrations are appropriate to relate here.

The party decided that it would hold a demonstration on each of the anniversaries of the international workers' movement. In order to get maximum publicity, the demonstrations were always held in the [*sic*] [Nanjing] Road in my area of the city. In one sense these demonstrations were pure farce, but for the revolutionaries themselves the joke often turned out very sour. Having decided on a time and place, we would mobilize as many Party members as we could—never more than a few hundred—and gather furtively on either side of the [Nanjing] Road. At a pre-arranged signal, a handful of comrades would rush out into the middle of the street, shout a few slogans and scatter some leaflets around. If the red-painted lorries of the International Settlement police had still failed to turn up, the rest of us would gather round to swell the numbers and march raggedly down the road for a hundred yards or so shouting slogans until the police arrived, when we scattered in all directions and pretended to be ordinary passers-by. Some of the less fortunate ones would be arrested and dragged into the red lorries, and afterwards handed over to the [Guomindang] to be imprisoned or shot. The demonstration was over, and yet another “high tide” had come and gone. The organizers of these demonstrations were anxious and confused about what role they were supposed to play, and those who were mobilized to take part in them were very bitter. For Party members, the term “commemorating an anniversary” became synonymous with pointless activity.³⁷

What makes the use of demonstrations so interesting is that, even if they could have been held safely, they were, for the most part, useless

because they were not so much “mass movements” as they were “CCP movements.” Marching under banners proclaiming “Protect the CCP,” “Down with imperialism,” and “Down with the Guomindang,” scared off many people who failed to see any connection with their own lives and feared participating in an assembly so clearly linked with the outlawed CCP. Most people only knew Party members to be “dangerous elements” and wanted no part of them. In theory, the Provincial Committee recognized the problem and directed Party operatives to capture the “soul” of the masses through their propaganda campaigns. It argued that brave comrades would move forward at any cost but they were few and far between; hesitant comrades had to be coaxed and convinced.

Although the Provincial Committee had a point, cadres could hardly be blamed for less than enthusiastic responses in an extraordinarily dangerous situation. It was becoming increasingly difficult to undertake any kind of operation in the city. In February 1928, for example, ten members of the Provincial Committee itself, including the head of the Organization Committee, were arrested. Three months later, Sikh police, working for the infamous British Special Branch officer Patrick Givens, arrested Luo Yinong, a member of the CCP Central Committee and the man responsible for various counterespionage operations, as he walked along Gordon Road. He was a prize catch, indeed, because the previous summer Luo together with Evgeni Kojenikov had concocted a plan to assassinate Chiang Kai-shek. (It was aborted by Comintern representative, Mikhail Borodin.) Guomindang authorities demanded that Luo be turned over to them when they heard of the capture. “The leader has been caught! The Communist scourge will disappear,” ran newspaper headlines. The *Shanghai Daily* reported that Chinese authorities promised to pay a reward of one thousand dollars to the International Settlement police for their captive.* Givens promptly handed his prisoner over to Guomindang police, who brutally tortured Luo before executing him.³⁸

The Communists initiated their own “red terror” to counter the Guomindang’s “white terror.” A Shanghai Municipal Police report in the fall of 1927 attributed six murders to Communist assassins between 1 July and 30 September, all believed to be acts of revenge to silence traitors.³⁹ The man responsible for the red terror was Zhou Enlai, head

*Xiang Ying, the general-secretary of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee, believed that Nationalist and foreign concession police treated the arrest of Communists as a source of income. He argued that instead of simply rounding up all Communists at one time (an act Xiang apparently believed the authorities could implement), they chose to arrest Communists one at a time so as not to lose their source of income. Because these policemen had no ideological beliefs, according to Xiang, it was in their best interest to allow the Party to survive. See Zhang Guotao, vol. II, 61.

of the Party's intelligence operation. Zhou had been successful in planting CCP agents in the Guomindang's secret service. Three of those agents, among them future underground leader Li Kenong, eventually rose to important positions in the service. These strategically placed agents provided Zhou with advance information on Guomindang actions. Eventually, the head of the Guomindang secret service, Chen Gefu, became suspicious and purged suspected spies from his unit. The CCP agents escaped but left the Party without informants within the enemy operation.

Zhou then turned his attention to infiltrating other Guomindang operations. He directed the head of the dreaded CCP special services unit (tewu), Gu Shunzhang, to infiltrate police headquarters in the foreign concessions. An active member of the Green Gang, Gu still possessed many gangster traits and cared little about ideological matters. Nevertheless, he was successful in his job because he used his gang connections to hire informants in various police units to obtain information as to where and when raids against the CCP would occur. Gu was also put in charge of eliminating presumed traitors (a task in which he supposedly delighted). It was believed that during the late 1920s, he was responsible for the assassinations of a French Tramway Company inspector who had divulged to French authorities the names of the CCP leaders of the French Tramway Union; two dissenting members of the Zhili Committee of the CCP in Tianjin; and Bai Xin. Bai was the defector who had brought about the arrest of CCP leader Peng Pai in August 1929.⁴⁰

Zhang Guotao relates one example of how Gu Shunzhang and his special services unit operated. The story is also a good example of how lax security was within the Party at this time. When Zhang returned to Shanghai in late 1927, Zhou Enlai asked him to direct the activities of Party members who had escaped from Shantou. Zhang agreed but was dismayed to learn that the secret reception center for the refugees was run by He Zhihua (the former wife of Party leader Zhu De) and He Jiaying. Several Party leaders had warned Zhang that He Zhihua was unreliable but when Zhang passed that information on to Zhou, he dismissed it. Within the year, Party leaders found out that He Zhihua and He Jiaying were, in fact, selling Party rosters to the police. Early one morning, Xiang Ying, the general-secretary of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee, arrived at Zhang's house telling him excitedly, "We've got [He Jiaying and He Zhihua]. [Gu Shunzhang] and several of his men broke into their house this morning while they were still asleep. At gunpoint they surrendered the roster. Then [Gu] and his men shot them to death while one of the men set off a string of firecrackers outside the door, and then [Gu] and his men returned safely."⁴¹

Zhou's second henchman was Kang Sheng, a man who had his own private spy network composed of fellow Shandong natives. Kang was assigned authority over the Central Committee's Organizational Bureau, which controlled matters of cadre administration, discipline, performance review, and policy implementation. Along with the future secretary of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee and leader of the Shanghai underground, Liu Xiao, he was also assigned the task of organizing secret trade unions. Multiple assignments such as these were not unusual in a party whose leadership ranks were as ravaged as were those of the CCP. Shouldering the responsibility for organizational security, Kang issued a series of orders designed to protect Party members. He suspended daytime operations, established an ultrasecret network of liaison agents, and created a system of safe houses inside the foreign concessions. He also reputedly authored an Organizational Bureau pamphlet circulated in May 1928, which instructed underground cadres in various precautionary measures to be taken in the struggle against the Guomindang. The directive stated that each agent was to be linked to only one other Party member, the person to whom the agent reported directly. If agents were unable to infiltrate government bodies, they should resort immediately to bribery in order to gather information. All meetings with paid informers should take place in public places or at secret rendezvous—never at the home of the agent. Kang himself, however, paid little attention to his own orders. As Party leaders became increasingly paralyzed with fear, he moved freely about Shanghai disguised either as a rickshaw puller or as a ticket-seller for the British Tramways Company, never sleeping in a safe house for more than one night and always depending upon his private network of Shandong agents for protection.⁴²

Reforming the Organization

Problems in the Party

It was clear by 1928 that the Party's organizational structure had to be reorganized if it was going to survive. The Central Committee's "Communication #32: Regarding Organizational Work" (30 January, 1928) addressed that need: "One reason why the Party organization has not made many advances up to now is that the work methods of both old and new cadres lack definition. Many Party members, including comrades with major responsibilities, do not thoroughly understand the new policy."⁴³

The document then focused on what the Central Committee believed

to be the Party's worst problem: inept organization. It claimed that the decline in Party membership and the Party's failure to implement successful armed uprisings were both due to bad organization. Certainly flaws in the organization was one crucial problem but, in targeting it, the Central Committee ignored an equally important dilemma: the contradiction between the leadership's goals and what could practically be carried out by the lower levels given the current environment. This kind of disregard underscored the prevailing sentiment among many lower-level cadres that top levels of the Party were woefully ignorant of the realities of mass work and unaware of the futility of the demands they placed upon lower-level operatives. To make matters worse, few experienced cadres had survived the events of the last months and new unseasoned cadres made drastic and often fatal mistakes. The ranks had become so depleted that even if well-run organizations existed, they would fail in many districts and counties because there were not enough cadres to carry out operations. Decimation of the ranks not only diminished the effectiveness of policy and propaganda, but also frightened the masses away from entering the Party or even coming into contact with cadres because they feared for their lives. Nevertheless, Communication #32 ignored the obvious and blamed the failure to recruit new members on the poor quality of inner-Party education and discipline, arguing that cadres lacked the skills to dispel mass fears and entice them into revolutionary activities and Party membership. Moreover, because lower levels of the organization were so dispirited according to the document, they paid scant attention to assuring the safety of Party members in a way that would attract potential new supporters.⁴⁴

Clearly, there were problems—both those the leadership admitted and those they did not. His biases against General-Secretary Qu Qiubai aside, Zhang Guotao was a keen observer of the problems within the organization under Qu's direction. He argued that the Party was in dire need of reform but that Qu and his followers labeled as opportunistic any attempts at change such as building up cells within labor unions and factories, and strengthening Party branches. Instead, they ordered Party members and local organizations to engage in extremely risky operations, which they said would intimidate the enemy and increase the influence of the revolution.

One tactic favored by the leadership was to send Party members to a factory where, during shift changes, they would hide among the arriving and departing workers shouting such slogans as "Armed Uprising!", "Down with the Guomindang!", and "Support the Soviets." Numerous of these operatives were arrested and killed by foreign police and Guomindang secret-service agents. This was only one of numerous

risky assignments given to lower-level operatives. According to Zhang Guotao:

Many CCP members lost their lives in Shanghai because the central authorities forced them to run such risks as circulating leaflets, mounting wall posters, holding risky meetings, and so forth. Some couriers were needlessly killed because they were ordered by the central authorities to run the police check point. Those actions encouraged useless risks and gave members the mistaken idea that security precautions were cowardly measures.⁴⁵

Lower-level Party members were not the only victims of the Party's foolhardy practices. Another tactic employed under Qu's leadership was testing the "Bolshevization" of members by assigning senior members jobs that risked dangerous exposure while employing junior members in decision-making positions. This practice not only destroyed the top ranks of the Party but resulted in an extremely inefficient organization. Xu Baihao was one leading Party member who lost his life to the foolhardy policy. Having served as a member of the Hubei Provincial Committee and the General Labor Union, and as general-secretary of the Hubei Province Labor Union, Xu was as important a Party labor leader as Xiang Ying and Liu Shaoqi. Nevertheless, instead of assigning Xu to a top-level task when he arrived from Hankou in October 1927, Qu Qiubai ordered Xu to a low-level organizing job supposedly to cleanse him of opportunism. Shortly thereafter, the well-known Xu was arrested at a small street gathering of about a dozen workers and subsequently killed.⁴⁶

In the CCP's drive to place blame for its failures anywhere but firmly on the shoulders of the leadership, no one escaped condemnation. The Shanghai Party, for example, was cited for its inability to expand membership. This was a ludicrous accusation because, given the foreign and Guomindang witch hunt taking place in the city, attracting new members to take part in almost assuredly fatal activities was a Herculean task at best. Following the 12 April Coup, the Shanghai Communist Party's ranks had declined from 8,000 members to 1,200. The already shaky organization was further weakened by the strike activity of November 1927, which put Party members at extreme risk of exposure. For example, the heavily industrialized East Shanghai District went from twenty branches to ten in the period following the 12 April Coup with membership falling from 400 to 100.⁴⁷ Other districts suffered a similar fate.

According to "Communication #32", rebuilding the organization was the Party's most immediate problem and, to correct it, the Central

Committee ordered a series of reforms. On 18 January, 1928, it issued a directive to the Jiangsu Provincial Committee commanding it to reform the Shanghai Party and Party organizations in the surrounding counties by 15 February. On that date, a collective provincial meeting would be convened to reform the Provincial Committee itself. The Committee responded to the order by saying that it would be difficult to implement reforms by the designated date because of conditions in the area. According to the Provincial Committee, none of the Shanghai districts except for Zhabei had undergone any kind of reform.* The East Shanghai District had been so thoroughly destroyed as a result of failed strike activity that many branches had collapsed and the secretary to the District Committee had become ill. There were many defections among activists and Party members as people simply quit the Party and disappeared into the nameless mass of the city. As for Party branches in the counties surrounding Shanghai, the Provincial Committee claimed that more than half of them were “opportunistic” organizations and, therefore, worthless. To correct such tendencies, it claimed that it had wanted to send out inspection teams but could not because it lacked financial resources. Two men had been dispatched to inspect six counties but had accomplished nothing because they found the job overwhelming.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the Provincial Committee put reform on the top of its 1928 work plan and published a list of intended changes. These included such lofty goals as abolish commandism, strengthen branch work, eradicate committee factions, practice collective leadership, professionalize Party members, create a strong proletarian base, build up local Party branches, pay attention to inspection work, and revitalize the Jiangsu Provincial Committee organization.⁴⁹ On 6 February, 1928, it sent an outline of what it believed were the principal problems within its organization to all district and county committees with the directive that when members gathered for the collective provincial meeting to discuss reform, they were to have concrete solutions in mind not only for the specific problems within their own districts but also for the problems affecting other districts. In giving such orders, the Provincial Committee demanded the impossible from already harried cadres who had very little, if any, idea about what was going on in districts outside their own. The statement then listed seventy-nine problems the committee saw at the branch and district levels. These ran the gamut from laxity in holding meetings, to bad working conditions, to lack of communications, to lack of record keeping, to bad leadership.⁵⁰

*For a discussion of the reforms that took place in Zhabei, see “Shengwei tonggao diliuhao” [Provincial Committee communication #6], Jiangsu Provincial Archives, Zhong (83)147, 10, 8–9.

The Reforms

How were district committees and branches to carry out reform? The Provincial Committee sent representatives to the Shanghai district committees to report on the new policy. According to Party documents, these envoys talked about past mistakes and invited Party members to join in a general discussion and criticism of problems at all levels of the hierarchy but with specific focus on the work of their group. Another focus was making units more democratic. One substantive criticism of Party work was that Party members had very little say in the decisions made in a hierarchical organization where power was concentrated at the top of each level. Such concentrations of power, many believed, led to corruption. Among the Provincial Committee's reforms was one in which branches and district committees would elect their leaders who would be responsible for formulating work plans to be implemented only after discussions at general meetings of the branch or district committees. The goal was to integrate workers and peasants into leadership positions and weed out petty bourgeois and intellectual leaders. In other words, to become more mass oriented.⁵¹

Even though reform did take place in Shanghai at the district and branch levels, what the Jiangsu Provincial Committee envisioned and what actually occurred were two different things. Reforms advocated in its resolution on Party rectification fell into four general categories. The first two areas targeted for reform—collective leadership and inter-organizational relationships—resulted in no substantive changes in the life of the average Party member and are indicative of the leadership's ignorance of actual conditions within the organization. One consistent complaint from the CCP's Central Committee on down was that the Party organization had become too dependent on individual leaders for direction and, therefore, the run-of-the-mill Party member had absolutely no understanding of work plans or goals. To correct that flaw, the Provincial Committee ordered that all levels practice collective leadership, which meant that when members of one level received work assignments from the next higher level, they were to implement them and then report in detail to the responsible person at the level that made the assignment. Members of the Standing Committee at one level were to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the organization that had jurisdiction over them. Although general secretaries had ultimate responsibility, they were now instructed to meet regularly with their standing committees to discuss policies and plans.⁵² It is indicative of the malaise affecting the CCP at this time that democratization really only meant more reports and meetings.

The second area targeted for reform was inter-organizational relation-

ships. Because of the secrecy surrounding the organizational structure of the Party, the Provincial Committee believed, with apparent good reason, that members failed to understand the relationship of one level to another so, therefore, upper levels provided insufficient direction to lower levels. Moreover, they rarely investigated the work of subordinates—simply trusting that directives would be carried out. Conversely, lower levels rarely reported to upper levels. Even within a particular level, meetings were held on an irregular basis so people had only a vague idea of what was really going on. Party leaders called this the mistake of “extreme democracy” (an odd criticism given the cries for more democracy cited above) to be corrected by strictly mandated organizational procedures. Upper-level comrades would regularly visit lower levels and investigate their work programs. Lower-level comrades would report work progress and problems regularly to upper levels.⁵³ Again, there was little comprehension of real life here. Certainly, the regularization of contact between levels of the hierarchy would provide much-needed coherence to the organization but, given the depletion of the ranks and the unevenness of numbers in the branches, this kind of routinization might prove more troublesome than helpful. In addition, by creating a system whereby Party members had contact with those at different levels in the hierarchy, Party leaders were opening up the whole organization to dangerous levels of exposure.

The third and fourth areas of reform—inner-Party education and the reorganization of branches—were another matter. Unlike the first two areas, reforms in these areas had the potential to advance Party goals, make the organization more coherent, and, most important, save lives. In its “Communication #3” (20 October, 1927), the Jiangsu Provincial Committee went straight to the heart of inner-Party education:

Formerly, the Jiangsu Party only did political agitation and did not have a systematic plan for frequent inner-Party education. There are Party members who do not have a deep understanding of Party principles, organization or rules; Party policy and theory; internal and external political and economic conditions; or conditions within the peasant movement. Because many Party members lack conviction, they take political agitation as struggle. When they suffer setbacks, they become frustrated and leave the Party. Some go to the extreme of betraying the Party or selling it out. . . . The Party is more than just political agitation.⁵⁴

To correct the problem of inner-Party education, the Provincial Committee instituted a training program to be implemented through the propaganda hierarchy. Every level of the organization would undergo a training program but special emphasis would be placed on branches,

among new Party members, and among those responsible for specialized work. Branch secretaries, cell leaders, and activists from the various districts were responsible for organizing these sessions, which would meet twice weekly for four weeks running from ninety minutes to two hours a session. For Shanghai, the program had four goals: (1) raising Party members' political consciousness; (2) elucidating the Party's principles and policies; (3) inculcating the need to participate positively in Party work, follow Party discipline, lead mass struggle, and broaden the Party's influence with the masses; and (4) stressing the importance of maintaining secrecy.

These points encompassed the fourth area of reform: reorganization of branches and their work methods.⁵⁵ The Provincial Committee reasoned that reform was not simply a matter of talk; it was a matter of inspiration. When leaders of district committees devised the daily program of training to be implemented by branch leaders, they had to keep in mind conditions in specific branches. A general framework was useful only if it conveyed general principles in the context of a Party member's daily work. Discussion of Party principles and policies were important at branch-level meetings but only if done in terms of solving practical problems. Moreover, only through the branches could the Party's upper levels learn the specific concerns of the working masses.

There is no indication in 1928 that any of this theory existed in reality. Instead of encouraging local initiative and branch independence, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee concluded that cadres were uninspired because Party life was dull and lonely. Apart from branch and cell meetings, there was almost no contact with comrades and no individual friendships. Therefore, from that time on, the Provincial Committee directed branch leaders to help comrades think of their fellow Party members as brothers and engage in personal friendships. "The sentiments among comrades," a March 1928 document read, "must become the sentiments of personal friends."⁵⁶ Once again, the Provincial Committee had misread the situation and foolishly opened its lower levels to dangerous exposure.

The Provincial Committee did, however, effect positive changes when it turned its attention to what it termed the "unreasonable rules" of branch life. Obviously such trivial rules as no smoking or eating during meetings, or mandatory agreement with the chair had to be changed but the Committee went deeper than that and attempted to correct the more serious problem of branch governance by instituting a series of "unbreakable" rules. Its intent was a good one. What it wanted to do was create a system where all branches had to operate from the same set of rules. Once a system of uniform operating procedures was in place, it reasoned that it was safe to allow branches to solve their own

practical problems. From that time on, with regard to their subordinates, branch leaders were supposed to assign work, discuss it, prepare propaganda materials, supervise members' work, train them in the use of arms, and discipline them. With regard to their superiors, branch leaders were to report on local conditions and criticize the work of those higher up in the organization.

Once it defined the role of branch secretary, the Provincial Committee moved on to redefine the organization itself: branches with more than fifteen people were to establish a secretariat with a secretary; branches with more than eight members were to subdivide into two cells of at least four each and elect cell leaders. Comrades were to communicate with their cell leaders, cell leaders with branch secretaries, and branch secretaries with district committees. The purpose of this reform was to maintain the vertical integrity of the organization. In keeping the interaction between levels limited, the Provincial Committee reasoned that members of one level could not so easily divulge the identities of members at any other level. It was an important rule and one strictly carried out in the 1930s but it contradicted the earlier reform in which the Jiangsu Provincial Committee had opened up the system so that Party members might know each other not only horizontally but also vertically. Because this allowed members of one level to know people at another level, it led to the exposure of top levels of leadership and was one reason why so many of them were arrested in the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

The committee also decreed that branch records must include in addition to the name and code name or number of each member, their professions, native places, and date of entering the Party. In communications and meetings, comrades were to be addressed by their code names or numbers only. Nonmembers, such as members of the Communist Youth League or Party-dominated labor associations, were prohibited from attending cell or branch meetings and members were advised to speak carefully in their presence. Last, when working among outsiders, Party members were to be cautious in revealing their affiliation or any information that might link them to the Party. Given the pervading danger, these were important and potentially life-saving reforms.

We will see throughout this study that creating an effective organization was no easy matter. It is, however, an area that deserves our close attention because, in determining the bureaucratic parameters of the operation, Party leaders at both the local and national level were laying the groundwork for years to come. Harry Harding points out that the Communist Party has an "unusually complex" organizational heritage consisting of Marxist-Leninist theory and Leninist-Stalinist practice

combined with China's legacy of bureaucratic government and the CCP's own revolutionary experience. The common link is the assumption that indoctrinating officials in a coherent set of philosophical principles ensures that they will implement policy in a unified manner. Although the third segment of the organizational heritage—local experience—plays a much greater role in guiding later organizational reforms, it was overshadowed in these early days by the perceived need to balance Marxist-Leninist theory and Leninist-Stalinist practice.⁵⁷

The Communist Youth League

Because the activities of the Communist Youth League were so closely integrated into those of the Party, and because it was, on occasion, the key link between the Shanghai Party, students, and workers, it is appropriate here to take a brief look at the Youth League in the late 1920s.* Formed from the Socialist Youth League in early 1925, the Communist Youth League was considered a reserve force and recruiting ground for the main body of the Party. Although the CCP did recruit from the masses directly, it was the preferred practice for young men and women to pass through the training and tempering program of the Youth League before joining the Party.

Of the two organizations, the Youth League tended to be the more radical and, at times during the mid-to-late 1920s, had more members and exercised more influence than did the parent organization. Nevertheless, despite its strengths, it still considered itself part of a larger whole, modeling its policies and organization on that of the CCP and the Comintern. When, for example, the CCP's Central Committee established the Jiangsu Provincial Committee and Shanghai City Committee with subordinate district committees, branches, and cells in the summer of 1927, the league set up an identical hierarchy. When, in 1928, the main body of the Party undertook a program of reform to make the organization more efficient and attuned to the demands of the community, so did the League. In addition, league reforms sought to strengthen its relationship with the main body of the Party while reinforcing its own organization by increasing league membership. Initially, it succeeded in attracting new members. By September 1927, the league's Jiangsu Provincial Committee was directing 199 branches with a membership of 2,238; of those branches, 87 were in Shanghai with a membership of 1,190. By April 1928, membership had increased to

*The discussion of the Communist Youth League is taken from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai zuzhishi ziliao*, 131–37.

approximately 3,000 members with branches in every district and county in Jiangsu Province. Membership in Shanghai's league had declined to 800 members, an affirmation of just how dangerous life was in the city.

One of the reasons why membership figures fell in Shanghai was that Youth League leaders persisted in promoting potentially dangerous policies such as ordering members to introduce one new person into the organization. In their rush to comply, league members failed to be as cautious about introducing new people as they might have been and, as a result, branches were opened up to dangerous infiltration by enemy agents. League leaders also recklessly continued to organize young people to participate in public assemblies and demonstrations to mark well-known Party anniversaries. That kind of exposure led to mass arrests and caused many of Shanghai's young workers and students to abandon league activities. Its risky behavior eventually resulted in the arrest of the entire Provincial Committee in November 1928 and a complete shutdown of operations. Although the league renewed operations, it never recovered from the mistakes of its foolhardy practices nor regained the membership it had in September 1927. By June 1930, for example, Youth League membership in Shanghai had fallen to 560 members.

Although it considered itself to be the principal ally of the Party, the league was often at odds with the parent organization and there were, in fact, real differences between the two. The league under Ren Bishi, for example, had long opposed the policies of CCP General-Secretary Chen Duxiu.⁵⁸ In "A Report Concerning the Youth League in the Party at Present" published after the Third Representative Meeting of the Provincial Committee (11 December, 1927), the league's leadership complained that because the league lacked representation at all CCP meetings, it failed to understand the Party's important problems and issues. It argued that the Party ignored the league and provided no assistance in expanding and consolidating its organization. The accusations were well-founded because, even though the two organizations worked toward the same goals, they were separate entities. As much as it might depend upon the league, the Party saw it in the same light that it saw other affiliated groups such as labor associations. In the movement to transform the CCP into an ultrasecret Leninist organization, CCP members were admonished to speak and act cautiously in front of non-Party members who might knowingly or unknowingly breach Party security.

The Shanghai Party Organization

The Top Levels

The months following the 12 April Coup signaled the beginning of the CCP's radicalization as Party leaders made a desperate attempt to

“Bolshevize” the badly damaged Party organization. The goal was to create a Party composed of a disciplined elite that would be connected with the masses through an elaborate network of Party cells as opposed to a Party that only operated as a “cog in the apparatus of the State” under the supreme leadership of a single leader.⁵⁹ Prior to becoming general-secretary, Qu Qiubai had been very critical of the Party’s intricate bureaucracy under Chen Duxiu. Rather than correct the problem, the reforms under Qu resulted in an even more complex bureaucracy at both the provincial and city level.

The Jiangsu Provincial Committee/Shanghai City Committee were organizations entirely separate from the Central Committee—the leading organ of the CCP had its headquarters on Shimenyi Road while the thirty members of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee had theirs on what is today Shanyan Road. Structurally, the Provincial Committee was similar to, but not a clone of, the Central Committee (see table 1.2) while Shanghai’s eight district committees were similar to the Provincial Committee.

A general-secretary, appointed by the CCP’s Central Committee, led the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. He was responsible for overall planning and all routine matters involved in governing the Provincial Committee. Each day from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M., he met with various district and Provincial Committee subdivisions to discuss work. His staff of ten—a secretary, one person each for organization and propaganda matters, and seven people for communications—carried out the day-to-day work of running the committee (see table 1.3). Directly below him was the Standing Committee composed of members from each of the five committees making up the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. While the general-secretary’s office supervised work and made assignments

Table 1.2 The Three-Level Hierarchy of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee

-
- A. General-Secretary
 - B. Standing Committee
 - C. Organization Committee
 - Propaganda Committee
 - Labor Committee
 - Military Committee
 - Peasant Committee
-

Source: “Jiangsusheng guanyu changwei zhi jingchang gongzuo ji jilu” (The Provincial Committee on daily work and records of the Standing Committee) in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 2, 64.

Table 1.3 Duties of the General-Secretary's Staff

Secretary:

1. Manage Office
2. Read all documents
3. Read all correspondence
4. Keep minutes at meetings of the Standing Committee

Organization:

1. Responsible for the Shanghai District Committee
2. Responsible for the province's county committees
3. Responsible for investigative work
4. Responsible for governing work

Propaganda:

1. Edit all propaganda articles
2. Plan propaganda campaigns
3. Prepare propaganda articles
4. Implement decisions of the Standing Committee

Communication:

1. Manage communications with all districts
2. Handle all important communications, except those of the Standing Committee
3. Devise communication plans with other party bases
4. Dispatch inter-Committee mail daily at 10 A.M., 2 P.M., and 5 P.M.

Source: "Jiangsusheng mishuchu zuzhi tiaoli" (The Provincial Committee secretariat organizational regulations) in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 2, 260.

among various committees, districts, county committees, and branches, the Standing Committee devoted itself to policy making, educational and propaganda work, and organizational matters. It also served as liaison to the labor movement and the Communist Youth League.⁶⁰

The fact that the general-secretary's office handled the daily work of the Provincial Committee did not mean that members of the Standing Committee got off lightly. In addition to their duties as leading members of various committees, they spent a great deal of time in the bane of any bureaucracy: the meeting. The committee met each Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 4:00–6:00 P.M. with attendance mandatory. Members also met at biweekly meetings of the Provincial Com-

mittee and once a month at a three-hour morning meeting with the general-secretary. Two members of the Standing Committee, in rotation, chaired the weekly Tuesday morning work meeting of the secretaries of the Shanghai District Committees and the general-secretary. The district committee secretaries were divided into four subcommittees—Women, Labor, Counter-revolutionary troops, and the Chinese Aid Society—all of which met weekly (except for the Counter-revolutionary Troops Committee, which met twice a week) with a member of the Standing Committee in attendance at each.* Committee members participated in the actual work of the district committees to which they belonged or were assigned in addition to attending meetings of the Standing Committees of the various District Committees, meetings of “active elements” (such as non-Party labor activists), meetings of Party branches and training sessions for cadres. While Party work in Shanghai occupied most of the Standing Committee’s time, its members were also required to attend meetings concerned with Party work in surrounding counties.⁶¹

As if members of the Standing Committee were not busy enough, they also had a responsibility to the subcommittee of the Provincial Committee to which they belonged. Although the duties and functions of these committees varied, they all contained a common organizational substructure. The Propaganda Committee is a good example (see table 1.4). Like all committees throughout the CCP’s organization, the Propaganda Committee had a leader (*buzhang*), a secretary, and various subcommittees (*ke*). In the case of the Propaganda Committee, these were the propaganda, agitation, and public subcommittees. The propaganda subcommittee initiated campaigns and devised their content; the agitation subcommittee implemented those campaigns; while the public subcommittee took care of technical aspects such as printing and distribution.

In keeping with tradition, the Propaganda Committee held its own round of meetings—with the first starting at 8:00 each morning when the committee head met with the five committee members. The Propaganda Committee also held a twice-weekly general planning meeting, attended by committee members as well as the heads of the Shanghai General Union’s Propaganda Committee, the Communist Youth League’s Propaganda Committee, and the Propaganda Committee for

*The Counter-revolutionary Troop Committee concentrated on organizing Guomindang and warlord troops. The Chinese Association to Relieve Distress will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. As the most important of the CCP-dominated mass organizations, it served as a relief agency for victims of political upheaval, and as a go-between for the CCP and the Communist Youth League, and for CCP members who had lost their connection.

Table 1.4 The Structure and Function of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee's Propaganda Committee

Committee Head:

1. Convene subcommittee meetings
2. Lead the work of subcommittees
3. Investigate branch propaganda work
4. Publish weekly propaganda outlines

Secretary:

1. Collect and arrange various propaganda materials for use inside and outside of the Party
2. Assist committee head in restoring branch letters
3. Protect committee documents
4. Edit committee's weekly reports
5. Keep minutes at committee meetings

Propaganda subcommittee:

1. Implement internal Party propaganda and education
2. Implement external Party propaganda work
3. Draft propaganda outlines
4. Influence social education organs, expanded Party educational work

Agitation subcommittee:

1. Prepare and implement the activities for various commemorative dates
2. Implement agitation work in Party and non-Party movements
3. Implement agitation work for occasional events
4. Plan and command the work of the special services (tewu) unit
5. Implement the daily agitation work of various kinds of mass organizations

Public subcommittee:

1. Edit three daily tabloids
2. Manage printing department
3. Manage distribution work
4. Manage communications work

Source: "Jiangsu shengwei chuanbu guanyu si zhi bayuefen gongzuo gei Zhongyang de baogao" [The Provincial Committee's propaganda committee's report to the Central Committee on work from April to August] in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 1, 77-78.

Work in the Guomindang. The Shanghai District Committees had their own Propaganda Committee made up of one person from each district, and liaisons from the Shanghai General Union, the Communist Youth League, students, the Guomindang, the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress, women, and the Provincial Committee's Propaganda Committee.⁶²

The Districts

The local Shanghai Party organization was composed of districts of varying sizes. The first to be established (July 1927) was the East Shanghai District. A month later, the West Shanghai, Fanan, Pudong, Central Shanghai, and Zhabei districts were established. By early 1929, the East Shanghai District had 27 branches with 164 members; the West Shanghai District had 18 branches with 89 members; the Fanan District had 20 branches with 403 members, the Zhabei District had 30 branches with 253 members, the Pudong District had 9 branches with 40 people (but was raided so often that by October it was down to 7 branches with 25 members); and the Central Shanghai District had 25 branches with 224 members. The Wusong District separated from the Zhabei District in November 1927 and by March 1929 had 14 branches with 238 members.⁶³ From the size of the districts, it is possible to generalize that the Party was making more headway, at this time, in the commercial areas of the city (e.g., Central Shanghai) than in the industrial areas (e.g., East Shanghai), and far more progress in those areas than in the agricultural suburbs (e.g., Pudong). Because the Fanan District contained the safe-haven of the French Concession, it is little wonder that it was the largest district.

Districts were governed by district committees, which were composed of eleven to fifteen people and were organized in a hierarchical manner similar to the Provincial Committee (see table 1.5). For the example given here for the Fanan District, there were subcommittees for propaganda and organization. These were broken down into "troops" and "leagues." Troops were composed of CCP members while leagues incorporated both CCP and non-CCP members. Each district committee also had its own standing committee of three to five people.

Below the District Committees were the branches. In the late 1920s, because of the devastation brought on by the break with the Guomindang, conditions within branches varied drastically. Regardless of the size or status, however, they all had the same organizational structure: secretary, deputy secretary (for larger branches), standing committee, and committees. The position of branch secretary was, perhaps, the

Table 1.5 The Four-Level Hierarchy of the Fanan District (1927)

A. Secretary

- B. Standing Committee (the secretary, heads of the propaganda and organization committees plus two other members of the District Committee)**

C. Propaganda Committee

Education group*
 Promotion troops
 Instigation troops
 Propaganda troops

D. Propaganda Leagues

Students **
 Research and scholars
 Public schools
 Secret Organizations

C. Organization Committee

Investigation troops
 Reconnaissance troops
 Arms training troops
 Skilled workers troops

D. Organization Leagues

Peasant aid
 Aid Society
 Self-defense
 Secret labor unions

Secretariat

Cell Meetings

Source: "Jiangsu shengwei zuzhi baogao" [The Provincial Committee's organizational report] in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 1, 418; *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai zuzhishi ziliao*, 105.

* Among all these groups there was the troop or group leaders' meeting and the meeting of responsible people.

** Among these groups there was a branch responsible person meeting.

most critical position in the entire Party organization since it was his or her responsibility to maintain solidarity with the masses through good programs, personnel assignments, and recruitment techniques. Where he or she existed, the deputy secretary took charge of guiding the actual work of the rank and file—recruiting, training, and coordinating assigned tasks.⁶⁴ Committees varied depending upon location and conditions, but in accordance with the 1927 Shanghai Organizational Work Plan, every branch had committees for propaganda and agitation. Branch members were supposed to work independently, be thoroughly trained in covert operations, and be prepared to participate in an armed uprising at a moment's notice.⁶⁵ March 1928 statistics on Party activities in the West Shanghai District provide an interesting example of the varied sizes of branches in four factories and the status of work in each:

1. Name of factory: Jihua
Number of cadres: 4–5
Members in branch: 30
Meetings convened: temporarily disbanded
Mass work: comrades can begin work
Collection of fees: can collect
Notes: collection has already begun
2. Name of factory: Tongguang
Number of cadres: 3–4
Members in branch: 30
Meetings convened: can begin to convene
Mass work: 8–9 members can begin work
Collection of fees: can collect
Notes: not yet begun collection of fees
3. Name of factory: Huaxin
Number of cadres: unknown
Members in branch: 3
Meetings convened: can begin
Mass work: inside the factory not much; outside the factory a great deal
Collection of fees: can collect
Notes: not yet begun collection of fees
4. Name of Factory: Puyi
Number of cadres: 3
Members in branch: 13
Meetings convened: unsafe

Mass work: no work

Collection of fees: became a problem

Notes: none⁶⁶

At the very bottom of the Party organization were cells of five to eight people (the ideal size but sometimes larger or smaller) with a cell leader and a deputy. This was the only Party unit that actually interacted with the masses and was where the real work of the Party was done. According to a 1925 Central Committee circular:

The cell is the kernel of the Party among the masses. All policies and plans of the Party must go through Party cells before they can materialize. Otherwise, even if the Party had very sound policies and plans, they would be mere empty words. We depend entirely on Party cells to explain the Party's policies and plans and to carry out propaganda and agitation among the masses.⁶⁷

Each cell met weekly at a given time and place and, although it was unnecessary for the cell leader to serve as chair at every meeting, it was his or her responsibility to "designate comrades to serve as the chairman by rotation so that they may practice the techniques of chairmanship." Like meetings at higher levels, cell meetings followed a standard procedure. After a political report, members discussed concrete procedures to realize the Party's policies, methods to expand membership, the distribution of work, and common problems. The meeting closed with a report and discussion on life inside and outside of the Party and any proposals for furthering Party work.⁶⁸

Finances

To function, the branches, District Committees, and the Provincial Committee all had to have funds. Members of the Central Committee earned twenty-five dollars each month while members of District Committees earned nineteen, roughly the average workers' wage. Except for those at top levels, Party members were expected to hold outside jobs not only to support themselves but also to provide cover for their Party work. The problem according to Wang Fanxi, was that in China's cities, professional revolutionaries frequently outnumbered the rank-and-file members who held jobs and paid dues each month to support the professionals. Because there were so many professionals and so few rank-and-file members, there was never enough money to go around.

For many longtime Party members, being a revolutionary was the only way they knew how to make a living. According to Wang Fanxi,

Zhang Guotao reportedly commented to Party member Peng Shuze, "You can get by on translation work, but how could I earn a living if I left the Party?" Wang believed that lack of employment opportunities for those who left the Party was one reason why professional revolutionaries toed the Party line even when it was as blatantly wrong as it was under Qu Qiubai.⁶⁹

If lower-level Party members received any funds at all, they received them according to need not according to rank. Zhang Guotao claimed that the goal of this policy was to keep the rank-and-file "close to the toiling masses. . . . We wanted comrades receiving the smallest allowances to feel proud of the fact and to be able in this way to demonstrate the spirit of a worthy Communist. But the Party would take care of the emergency needs of all comrades whether they drew an allowance or not."⁷⁰

The Jiangsu Provincial Committee and its subsidiaries received some money from the Central Committee and from the Comintern (channeled through the Metropolitan Trading Company, an import-export business set up by the Comintern), but most of its funds came through membership dues assessed according to the Party member's monthly income or class status (see table 1.6).⁷¹ District committees and county committees were responsible for collecting and turning over dues to the Provincial Committee, which allotted money to the districts and counties, which, in turn, allotted money to the branches. Considering the shaky position of the Party in Shanghai and Jiangsu and the decline in membership, it is not surprising that there were times when the Provincial Committee's funds were insufficient. On 14 January, 1928, a member of the Commit-

Table 1.6 Dues Structure for Party Members

Workers	5 cents /month
Peasants, soldiers, police	2 cents /month
Incomes of:	
20-30 yuan	20 cents /month
30-60 yuan	\$1.00 / month
60-80 yuan	3% of income
80-100	5% of income
100-200	10% of income
above 200	special tax

The unemployed, hospitalized, jailed, or Communist Youth League members paid no dues.

Source: "Jiangsu shengwei tonggao diershibahao" [Announcement #28], in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 2, 131.

tee wrote to his counterpart in the Central Committee pleading for more money:

To: (code name)

At present the cotton mills of Shanghai have, one after another, stopped production. Workers are unemployed. We are definitely rallying workers to demand labor organizations and we require some expense money. Each person taken into custody by the Guomindang or taken into custody by roving bands of soldiers should have some expense money, as should those who have participated in the struggles. Please ask the Central Committee to approve this special expense of 1000 yuan in addition to the 1000 you have already committed to us. Okay?

Signed: (code name)⁷²

While some money went to special expenses such as helping workers through strikes and aiding the families of imprisoned or deceased comrades, most of the money collected from Party members went to maintaining the bureaucracy and to paying the salaries of the professional revolutionaries. A good illustration of the kind of daily expenses incurred is found in the expense report submitted to the Central Committee in November 1927 (reprinted in part in table 1.7). Not surprisingly, the largest portion—1,900 yuan—of the 7,814 yuan budget went to propaganda work. Most of the other expenses such as office expenses of 829 yuan for the Provincial Committee's secretariat or district committee expenses (ranging from 334 yuan for Fanan to 168 yuan for Pudong) seem quite ordinary. Nevertheless, the report does provide some insights into Party life and dispels the notion that revolutionaries lived spare and poverty-stricken lives. Cadres who worked in the secretary's office in Shanghai, for example, received living allowances of up to 50 yuan a month (almost three times the average worker's salary of 19 yuan) and had the luxury of servants (who at 15 yuan a month cost only slightly more than the telephone).

The general-secretary's office received all expense reports and was also responsible for allocating money to the Shanghai districts and surrounding counties. Expenditures below 10 yuan were approved by the general-secretary while expenditures above 50 yuan had to be approved by the Standing Committee. (There is no mention of who approved expenditures between 10 and 50 yuan.) By the fifth of each month, expense reports for all levels of the Party hierarchy had to be submitted to the proper reporting agency. By the twenty-fifth of each month, budgets for the following month were due. The general-secretary's office was required to make budgets for district and county committees available between the fifth and twenty-fifth of each month.⁷³

**Table 1.7 Expense Report for the Jiangsu Provincial Committee
(November 1927)**

A. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee	
I. Individual Outlays	<u>Yuan</u>
a. Office of the Secretariat	829
b. Organization Bureau	298
c. Propaganda Bureau	269
(1) Printing	492
(2) Distribution	226
d. Women	70
e. Communications	263
f. Livelihood expenses for members of Secretariat Office	305
g. Livelihood expenses for members of Organization Bureau	140
II. Outlays for Districts	
a. East Shanghai	329
b. West Shanghai	313
c. Zhabei	334
d. Fanan	273
e. Central Shanghai	224
f. Pudong	168
B. Budget for Shanghai	
I. Office of the Secretary	
a. Rent	30
b. Telephone	10
c. Servants	15
d. Miscellaneous	10
e. Residences	59
f. Livelihood expenses (individual names and sums from 20-50 yuan)	
II. Organization Bureau	
a. Rent	24
b. Miscellaneous	3
c. Livelihood expenses	100
III. Joint Offices	54
IV. Communications Bureau	103
V. Documents Office	21
VI. Workers/Soldiers Bureau	392
VII. Production (this included breakdown according to industry)	105
VIII. Children and youth	120
IX. Propaganda expenses	<u>1,900</u>
Total Daily Expenses	4,814
Total Special Expenses	3,000

(continues)

(Table 1.7 continued)

C. Budget for the West Shanghai District (budgets differed according to size of district)

	<u>Yuan</u>
I. Secretariat	25
II. Responsible person for organization	20
III. Caojiadu branch organization *	19
IV. Propaganda	20
V. Women	20
VI. Women's secretary	19
VII. Skilled workers' secretary	19
VIII. Xiaoshadu communications *	19
IX. Caojiadu communications *	<u>17</u>
Total:	197

Source: "Jiangsu shengwei, Shangzong shiyiyuefen yusuan ji Jiangsusheng gongzuo ren yuan he shengyao tongjibiao" [The Provincial Committee and the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions November budget and the Jiangsu work, manpower, and livelihood statistical report] in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 1, 345-64.

*Xiaoshadu and Caojiadu were the largest industrial areas in the district so were singled out for special funds.

Reporting Mechanisms

The Shanghai Organizational Work Plan for September 1927 called for joint committees of various district committees to meet biweekly, district committees weekly, and branch committees every three days. All these groups were required to keep statistics on mass strength, arrests and deaths, participation in political struggles, and variations in membership rolls. The daily records of branches had to be signed by either the branch head or the head of the organization committee. Each level of the bureaucracy was also responsible for submitting a weekly work report to the next higher level (see table 1.8). For the district committees in Shanghai, that meant including information on the "origins, events and results of struggles" as well as narrative and statistical data on organizing, the labor movement, the peasant movement, the counterrevolutionary troop movement, the expansion of the Chinese Aid Society, and the Communist Youth League. Finally, the weekly report was to include criticism of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee.

One problem Shanghai Party branches faced in 1927 and early 1928 was a dearth of daily activities worth reporting. It was far too dangerous to undertake most day-to-day operations, so branches were left without anything to do or, perhaps equally important, anything to report.⁷⁴ That fact did not induce Party leaders to simplify the complexities of the reporting mechanisms, however. When the bureaucracy failed to func-

Table 1.8 Shanghai District Committee's Instructions for Writing Weekly Reports (1928)

1. Each week the District Committee must write a report depicting the said district's work
 2. The report must contain the origins, events, and results of struggles that occurred during that week
 3. A week's organization phenomena
 - a) Pluses or minuses of numbers and other statistics
 - b) Meetings convened or participated in
 - c) Additions or deletions of masses under the influence or leadership of the Party
 - d) Conditions of reformed branches
 - e) Comrades' activities
 - f) Statistics on newly emerging or backward elements
 4. A week's propaganda and educational work
 - a) Propaganda articles distributed and other statistics
 - b) Contents of various meetings and other materials
 - c) Names, educational materials used, and other statistics for training sessions
 - d) Temporary propaganda essentials
 - e) Party instigated mass meetings
 5. A week's labor movement work
 - a) The relationship between the Party and workers associations
 - b) Additions or deletions of workers and mass organizations
 - c) Details of the week's struggles
 - d) Activities of comrades in labor associations
 - e) Additions or deletions in reactionary cliques' labor associations
 - f) Expansion and advances of workers and military meetings
 - g) Conditions in work with women
 6. Criticisms of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee
-

Source: "Jiangsusheng wei guanyu gequ meizhou gongzuo baogao dagang" [The Provincial Committee report outline for the weekly reports of various districts], in *Jiangsu geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 2, 38-39.

tion efficiently (as was claimed in the summer and fall of 1928) and efforts were made to correct problems within it to make it more efficient and to make bureaucrats more attuned to issues of mass concern, there was little effort to alter the structure of the bureaucracy itself.

It was only during the mid-1930s when the Provincial Committee was

disbanded and the city's Party was cut off from the CCP's bureaucratic hierarchy that the local bureaucracy broke down enough to allow districts and branches the freedom to implement policies directed at local conditions. In the late 1920s, however, the bureaucracy proved to be more trouble than it was worth. Nevertheless, it is clear from the discussion of the Party hierarchy, its finances, and reporting mechanisms that the top levels of the Provincial Committee wielded enormous power. When one fully comprehends the extent of power exercised at the top, then the intensity and ferocity of struggles for leadership described in the next chapter can be better appreciated.

Conclusion

The CCP sought to come to terms with its new environment during the period when Qu Qiubai served as general-secretary. That meant repeated reforms of a complex bureaucratic organization whose decimated membership rolls and outlaw status had changed the rules of the game. Except for inner-Party education and reorganization of the branches, the reforms implemented by the Jiangsu Provincial Committee were largely superficial and did not address the real needs of lower-level operatives working directly with the masses. Added to this was a dizzying set of policy changes instituted from above, few of which had any bearing on the current environment of Shanghai. Ignoring concrete realities, Party leaders continued to make the organizing of labor the backbone of policy and to call for armed uprisings among workers and peasants. The combination of all these factors made life very perilous for members of the Shanghai Communist Party. Traditional activities such as strikes and demonstrations were futile given the highly volatile situation in the city and exposed cadres to much danger. Nevertheless, Party members were provided few alternatives by higher-ups. Moreover, reforms had opened up the organization to highly risky interaction between the various levels of the hierarchy. In a world where ironclad loyalty, precise instructions, and efficient organization meant the difference between life and death, Shanghai cadres were left confused about policies, which, even with more precise instructions and clearer organization, were unworkable.

In theory, the CCP was moving in the right direction in its efforts to rebuild the devastated Party into a Leninist organization of professional revolutionaries. Moreover, the idea that cadres had to identify with community goals was absolutely correct. Nevertheless, as often is the case, theory did not conform to reality and, in Shanghai at least, these ideas were not put into practice. To make matters worse, leaders at the

top levels of the CCP and those in the Jiangsu Provincial Committee appeared incapable of devising a consistent policy for operational procedures and, instead, issued a series of contradictory instructions that just added to the chaos among the ranks. As failure piled upon failure and cadres endured one reform after another, lower levels of the Party organization found themselves adrift in a sea of imprecision and ignorance.

One of Qu Qiubai's principal criticisms of Chen Duxiu was that the Party organization under his leadership had become a rigid bureaucracy with set procedures and no local initiative. He also charged that Chen had failed to apply Marxism-Leninism creatively and had adhered to the inflexible ideological formula of (1) propagandizing, (2) organizing, and (3) armed uprisings. This kind of intractability, he argued, had led to the disastrous experiences of the Party in 1927.⁷⁵ Qu had a point certainly but, under his stewardship, nothing changed. Although writing about the relationship between the state and the village during the Republican era, Prasenjit Duara makes a point that is also applicable to the CCP during the Qu Qiubai era. Duara argues that there was a direct correlation between the increase in size of the bureaucracy at the top levels and the decrease in its ability to control the lower levels.⁷⁶ This is exactly what happened in the period under study in this chapter. Wrapped up in creating a centralized power structure and in reforming the existing organization to conform to that structure, Party leaders lost all touch with the world in which lower-level Party members operated.

Chapter 2

The Shanghai Party Emerges (1928–1931)

The attempts to streamline the Party organization during the first half of 1928 had the right intent but were unworkable in an organization bound by unrealistic policies and goals. All the Central Committee and the Jiangsu Provincial Committee had done was to create a confusing medley of reforms implemented in a contradictory way. Employing lower-level cadres, who were unsure of their role in a bureaucracy in constant flux, to rally a subdued and largely detached working class to participate in armed uprisings built around ill-defined ideological tenets was just not going to work. Up to this time, CCP attempts to implement Stalin's ever-changing policies for China had been futile. This string of failures—which included the Autumn Harvest Uprising, the Nanchang Uprising, and the Guangzhou Insurrection—had produced contending groups within the Party, all confident they had the answer to China's problems and all ready to take control. Pressure increased both inside and outside of the Party with factionalism generating as great a threat to the CCP's survival as did the Guomindang.

Prior to the Sixth Party Congress (18 June–11 July, 1928), work plans issued to lower levels put forth a nebulous call for mass organizing while awaiting revolutionary opportunities. In its directive on the 1 May commemoration, the Jiangsu Provincial Executive Committee advised cadres: "Each person must shoulder the responsibility of revolution, expand class consciousness, and unite class strength to oppose the attacks of imperialists, warlords and capitalists." To do this they should

Expand the land revolution in rural villages. Advance workers' and peasants' seizure of cities and the overturning of the capitalist class. This year's May 1 must make people understand why cities have had such terrible white terror. . . . Workers, peasants and soldiers must study methods of adaptation so that they can begin to seize the cities.¹

In Shanghai, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee had redefined the city's Party organization in an attempt to create a safer and more efficient body. But the efficacy of that group did not matter if cadres were ordered to implement a policy that would be disastrous in the city's current environment. It was during these years that Guomindang and foreign police joined forces to crack down on the Communists. Communist Party members were assaulted on all fronts. In describing Shanghai policing efforts at this time, Frederic Wakeman comments that there was "a growing obsession with Communist subversive activity, in contrast to the previous three years when ordinary criminals and social order were the Chinese police force's primary worry." He attributes the cause of this new paranoia to "the growth of Communist soviet in the interior." Measures were implemented that severely curtailed freedom of speech and assembly. In early 1931, the Nationalist government promulgated the Emergency Law for the Punishment of Crimes against the State, which stated that anyone found guilty of subversive activities or inciting others to traitorous activities would be sentenced to death. In politically active Shanghai, this was *carte blanche* to go after anyone even suspected of being a "red."²

While building a top-secret organization of professional revolutionaries in the Leninist mold was an admirable goal, the Provincial Committee ignored the real danger. As long as it adhered to the Comintern's view that revolution was just around the corner (made in part to refute Trotsky's claim that the next revolutionary wave was a long way off), the Provincial Committee was undoing any good it had done when it reformed the Shanghai Party organization. Even if it had succeeded in constructing a viable base, the men and women who composed that base could not survive when they were continually being exposed to extremely hazardous conditions. Demands that cadres seek support from the working classes by organizing in factories and schools (all carefully watched by enemies of the Party) and by participating in large demonstrations wrote the death warrant for many members of the Shanghai Party.

Moreover, having established in the late 1920s and early 1930s the closest thing China had seen to a national government in years, Guomindang strength was at its height. Nevertheless, while Chiang Kai-shek had succeeded in mobilizing nationalism, he had never fulfilled its demands. What he had done, among other transgressions, was to alienate the bourgeoisie in cities like Shanghai with his monetary extortions and economic policies. In the late 1920s, Chiang unleashed a reign of terror against Shanghai's capitalists in order to raise the money he needed to maintain his army and complete the Northern Expedition. The Nationalists confiscated the property of the chairman of the Shang-

hai Chamber of Commerce, for example, when the man refused to provide the bulk of a \$10 million loan, forcing him into exile. They coerced businessmen and corporations into buying millions of yuan worth of short-term government bonds. They also kidnapped children of industrialists and returned them only after their families made a "donation" to the Guomindang of anywhere up to 670,000 yuan.³ While these and other actions caused many among the elite to turn against Chiang Kai-shek, the bourgeoisie remained unreceptive to an alliance with the Communists (whom they considered ideologues not patriots) until after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Moreover, CCP leaders never viewed the bourgeoisie as potential partners and continued to consider them enemies of the revolution. Instead of reacting to the growing conservatism of the Guomindang by becoming more moderate and, therefore, more attractive to a broader range of the population, the Party became more radical, thereby becoming less rather than more, appealing to the elite.

In Chapter 1, we examined provincial and city Party organizations governed by a leadership who, as loyal Communists, were unable or unwilling, to refute the unrealistic policies of the Central Committee and the Comintern and pursue independent action. Between the last half of 1928 and 1931, the situation changed as a faction of the city's Party organization clashed openly with Party leaders over policies the dissenters believed to be ill-suited to the environment of Shanghai. This was the first of what would become a pattern in the 1930s when the Shanghai Party took what it believed to be the unworkable portions of policy as defined by the CCP's Central Committee and accommodated it to conditions in the city. Such actions advanced the cause of the revolution for the first time since the 12 April Coup. The divergence of the city Party organization from its superiors began at the end of October 1928 and was complete when the Shanghai Party was cut off from the CCP following the Central Committee's evacuation of Shanghai in 1933.

Li Lisan in Power

The Rise of Li Lisan

To understand the factionalism that came to divide the Party organization, it is important to look at CCP politics both before and after the Sixth Congress. Held during the summer of 1928 in a village outside Moscow, the Sixth Congress was the Comintern's show. Qu Qiubai's extreme leftist position of permanent revolution lost out to supporters

of Stalin's new more "moderate" position as interpreted by his China expert, Pavel Mif. According to the revised view, the rural question was the central concern of the revolution; nevertheless, crucial to that issue was the CCP's recapture of the proletarian base in urban areas.⁴ To further complicate the problem, it was decided that no revolutionary tide presently existed in China even though the prospect was there. To prepare for that possibility, it was essential to undertake intense organizational work in "united fronts from below" (i.e., with the masses) rather than in "united fronts from above" (i.e., with those in authority).

Cementing the change in policy were resolutions on the organization of soviets, land revolution, the peasant question, and military affairs; and the adoption of a new constitution, which tightened Party discipline and reinforced democratic-centralism. A political resolution passed at the same time proclaimed China to be part of the third stage of world revolution during which renewed revolutionary activity would take place in the West accompanied by anti-imperialist uprisings in the East. The primary tasks of the CCP in this stage were to abolish the system of private landowning and to unify China by driving out the imperialists. It was the opportune time to establish soviets, confiscate foreign enterprises, achieve better working conditions for urban workers, give land to peasants and soldiers, and unite with the world proletariat. First and foremost, however, Party leaders should realize "the slogans of the agrarian struggle."⁵

The Sixth Congress created real dissension within the ranks of the CCP both in the Soviet Union and in China. One of the leading forces of opposition was Wang Ruofei, a member of the Chinese delegation to the Comintern and a Trotsky sympathizer who led a group bound together by practical experience and the ideas of former General-Secretary Chen Duxiu. Although Wang tried to enlist the former general-secretary in his cause, Chen remained steadfastly above the fray. Although Wang Ruofei's group successfully toppled Qu Qiubai and Li Wei-han, they found the alternative—Li Lisan—no better.⁶

The dissension within the ranks of the CCP was unfortunate because those Party leaders who returned to China after the congress found a climate more favorable than the one they had left. The CCP was beginning to recover its strength in urban areas and was rapidly expanding in China's rural areas. The Red Army and soviet areas were growing steadily and by the end of 1929, were emerging as the most dynamic forces of the communist movement.⁷

To accommodate the new situation and the changes in policy resulting from the Congress, the top level of leadership in the CCP was realigned. The powerful trio of Zhang Guotao, Wang Ruofei, and Qu Qiubai were detained in Moscow after the congress. Xiang Zhongfa, a

forty-year-old laborer from Hubei whose chief assets were a proletarian class background and membership in neither the left nor right wings of the CCP, was named general-secretary. According to Zhang Guotao, as soon as Xiang was selected, he was "forgotten by everybody due to his incompetence."⁸ If Xiang Zhongfa was as inept as Zhang Guotao contends then real power had to lay elsewhere. In this case, it was concentrated in the hands of Li Lisan, the stubborn and arrogant labor leader from Hunan who returned from Moscow as an alternate member of the Politburo but who, in the absence of one of the full members, filled the vacancy.⁹ Given Li Lisan's background, it was not surprising that at a time when the CCP was placing increased emphasis on the peasant movement, he remained convinced that the revolution must be led by the proletariat.

The theme of the Sixth Congress was the need to correct Qu Qiubai-created weaknesses in the Party: loss of fighting power, destruction of Party cells, decline in Party membership, growth of "cliqueism," laxity in training, and sloppiness in propaganda.¹⁰ All these would disappear, the leadership concluded, in the third stage of the revolution when the Party would mobilize the masses to prepare for the inevitable upsurge of a new revolutionary wave. As the CCP moved further to the left, it made additional reforms in the organization and expanded the workers' movement.¹¹

Because our study focuses upon the Shanghai Party, I will examine the new direction as it was interpreted by the Jiangsu Provincial Committee—the policy-making organ for the local organization. According to its report on the congress:

The basic responsibilities of the political program are to eliminate: 1) the landlord class and feudal remnants by thoroughly implementing a land revolution, and 2) imperialism thereby uniting China. These are mutually related and cannot be separated. The Party must prepare for armed revolution; overthrow the anti-revolutionary capitalist class and Guomindang political rule; and establish a soviet political government run by workers, peasants and soldiers.¹²

The document then justified the changes:

The Congress has correctly analyzed the problem [of the lack of success in China]. The old revolutionary high tide is past and now the central responsibility is to unite revolutionary strength and prepare for a period of armed uprisings. [Cadres] must do the kind of propaganda work necessary for armed uprising and prepare for the last victory. This change in policy conforms to the change in the revolutionary situation.¹³

In view of the new emphasis on the land revolution, what should the Communist Party in Shanghai do? The Jiangsu Provincial Committee believed that the Shanghai Party's role in the new wave was to obtain the support of "great numbers of the working class." This was to be done by expanding organizing efforts in the city's labor associations, an activity that had failed all too often in the past and for which cadres had no concrete instructions for implementation this time around.¹⁴ In September 1928, the Provincial Committee issued a statement of the organization's present and future work responsibilities. Continued reform was essential at all levels of the Party in order to penetrate the masses and utilize their strength to lead the daily struggle. In addition, the organization would continue to oppose the Guomindang and the imperialists through a step-by-step program devised by the Committee. Finally, in a manner left undefined, cadres in Shanghai and Nanjing were directed to adapt their work to the increasingly important peasant movement and pay closer attention to "old soldiers of the revolutionary troops."

That the reforms undertaken not six months before had been inadequate to the task was obvious in the Central Committee's directive "The Present Weakness of the Party Organization and the Central Task of the Organization," which stated, "Incidents in which [P]arty members are becoming restless and renegade giving up themselves [*sic*] in treachery are daily increasing; all this represents the continued trend of enfeeblement."¹⁵ To correct these flaws the Provincial Committee called for a further round of reform. "In practical work," it wrote, "we must reform the party's old viewpoints and customs, adopt new work methods and nurture new work customs."¹⁶ This was to be done through training sessions to increase cadres' political and class consciousness. What the committee meant by "new customs" remained vague and is indicative of the confusion and lack of direction for lower-level work. Nevertheless, strengthening the weak organization became the dominant theme in the Party throughout 1929. At the Second Plenum in June, the Central Committee again brought forth the need to reinforce the organization in a statement that provided more general direction than concrete guidance on how to implement policy:

The Party organization is still quite weak. But the Party's work during the past nine months has attempted to fix this situation. It has begun to penetrate into the productive working masses; to pay attention to the qualitative reform of Party members; to establish production branches; to rebuild local Party organizations, Party professionalism, and the various provincial watchdog groups; and to correct the Party's relationship with mass organizations.¹⁷

There is no anecdotal or statistical evidence that any of these purported advances had been made. Nevertheless, statements such as this one show where the Central Committee believed reforms should be targeted. Not only did it think that corrections were necessary within the Party organization itself, it concluded that it was imperative to redesign the Communist Youth League as well: "The Youth League is still not leading the country's working masses. Its work line is that which is directly opposed [to leading the masses]." ¹⁸ Given the fact that the entire top level of Youth League leadership had recently been arrested causing all League operations to end, these criticisms demonstrate how out of touch CCP leaders were with the activities of the lower levels.

In Shanghai, redesigning an organization that had just undergone a major reform was not the answer. The problem lay in the lack of substantive, and relatively safe, areas for Party mobilizing. Muddled in the calls for revolution, condemnations of the bourgeoisie, and continued infatuation with the proletariat was the demand for anti-imperialist alliances. Here was the bud that would flower in the 1930s, the basis of the survival of the Shanghai Communist Party. However, only a few, such as local Party leader He Mengxiong, recognized the true possibilities of that call, and when they tried to convince others of its importance, they met with strong and, in He's case, fatal opposition. This was not the first time that leaders of the city's Party organization departed from the Party line over imperialism. As we saw in the last chapter, the previous year Zhang Guotao and Xiang Ying, secretary of the Shanghai City Committee, along with most of the city Party organization's leading members had argued unsuccessfully for active Party involvement in the city's nascent anti-Japanese movement. ¹⁹

There was, however, a critical difference between the way the Comintern and the Central Committee played the anti-imperialist card at this time and the way it was eventually played by the city's Party organization. CCP leaders called for gaining mass support in an anti-imperialist struggle. An 11 December, 1928 Provincial Committee communication outlining the Party's policy for opposing imperialism reinforced this idea in seven points:

1. The struggle between the proletariat and capitalist is still necessary.
2. The authority of the proletarian class is not naturally consolidated.
3. The anti-imperialist movement must be united with the peasant struggle and the anti-warlord struggle under proletarian leadership.
4. The slogans of capitalists [promising] improvement are the mortal enemy of our appeals to the working class.
5. The anti-Japanese movement must be allied with the anti-imperialist movement.

6. Increase anti-Japanese organizations in various locations and employ revolutionary slogans of mass opposition to the Guomindang.
7. Strengthen the existence of workers' associations and demand the freedom of mass movements.²⁰

The concept of relying upon the working class to implement a policy that failed to tangibly better their lives was foolish. Only when the city's Party organization made its anti-imperialist call multiclass did this tactic make any headway.

All struggles, anti-imperialist or otherwise, were linked to restoring Party control over the proletariat in order to prepare this group for the forthcoming revolution. "Resolutions on the Spirit of the Second Plenum of the Central Committee" (9 July, 1929) made that orientation clear when it defined the Party's primary goal as enlarging the proletarian base of the Party.²¹ The best way to "penetrate the ranks of industrial workers," according to Li Lisan, was through public strikes and demonstrations: "the Party must seize every opportunity to use public means to do work in propaganda and agitation, to summon the masses to struggle publicly in order to be able to win over the broad masses to the influence of our Party."²² It was also the best means, in his opinion, to prepare for the revolution. In advocating such an approach, Li seriously misjudged popular support for CCP programs and appeared blind to the fact that organizing among the proletariat was futile at this point in the Party's development and in the current environment, and that strikes and demonstrations had proved too dangerous. According to Wang Fanxi, in Li Lisan's mind, ordering members of the local organization to occupy the streets of Shanghai was the same as ordering members of the newly formed Red Army to occupy Changsha or Wuhan.²³ Li failed to see the futility of directing largely untrained Party members to take control of a well-policed city via a disillusioned working class. When the call: "The time for insurrection has come! Organize yourselves!" was raised in 1930, only 125 Shanghai workers responded by enlisting in the Party's Red Guards.²⁴

In fairness to Li Lisan, he was in an extremely difficult position. On the one hand, like Qu Qiubai, he had to comply with the unrealistic policies of the Comintern while, on the other hand, he faced the indifference of the working class. If the CCP had championed economic causes instead of political demonstrations and strikes, it might have retained more proletarian support than it did. But it did not and its lack of response to the issues of real importance meant working-class alienation from the Party. Li Lisan refused to accept the fact that the labor movement had fallen far behind the agrarian movement and con-

tinued to focus on proletarian support.* Despite the emphasis on the land revolution, for example, the CCP's Organization Bureau spent more than two-thirds of its time on organizing workers in Shanghai and the remaining one-third on all the rest of China.²⁵

The Li Lisan Line

Between 1928 and 1930, despite working-class apathy, the CCP leadership directed cadres to speed up the revolution in China's urban areas. What would start as a revolutionary upsurge in China's rural regions would, Li believed, rapidly become a proletarian-led urban revolution. In fact, for the first time since late 1927, there was talk of using the newly created Red Army to take China's largest cities. Li believed so strongly in events "soon to occur" and their implication for worldwide revolution that he demanded the USSR send troops through Manchuria and Mongolia to foment the Chinese revolution. This belief in the imminent revolution was later seen as one of Li Lisan's most grievous theoretical errors.

The radical shift coincided with the Comintern's revised view of the world situation. It was a time of great change: the onset of the world depression and unrest in the capitalist countries, renewed fighting between Chiang Kai-shek and various warlords, the Soviet intervention in Manchuria to protect its interests in the Chinese Eastern Railway, and the challenges to Stalin's power by Trotsky and Bukharin. The factional struggles between Stalin and Bukharin and between Stalin and Trotsky had a significant impact on the CCP.

The Stalin-Trotsky dispute will be discussed in the fourth section of this chapter, but it is appropriate here to say a few words about the Stalin-Bukharin conflict. Bukharin was the leading Comintern force at the Sixth Congress and instrumental in the formation of the CCP's new Politburo. But by the end of 1928, he was under attack by Stalin for his "rightist" tendencies and "rich peasant line." The antirightist drive taking place in Moscow could not help but affect policy in China. In February 1929, the Executive Committee Communist International (ECCI) issued a letter to the CCP Central Committee informing it that, while signs of a revolutionary high tide were visible in China, there was currently a dangerous rightist trend in the Party. Eight months later, in October, it sent another letter to the Central Committee, which confirmed the existence of the revolutionary high tide and, once again, warned against the dangers of rightism.²⁶

*For examples of how this emerges in Li's writings, see articles by him in the *18 December, 1928*, the *25 December, 1928*, the *29 March, 1930*, the *5 April, 1930*, and the *24 May, 1930* issues of the Party journal *Hongji* [Red flag].

The October 1929 document called for greater radicalism. Heeding Moscow, the CCP's Central Committee issued resolutions on 20 December and 11 January condemning rightism and calling for increased revolutionary activities in both urban and rural areas. These statements were the beginning of what would later be known as the "Li Lisan line" and were based, in part, upon a revolutionary tide that did not exist in urban areas. A directive dated 26 February, 1930 clarified the new focus when it ordered the Party "to concentrate its forces and attack." CCP leaders decided to use the revolutionary movement in rural areas to recapture its positions in the cities.²⁷ Priority was to be given to organizing strikes that would lead to a nationwide general strike supported by rural guerrillas.

The order to change its policies to reflect the Comintern's revised worldview (and Li Lisan's own desire to act more aggressively) created much confusion among leaders of the CCP. Wang Fanxi describes sitting through an orientation session for new cadres in late 1929 and listening to Zhou Enlai try to interpret the meaning of the Comintern's October resolution.

While [Zhou] was discussing the text of the resolution with us, he was very hesitant about how precisely to take it. We returned again and again to the words "high tide", and even studied the Russian text. Since the original Russian word (*pod'em*) had the connotation of both "high tide" and "on the rise", [Zhou Enlai] finally decided to translate it as "rising tide" (in Chinese [*gao-zhang*]), explaining that the translation "high tide" ran the risk of being misinterpreted as "climax" and could easily lead to a repetition of the old putschist line. As far as I remember we decided that the word "imminent" was to be understood in the sense of "still quite a long way off."²⁸

Zhou's confusion regarding the new policy is significant because he was widely regarded as a source of real power in the CCP and the only one who could correct Li's flawed policies. Like Li, Zhou Enlai had no real experience in mass organizing, having spent the years after his return from France in 1924 at the Whampoa Military Academy where he devoted himself to military matters. His critics claimed that the only organizational techniques he knew was to prepare the masses for armed uprisings.²⁹ But unlike Li, Zhou was considered to be a brilliant administrator and a fair man.³⁰ Perhaps it was inevitable that a conflict between the cautious Zhou and the rash Li would develop. Under attack from Li, Zhou's moderation fell victim to Li's more radical policies. Zhou finally left for Moscow in April giving Li free rein over the Party's leadership. Firmly in control, encouraged by the Comintern, influenced by the strength of the Red Army and the soviets, and heartened

by the outbreak of civil war within the Guomindang, Li embarked upon his radical course.

The Li Lisan line was a disaster for Shanghai and signaled the beginning of independent action by dissident elements within the Shanghai Party.* A faction of the city's Party organization led by He Mengxiong opposed the Li Lisanists over the Party's participation in public demonstrations, the emphasis on proletarian organizing, and the impending revolution. None of these were feasible in a city as dangerous as Shanghai, they argued. It was extremely difficult to convince the CCP's strongman of that, however. Hotheaded, vain, and intolerant, Li Lisan paid them no heed and moved quickly to eradicate his rivals and Bolshevize the Party even further. Instead of strengthening the Party, his tactics created a strong response from those who had a more realistic picture of the situation than did Li. Li faced opposition not only from within the Shanghai Party but also from within other Party groups as well.

The Emerging Gap

Theoretical problems were not the only ones the Shanghai Party organization was having with Li Lisan and his supporters; there were also logistical problems as Li moved to centralize the Party even further. At the end of October 1928, the Politburo decided to merge with the Jiangsu Provincial Committee in a move by Li Lisan to control this center of opposition.† If carried out, that merger would have resulted in the CCP's Central Committee, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee and the Shanghai City Committee being one and the same organization. Zhou Enlai opposed the idea and on 14 January, 1929, the Politburo agreed to cancel that plan but, instead, insisted on one whereby cadres from the Central Committee would be transferred down to work in the Provincial Committee while cadres from the Provincial Committee would be transferred down to work in the Shanghai district committees.

To members of the Provincial Committee and the Shanghai district committees, plan one equaled plan two because both were aimed at installing Li Lisan supporters in top-level positions. Under plan two, two members of the Provincial Committee's Standing Committee would remain on that committee while the other members would be

*The Shanghai Party was not the first group within the CCP to act independently nor would it be the last. The Communist soviets were relatively independent of the Central Committee under the Sixth Party Congress in August 1928 when an effort was made to harness the soviet movement to the Comintern's program of urban insurrection. See Charles B. McLane, *Soviet Policy and the Chinese Communists, 1931-1946* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1958), 18.

†Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of the reorganization of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee comes from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao*, 88-90.

sent to work in Shanghai's labor movement. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee angrily criticized the Central Committee for the plan and, in many district committees, responsible people rejected all decisions coming from the Central Committee in protest. According to Zheng Chaolin, this "revolt" was carried out by longtime Li Lisan rival, Xiang Ying, in collusion with provincial leaders He Mengxiong and Li Fuchun, and Trotskyists Cai Zhende and Ma Yufu.³¹ Pressure to conform was too much, however, and on 19 January, 1929, the Provincial Committee passed a resolution stating that its criticisms had been a mistake.

While the Committee officially chose to submit to the orthodox line, there was a significant faction within the Shanghai Party organization that remained adamantly opposed to any changes in the organizational structure. Among those in disagreement was He Mengxiong, the Shanghai Party leader, who argued that conditions in the city could, in no way, support a revolution.* Li Lisan dealt with He just as he dealt with others who opposed him—he simply had him transferred away from the seat of power. He Mengxiong was in good company. Revolt leader and Politburo member, Xiang Ying, was sent to direct party work in Shanghai while He Mengxiong, labor leader Luo Zhanlong, and well-known organizer Yun Daiying were given even lower-level assignments.³² It was while performing his new duty of handing out leaflets in the factory district of East Shanghai, that Yun was arrested. Taken at first for a low-level operative, Yun was sentenced to two years in a Guomindang jail. When the head of the Party's security police, Gu Shunzhang, defected to the Guomindang in 1931, he identified Yun Daiying as a prominent Party member and Yun was executed shortly thereafter.³³

On 25 January, Zhou Enlai, representing the Central Committee, chaired a meeting to reorganize the Provincial Committee and on 5 March the revised Committee met to devise a work plan to conform to the demands of the Sixth Congress. Based on Central Committee policy, the Provincial Committee directed Shanghai district committees to organize mass demonstrations, assemblies, and strikes on appropriate commemorative days between May and November. It was a fiasco because each public display meant the arrest of Party members, many of

*He Mengxiong was a leader of the Shanghai Party and secretary of the Central Shanghai District Committee. He was born in 1903 in the same part of Hunan Province as Mao Zedong. As a student at Beijing University, he became involved in the May Fourth Movement and joined a Marxist study group, which included such future CCP leaders as Zhang Guotao, Li Dazhao, Deng Zhongxia, and Luo Zhanlong. After joining the Party, He Mengxiong spent most of the early-to-mid 1920s organizing workers in various urban areas including Shanghai. By 1927, He was in Shanghai where he served on the newly formed Jiangsu Provincial Committee. For a complete biography of He Mengxiong, see Zhang Yiyu and You Liang, "He Mengxiong" in *Shanghai yingliezhuan* [Biographies of Shanghai's brave martyrs], vol. V (Shanghai: Shanghai Minzhengju, 1989), 72–87.

whom then betrayed the Party and identified leading members of the organization. The reforms described in the previous chapter had created a relatively open organization in which there was the possibility that Party members knew more than one person at another level. This lax hierarchical security meant that the risk of exposure was very high and weakened the already weak Party organization even further.

Despite indications to the contrary, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee convened the Second All Provincial Party Representative Meeting (18–26 November, 1929) to affirm its “successes” under the Central Committee’s new direction. The meeting proclaimed that anti-imperialist and anti-Guomindang movements had expanded as had the numbers and quality of Party members. The tide of the revolution had turned. No statistical evidence was provided to confirm the announcement and, in fact, the entire meeting may well have been held to affirm the Party line not its successes.

When fighting broke out between Chiang Kai-shek and various warlords during the first half of 1930, CCP leaders believed it was the opportunity they had been waiting for and called for increased strike activity in cities like Shanghai and Nanjing. They told cadres in Shanghai that their responsibilities during the new strike wave were to (1) incite and propagandize among the broad masses, (2) organize strikers and ally with the Shanghai strike wave, (3) expand CCP-sponsored strike meetings and workers’ pickets, (4) enlarge CCP-sponsored work committees by persuading the masses to join, (5) intensify propaganda to oppose warlord struggles, (6) oppose imperialist and Guomindang suppression of strikes, and (7) strengthen organizational leadership.³⁴ The Provincial Committee responded to the call and prepared for a “Red May” by mobilizing the CCP-dominated labor unions, the city’s Party organization, and the Communist Youth League to participate in large demonstrations. Beginning in April, there were continuous CCP-led demonstrations and strikes—and arrests—in Shanghai. On 1 May and 30 May, rallies involving tens of thousands of people took place and, throughout the summer, aggressive action continued unabated. Details of one such demonstration were given in a Municipal Police report:

On the morning of July 16, 1930, a demonstration was attempted on [Nanjing] Road when about 300 students and labourers congregated at the corner of [Nanjing] and [Tibet] Roads and after shouting slogans and throwing pamphlets in the air proceeded east along [Nanjing] Road until intercepted by the Police. A few minutes later a similar crowd of about 200 adopted the same tactics at the corner of [Nanjing] and [Fujian] roads. Proceeding east they stoned a passing tramcar breaking two windows and a private owned motor car breaking one window. In breaking up the different assemblies of demonstrators, the Police made 32 arrests.³⁵

The Shanghai Party organization paid a heavy price for such actions. Between May 1930 and December 1931, membership in the Shanghai Party dropped from more than 2,000 to around 700. Much of that decline can be attributed to arrests and executions.³⁶

Given the Party's radical policies, the danger involved in public displays, and the large number of arrests, it is little wonder that the job of organizing grew more difficult with each passing day. Nevertheless, the Party under Li Lisan was determined to light a revolutionary fire and searched diligently for whatever kindling it could find. Wang Fanxi provides one example of the difficulties encountered in organizing when he described his own assignment.³⁷ Wang worked as an organizer among clerks and shop assistants in the Central Shanghai District, that section of the city where most small commercial enterprises were located. Although not as important in the Party's scheme of things as factory workers, the activities of this group had a big impact because they took place in the center of the city, and because small businesses were the mainstay of the urban economy. Therefore, shop assistants and clerks were important targets of Party organizing. Wang and other organizers approached their work with a fierce intensity: "We would get up at the crack of dawn and hurry down to talk to the shop workers before business started. Then we would hold a meeting, rush around making contacts, hold another meeting, make more contacts, and so on until the early hours of the following morning."³⁸

To a certain extent, they found a receptive audience. Workers in the secondhand clothing shops along Fujian Road were particularly militant as were clerks (who had become pillars of the Shanghai trade union movement) in the department stores along Nanjing Road. They were, however, a volatile group and organizing among them had its difficulties. For one thing, the relationship between boss and workers in small shops was more personal than that of boss and worker in a large industrial factory. Many employees got their jobs through family connections or because they came from the boss's home village. In addition, owners of many small firms were having a hard time surviving the depression and this affected their treatment of employees. Therefore, when a strike occurred, issues more emotional than just wages and working conditions were at stake, and the situation often became extremely violent and cruel. Party organizers worked to capitalize upon this combativeness in order to raise workers' class-consciousness. Unfortunately, the end product was often tragedy on both sides.

In its rush to incite the revolution, Party leaders ignored the fact that, in some cases, the losses vastly outnumbered the gains. According to Wang:

At that time, in order to co-ordinate and if possible hasten the “imminent nationwide high tide of revolution”, we frantically searched everywhere for the slightest sign of a struggle. Some top-level conferences would be called, with members of the Central Committee, the District Committee, and the [Jiangsu] Provincial Committee . . . to discuss some trifling altercation between shop-owner and employees. These meetings would often carry on into the early hours of the morning. It was like taking a sledge-hammer to crack a nut. From early morning to late at night we searched high and low for “the spark to light a prairie fire”, keeping ourselves in a state of artificially induced tension. Our aim was to transform the central district of Shanghai, China’s first city, into a beacon for the rest of the country.³⁹

The CCP was, perhaps, the least-successful group involved in strike activity at this time. Because the Guomindang and gangster-controlled yellow unions concentrated on economic issues, they were more successful in rallying workers to their cause. Communist appeals of anti-warlordism and anti-imperialism were not concrete enough to effect the kind of worker participation and loyalty that the CCP required to implement its aggressive policies successfully. The lack of interest in these issues was reflected in the drop in membership in CCP-led unions in the early 1930s. In 1930, for example, approximately 2,000 Shanghai workers belonged to red unions; two years later that number had dropped to 500.⁴⁰

The Action Committees

Despite the obvious difficulties, the call for revolutionary action continued unabated. On 11 June, 1930, the Politburo met and passed Li Lisan’s “Resolution on the Present Political Responsibilities,” which activated a plan to unite all revolutionary power in order to “seize a victory.” “Particular attention should be directed to [the fact that] the ruling class will [stage] a final struggle in the cities. This cruel struggle will be even fiercer than that in the rural areas.”⁴¹ To direct the ultimate victory, the Central Committee formed action committees.

To coordinate general strikes among the same industries we should adopt the new method of organizing struggles, that is, organizing Action Committees for strikes in the [sic] similar industries (as in textile industries, municipal offices). These Committees should be mass in character concentrating party strength therein at the same time.⁴²

All levels of the Party from the Central Committee to the local organizations, to the Communist Youth League, to the labor organizations

merged to become action committees whose purpose was to serve as command centers for all armed uprisings and general strikes. On 6 August, the Central Committee General Action Committee was formed and the Jiangsu Provincial Committee's General Action Committee was placed under its supervision. The Provincial Action Committee had jurisdiction over the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui, each a separate district, as well as the cities of Nanjing and Shanghai. Li Lisan served as secretary of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee.

What this meant in Shanghai was that each of the city's seven district committees merged with the Communist Youth Leagues and the labor associations of their districts to become District Action Committees. These committees violated the fundamental organizational principle of the CCP because they abolished the "nuts and bolts" operations of the Party, youth, and labor organizations (i.e., mass organizing, propaganda, education, and cadre training).⁴³ District Action Committees, answerable only to the Provincial Action Committee, directed activities in every area. On 19 July, 1930, the Provincial Action Committee announced that Shanghai had too many districts, which made armed uprisings difficult. Therefore, in September, it combined the four big districts of the southeast and northwest into two districts.

Action committees provided no effective alternative to what was already in place and continued to promote ill-conceived strikes and demonstrations. According to "Instructions on the Preparations of an Armed Uprising and the Organization of a General Strike,"

the work of the urban poor is to organize rice riots in coordination with the overall preparation of armed uprisings and with the organization of a general strike. We should [also] set up mass organizations and armed organizations of the poor. To enlarge the class basis of the poor is the main organizational line of the [P]arty.⁴⁴

These activities only succeeded in making the Shanghai Party the target for even harsher suppression by the Guomindang. According to figures gathered by the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress, from April to September 1930, 3,130 people were killed in Jiangsu Province and 1,480 were arrested as a result of strikes and demonstrations. The fortunes of the Party had fallen very low indeed.⁴⁵

He Mengxiong and the Shanghai Dissidents

He Mengxiong v. Li Lisan

It was at this point that Shanghai Party leader He Mengxiong attacked the Central Committee.* Although He was one of the members of the

*Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of He Mengxiong is taken from Zhang Yiyu and You Liang, "He Mengxiong" in *Shanghai yingliezhuan*, 72–87.

CCP's Standing Committee who had been dismissed from his posts during the controversial reform of late 1928 to early 1929 and sent to work in Shanghai's labor movement, he remained a powerful force at both the provincial and local level. As an alternate member of the Provincial Committee and secretary of the Central Shanghai District Committee, He Mengxiong was a force to be reckoned with and a very real threat to Li Lisan. A leader with actual experience in mass organizing and a man attuned to the political and economic realities of Shanghai, He Mengxiong had no use for Li or his vision of imminent revolution. At a meeting of the Central Shanghai District Committee on 20 August, 1930, he attacked the Li Lisan line saying that its evaluation of the "revolutionary high tide" was unrealistic and that a general strike would ruin all revolutionary prospects in China. On 1 September, He attacked Li more vehemently saying that the general-secretary's policies directly contradicted those of the Central Committee and challenged Li to make public Comintern policy directives.⁴⁶

He Mengxiong was not the only one who was having problems with Li's policies at this time. The CCP's inability to incite the expected revolution convinced the Comintern that it was, once again, time to revise its China policy and, once again, time to find a scapegoat. Japanese aggression in northeast Asia was higher on the Comintern's list of priorities than was revolution in China so when Li Lisan demanded that Soviet troops be sent to aid the revolution, it became clear to many members of the Comintern just who that scapegoat would be. In February 1930, the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau, which led the opposition to Li, invited Zhou Enlai to Moscow to determine his qualifications as a possible replacement. Two things stopped Zhou's candidacy, however: (1) Zhou, along with former CCP General-Secretary Qu Qiubai, remained ambivalent about the correctness of Li's policies and had not yet entered the opposition's camp; and (2) radicals held the principal decision-making positions in the Soviet Union and were not inclined to remove Li.⁴⁷

The CCP Politburo's 11 June resolution, which had confirmed the Li Lisan line, was the deciding factor for the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau. It denounced the resolution in letters dated 20 June and 5 August, and in a meeting with the CCP's Politburo on 6 August. From that point on, it attacked the CCP's general-secretary directly. Zhou Enlai and Qu Qiubai, both of whom were in Moscow, were dispatched to China in late August to correct Li's mistaken policies but, since they had not yet made up their minds concerning Li, they made no move until autumn.

The continued defeats and failed uprisings of that summer proved to be too much for the Comintern and by late summer it had joined the Far Eastern Bureau in attacking the Li Lisan line. It issued "The Resolution Regarding China's Problems," which led to a reevaluation of Li Lisan

by the CCP's Politburo on 22 and 24 August. The meetings did not result in a condemnation of Li, however. Nor was he condemned at the Third Plenum two weeks later (4 September, 1930). At that meeting, the Central Committee simply accused Li of tactical errors but refrained from denouncing his policies. Rather, it stopped them temporarily. However, the Central Committee did disband the action committees and restored the independent organizations of Party, Youth League, and labor associations.

Li Lisan may have been down but he was definitely not out; he retained enough power to mount a powerful counterattack. After He's accusation that his policies did not conform to those of the Comintern, Li charged He with slander, saying, "It is not a minor thing that Mengxiong said there exists another line and that the Comintern has sent letters and resolutions to us. It is not only a mistake but also a crime if we hid the resolutions of the Comintern."⁴⁸ At the Third Plenum, Li made sure that He Mengxiong appeared on the agenda as a "typical negative case" and that the whole Party was mobilized to attack him. The Central Committee also issued a statement accusing He Mengxiong of denying the need to prepare actively for armed insurrection, for failing to exercise "diplomacy in politics," and for attacking the CCP under the false pretense of supporting the Comintern. Simultaneous with his attacks at the Plenum, Li forced the Jiangsu Provincial Committee to expel He Mengxiong from his post as secretary of the Central Shanghai District Committee.

The Shanghai Party leader persisted in his attacks on the CCP general-secretary. Shortly after the Plenum, He wrote a letter to the Central Committee entitled "Political Opinions" (8 September, 1930).⁴⁹ In it, he outlined his ideas concerning the theories and tactics of the revolution and revealed an astute understanding of conditions not only in Shanghai but throughout China. He Mengxiong wrote that the Central Committee did not understand the concept of the "third revolutionary wave" nor did it understand the different levels of revolutionary development in China. He then listed what he believed to be the flaws in the CCP: Li Lisan neglected the importance of armed uprisings; the Party's reorganization was all wrong; political strikes were wrong and should be replaced with economic strikes; dogmatism counted more than realism; and current CCP policies deviated from the theories of Lenin.

To correct these defects, He Mengxiong advocated a united front with yellow unions, an increase in the proportion of workers in the Party and Red Army, and the reinstatement of an independent Youth League, which he argued should be led by younger members of the Party. His outspokenness resulted in his suspension from all assigned work and a demand for a self-criticism. (His supporters were dismissed from their

posts as well.) As the “detective of Liquidationists” and the “spy of the Liquidationists,” He’s attackers claimed that he “simply denied the new high tide of the Chinese revolution and the line of actively preparing for armed insurrection and revolutionary war,” and that he had attacked the Central Committee under the false pretense of supporting the Comintern.⁵⁰

He Mengxiong was not without his allies, however temporary they might be. Joining him in opposing Li Lisan were the Internationalists, a group of young Stalin supporters who had studied at Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and who had recently arrived in Shanghai under the supervision of the Comintern’s delegate to China, Pavel Mif. Because Mif was charged with correcting Li’s errors, the faction he controlled soon became embroiled in the struggle against the general-secretary. Like others whom Li Lisan deemed potential enemies, the Internationalists had been assigned to low-level work under the Shanghai City Committee so it was not surprising when they came into contact with He Mengxiong. When He and Internationalist leader Wang Ming exchanged views, they discovered a range of common interests centered around opposition to Li Lisan and embarked upon a collaboration. It was a good match in many ways: He had experience in practical matters while Wang Ming was well versed in theory. Through Wang Ming, He Mengxiong established a relationship with Mif.

The Internationalists Attack

At the Third Plenum, Li Lisan and Qu Qiubai, still the dominating forces in the Central Committee, accused He Mengxiong and Wang Ming of being rightists and anti-Party. Realizing that ridding the CCP of Li Lisan was going to be more difficult than it had previously thought, the Comintern transferred Li to Moscow and prepared for a new plenum where it would orchestrate a reorganization of the CCP and the removal of Li. In their united efforts to depose Li Lisan, the Wang Ming–Mif faction remained in constant touch with the He Mengxiong faction. Collaboration between the two anti-Li factions was to be short-lived, however. In October, Wang Ming moved to destroy the power of his potential rival when he wrote to the Central Committee demanding that He Mengxiong be punished for his beliefs and be denied the opportunity to defend himself. That same month Mif convinced the Central Committee to dilute the power of Li Lisan’s opponents, many of whom were members of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee by reorganizing it into the Committee for the Lower Yangzi Provinces (Jiangnan shengwei). Still headquartered in Shanghai, the Lower Yangzi Committee had jurisdiction over the provinces of Jian-

gsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui. At the time it was established, the committee claimed 17,000 Party members in the three provinces with 8,000 Party members for Jiangsu. Shanghai had approximately 1,100 Party members in 155 branches, of which 93 were industrial branches with approximately 500 members.⁵¹ The Central Committee also took the opportunity to dismiss He Mengxiong from his position as an alternate member of the Provincial Committee and deprive him of the right to participate in any Party activity.

By the middle of November, divisions in the CCP were clearly apparent. Wang Ming and the Internationalists were especially vocal in demanding a thorough reform of the Central Committee and of the “confused thinking” that pervaded the Party. In mid-December, without prior authorization from the Central Committee, Mif arranged for a convoluted transfer of power in which Wang Ming would take control of the Lower Yangzi Committee. In order to do that, Mif had to arrange for Li Weiham, the current Committee secretary, to be transferred and for labor leader and well-known Party activist, Liu Shaoqi, to be named the new secretary. Because Liu Shaoqi was in the USSR and, therefore, unable to assume his duties, who better to take his place as acting secretary but Wang Ming, Moscow’s choice but a man without real support in the CCP? It was Mif’s plan that once in a position of power, Wang Ming would become the leading representative of the “correct line.” His actions infuriated He Mengxiong who had fully expected to take control of the new committee himself. The Comintern representative’s duplicity was made worse because at the same time he was masterminding the Central Committee’s attempt to win over the Internationalists in the struggle against He Mengxiong and his supporters, he was masterminding the takeover of the Central Committee by the Internationalists.

Now locked in battle with the He Mengxiong faction, the Internationalists moved to assert control over the Shanghai Party by sending their own people to do “fieldwork” in the various districts. Since members of the Internationalists had been assigned low-level work when they first arrived in the city, it was not difficult to reestablish ties. At the same time, in order to further diminish the power of his potential rival, Wang insisted on the transfer of cadres already in place in the city to new positions either in different districts or, optimally, outside Shanghai. He Mengxiong was not ready to concede defeat and did admit to some mistakes in order to regain the right to continue his Party work.

In December, the Central Committee issued “The Resolution on the Issue of He Mengxiong” in which it rescinded its decisions concerning He and conceded that many of his points were valid.⁵² For some unknown reason, that resolution was not published at that time and on 24 December, He appealed to the Comintern’s Far Eastern Bureau asking

to be reinstated and citing the severe damage to Party operations in Shanghai that had resulted from his conflict with the Central Committee—a fight he argued that had occurred simply because Li Lisan regarded him as an enemy.⁵³ What He Mengxiong did not know was that the previous day the Central Committee had notified the Lower Yangzi Committee that He was to be assigned work and that the Committee had decided to put him on its Standing Committee.

He Mengxiong's actions had attracted enormous support in Shanghai from the lower levels of the Shanghai Party and from various city Party leaders. Luo Zhanglong (head of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions), Xu Xigen, Wang Kequan (both members of the Shanghai City Committee), Lin Yunan (head of the Propaganda Bureau), and Li Qiu-shi (a member of the Standing Committee of the Youth League) all followed He Mengxiong's lead and voiced their opposition to the new line. According to Wang Fanxi:

These men were outstanding professional revolutionaries and pillars of the workers' movement, down-to-earth, hard-working, and indissolubly linked to the proletariat. Even though none of them was an outstanding theoretician or could match Wang Ming in his manipulation of quotations from the "classics", the fact that they lived like true revolutionaries and shared the day-to-day fate of the working class meant that they had a genuine feeling for the movement and were receptive to the smallest change in its mood.⁵⁴

Originally Luo had opposed He because of his collaboration with the Wang Ming–Mif faction and had warned He against Mif, whom he claimed was a schemer joining with He Mengxiong only to get his man into power.⁵⁵ But when Wang broke with He, Luo joined with He and other Shanghai dissidents to oppose the Internationalist assumption of power. The dissidents were all men with practical work experience and they were angry at the Comintern's and the Internationalists' lack of insight into the political and economic environment of Shanghai. Many remained loyal to former CCP General-Secretary Chen Duxiu and his belief that the revolution was currently at a low ebb. What they wanted was a policy that addressed the issues directly affecting the proletariat and that would rally the working class to the CCP's cause. When they saw that the new power holders had as little grasp on reality as the old ones, they protested.

At the end of December, He, Luo, and the others met to establish a new independent organization with an executive committee of twenty-seven. Its first act was to demand an emergency conference similar to the August 7 Emergency Conference opened to groups outside of the

Central Committee and imbued with the power to overturn the Li Lisan line while preventing the Internationalists from taking power. Their efforts were in vain, however, because by this time key members of the old Party leadership such as Qu Qiubai, Zhou Enlai, and Xiang Zhongfa had thrown their support to the Internationalists, thereby assuring the dissidents' defeat.⁵⁶

At the Pavel Mif-dominated Fourth Plenum, held in January 1931, Li Lisan's mistakes were reevaluated not as tactical errors as previously claimed but as ideological ones, a much more serious charge. Li was removed from office and Mif's protege Wang Ming was elected to the Central Committee, the Politburo and, shortly thereafter, the Standing Committee. Once Wang Ming was assured of these top-level positions, the Lower Yangzi Committee was dissolved and instantly reorganized as the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. Wang Ming was named secretary of the "new" Provincial Committee, a powerful position from which he could attack his enemies. With great speed, Mif had achieved his takeover of CCP leadership as Wang Ming and other members of the Internationalists assumed leadership positions in the Party. Every effort was made to thwart He Mengxiong and the other dissidents who were told of the plenum only a few hours before it began and who found, upon their arrival, that there were no seats left for them. When Luo Zhanglong discovered that this was to be the all-important Fourth Plenum, he and other dissidents demanded that the meeting be postponed and that an emergency conference be held instead. Mif overruled them and continued the meeting, which he chaired. Although He Mengxiong attended the plenum, he was not allowed to speak and was criticized by Mif. Members of the old Central Committee, such as Zhou Enlai and Xiang Zhongfa, confessed their mistakes and were allowed to hold onto their top positions in the leadership. Xiang remained as general-secretary of the CCP while Zhou retained control of the important Military Affairs Committee. When Xiang was arrested and executed in the spring of 1931, Wang Ming became general-secretary.

The Defeat of the Dissidents

In protest, He Mengxiong, Luo Zhanglong, and other dissidents withdrew from the Plenum and published an inner-Party letter criticizing the meeting. On 17 January, He, Luo, and the others met to establish a separate Party organization with its own slate of candidates for the Central Committee. Mif attended the meeting and threatened the group saying that those who opposed the Comintern's representative opposed the Party, and that those who opposed the Party would be expelled. The Comintern representative was as good as his word because He Meng-

xiong, Luo Zhanglong, and the other dissidents were expelled from the CCP shortly thereafter.

Within twenty-four hours of their expulsion, He Mengxiong and about twenty other dissidents, including Lin Yunan and Li Qiushi, met at the Eastern Hotel behind the Sincere Department Store to convene what was ostensibly a preparatory meeting for the All-China Soviet Congress but which in fact was a protest of Wang Ming's takeover of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. Tipped off by a turncoat named Tang Yu, Guomindang agents from the Wusong-Shanghai Garrison along with thugs from the Green Gang raided the meeting and arrested He and forty-eight others, among them the assistant secretary of the Provincial Committee, the secretary of the Shanghai General Labor Union, the secretary of the Nanjing Party Committee, the secretary of the Central Shanghai District Committee, and five members of the League of Left-wing Writers.⁵⁷ The following day, Wang Ming attacked He at the Fourth Plenum calling him a "right opportunist." A day later, members of He Mengxiong's family, including his five-year-old son, his three-year-old daughter, and their nurse, were arrested.

As the Internationalists expanded their power within the CCP, they continued to attack their jailed comrades. They notified the Party branch in the jail where He and the others were held that the newcomers were rightists and were to be excluded from all Party activities inside the prison.* On 20 January, the Politburo, now controlled by Wang Ming, adopted the "Resolution Concerning the 17 January Meeting and the Report of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee," which attacked He Mengxiong by name. He, Lin Yunan, and Li Qiushi pleaded their case in a letter to the Comintern on 5 February saying that they opposed only the representatives of the Comintern not the organization itself. Two days later, twenty-five of those arrested, including He and the five young leftist writers, were executed.⁵⁸

Confusion reigned throughout the Shanghai Party as well as other Party groups under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Committee as people vied with each other for power and divided for or against the Wang Ming faction. There were even cases of competing district committees, branches, and cells being set up. Shanghai Party leaders Xu Xigen, Wang Kequan, Luo Zhanglong, and several other members of the origi-

*This ostracism must have made prison life much more difficult for the dissidents. We will discuss Party activities in Shanghai prisons in detail in the next chapter but suffice it to say that the Party had created an orderly system within the city's jails that benefitted prisoners (both Party and non-Party) and warders alike. To be banned from the system may well have meant real hardship for He and the others. The CCP often paid substantial bribes to prison officials to get leading cadres released. Apparently, no such bribes were offered for the dissidents.

nal Jiangsu Provincial Committee forcibly seized the residences of the Provincial Committee leadership in an attempt to keep the new members from assuming power. They then declared the formation of the Second Provincial Committee and the Red District Committee.⁵⁹ Dissident Wang Fengfei established a rival Zhabei District Committee. In the East Shanghai, Central Shanghai (the center of support for He Mengxiong), and Zhabei Districts, committees were formed to oppose the Fourth Plenum, the Central Committee, the new Jiangsu Provincial Committee, and everything else Wang Ming controlled.

But opposition did not last; Wang Ming and the Internationalists had cleverly taken power and were now firmly entrenched. Having gotten rid of He Mengxiong, the Internationalists moved on to other opponents. Luo Zhanglong, Wang Kequan, and Wang Fengfei were expelled from the Party while Xu Xigen and Yu Fei were dismissed from their powerful positions in the Central Committee and the Communist Youth League. The Internationalists purged the Shanghai district committees, the Labor Alliance, and the city's Communist Youth League expelling all those who were thought to have supported He and the dissidents. That purge extended to branches and cells who received orders to eliminate all vestiges of both the Li Lisan line and right opportunism (as practiced by He Mengxiong). By the early spring of 1931, the situation in Shanghai had begun to stabilize; the Internationalists were in power and their enemies all but destroyed.

Years later, at the Seventh Party Congress in 1945, He Mengxiong's name was restored and he along with Lin Yunan and Li Qiushi were commended for their "good relationship with the masses," and for "remaining faithful [to the CCP] and unyielding [after their arrest] and dying a heroic death."⁶⁰ Luo Zhanglong was never rehabilitated because, it was claimed, he later formed a real right wing and became a counterrevolutionary. In his autobiography, Zhang Guotao commented that in the eyes of most essential cadres of the CCP, He Mengxiong was the prototype of a CCP member.⁶¹ Although He never reached the status of men like Liu Xiao or Liu Changsheng in the pantheon of Shanghai Communist Party heroes, his contribution to the Shanghai organization was no less important.

Despite the fact that they lost their battle with the Internationalists, He Mengxiong, Luo Zhanglong, and the other dissidents' base of support in the city was unquestioned in the late 1920s. Most lower-ranking Party members supported them as did the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress, the Central Preparatory Committee for the All-China Soviet Congress, the Delegation to the All-China Soviet Congress, the Delegation from the Soviet Areas, the Railroad Union, the Maritime Union, and a large segment of the League of Left-Wing Writers. By

standing up to what they believed were the incorrect policies of the Central Committee and the Comintern's representative in China, the dissidents set a precedent of independent behavior for the city's Party organization. While we will not see such vocal disagreement with the CCP's governing body again, we will see instances of the Shanghai Party going its own way when it believed the Central Committee promulgated unworkable policy or when it was cut off from top-level direction.

The struggle between the He Mengxiong faction and the Internationalists is a relatively unstudied chapter of Communist Party history. That is unfortunate because the clash adds important insights into the way factional conflicts were carried out within the Party. In many ways, the struggle is an excellent example of Nathan's crisis-consensus-conflict model of factionalism. The inner-Party emergency and the city's repressive environment created a bond between the He Mengxiong-led group and the Internationalists that allowed for joint action. Under the umbrella of cooperation, the Internationalists were able to expand their power and moved to destroy the He faction by discrediting its leaders and removing them from their positions of power. But there the comparison ends. Rather than concluding in the "live and let live" paradigm of Nathan's model, the arrest and execution of He Mengxiong supports the Tang Tsou thesis that factional fights typically end with a clear-cut victory of one faction over another.⁶² Their defeat of a powerful locally based faction would create some real problems for the Internationalists in the next few years.

The Trotskyists

As we have seen, not all the members of the Shanghai Party supported the Central Committee and its Moscow-imposed line. There was strong support for the ideas of Leon Trotsky, which some Party members found better suited for China than Stalin's. While many were not Trotskyists per se, they did agree with his theories regarding China. He Mengxiong and his supporters, for example, had links with Trotskyists (including Zheng Chaolin, Cai Zhende, and Ma Yufu) at both the local and provincial levels.⁶³ Trotskyist Wang Ruofei played an influential role in the Jiangsu Provincial Committee during the late 1920s. The existence of such links suggests that the struggle between the Internationalists and the Shanghai dissidents may well have been an extension of the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky. Whether or not that was the case, the Trotskyists (and those accused of being Trotskyists) exercised

enough power in the late 1920s to early 1930s that they merit closer examination here.

The Chinese Revolution was a key issue dividing Stalin and Trotsky.* Unlike Stalin, Trotsky believed that China did not need to complete the bourgeois-democratic stage of the revolution before entering into the proletariat-socialist stage. He argued that in a backward country like China, which had been a victim of both semicolonialism and imperialism, the bourgeoisie-democratic revolution could not be led by the bourgeoisie as was the case in more advanced nations. The only revolutionary state possible, according to Trotsky, was one based on the dictatorship of the proletariat.

As early as 1926, Trotsky, a longtime critic of the CCP-Guomindang alliance, had predicted that an anticommunist coup was imminent. When his forecasts were proved correct by the bloody events of April 1927, he demanded that the CCP immediately declare its independence from the Guomindang and establish Soviets to lead the agrarian revolution in the parts of China where it was still viable. These actions would, he believed, bring about the downfall of Chiang Kai-shek. Stalin countered saying that his strategy of alliances was the correct one and he directed the CCP to continue to work with the left wing of the Guomindang.⁶⁴

After the defeat of the Guangzhou Insurrection in December 1927, Trotsky declared the second revolution in China finished and began to talk of a third revolution.† To prepare, he believed that it was necessary to unite disparate economic and political interests through an all-powerful national assembly elected by secret ballot. This would create political stability for the ruling class, which, in turn, would provide a base for the revival of the economy. That awakening, he reasoned, would lead to a rebirth of the Chinese proletariat.⁶⁵

There were many within the CCP and among the Chinese students studying in Moscow at this time who agreed with Trotsky's evaluation of the situation. Like him, they blamed Stalin for many things, primarily his refusal to admit, for factional reasons, that the Chinese Revolution had been defeated. It was an important point because if no defeat had been suffered, then the CCP was free to lead uprisings in the cities backed by peasant armies in the countryside. (This was, of course, the Stalin-directed policy that the CCP under Qu Qiubai followed.) The Trotskyists argued that after its massive defeat, the revolution was no-

*Except where noted, this discussion is taken from Wang Fanxi, 132–61, and Zheng Chaolin, 409–50. For a further discussion, see Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries* (Atlantic Highlands, N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1996).

†The first revolution had been in 1911, the second between 1925 and 1927. The third was yet to come.

where near a “new high tide” and that the immediate task was not more aggressive action but rebuilding the Party and reestablishing links with the working class. This idea clearly corresponded to those of He Meng-xiong and the other dissidents.

The most famous Trotskyist was Chen Duxiu who, even after his removal from the Party’s leading position, had many supporters among the rank and file in the Shanghai Party. Like others in the CCP, Chen did not easily convert to Trotskyism. Although the former general-secretary had stressed the role of workers and peasants, he did not embrace Trotsky until after the defection of the left Guomindang when he concluded that the revolution was impossible without broad mass support. Chen’s conversion to Trotskyism provoked a serious crisis within the CCP and led to a purge at all levels of the Party, the Youth League, and mass organizations. Every week, the Party journal *Red Flag* published the names of those who had been expelled. In 1929, Chen Duxiu’s was among them. His expulsion produced a strong reaction among the Party’s rank and file, which caught Stalin and his Chinese supporters by surprise. That response may well account for the ferocity with which the Stalinists attacked the Shanghai dissidents.

The Trotskyists, who had been expelled from the Party, still considered themselves members of the CCP and formed their own faction—the Left Opposition. It was not a united group, however. Among the four major factions were three composed primarily of people returned from Moscow—the *Our Word* faction (composed of inexperienced returned Left Opposition students), the Octoberists (founded by Liu Ren-jing), and the Combat Society (sustained by no consistent political position). The Proletarian Society was made up of oppositionists, including Chen Duxiu, from the Party organization in China. Although all the factions were in conflict, the real tension lay between those who had returned from Moscow and the leadership of the Proletarian Society.

Only when Trotsky intervened personally did the factions agree to create a negotiating committee that would seek to unify the societies.⁶⁶ According to Zheng Chaolin, “The process of negotiations [to unify the groups] was extremely protracted, complicated, muddled, and a waste of time. The different organizations looked upon one another not as comrades but as enemies.”⁶⁷ Part of the problem was the unbridled ambition of Chen Duxiu’s cohort, Peng Shuzhi—a man more concerned with the structure of unification than with the principles upon which it would take place. Zheng believed that Peng sabotaged the talks because he knew he would be an unlikely choice to lead a unified group. Another part of the problem was members of the Proletarian Society

who opposed unification.⁶⁸ When Chen Duxiu broke with Peng and endorsed unification, the negotiation process became much easier.

The Unification Conference began on 1 May, 1931 in a rented house on Dalian Bay Road. Delegates spent days one and two discussing resolutions that had been drafted by the Negotiation Committee and agreed upon by the factions' leaders prior to the meeting. Day three was devoted to elections with Chen Duxiu, Zheng Chaolin, and Wang Fanxi, among others, elected to leadership positions. Begun in conflict, the conference ended in harmony and hope as the Chinese Oppositionists—the name of the new body—looked to the future.

Unfortunately, the Oppositionists never had a chance to be anything but bystanders in the revolution. From their inception, they were a target of both CCP and Guomindang repression. Within a month of their founding, on 21 May, a Guomindang raid netted almost all of the Oppositionists' leaders including, with the exception of Chen Duxiu and Luo Han, the entire Standing Committee. Among those arrested was Wang Fanxi.⁶⁹ For the remaining Trotskyists, there was no escape. Those who were not jailed and tortured by the Guomindang were shot as counter-revolutionaries by the CCP. Chen Duxiu was arrested in the French Concession in 1932 and spent five years in a Guomindang prison.

The Trotskyists failed to make any significant impact because, as a small group caught between the Guomindang and the CCP, they simply could not create any political space for themselves in the early thirties. By concentrating their efforts in China's cities, they, unlike the main body of the CCP, created no rural refuge to which they could retreat when Guomindang repression became too much. Nevertheless, even if they had escaped the Guomindang witch hunt, they had an equally vicious CCP to contend with. Although the Trotskyists organized workers in Shanghai and led guerrilla bands in various parts of China during the Anti-Japanese War (1937–1945), they never became part of China's political future.

This question of political space is an important one not only for the Trotskyists but for other outlying groups as well. In her book *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism*, Yeh Wen-hsin argues that if one examines the events of a given locality without the editorial mediation of “a centralized political score,” one may find a very different dimension than what has been held up as the accepted norm.⁷⁰ What she means is that if there had not been the particular centralized political score of the Communist Party of the late 1920s to early 1930s, then there may well have been political space for groups such as the Trotskyists or the He Mengxiong faction. We will see in the context of the mid-to-late 1930s that when the centralized political score became dominated by the United Front, then the remaining ele-

ments of the Communist Party in Shanghai did find a political space—not necessarily within the larger Party structure—but among the city’s patriotic groups.

The Search for Allies

The period between late 1928 and 1931 was a bleak period for a demoralized and weakened Shanghai Party. In addition to complicated inner-Party struggles, the Shanghai Party organization faced the combined wrath of the Guomindang, the city’s powerful gangsters, and foreign authorities. The ranks of the Party diminished rapidly in the city with killings, arrests, and lost contacts. Many Party members simply vanished because they were too afraid or too tired to continue the fight. While CCP figures claim great increases in Party membership during the late 1920s, figures for Shanghai show an overall decrease. In December 1927, the Shanghai Party claimed 1,799 members; in June 1928, 1000; in November 1929, 1,100; in May 1930, 2000; in December 1931, 700.^{71*} Given the size and economic diversity of the city, at no point were there enough Party members to effectively implement Party programs even if these programs were workable. Therefore, the only way that the city’s Party organization could survive was through alliances with “correct-thinking” people. Nevertheless, collaborations and cooperative efforts scared many Party members; after all, such efforts had been a primary cause of the debacle of 1927. In addition to being embroiled in factional fighting, one of the reasons why the Shanghai Communist Party made no significant inroads in the city during this period and, in fact, lost ground was because it had no effective alliances.

It is easy in the safety of historical hindsight to say that the great mistake the city’s Party organization made was to follow CCP directives and concentrate its organizing on the working class. But we must remember that these were dedicated Communist revolutionaries who, while they might not agree with the road chosen by Party leaders, were bound through the principles of Leninist discipline to uphold Party policy. The Party’s failure to attract members of the working class can be attributed not only to the Party’s esoteric message but also to the city’s repressive and uncertain atmosphere. Workers were well aware that the danger inherent in participating in Party-sponsored strikes, demonstrations, and assemblies far outweighed the gains produced by them. As

*I found no valid reason for the extraordinary jump in membership from November 1929 to May 1930. Given the extent of foreign and Guomindang suppression, a decrease would have been more feasible. There was a propensity to exaggerate figures and this may well explain the high number.

long as the Party did not identify with issues of real concern to the mass of people, that is wages and working conditions, it stood little chance of garnering support among the working classes.

What makes the period all the more interesting is that a very workable issue—anti-imperialism—was being promoted but, unfortunately, with the wrong group. As long as the Shanghai Party followed the CCP's antibourgeoisie policies, it excluded its most promising ally: disaffected elite. Here was a group that understood the anti-imperialist, anti-Guomindang, anticapitalism of the Party; here was a group that had believed in the Nationalist dream and that had awakened to a nightmare reality. Nevertheless, the Shanghai Party, despite the vocal opposition to Central Committee policy and the realistic assessment of the environment in the city by He Mengxiong and others, was not actively seeking out members of the bourgeoisie. The potential was there but not realized because it could not conceive of breaking with the Party line. Certainly, as we will see below, there were those among the bourgeoisie who participated in Party-sponsored activities and groups, but these were few and far between and the Party never fully appreciated their value. The city's Party organization made no strides forward during these years. It did not begin to create a strong and workable organization until the mid-1930s when, cut off from the Central Committee, it saw the potential of working with multiclass groups. Between late 1928 and 1931, then, who were the supporters and potential supporters of the Shanghai Party?

Labor

In the aftermath of the 12 April Coup, Party labor organizing in Shanghai suffered both because the CCP was now an outlaw organization and because it was now in direct competition with Guomindang and gangster labor organizing. The yellow unions they sponsored proved to be quite effective in obtaining economic relief for workers and had attracted considerable support. Nevertheless, instead of pulling back and reassessing its labor policies, the CCP only increased its strike activity in the city.* On 30 April, 1928, the Central Committee called for using propaganda and agitation to raise workers' political consciousness and instructed cadres to involve themselves in the economic struggles of workers' daily lives. In May and August, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee issued resolutions ordering cadres to merge workers'

*Except where noted, the discussion of the Party's labor activities is taken from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao*, 137–43 and from *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai*, 100–109.

economic struggles with the anti-imperialist, anti-Guomindang movement. It also ordered cadres to expand workers' organizations and "united fronts" among various groups, broaden workers' organizations, and strengthen the labor leadership. Particular attention was to be paid to silk and cotton mills, city government, the arsenals, and railroads; CCP-led militias were to be established. None of these goals was achieved even though, by the end of 1929, the Central Committee was at least conceding the need to consider workers' economic demands. In a 1 February, 1929 communication, the Provincial Committee stated:

Things are changing and workers are beginning to attack. If the Party of the proletariat can capitalize upon "year's end" for various big and small demands of the workers, then it can further mobilize the attack of the broad masses on the capitalists, raise mass class consciousness, and strengthen the Party.*

It went on to provide guidelines for the "year's end struggle."

Our complete policy is to mobilize a year's end struggle with the following slogans: "year end double salaries," "oppose year end dismissal of workers," "salaries based upon supply," "the unemployed want work." Our policy is to mobilize small struggles. Because conditions in various factories and industries are dissimilar, we must have separate policies for various factories and industries. In struggle, we must utilize practical ideas for Party politics and propaganda. For example, "oppose imperialism," "oppose the Guomindang," "eradicate the Guomindang leadership and labor associations." Struggles in various districts must utilize the previous or current practical demands of workers in that district. Taking into consideration the current sentiments of Shanghai workers and the conditions of the workers' struggle, we will avoid the Party or League's published slogans. The Shanghai General Labor Union must publish a letter to all Shanghai workers pointing out the bitterness of workers' lives, the conditions of class struggle, and the road to year end struggle.⁷²

Once again, theory differed significantly from reality. Instead of following the Provincial Committee's directions and focusing upon economic struggles and the consolidation of the movement, labor organizers continued to follow the Party's more ideological line of mobilizing workers to participate in antiwarlord struggles, anti-imperialist rallies, and demonstrations calling for military aid for the USSR. Even though it cost many of them their freedom or their lives, cadres continued to promote the "tried and true" rather than devise new methods to obtain gains in wages and higher standards of living for workers. Party

*It is customary in China to settle all debts before the New Year.

leaders directed the Shanghai General Labor Union to concentrate on strikes in foreign-owned enterprises and, from all reports, the Union implemented those instructions as well as it could.

Nevertheless, the same problems continued, primary among them the lack of a suitable plan to organize the masses. As early as December 1927, Qu Qiubai, writing in the Party journal *Bolshevik*, had addressed these difficulties when he argued that the CCP wanted to be the central and leading force in the urban revolution but in large cities like Shanghai, it still had not been able to incite worker uprisings. Although economic struggles among workers were growing daily according to Qu Qiubai, the CCP had yet to answer the questions of how to begin organizing the masses, how to begin to unite daily economic struggles, and how to attract an even larger proportion of the masses.⁷³ There was no indication two years later that the CCP had answered any of these questions.

The Jiangsu Provincial Committee continued to concentrate its energies on Shanghai's strike movement, participating in eleven strikes during the first half of August 1928 alone. These were conflicts over wages and working conditions and, under the leadership of organizers who were touting ideological and political goals, most of them failed.⁷⁴ An excellent example of the Party's inability to capitalize on explosive strike situations is the French Tramway strike during the fall of 1928. The French Tramway Company was a major base of Party support in Shanghai with more than fifty Party members among its workers.⁷⁵ On a rainy September night, French marines murdered a driver for the company named Wu Tonggen, an act that set off a twenty-four-day strike by Chinese workers. French authorities offered monetary compensation for the death, which the Guomindang accepted. The CCP immediately capitalized upon the incident arguing that it was not a matter of the death of one individual but a matter of oppression and the violation of workers' rights.

If the Party had manufactured this incident, it could not have done a better job. Here was the death of a Chinese worker at the hands of imperialists all brushed under the rug for a few dollars by the Guomindang. Here was an opportunity to rally Chinese angered by the death to demand improvements in working conditions, wages, and rights. But the Party failed to seize the moment as is well evidenced by the list of slogans the Provincial Committee issued for use at rallies to protest the death: "Strike down the French imperialists who murdered a Chinese worker," "Strike down the Japanese imperialists who murder Chinese," "Strike down all imperialists," "Take back the foreign concessions," and "Strike down the Guomindang who suppress mass movements."

Only "Institute an eight-hour workday" dealt with workers' concrete demands.⁷⁶

Nine months before the French Tramway strike, the Provincial Committee had decided that one reason why the General Labor Union had been so thoroughly destroyed in the post-April 12 period was because it was not a "broad organ of the workers and masses." It then cited as an example of the Union's aloofness the fact that the executive committee was chosen by the CCP leadership and not elected by the Union's membership. All that would change according to the Provincial Committee as it resolved to democratize the organization by convening a representative meeting to devise mass-based policy and hold elections.⁷⁷ Despite good intentions and the claim that it could assemble as many as 10,000 workers at any one time, the Shanghai General Labor Union was never able to topple the yellow unions and achieve preeminence, as its lackluster performance in the French Tramway strike so clearly proved. In May 1929, the Union claimed it had 108 base-level associations in twelve major enterprises (the post office, printing, commercial establishments, handicrafts, sailors, docks, cotton mills, iron mills, lumber, tobacco, silk mills, and the electrical industry) with 70,000 members, 2,000 of whom were Party members.* Organizing people was one thing; effectively leading them was another and the Union's organizational foundation was too weak to exert effective leadership.

The failure to lead did not come from a scarcity of written materials detailing the Party's plans for workers. For labor organizers, the Central Committee published *The Chinese Worker* [Zhongguo gongren] while, for workers, the Provincial Committee published the *Shanghai newspaper* (Shanghai bao). First published on 17 April, 1929 under the name *Common Language Daily* (Baihua ribao), the publication took the name *Shanghai Newspaper* on 19 May and then went through four name changes in three months as Guomindang authorities tried to stamp it out. Publication ended on 14 August, 1930 (after 385 editions of 5,000 copies each) when ten journalists and delivery men were arrested and tried for subversion, with many receiving sentences of up to eight years in jail.⁷⁸ In addition to the newspaper, the Provincial Committee also sponsored groups that performed songs and skits for workers.

Because of its outlaw status, the General Labor Union had to be very circumspect in initiating any kind of public activity. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee considered that a serious flaw and one reason why labor organizing was floundering. Therefore, in June 1929, it decided to combine its industrial labor associations (*chanye gonghui*) and dis-

*A figure of 2,000 Party members is high and is indicative of the exaggeration of figures prevalent at that time.

strict labor associations (*qu gonghui*) to form the Shanghai Labor Alliance (Shanghai gonghui lianhehui), which would serve as the Provincial Committee's public labor forum. Its goal was to unite all red and yellow unions and initiate a program of public activities championing the rights of workers. Hoping to build a foundation of the city's most important industries, it envisioned the Labor Alliance becoming the leading force among the city's workers. But the General Labor Union was not ready to give up and, during the summer, it vied with the Alliance for control of the Party's labor organizing efforts. Who controlled the movement did not really matter, however, because one group functioned very much like the other with subbranches in various factories and members dispersed and hidden among the working masses.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, by November 1929, the Provincial Committee claimed there were more than two hundred Labor Alliance-sponsored groups in the city with more than 27,000 members. It also claimed expansion in the number of industrial Party branches and in Party membership. According to Committee figures, by May 1930, there were seventy-six Party branches in nineteen industries with 479 Party members (49 percent of the city's total Party membership).⁸⁰ Given the CCP's propensity to exaggerate figures in this period and the extreme danger for Party activists in Shanghai, these numbers may be unrealistically high.

The labor alliance never worked. One of its biggest problems was that the leadership was an unstable conglomeration of Party and non-Party people, Communist Youth League, and workers' committees' members. Moreover, even though it gave lip service to the need to champion economic demands, the Alliance continued to promote the far too ideological and political goals of armed uprisings and opposition to warlordism, imperialism, and aggression in the USSR—items of little interest to workers. Finally, the city's Party organization and the Provincial Committee were not strong enough to compete with the Guomindang or the city's gangster elements. In October 1929, the Guomindang passed a labor union law that brought all union activity under government supervision. Within individual unions and factories, Guomindang organizers working with management utilized tactics aimed at dividing and controlling the labor force.⁸¹ Even though dominated by this kind of mentality, union activity under the Nationalists did produce some positive results for Shanghai's workers and left little opportunity for the organizing efforts of the Shanghai Party.

Students

The Shanghai Party fared little better in organizing students because the student movement, like the labor movement, was highly fragmented

and under close government scrutiny. Communist failure with this group stemmed not from competition with other sources or from lack of interest on the part of students (although both did exist) but, rather, from an inability on the part of Party activists to see the value of student allies. In theory, the Party recognized that it was losing support among intellectuals and needed to reform its work methods in order to recruit more students to the cause. A list of Provincial Committee work responsibilities published in September 1928 stated that when work among the petty bourgeoisie was abandoned after the August 7 Emergency Conference, defections among intellectuals became commonplace. From that time, Party activities among students consisted primarily of propaganda work and slogan writing. That document declared an end to such ineffective tactics and issued four regulations for cadres to follow: (1) student Party branches must work to attract students who oppose the Guomindang and the imperialists; (2) cadres must strengthen work among students and encourage them to influence the petty bourgeoisie; (3) cadres must raise slogans like "Going to the troops" and "Going among the workers and peasants" to encourage students to participate in the practical struggles of the revolution; and (4) the Party must pay closer attention to the political education of students.⁸²

As has been seen elsewhere, regulations were one thing, executing them successfully was quite another. While intentions were good, given the highly volatile and dangerous situation in Shanghai in the late 1920s and early 1930s, most Party activists were understandably nervous about political work among non-Party people.* One of the Guomindang's top priorities was to eliminate all vestiges of Communist influence in schools and to convince students to refrain from political activities. Any student or teacher suspected of being a Communist was dismissed or executed. Students were required to take loyalty oaths and to join *baojia* cells in which each student was responsible for the good behavior of other cell members. Curriculum was revised so that ideological education received as much attention as academic subjects. The Nanjing government also outlawed the formation of new student groups and moved to take control of existing organizations. These regulations did not mean that the Guomindang quashed all student activity. On the contrary, while it wanted a controlled situation, it did recognize the power of popular outrage, particularly protests over the increased aggression of the Japanese and the need to allow the venting of that outrage by students.

*Unless otherwise noted, the remainder of the discussion on students is taken from Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 155–64.

During this period, the Shanghai Party was in no condition to lead the movement or even to recruit actively among students. Before the 12 April Coup, the Communist Youth League had seen students as allies and worked hard to convert them to their cause. But during the Qu Qiubai and Li Lisan era, students were identified as members of the enemy bourgeoisie class, so were not an appropriate target of Youth League organizing, which now focused on young workers. Students were not abandoned altogether, however. Activists remained interested in working among student converts to the Marxist cause but clearly lost interest in winning over those who were simply patriotic or left-leaning. Where once Party organizers had geared their slogans to the widest possible audience, by the late 1920s, they showed little inclination to create a broad-based coalition that included students. Gone, too, were the inspirational cries to fight specific abuses of power that had attracted students. Youth League cadres now contented themselves with promoting rallies and demonstrations to mark specific revolutionary holidays. Slogans like “Long live the soviets” or “Prepare for armed uprisings” held little allure to non-Marxist students.

The Party had simply become too radical for many students. This was a problem experienced with all potential supporters in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Years of terror and suppression had left only the most hard-core and committed of cadres. They had seen too many close comrades arrested or killed to tolerate the inclusion in their ranks of any but the most dedicated converts. Consequently, Communist Youth League organizers repudiated all rival student groups be they left-wing or right-wing. Instead of joining forces with those who shared similar goals and who could provide much needed help in spreading the message, the Communist Youth League succeeded in alienating all other groups. It was well into the 1930s before the Party or Youth League saw the value of meeting people halfway.

Bourgeoisie

Although the Party line changed frequently between 1927 and 1931, it was consistently antibourgeoisie. That created problems because many among Shanghai’s bourgeoisie, increasingly disenchanted with the Nationalist government and irate at growing Japanese intrusion in China, were promising targets for Communist organizing. It was not until the Shanghai Party began to remold the Party line in its own image in the early 1930s that it saw the importance of work among the bourgeoisie and began to concentrate on anti-Japanese elements within it. To be fair, however, in the late 1920s, the bourgeoisie would not have

been an easy target of organizing.* Equally afraid of CCP-dominated labor unions and of social revolution, Shanghai's capitalists had originally supported the Guomindang. Chiang Kai-shek had encouraged that support because he believed a revolution with a strong bourgeois character played well to his intended audience of European and American democrats. Relations between the two appeared amiable on the surface but soon after Chiang's break with the CCP, the city's bourgeoisie began to experience problems as the Guomindang government undertook an offensive designed to bring the capitalists into line.

Determined to control the bourgeoisie and to have it finance his troops' march to the northern provinces, Chiang attacked on two fronts. First, he undertook a wave of terror. Using gangsters from Shanghai's infamous Green Gang, he penetrated the world of the elite, kidnapping their children and holding them for ransom, arresting merchants on trumped up charges and demanding money for their release, and extorting money from them in a variety of other ways. There was nowhere for the beleaguered bourgeoisie to hide because the long arm of the Green Gang knew no boundaries. Once safe foreign concessions no longer provided protection. In addition, Chiang reorganized or eliminated old institutions and established parallel institutions, all designed to reduce the range of the bourgeoisie's political and social activity. New leaders, loyal to the Guomindang, replaced old ones. By November 1929, Nationalist authorities had dissolved the Federation of Street Associations, which, as the mouthpiece of certain merchants, had played an important role in local politics since 1919. Next it merged the city's General Chamber of Commerce with the chambers from the Chinese City and Zhabei, reserving only one-third of the seats for the vocal delegates from the Merchants' Alliance. From that point on, the government decreed, the chamber would "obey the directives and orders of the Guomindang and would be placed under the authority of the local administration."⁸³ Shanghai's bourgeoisie lost all hope of help or support from the Chiang government. Its alienation only increased when that same government refused to deal with, or even recognize, the ever-growing Japanese threat to northern China and to Shanghai itself.⁸⁴

Anti-Japanese Organizations

On 1 August, 1929, the Provincial Committee established the Shanghai Anti-imperialist Grand Alliance (Shanghai fandǐ dà tóngmèng),

*Unless otherwise noted, this discussion of Chiang Kai-shek and the bourgeoisie is taken from: Marie-Claire Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937* (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 273 and 280; Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists*, 264; Marie Claire Bergere, "'The Other China': Shanghai from 1919 to 1949," in *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis*, ed. Christopher Howe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 16.

which was the first of what would later become a Shanghai Party mainstay: the broad-based patriotic periphery organization. These groups differed from student and labor organizations, which were part of large fragmented movements that the Party sought to infiltrate and control. Composed of workers, students, and intellectuals, the Anti-imperialist Grand Alliance was a leading force in the city's anti-Japanese movement until it was dissolved in September 1933. A similar organization, also established by the Provincial Committee, was the Shanghai Peoples Anti-Japanese National Salvation Alliance (Shanghai qunzhong fanRi jiuguo lianhehui).⁸⁵ The link between these organizations and the Communist Party was not readily apparent. If they followed the pattern of similar organizations that were founded in the early and mid-1930s, then they contained members who had little or no idea of the Party connection.

For obvious reasons, only minimal contact existed between the Provincial Committee and the anti-Japanese alliances. If any communication was necessary, it was carried out by the Shanghai Cultural Committee, a Party branch established in July 1928 by the Provincial Committee for the purpose of strengthening cultural work in the city. Pan Hannian served as branch secretary to the twenty-one branch members divided into four cells. When the Central Committee formed its own Cultural Committee (with Pan as secretary) a year later, the Shanghai Committee disbanded.

Patriotic appeals eventually become the most successful area of the Shanghai Party's organizing. Anger at Japanese intervention in China cut across class lines and political inclinations. Nevertheless, in the late 1920s, ire at the Japanese had not reached the all-encompassing level it would after the invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 and the bombing of Shanghai in January 1932, and remained a secondary concern of a party dominated by class issues and armed uprisings.

The Literary and Art World

The Cultural Committee was also part of the Party's attempt to find allies in Shanghai's literary and art world. China's largest and most cosmopolitan city was a magnet for progressive writers and artists who congregated in the free-wheeling world of Shanghai where they spent long hours discussing their nation's plight and writing emotionally about their country's ills. Many of these young intellectuals were left-leaning and, while some eventually joined the Communist Party, others were simply fellow travelers. No matter what their official status, these leftists were valuable assets in the Party's quest to get its anti-imperialist, anticapitalist, proproletarian message across. Therefore, it was im-

portant to infiltrate the Shanghai literary and art scene thoroughly in order to control it.

The man chosen for this task was Pan Hannian, an early member of the Creation Society, one of several progressive literary societies established in post-May Fourth Shanghai. Composed of both Party and non-Party people, the Creation Society took an increasingly Marxist tone in the mid-1920s and began to advocate proletarian-oriented literature. Although he left the city to do propaganda work for the Northern Expedition, Pan returned to Shanghai after the 12 April Coup to represent the Party's interest in the Creation Society. One of his assignments was to mediate the growing dispute between various of the city's literary factions. In October 1929, Pan Hannian chaired a meeting in which contending groups met to discuss their problems and to agree upon common courses of action. This was the first step toward the formation of the Leftist League (*zuolian*, also known as the League of Left-wing Writers), which would, in a few years, become one of the Shanghai Party's staunchest allies.⁸⁶ Activities of this group will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The Chinese Association to Relieve Distress

Founded in September 1925, the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress (*Zhongguo jinanhui*), later known as the Revolutionary Mutual Aid Society (*geming hujihui*), was the most important of the CCP-dominated mass organizations.* Although separate from the Party organization and often with a non-Party person as head, the association was, nevertheless, led by the Communist Youth League. Its core members were Party and league operatives who masqueraded as social and economic elites in order to facilitate fund raising among the upper classes.⁸⁷ Headquartered in Shanghai, the association had branches all over China and was linked internationally with the Comintern-sponsored Red Aid Society. Within the association, there were Party and Communist Youth League branches whose duty it was to control the leadership and expand Party influence within the organization. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee formed its own aid society in November 1928, which then established a subsidiary Shanghai branch. Neither of these groups survived; the subsidiary Shanghai Association to Relieve Distress (*Shanghai jinnanhu*) was destroyed by Guomindang and International Settlement authorities in 1929.

*Unless otherwise noted, this discussion is taken from *Zhongguo jinanhui geming hujihui zai Shanghai* [The Chinese association to relieve distress and the revolutionary mutual aid society in Shanghai] (Shanghai: Zhishi chubanshe, 1992), 1, 7, 24–26, 82–86.

The Chinese Association to Relieve Distress served several functions, one of which was to provide relief to victims of political upheaval. For example, after the 12 April Coup, the association in the Pudong district of the city paid for the burial of fourteen of the forty-one people who died there. It also paid 270 yuan in medical expenses for injuries received by some twenty people. Among ninety-one people who were either wounded or arrested during the coup and its aftermath, seventy-two obtained payments of between two and five yuan from the association for medical expenses or general relief. Other people received bail money.

One of the most important functions of the association was to serve as a bridge between the CCP and its fellow travelers. Via this bridge, many left-leaning progressives established a relationship with the Party. The famous writer and fellow traveler, Lu Xun, for example, used the association to contact the Shanghai Party after he arrived in the city from Guangzhou in October 1927. Later, he joined the association and it was through this group that he met Shanghai Communist Party member Feng Xuefeng who, in December 1928, went to live in Lu Xun's house. The literary and political relationship the two men established had a critical impact on the fate of the city's Party organization in the 1930s.

Finally, the association acted as a go-between for CCP and Communist Youth League members who had lost their Party connection. The organizational set up of the CCP was such that each base-level Party member had a "single-link" with one person in the next level of the hierarchy. Although they knew the other members of their cell and could expose them if they betrayed the Party or were tortured, if the system worked correctly, they could only expose one member of the Party's next higher level. While this system protected the organization, it cut the rank-and-file Party member off from the organization if the link was broken. During the chaos and white terror that followed the 12 April Coup, cells were destroyed all over the city causing many Party members to lose their link. We will talk more about reestablishing links later, but suffice it to say here that reconnecting with the Party was no easy matter in a world as full of traitors and spies as that of Shanghai in the late 1920s. Party members were understandably nervous about admitting a new person to a cell unless they were absolutely certain that they were bonafide Party members. Anyone wanting to reestablish their link had to go through a complicated process of sponsorship and investigation before he or she could be readmitted.

The Chinese Association to Relieve Distress played an important role here. It often served as a medium of communication between the CCP and Party and Youth League members who had lost their connections.

In like manner, the association worked actively in Shanghai jails. During the first eight months of 1928, for example, the association successfully established Party branches in several Shanghai jails and was able to smuggle communications in and out of the prisons so that the detainees could communicate with the CCP leadership.

The Wang Ming faction attacked the association at the Fourth Plenum in January 1931. A month later it published "The Central Committee Decision Regarding the Report on the All-China Association to Relieve Distress," which criticized the aid organization for lack of progress and for leftist mistakes (both accusations left undefined). In January 1932, the Central Committee published another declaration calling for a thorough reform at all levels of the association. Nevertheless, as we will see in the next chapter, the association scarcely had time to begin reform before it, too, became a victim of the Guomindang's white terror.

Conclusion

The period between late 1928 and 1931 found the CCP riddled with factions producing a confusion that pervaded not only the organization itself but its peripheral groups. The bureaucracy was operating under such vague and/or conflicting instructions that it had become dysfunctional. In theory, the reforms of 1927–1928 had recognized the need for adapting Marxist-Leninist ideology to the demands of the community; in reality, cadres were receiving few instruction on how to do anything but tout the accepted line and hope for the best. The best was not to come, however, as the Party organization endured one blow after another. What CCP leaders had created was a policy that could not work either in the milieu of Shanghai or within the inner-Party atmosphere of the time. There was a real lack of conviction among Party factions asked to propagate a vague and intangible cause to a group concerned with the very real struggle of survival. Given the strength of the opposition to the outlawed political group, the Shanghai Party could only survive if it adroitly exploited its surroundings. What went wrong between 1928 and 1931 was that Party policymakers instructed local Party organizations to manipulate an environment that could not be manipulated.

One of the premises of this work is that the Shanghai Party survived the Nanjing Decade because it responded to political realities by entering into workable alliances that capitalized upon the discontent of certain segments of society. Through most of the period examined in this chapter, the city's Party organization, inflexible and faction-ridden, hovered near extinction. Nevertheless, these are important years for the Shanghai Party because it was in the ill-fated struggle between He

Mengxiong and the forces controlling the CCP that we see the beginnings of a party organization ready to pursue what it believed was a workable policy for its milieu. It was not that He Mengxiong and the other dissidents were unique within the CCP at that time, or that they clearly saw the flaws of Party policy as it applied to Shanghai. What they did understand, however, was that ideology had to work within the context of the community and that the ideology as interpreted by Li Lisan and, later, by Pavel Mif posed a serious threat to the survival of the Shanghai Party. By late 1929, the city's Party organization was beginning to accept the futility of labor organizing and was starting to leave the shadow of the Central Committee to strike out on its own. That odyssey defined the next few years and eventually created in Shanghai a Party organization more attuned to its world and better prepared to survive.

Chapter 3

The Dark Days (1931–1934)

The period between 1931 and 1934 was a critical and chaotic time in Shanghai. For the city, these were years of uncertainty and conflict in government, business, and education; for the Shanghai Party organization, these were years of repeated blows and continual suppression. What makes the interval remarkable is that given the crises facing all citizens, all political parties, all economic sectors, and all social classes, both the city and the Party organization survived intact. During these pivotal years, the Shanghai Party underwent a transformation in part by design of the Internationalists and in part as a means of survival in an unprecedented period of repression. Although at the time it appeared that the downhill spiral of the city's Party organization would result in its total destruction, the years between 1931 and 1934 were, in fact, a defining period in the history of the Shanghai Communist Party. From the ashes of external suppression and internal ineptitude rose an effective underground organization that would play an integral role in the city's nascent anti-Japanese movement. Reshaped into a Leninist party and capitalizing upon the surge of patriotism sweeping the city, the Shanghai Party was able in the mid-1930s to create a foundation upon which it began to rebuild.

The first half of this chapter looks at the extraordinary destruction of the Party organization in Shanghai at the hands of Guomindang and foreign authorities, and at the hands of comrades from within the CCP itself. These were the years of "white terror" when enemies of the Party stopped at nothing to ferret out anyone even suspected of being a Communist. No one was immune from suspicion as neighbor betrayed neighbor, friends betrayed friends, and family members betrayed family members. The foreign concessions that had once been a safe haven for radicals of all kinds no longer provided protection as foreign authori-

ties, angry at Party organizing among their troops, joined Guomindang authorities in the witch hunt. Terrified Party members found little comfort from their own organization when they sought guidance and protection in their efforts to survive. Infiltration and betrayal were rampant so, in order to protect themselves and the organization, Party leaders retaliated with their own “red terror,” an equally brutal suppression of anyone believed to be a traitor to the Party. Fearing for their lives from all sides, many Shanghai Party members simply broke their connections and disappeared.

How, then, did the Shanghai Party endure? Before it fled Shanghai and sought refuge with Mao’s forces in Jiangxi Province, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee executed a series of reforms throughout the city’s Party organization. These changes resulted in an organizational structure that was able, even in its ravaged form, to revitalize itself in the mid-1930s and join in the city’s ever-growing anti-Japanese movement. In the second half of this chapter, we will examine those changes and set the stage for chapter 4, which will explore the specific activities of the Shanghai Party during the early-to-mid 1930s and its transition from a political group concentrating on a single issue and a single class to one centered on a broader range of issues and several classes. The flexibility and program of local initiative the Provincial Committee put into place paid off when the city’s organization was left to its own devices after it was cut off from the Party hierarchy in 1934. In Shanghai, at least, the sin of the Internationalists was not the organization they created but their misjudgment of the environment in which they operated. This was a time of real alienation among many in the Shanghai Party. They were angry at the Internationalists who, with almost no practical experience in the revolution, had usurped power and then turned on the real and imagined “rightists” and “Trotskyists” among the rank and file of the Shanghai organization. Shanghai Party people were also angry at the Internationalists for promoting proletarian participation in public demonstrations and strikes to commemorate important revolutionary anniversaries. Because the group in power believed that the revolution was at high tide, they had gone on the offensive, arguing that every struggle possessed the germ of a mass uprising. Not only did such a policy reflect their ignorance of conditions in China but also their lack of awareness of the dangers faced by lower-level operatives when they implemented such tactics. When they mobilized workers for demonstrations and strikes, lower-level Party members exposed everyone, including themselves, to extreme danger. The resulting disaffection among the targeted class only segregated the Shanghai Party even further from the group it was supposed to champion.

The Internationalists failed to fully appreciate two important changes

in Shanghai's environment: the surge of anti-Communism and the shift in class relations. After the Manchurian Incident in September 1931, Chiang Kai-shek stepped down from power but in March 1932, he reasserted his control of the Guomindang army and began an all-out campaign to destroy the Communists.* In rural areas, that meant a series of encirclement campaigns against the Red Army that eventually led to an evacuation of the Jiangxi Soviet and the Long March. In Shanghai and other cities, it meant establishing special organs that promulgated a "confess one's crimes" policy that promised pardons for Party members who provided information on the activities of their comrades. Guomindang authorities also employed all sorts of clever deceptions to trap Party members. One of their favorite ploys was to create bogus district committees, branches and cells that they hoped would attract CCP members who had lost their Party connection. When unattached Party members tried to reestablish contact through these phony organizations, Guomindang agents would arrest them. In the chaotic world of Shanghai in the early 1930s where a large number of Party members had lost their connection, this was a creative and potentially effective means of identifying Communists.¹ By the mid-1930s, the Guomindang claimed that about a third of the three hundred or so CCP members remaining in Shanghai had betrayed the Party and were now working for the Nationalists.²

Guomindang authorities netted a real prize when they arrested Gu Shunzhang, head of the CCP's armed wing—the Red Brigade (*hong-dui*)—in 1931. Because Gu's capture is pivotal to our story, it is important to relate it before beginning our discussion of the "white" and "red" terror. Zhou Enlai had formed the Red Brigade in the late 1920s to protect Party members. Organized into four departments—organization, intelligence, operations, and liaison—the Red Brigade operated in urban areas and was responsible for protecting Party members and penetrating military, police, and government units. One of its important duties was to establish safe houses and command posts. Its agents would set up furniture, rice, and department stores, as well as clinics to provide necessities for CCP operatives. These stores were not only good cover, they also provided additional income for the brigade. Through a system of tight security, which allowed only vertical contacts, houses

*On the night of 18 September, 1931, Japanese army officers set off a series of explosions along a railroad outside of Mukden. In the confusion of the explosions, skirmishes broke out between the Japanese and Chinese soldiers stationed in the large barracks nearby. The senior Japanese officer ordered a full-scale attack on the Chinese barracks and the capture of Mukden. Chiang Kai-shek, embroiled in political problems of his own, did not want to risk a large-scale conflict with the Japanese and ordered Zhang Xueliang, leader of the Manchurian forces, to withdraw south of the Great Wall. By the end of 1931, the Japanese controlled all of Manchuria. Japan's actions resulted in a great outpouring of patriotism among Chinese and boycotts of Japanese goods in cities like Shanghai.

would be secured, furnished, and peopled with “families” (composed of actual family members, operatives, and servants) to ensure an outwardly normal appearance for CCP members. Another of the Red Brigade’s duties was to penetrate high levels of Guomindang administration. As we will see later, the Red Brigade’s placement of Qian Zhuangfei in the Guomindang Special Services Bureau as confidential secretary to bureau head Xu Enzeng was a lifesaving move.³

Gu Shunzhang was a machinist from Songjiang whose cover was a position at the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company. Trained by the Russian secret service in Vladivostok and famous for strangling his victims with his bare hands and leaving no telltale marks, Gu had responsibility for the Red Brigade’s day-to-day operations.⁴ On 24 April, 1931, Hankou police arrested an itinerant magician who turned out to be Gu using the disguise to check the Communist supply route along the Yangzi River, which linked Shanghai and the other cities of East China with the Jiangxi Soviet. Traveling with a band of entertainers was an easy way for him to stop at every checkpoint and examine the relay apparatus.*

Gu Shunzhang was an assassin not deeply schooled in Marxist-Leninist ideology. Nevertheless, as a protégé of Li Lisan, he was angry with the CCP’s new anti-Li line and agreed to cooperate with his captors as Chiang Kai-shek’s “adviser on Communist affairs.” There is evidence that Gu’s disenchantment with the CCP began well before his arrest. Among the Far Eastern Bureau documents seized during a raid was one that said:

During a search made by our people in Gu’s house, a letter from him to Chiang Kai-shek was found, in which he stated that he was disillusioned in Communism, that he was prepared to work together with [Nanjing], to betray the representatives of the [Comintern], the secretary of the party, the whole [Politburo], etc. This letter had not been despatched, but it proves that Gu had long been preparing himself for this treacherous role.⁵

When Gu agreed to collaborate with the Nationalists, he revealed information that exposed the whole CCP organization in Central and East China. Eventually, the entire Party organization was endangered as

*For details of the Gu Shunzhang affair, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Policing Shanghai, 1927–1937* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995). 151–61. This discussion comes from Wakeman, *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao*, 154–55; Shanghai Municipal Police Files, Box 20, D2527/45 and Box 3, Doc. 12, Report 680/2–1; and Xu Enzeng, *Wo he gongdang douzheng de huiyi* [Memoirs of my struggle with the Communist Party] (Taipei, n.p., 1953).

It is highly doubtful that a man as crafty as Gu would have left such an incriminating document. This may well have been a bogus statement to get the CCP off the hook. Therefore, while important, it should be approached carefully.

were red unions, communication centers, publications, the headquarters of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee, and even the Central Committee.

About the same time Gu Shunzhang was arrested, the CCP extended propaganda activities to foreign troops stationed in Shanghai. This angered authorities in the foreign concessions, which had, until this time, provided a sanctuary for Communist operatives. In addition, the French Police Commissioner, under whose rule the French Concession had become the preferred safe haven for Communists and gangsters, returned to France because of illness. The men who replaced him were tough anti-Communists who joined with authorities from the International Settlement and the Guomindang to search out and destroy “communists” (a group they defined very loosely) and their organizations in the city.⁶ Party leaders began to flee to Mao Zedong’s rural stronghold in Jiangxi and by January 1933 none of the leaders of the national CCP remained in Shanghai.

Even if the Internationalists had been able to foretell the anti-Communist fervor sweeping the city and to protect Party members by halting work in legal activities such as demonstrations and concentrating on covert kinds of activities, chances are they would not have advanced the work of the Party much more than they did. Why? Because they failed to take advantage of the subtle change in class relations occurring in the city and continued to focus their organizing activities on the proletariat who had lost interest in anything the Party might have to offer.

After the Manchurian Incident and the bombing of Shanghai in January 1932, class relations in Shanghai changed as diverse segments of society joined together to oppose the Japanese. These anti-Japanese groups were a logical alliance for the Shanghai Party. Although anti-imperialism was one of the Internationalists’ stated goals, they never really seized upon the opportunity the patriotic outbursts provided. Instead, they continued to follow Stalinist ideology and focused upon imperialism as a class-based theoretical issue. While historical hindsight makes these opportunities readily apparent, we must remember that to good Communists committed to a Marxist-Leninist revolution, the path might not have been so clear. It would be several years before members of the Shanghai Party realized that power comes from collective action among people with common interests. At this point, they failed to recognize that there were men and women of all classes who had similar concerns and that these could be translated into united action against common enemies.⁷

The White Terror

The Suppression Campaign

The combination of Guomindang determination to destroy the Communist Party, the anger of foreign concession authorities over increased

Communist propaganda activities among soldiers and sailors, and the information supplied by the betrayal of CCP member Gu Shunzhang created an anti-Communist suppression campaign in Shanghai that few Party members escaped. In 1931, Guomindang special agent Xu En-zeng negotiated a settlement with the French Concession and International Settlement police that allowed Nationalist agents to enter the concessions and make arrests. As part of that agreement, foreign police agencies agreed to assist the Guomindang in every way possible in its suppression campaign.⁸ There were no refuges left for Party members; arrest could take place anytime, anywhere. Between mid-1927 and 1937, the Guomindang claimed to have arrested as many as 24,000 Communists and 155,525 radicals.⁹ The witch hunt was on.

The Shanghai Municipal Police went after Communists and suspected Communists with a vengeance in the International Settlement. In February 1930, authorities arrested student and labor leader Lin Jian; the next month they arrested agitators for intimidating strikers at the Yang Sung Kie [*sic*] Foundry, selling Party newspapers, and possessing Party literature while inciting workers to strike; on 27 and 29 April, two hundred people were arrested in raids of suspected Party bases and handed over to Chinese authorities (who shot eight of the suspects and sentenced the rest to prison terms).¹⁰ In 1931, police raided ninety-five Communist bases in the settlement, arresting 276 people and seizing 815 different kinds of literature totaling 963,601 copies. Principal among those arrested was Xiang Zhongfa, general-secretary of the CCP, who was in Shanghai gathering information about military plans to suppress Communists. He was executed the day after being turned over to Guomindang authorities.¹¹ The next year International Settlement police claimed to have discovered 103 Communist bases and prosecuted 233 “Reds” of whom eighty were transferred to Chinese authorities for trial, two to the French police, and two to consular authorities. Of those remaining, sixty-eight were imprisoned, fifty-six released on bail, and twenty-five were remanded until year’s end. Authorities also claimed to have seized sixty-five different kinds of communist literature totaling 117,920 copies.^{†12}

There was a clear hierarchy among the Communists arrested. Top leaders, like Xiang Zhongfa, were handed over to the Guomindang and guarded until a judge was brought in to “identify” them after which they were taken out to the airport or to the prison yard and shot. Second-rank leaders were transferred to Nanjing where their cases were dealt

*I could find no corroboration for this figure and it may be an exaggeration of the true number.

†For additional descriptions of raids by International Settlement police, French Concession police, and Chinese police see *Shanghai Municipal Police Files*, G-2, Doc. 19.

with by Chiang Kai-shek himself. Lower-ranking Party members (and ranking leaders who had escaped identification) were tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to jail. These lower-ranking people were welcomed by prison authorities who saw them as an excellent source of ransom money. Some prison wardens were so open about ransom negotiations that prisoners could request a meeting to discuss terms. Release was expensive and it was not unusual for negotiations to drag on for as long as six months with a sentence beginning only after they broke down.

The Party was very selective in whom it ransomed. Those arrested who were close to the group in power were ransomed and released within two or three days. Such was the case for Xiang Zhongfa's secretary. Others, like He Mengxiong, who were important but were on bad terms with those in power, were left in jail to rot. Even groups like the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress, who were instrumental in getting many imprisoned Party members released, abandoned such people.¹³

Guomindang and French Concession police pursued Communists as avidly as did the International Settlement Police. On 17 July, 1932 at 8:30 A.M., Chinese police raided the Gong Wu Tai theater at 69 Robinson Road on the pretext that the owner did not have the correct permits to operate. The raid netted ninety-three arrests of suspected Communists and a collection of anti-Guomindang and anti-Japanese literature. Among the titles confiscated were "Brief Regulations of the Jiangsu Provincial anti-Japanese and anti-Imperialist Federation," "Advice to Representatives" (which was anti-Guomindang in nature), a draft of a manifesto of the representatives' meeting of the Jiangsu Provincial Anti-Imperialist and Anti-Japanese Federation; and forms to join the "Dare-to-Die Corps" (an anti-Japanese, anti-imperialist group).¹⁴ Because of Gu Shunzhang's betrayal, the raids of 1932 surpassed those of 1930 and 1931 and struck a crippling blow to the Shanghai Party organization. Among the big fish netted in the raids was former Party General-Secretary Chen Duxiu. He along with Peng Shuzhi, Peng Daozhi, Pu Yifan, Wang Wu, Wang Zhaoqun, and Xie Shaoshan, all members of the Left Opposition, were arrested on 15 October, 1932 at the group's headquarters at 210 Zongyanli, East Yuhang Road. Two days later they were handed over to Chinese authorities for trial. That same year, twenty-six members of the Communist Youth League were arrested, including several members of its Central Committee and the secretary of the Shanghai League; seven members of the CCP's Military Committee, two members of its assassination squad; four members of the Party's Labor Alliance including the general secretary; two members of the Party's printing department; a member of the Social Science

Research Society; and two members of the Malayan Communist Party.¹⁵ In one case, Guomindang police raided an anti-imperialism, national salvation rally at the Gonghe Sports Theater, which the Provincial Committee sponsored. Of the ninety-five people arrested in the raid, thirteen were sentenced to death, seventy to life in prison, and those under age eighteen to set terms of imprisonment.¹⁶

The year 1934 proved disastrous for those few Party members left in the city. By this time, the Central Committee had moved from Shanghai to the Jiangxi Soviet and the Provincial Committee was all but destroyed. Nevertheless, foreign and Chinese police continued their hunt, which was still bringing in sizable catches. A good example is a list of CCP members arrested in raids that took place on one day, 28 June, 1934. Among those arrested were the liaison agent between the Central Committee and the Comintern, the secretary-general of the Pan-Chinese Syndicalist Federation and its liaison agent, the head of the Central Committee's Organization Bureau, a member of the Central Committee, and the secretary of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee.¹⁷

In October and November, raids devastated what remained of the CCP organization in the city. A 5 October raid at Number 34 Magy Town uncovered the Central Committee's Accounting Department and produced receipts, records of disbursements in "white areas" for 1933 and 1934, and the names of banks where CCP funds were deposited. Three days later another raid at 122 Donglouloufang Town, Waxing Road, and at House 52, Lane 31, Urga Road, resulted in five arrests and the seizure of the radio transmitters and receivers that linked Shanghai with Jiangsu, Xiamen, and Moscow. Another radio station was raided at 742 Kunming Road. On 31 October and 1 November, a series of raids led to the discovery of seven bureaus of the Youth League. Raids the night of 23–24 November resulted in the capture of the archives of the Central Committee's Organization Bureau and a ton and a half of radio equipment. Documents confiscated in a raid later that same month revealed the organizational relationship between the Central Committee, the Comintern and their agents; the activities of various factions within the CCP; and the dispatches of Comintern advisors to the Red Army (currently on the Long March).¹⁸ It is little wonder that General Yu Jishi, director of the Zhejiang Provincial Peace Preservation Corps, remarked in February 1935 that there had been great progress in exterminating the Communists and that the "Red menace" was on the wane.¹⁹

Citizens were encouraged to report anyone they suspected of being a Party member, even a relative. In 1934, the brother of an alleged Communist led police to a room at 339 Tongshan Road where authorities

arrested the suspect and confiscated Party literature, membership forms, and a duplicator from under the bed.²⁰

Not all the actions of foreign and Chinese police were as successful as those described above; some resembled the Keystone cops. Take the case of Yu Ailin, a brassmith employed at the Tramway Depot on Hart Road whose home address was 216 South Chengdu Road. A CCP informer named Xu Weisan told Shanghai Municipal Police that Yu was the chairman of the CCP's Labor Alliance. On the night of 14–15 December, 1931, the Bubbling Well Police arrested Yu along with a woman named Wang Yuezhen. A detective of the Wusong Military Headquarters identified Yu the next morning as being wanted by Chinese authorities for Communist activities and identified the woman as the wife of Liu Jinshan, reportedly the secretary of the CCP branch of the Shanghai Municipal Workers' Union. When police searched Yu Ailin's home, they found a notebook that contained materials concerning the accounts of the Labor Alliance and the Municipal Workers' Union. At the Tramway Depot, authorities found an account book with receipts of money from the Alliance to an "An Lin," an alias of Yu Ailin. Yu was also accused of renting a house on Wuting Road on behalf of Liu Jinshan whom Yu admitted to authorities he first met in Canton in 1920 and whom he had run into in Shanghai in May 1931. After identifying and charging Yu, Shanghai Municipal Police turned him over to the Guomindang Defense Commissioner who sent him on to Nanjing where he was to stand trial. Things turned out to be a little confusing in Nanjing, however. Yu was supposed to be tried by the military court there but when that court was abolished in early 1932, authorities sent him to Suzhou where he was supposed to be tried by the Jiangsu Province High Court. He was detained there without trial until March 1932 when, for some unexplained reason, he was sent to the Third Branch of the High Court in the French Concession. Unfortunately for foreign and Chinese authorities, Yu's file got lost in the shuffle of his constant moves and when he arrived in the French Concession nobody had any idea who he was or what the charges were. Although the source does not reveal what ultimately happened to Yu Ailin, chances are, like many others, he was simply let go.²¹

Nobody was immune to the Communist hysteria that pervaded the city. The American Consulate succumbed in its political report for May and June 1930, which commented: "Not a day has passed but that there have been large numbers of arrests for the distribution of communistic propaganda and raids have been made on headquarters and printing presses; in fact, the police have found it necessary to devote more time to the suppression of communistic propaganda than to any other single

matter.”²² In July, the political report once again reflected growing anti-Communist sentiments: “Communists have been exceedingly active throughout the district this month. It may be banditry, it may be communism, it may be both, but the elements of disorder have been very active.”²³ By August, the report gave way to despair: “There is no doubt that the people of China are living between the devil of militarism and the deep sea of communism.”²⁴

The *Shanghai Municipal Police Files* contain numerous reports from citizens on suspected Communists. One, a long letter written in 1933 and signed by “The Reporter,” accused Mr. Zee Pao [sic], a twenty-eight-year-old native of Zhejiang who resided at 111 Tai Wai Fang, Annam Road (an area, the letter claimed, famous for its squabbles) is worth relating in some detail because it is a good example of the hysteria prevalent at the time and of what, in some people’s minds, constituted a Communist. According to the informer, Mr. Zee taught geography at two schools, one of which was the Overseas Chinese Middle School at 103 Seymour Road. He was married with two children and had a reputation of being quiet and studious. In a rambling, handwritten account, “The Reporter” stated that he had opened a letter addressed to Mr. Zee and in it found “Communist materials” such as the article “How We Should Prepare to Save the Leaders Who Were Seized by the Police Last Month in Shanghai” by leaders of the Trotskyist opposition, Chen Duxiu and Peng Shuzhi. “The Reporter” went on: “Within [the letter] there are many horrible and sharp words and in the conclusion there are two watchwords: 1. Communists are living forever and ever. 2. Communists must be getting up to pull down the China National Government in the time being—[the] Chiang Kai-shek government. Ah! The crisis of Communist [sic]!” Then in the informer’s coup de grace (and clearly the point at which “The Reporter” had no doubt Zee was a Communist), he related how Mr. Zee persuaded girl students to go to the park with him. At the bottom of the letter there is a notation from the police that the accusation had no validity.²⁵

No one was left untouched. Like its parent institution, the Communist Youth League became the target of foreign and Guomindang police. In the summer of 1932, the Shanghai Municipal Police raided Youth League headquarters where they seized the league’s archives and arrested two men who confessed immediately. They told authorities that the Youth League’s Standing Committee frequently visited a house on Aiweng Avenue where they met with a Russian who had been sent from Moscow to direct the work of the Comintern in China. The Munic-

*I found no evidence to corroborate the consulate views that the summer of 1930 produced any more or less activity among the Communists than any other time period.

ipal Police put the house under surveillance and from there, on 1 February, 1933, they followed suspected Youth League members and the unidentified Russian to a house on the Avenue Joffre near Rue Doumer where they observed a meeting with a young American delegate of the Communist Youth International. That was all the police needed. That same day, accompanied by their Chinese counterparts, the Shanghai Municipal Police raided House 5, Lane 56, Medhurst Road where the league had its headquarters. They arrested three men, one of whom was the league's secretary, Wang Yongcheng. He told police that in February 1932 he had accompanied an interpreter to a foreign house on Bubbling Well Road near Gordon Road where they met with a Russian who gave them instructions as to how they should proceed with their work. That foreigner was later identified as Vladimir Aronovitch Rover, the Shanghai representative of the Tass News Agency and a longtime member of the Communist Party. Rumor had it that Rover had been sent by Moscow specifically to save the CCP organization in the city. Wang also reported that in January 1933, he had met on several occasions with the delegate from the American Youth League near the Cathay Theater.²⁶

Another group targeted by police was the CCP periphery organization, the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress. The association had stuck by the Party during these dark times and had been successful in obtaining the release of a number of Party people who had been arrested, including secretary-general of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee and future leader of the Shanghai underground, Liu Xiao, and two *Red Flag* staff people, Chen Weiren and Guan Xiangying. In October 1932, the association itself was raided and it shut down. The CCP responded to these events by sending Lai Houbu, a Central Committee member, and Deng Zhongxia, the East Shanghai District Committee's propaganda chief, to rebuild the association. They had barely begun their work when Deng was arrested on 15 May, 1933. (He was executed in Nanjing in October.) Shortly thereafter, association member Du Linying betrayed the Party and revealed to the authorities the names and whereabouts of other association members and leaders. Many of those arrested also betrayed the association, putting the remaining members in great danger and making the once safe districts of West Shanghai, East Shanghai, and Central Shanghai very dangerous. Determined to keep going, the association formed a temporary leadership committee in August 1933, which established provisional work committees in the districts of East and West Shanghai. But the danger was too great and on 25 January, 1934, the CCP's Central Committee took over direct leadership of the association and disbanded it.²⁷

The Harassment of Foreigners

Even foreign residents of Shanghai were watched and their suspicious activities recorded. In a city as wide open as Shanghai, every conceivable kind of political activity and intrigue took place. Just in terms of Communists, there were, in addition to the agents sent by the Comintern in Moscow, those from various Communist organizations throughout the world. The police kept detailed records on everyone they could uncover. An April 1933 document claimed that the entire Embankment Building located on North Suzhou Road was filled with foreign radicals. Among the leftists living there was the American Harold Isaacs who edited the pro-Communist journal *China Forum* and his wife Viola Robinson.²⁸ Their names also appeared on a list of thirteen suspected Soviet agents which was compiled a month later. The American journalist Agnes Smedley also appeared on that list.²⁹

Isaacs and Robinson were never far from the watchful eyes of the Municipal Police who did everything they could to harass them and the journal. As early as 1932, the Municipal Police were intercepting Isaacs's mail. One 10 November, 1932 report contained photocopies of two letters to Isaacs mailed in Yangzhou with the comment: "Both letters, which are definitely 'Red' in character, were obtained for short periods, through a very confidential source, before they were delivered to [Isaacs]." ³⁰ When Isaacs published a supplement entitled "Five Years of [Guomindang] Reaction" (21 May, 1932) which chronicled Guomindang suppression and torture, the Municipal Police tried to take legal action against him and the Chinese stores where the magazine was sold on the grounds that it was Communist literature. The Municipal Advocate stopped the action arguing that being a Communist was not an offense against American law to which Isaacs was subject. Therefore, he could not be prosecuted.³¹

Viola Robinson was also harassed. The Shanghai Municipal Police Files contains a document entitled "Memorandum on the Movements of Mrs. Harold R. Isaacs nee Viola Robinson," which traced Robinson's movements through Europe and the United States (as well as her family background and that of Isaacs) through intercepted letters and information from the United States. Citing such evidence of her radicalism as being a follower of Lucy Stone, an American suffragette who advocated the retention of a woman's maiden name after marriage, the lengthy single-spaced document read in part:

As the result of action on the part of the Chinese Government Postal Censors in September 1931, a letter from Isaacs dated "[Chengdu, Si-

chuan], June 24, 1931" addressed to Viola Robinson, c/o U.S. Consulate, Dresden, Germany, which was returned unopened to the writer, was opened when it was ascertained that Isaacs in stating that he had definitely turned "Red" had also implicated Miss Robinson as a "Red" agent. One paragraph of this letter is particularly interesting and it is shown below in order to reveal the relationship existing between the two above named individuals: "You are in the swim, Viola. I'm coming back to dive in and swim alongside. What do you think? It is all extremely fortuitous from our standpoint that I should have [seen] the light at last."³²

One of the reasons why the Police were keeping such close tabs on Robinson was her reported connection with Hilaire Noulens (the assumed name of Yakov Rudnik).³³ Noulens, who posed as a teacher, was actually the chief of the Department for International Liaison, the logistics, communications, and intelligence arm of the Comintern. Part of Noulens's duties was to handle all communications between the Executive Committee of the Comintern and the CCP, and between the Comintern, the CCP, and the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau. The Far Eastern Bureau represented Comintern interests in China, Indochina, the Malay Peninsula, Japan, Formosa, Korea, and the Philippines. At the time of Noulens's arrest in 1931, it was responsible for maintaining communications with the Communist Parties in those countries it covered, for paying cash subsidies, and for developing Communist movements in accordance with Comintern policy.³⁴ It was also responsible for sending students to Moscow for study. In 1931, it had a staff of eight or nine Europeans and a few Asians (for translating and liaison work).³⁵

Noulens and his wife were arrested on 15 June, 1931 as part of the roundup after the betrayal of Gu Shunzhang. Their arrest was a coup for the Shanghai Municipal Police; 211 documents and 1,081 books and papers were seized in the raid. The Municipal Police's summary of what was found takes up thirty-nine single-spaced pages and reveals valuable information on the activities of the Far Eastern Bureau and the Pan-Pacific Trade Union; records of expenditures, conspiratorial methods, communications with the Comintern; and analyses of the CCP and of Communist movements elsewhere.³⁶ Following their arrest, the Noulenses were transferred to Nanjing where they stood trial in a Chinese court (after their claim to be citizens of Belgium and, therefore, entitled to extraterritoriality was found to be false) and received life sentences. Less than two months later, Oswald Donitz arrived in Shanghai from Germany to replace the Noulenses but he left on 25 December, 1931 because he was being so closely watched by police.³⁷

Commenting that according to information received the Comintern

had not been “unduly” upset over the arrests, the Municipal Police observed:

The general conclusion to be drawn appears to be that, so long as the Soviet Government continues to provide a safe home, from which the Communist International and the Red International of [Labor] Unions can in safety exert their unhurried, but equally unchecked, momentum in the manner illustrated by this Case, local preventive and punitive action, even on a scale so unusually extended as that resulting from the Noulens' Case, can do little more than administer a temporary and partial check to Communist-inspired centres of revolt or disaffection.³⁸

The Comintern may not have been upset by the arrests but to others, the Noulenses became celebrities. Such notables as Song Qingling (the widow of Sun Yat-sen), Edgar Snow, Harold Isaacs, Albert Einstein, Theodore Dreiser, Maxim Gorki, and Agnes Smedley joined the Noulens Defense Committee, which was formed to publicize the case and to pressure Guomindang authorities to release the couple. The Noulenses were released from prison in August 1937, perhaps as a result of the increasingly close ties between Chiang Kai-shek and Moscow following the outbreak of war in China. After several aborted attempts to return to Moscow, they left China on 25 July, 1939.³⁹

The Betrayal of Gu Shunzhang

The real blow to the Communist movement in general and to the Shanghai Party in particular was not the arrest of people like the Noulenses but, rather, the arrests and raids that took place day after day, providing no relief for beleaguered Party members and creating a paranoia that was as damaging as the raids themselves. The white terror of the early 1930s was truly effective and one major reason for its success was the defection of Gu Shunzhang. The information Gu gave to the Guomindang led to most of the raids cited above and to the arrest of the Noulenses.

Guomindang Special Services Bureau head Xu Enzeng knew exactly who he had when he arrested the powerful head of the CCP's Red Brigade on 24 April, 1931. Sizing up his captive, Xu decided to forgo the expected torture and, instead, hold a conversation with Gu in an unassuming interrogation room. The conversation ended when Xu told Gu he had two hours to decide his future. If he remained loyal to the CCP he would surely be killed; if he assisted the Guomindang, he would be warmly embraced. When Xu Enzeng returned, Gu had made his decision giving as proof of his sincerity the name of the CCP's mole

in the Special Services Bureau, Qian Zhuangfei. When Xu's agents went to arrest Qian, he had disappeared.⁴⁰

Gu rapidly proved his worth to the Guomindang. His first targets were Party leaders Zhou Enlai, Li Weiham, Kang Sheng, and Qu Qiubai. Fortunately for them, Qian Zhuangfei had intercepted the cable from Hankou announcing Gu's arrest. Acutely aware of the implications of the situation, Qian sent his son-in-law to Shanghai to alert Li Kenong who in turn alerted Zhou Enlai and Chen Geng. This quick thinking allowed Party leaders to evacuate only hours before Guomindang agents began their raids.⁴¹ Not so fortunate were more than forty high-ranking and eight hundred rank-and-file Party members, and foreigners like the Noulenses, who were caught up in a massive dragnet that destroyed the CCP's infrastructure in Shanghai. With his formidable knowledge of the CCP's middle- and upper-level organization throughout China, Gu's betrayal ran deep and included the CCP's General-Secretary Xiang Zhongfa, the writer, Yun Daiying, who had been under arrest for a year but never identified, the head of the Peasant Affairs' Department, and Gu's two assistants in the Red Brigade. Not stopping with Party members, Gu also revealed the whereabouts of underground printing presses, hideouts, stockpiles of literature (half a million leaflets were seized in one raid), receivers and transmitters, meeting places, the names of sympathizers and the names of Party members' families. Worse yet, for the CCP, he told Guomindang authorities exactly what the lines of communications were between Shanghai and Jiangxi, a system he himself had installed.*

Gu was by far the most important "turncoat" but he was certainly not alone. In 1933, Xu Xigen, Huang Ping, Xu Fei, and Yuan Binghui of the Central Committee, the Youth League Central Committee and the Executive Committee of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee respectively were arrested and collaborated with the Guomindang. Shortly thereafter, Party leaders Lu Futan, Wang Yuncheng, and Sun Jiming were arrested and they, too, defected. In April, the head of the Provincial Committee's Organizational Bureau, Huang Li, sold out and gave the Guomindang information that led to the arrest of the writer Ding Ling and most of the remaining leaders of the Provincial Committee. Several of these leaders also provided the Nationalists with information. In 1934, Li Zhusheng, secretary of the White Area Central Committee Bureau, was arrested. This was the organization that was put into place after the Central Committee left Shanghai to direct Party work in all

*For a discussion of this communication system see Li Peiqun, "Huiyi jiefang qian dang dixia jiaotong gongzuo" [Recalling the communication work of the Party underground before liberation], *Dangshi ziliao* 1(1982): 31.

Guomindang-controlled areas. Upon his arrest, Li cooperated with his captors and gave vital information on Party operations in the city and the surrounding area. When his successor, Sheng Zhongliang, was arrested, he, too, betrayed the Party. So did Kong Er and Zhao Yueshan of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee.⁴²

Certainly, these were the most important Party people to betray the CCP but there were many in the rank and file—190 in Shanghai in 1934 alone—who also collaborated with the enemy.⁴³ Based on their information, Guomindang agents along with foreign police conducted raids throughout September, October, and November that netted not only important Party people but also documents, communication equipment, and weapons.⁴⁴ So many Party members were betraying the CCP that the Nationalists drafted a set of regulations for its Shanghai branch to be followed when receiving the “submission” of Communists. In addition to three photographs (four inches in size), the collaborator was to provide authorities with age, birthplace, addresses (including those of family members), ethnic background, date when entered the CCP, location where that affiliation took place, names of those who sponsored Party membership, names of Party organizations worked for, Party assignments (including dates), names and addresses of all known Party members, reasons for submission, evidence proving sincerity, and the kind of anti-Communist work desired.⁴⁵

The Red Terror

There were few options open to Party members arrested by the Guomindang. Subjected to torture and round-the-clock interrogation and fearing for their own and their families’ safety, many loyal Party people “submitted” and gave information to Nationalist agents in order to save themselves and their loved ones. For others, collaboration occurred not only because of fear but also because of alienation and anger at the CCP hierarchy. Inner-Party struggles had left many scars and, among the lower ranks of the Shanghai Party, many with little loyalty to the Party hierarchy. Not all captured Party members collaborated, however; there were those who held out under interrogation and torture and revealed nothing. Nevertheless, in the paranoia and chaos of the period, anyone arrested or detained was a suspected traitor and until proven otherwise was as much at risk from the Party itself as from the Guomindang. Many Party members were so fearful that they published public notices in the newspapers announcing that they were leaving the CCP.*

*It is unclear exactly why they published these notices. One simple explanation may be that by publishing them, departing Party members may have believed they were providing themselves with a measure of protection. Any retaliation would be attributed to the CCP, which, in these years of terror, did not need any more adverse notice.

The source of their fear was the CCP's own "red terror," which visited itself not only on the Guomindang but on anyone who betrayed (or was even suspected of betraying) the Party. It drew legitimacy from an October 1928 Central Committee circular that called for "people inside and outside the Party to put to death any Party rebels and turncoats." Party security police from the Red Brigade and "sudden strike corps" were ordered to exterminate all those who threatened the Party. In January 1932, these groups were replaced by the Stray Dog Extermination Squad, which was formed to revenge the kidnapping of the Party writer Ding Ling and the assassination of Yang Xingfo, who along with Sun Yat-sen's widow, Song Qingling, led the anti-Guomindang Chinese League for the Protection of Human Rights.⁴⁶ The brutality of the Red terror of the early 1930s caused many men and women who might have remained loyal to the CCP under these dire conditions to seek Nationalist protection. Crushed by both the white and red terror, morale in the Party sank to an all-time low.

The most famous victims of the red terror were the family of the traitor Gu Shunzhang. According to the widely accepted story when news of Gu's defection reached Party leaders, Zhou Enlai himself directed the CCP Red Brigade to take Gu's family prisoner. When the defection was confirmed, Zhou ordered the entire family killed along with any members of the local Party organization whose loyalty was suspect. Police first learned of the massacre when Shanghai Municipal Police arrested Wang Zhuyou, one of the CCP's top assassins, and a man, like Gu, from Songjiang. When the former head of the Red Brigade confronted him, Wang admitted that the Party had taken Gu's family into custody but claimed to know nothing of their fate.⁴⁷ It was only when a Special Services Bureau department chief, Guo Deji, a former student of Wang's from Songjiang, convinced the assassin to defect to the Guomindang side that he admitted Gu's whole family, with the exception of his son, had been murdered. Once his decision was made, Wang Zhuyou directed Gu and Guomindang agents to a grassy plot just inside the gate at 11 Haitang Lane where, he said, the bodies were buried.

Under the watchful eyes of a curious crowd, workman began the excavation. After digging for the better part of a morning, they unearthed the grisly remains of decapitated corpses bound together two-by-two. When heads were matched to bodies, Gu identified his wife, in-laws and brother-in-law. From there, Wang took Gu and the others to 32 Wudingfang, the first of five additional burial sites. At each location, helped by Municipal Police officers, more bodies were dug up. Some were relatives of Gu's; others were simply "enemies" from within the Party. Alarmed at how the massacre might reflect on the public's per-

ception of its ability to maintain order, International Settlement police finally called a halt to the excavations.⁴⁸

There is ample evidence that the retaliation was carefully planned. Wang Zhuyou later told Gu Shunzhang that all those who had been killed “were on the Communist Party blacklist.” When the Shanghai Municipal Police raided the Far Eastern Bureau, they found documents that stated the Comintern and its agents in Shanghai knew of the impending murders. Commenting later on the matter, issue No. 54 of the Comintern’s *Internal Press Correspondence* (dated 22 October, 1931) denounced Gu’s betrayal and stated uncategorically: “We are carrying on and in the future will carry on a merciless struggle against provocateurs.”⁴⁹ The same sentiment was expressed by the writer and fellow traveler, Lu Xun who wrote that “bloodshed must be compensated by bloodshed.”⁵⁰ In December, the Soviet government in Jiangxi issued an order for Gu’s capture and arrest.⁵¹

There was a heavy price to be paid for the massacres, however. The Gu family had exercised great influence in the Shanghai labor movement and, when it killed off the family, the CCP broke almost every tie it still had with Shanghai’s proletariat.* The cost did not stop there. Public horror at graphic newspaper photos of the massacre’s victims increased support for the anti-Communist campaign. In addition, the horror at what they had found caused International Settlement police to agree to collaborate wholeheartedly with Guomindang authorities in their drive to eradicate the Communists.⁵²

The massacre following Gu Shunzhang’s arrest was not the only incident of red terror. On 25 November, 1932, members of the Red Brigade raided the headquarters of the Guomindang Special Services and killed station chief Zeng Boqian, his wife, and three agents.⁵³ During a raid of the CCP’s Security Bureau’s arsenal at No. 112–114 Rue Retard on 9 September, 1934, French Concession and International Settlement police found, among the weapons and munitions, records of at least seven assassinations of Guomindang agents and confirmed and suspected traitors to the Party (including one case of mistaken identity) that had been carried out since May 1933.⁵⁴ The 11 September, 1933 assassination of a Public Security Bureau secret agent and the discovery of bombs planted in International Settlement police stations caused the Guomindang and foreign police authorities to reach an agreement whereby Guomindang agents were permitted to enter foreign concessions to hunt down the Communists.⁵⁵

*Gu Shunzhang himself was executed by the Guomindang in 1936 after he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Chen Lifu, head of the Guomindang Special Services Bureau. See Wakeman, 253–54.

The Gu defection had destroyed the CCP's security system and Zhou Enlai lost little time in rebuilding it. A strong Security Bureau capable of infiltration, espionage, and assassination was truly a life and death matter in those perilous times. To guarantee its incorruptibility, Zhou chose as its core seasoned Party men Guang Huian, Chen Yun, Pan Hannian, Ke Qingshi, and Kang Sheng, all loyal beyond question and all quite capable of executing any task demanded of them.⁵⁶ These were the policemen of the Party, as feared as any Guomindang or foreign agents. In the early 1930s, Kang Sheng still controlled the separate special service unit, which was responsible for such top secret work as carrying out one-time assignments, protecting the upper-level leadership, and transporting secret documents.* He also continued to run his own system of spies, which had infiltrated the Nationalist army, the police and intelligence agencies, and the Guomindang government.⁵⁷

No longer roaming Shanghai disguised as a rickshaw runner or ticket-seller, Kang was now in the guise of the urbane and cultured personal secretary of Yu Xiaqing, a wealthy shipowner and confidant of gangsters, businessmen, and the Guomindang. Through him, Kang established invaluable contacts with the French Concession Police. His newfound friends granted him a personal *laissez passer*, a document that allowed him free access to French Concession jails and even to the cells of his imprisoned comrades. In return for this privilege, Kang, in his guise as personal secretary, supplied the French with information on "suspected" Communists, a convenient way to rid the CCP of traitors and oppositionists. When Kang was sent to Moscow in 1933 to study Soviet security and intelligence techniques, he appointed Li Shi-qun and Ding Mocun, two trusted aides, to head the special service unit. Both had just returned from the USSR where they had studied the latest espionage techniques. Despite their up-to-date knowledge, the duo did not last long. Arrested in May 1934, they, too, betrayed the Party, giving as signs of good faith the names of the head of the Comintern Liaison Office and the eight people working in the radio station that maintained communications with Moscow. When Guomindang agents seized the station's seven transmitters, they cut the link between Moscow and Shanghai.⁵⁸

The Organization

Reforming the Party

The period between 1931 and 1934 was indeed a bleak period for the Shanghai organization. Decimated by Party policies that overexposed

*One-time assignments included assassinations, subversion, and other extremely dangerous tasks.

cadres and by Guomindang and foreign witch hunts, the ranks of the Shanghai Party dwindled until there were not more than 450 active Party members in the city in December 1934 (some figures show as few as 100).⁵⁹ Underground Party leader Wang Yaoshan later wrote that by the beginning of 1933, neither the Central Committee nor the Jiangsu Provincial Committee functioned in Shanghai any longer.⁶⁰ It is generally believed that the city's Party organization disappeared completely in the mid-1930s, the victim of Wang Ming's "ultraleftism" and of Guomindang suppression.⁶¹ The facts show, however, that the organization did not vanish but remained viable, albeit in a severely reduced and fragmented form. The terror of the early 1930s had left behind only the most dedicated revolutionaries—survivors who had developed an extreme form of commitment. These were capable and committed men and women who were also combative and tough. They had endured years of hiding, suspicion, and violence to emerge as the core of a spare, but efficient, organization. While there is no question that the policies of Wang Ming and the Internationalists, which stressed demonstrations and strikes and eschewed alliances with nonproletarians, did subject Shanghai Party members to undue danger, there is also no question that the organization the Jiangsu Provincial Committee built during these years was an operation capable of overcoming enormous obstacles.*

Lenin believed that a core of highly trained professional revolutionaries was essential to the success of any movement. That core would play an increasingly important role as larger and more diverse segments of society joined in the struggle. Moreover, as the movement expanded, it would also grow in complexity, providing the revolutionaries with opportunities to achieve their goals while securely hidden in a large discontented population. A major goal of the Internationalists when they took control of the Party from Li Lisan was to reorganize a very disorganized and chaotic Party into a "centralized but flexible" Leninist organization committed to the conflicting practices of obedience and debate, and individual revolutionary heroism and the "superordinate impersonal authority of the Party."⁶² For Zhang Wentian and Wang Jiaxiang in particular, top to bottom rebuilding of the Party to correct organizational deficiencies was a top priority.†

*Despite the obvious destructiveness of the Internationalists' line, they did leave a legacy of reform in the local organization that saved it from complete destruction. That contribution is only beginning to be recognized. For analysis of the Shanghai underground under the Internationalists, see Lawrence R. Sullivan, "The Communist Party in the Shanghai Underground: 1931–1934," *China Quarterly* 101(1985): 78–97.

Historians in China are beginning to reevaluate Wang Ming and the Internationalists in a more positive light. See Li Liangzhi, "On Wang Ming's Role in the Establishment of the Anti-Japanese National United Front," trans. K. K. Shum, *CCP Research Newsletter*, Nos. 5–7(1990): 25–35 and 23–31.

†Sullivan's article cited earlier provides the framework for the discussion of reforms in the Shanghai Party organization.

Under the Internationalists, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee's approach to the Shanghai organization reflected not only the Party leadership's "two-line struggle" against the "rightists" and the Trotskyists but also its pragmatism. Several serious problems faced the Provincial Committee in the early 1930s. It needed to regain control over the lower levels of the organization where support for Luo Zhanglong, He Mengxiong, and Chen Duxiu remained strong. It also needed to ensure that cadres implement upper-level policy decisions. (Committee leaders claimed that cadres had violated the principles of democratic-centralism during the Li Lisan years.) Finally, it needed to correct dangerous flaws within the organization itself: branches did not know where their district headquarters were and vice versa; cadres lacked training; cell life had degenerated; and too many experienced cadres had been lost.*⁶³ Those cadres still able to operate balked at organizing among the working class.⁶⁴

To correct these problems, the Provincial Committee undertook a program of reconstruction that sought to rebuild the Party organization and rectify cadres. Its main goal was to encourage initiative and flexibility at the grassroots level. According to Sullivan:

Without challenging the basic principles of democratic-centralism, [it] wanted to reverse the over-concentration of personal power that had evidently accumulated at the Party's upper levels under Li Lisan. . . . Branch-level personnel were to obey the [center's] general policy line, but higher Party authorities were not to interfere in their day-to-day work. To protect the local Party's cadres' "creativity and independence," district (qu) committees were not to issue tactical orders to branches.⁶⁵

With the exception of the central place of Mao Zedong, what occurred under the Internationalists during the early 1930s was very similar to the Mao-inspired rectification campaign (*zhengfeng*) of 1942–1944.

One of the first areas where the new policy was implemented was in the Party branches that remained in factories. Party work in the industrial sector had suffered not only because of the Guomindang suppression campaign but also because cadres had not effectively organized among workers. Cadres that remained active claimed that many factory Party branches had been created through upper-level decisions that left branch members powerless to control their own destiny and caused many new recruits to abandon their branches. In response to these

*Kathleen Hartford found a similar situation among Party members in rural Hebei. See Kathleen Hartford, "Fits and Starts: The Communist Party in Rural Hebei, 1921–1936" in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 144–74 (particularly Hartford's conclusion, 165–69).

claims, Provincial Committee leaders decided to allow factory branches to determine for themselves whether or not to strike. They had two reasons for their decision. First, given the highly volatile situation of Shanghai, it was not unusual for branches to be severed either temporarily or permanently from their district committees, so they had to be capable of operating independently. "Comrades must cultivate their creativity and independent nature so that they will not rely upon direction and decisions from upper levels."⁶⁶ Second, policies such as these were an effective means of repairing the damage among lower-level Party members left by the battles with the He Mengxiong faction and others who opposed the interventionist policies of Li Lisan.

The Provincial Committee also sought to establish its control over the Party's lower level by implementing a rectification campaign to rid the organization of factionalism and to redirect the attitudes and work habits of cadres, many of whom had become paralyzed by the white terror. In line with the Internationalists' views on inner-Party struggle, it believed that cadres had to be personally committed to the Party and this could only be achieved through political rectification. This educational process coordinated study with the demands of daily work by requiring each cadre to attend, in groups of three to five, a training class of a half to a full week in length. The purpose of the sessions was to drill cadres in the "Three Watchwords of Communism": self-criticism, iron-discipline, and horizontal relationships. Adherence to these, Party leaders reasoned, would end excessive abuse and sloppiness among the rank and file, which they believed had led to exposure and betrayal.⁶⁷ The purpose of the reforms was to create a system of control within the bureaucracy. By restructuring the Shanghai Party into an organization staffed by well-trained and disciplined operatives who were capable of operating in an independent and flexible way, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee laid the foundation for the survival of the Shanghai Party. This kind of "internal remedialism" was to form the core of CCP organization theory before 1949.⁶⁸

The Structure of the Shanghai Party

The revised structure of the Party hierarchy between 1931 and 1935 was almost identical to that between 1927 and 1930 (see table 1.1) except for one important difference. In the early 1930s, the organization was not as rigid as the Party of the late 1920s. As table 3.1 indicates, the Provincial Committee did not hesitate to merge and divide districts depending on local conditions. These frequent rearrangements reflected the chaos permeating the Shanghai Party at that time and the need to adapt to the local environment. They are also a good example of the

**Table 3.1 The Four-Level Party Hierarchy in Shanghai
(October 1930-1935)**

- A. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee
 - B. Wusong District
 - C. Wusong District Committee (October 1930-December 1933)
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - B. Central Shanghai District
 - C. Central Shanghai District Committee (October 1930-October 1933)
[Name changed to Central Shanghai Temporary Work Committee (October 1933); name returned to Central Shanghai District Committee (1934).]
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - B. Pudong District
 - C. Pudong District Committee (October 1930-1934)
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - B. Zhabei District
 - C. Hongkou District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)¹
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - C. Zhabei District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)¹
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - B. Fanan District
 - C. South City District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)²
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - C. French Concession District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)²
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - B. West Shanghai District
 - C. West Shanghai Special District Committee (September 1932-March 1933)
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - C. Caojiadu District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)³
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - C. Xiaoshadu District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)³
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells
 - C. Yinxiang District Committee (October 1930-January 1931)³
 - D. Branches
 - E. Cells

(continues)

(Table 3.1 continued)

C. Yangshupu District Committee (October 1930-December 1930)³

D. Branches

E. Cells

Source: *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao*, 161-162.

1. In January 1931, the Hongkou and Zhabei District Committees merged to become the Zhabei District Committee; in December 1933 that name was changed to the Zhabei District Temporary Work Committee. It retained that name until 1934.

2. In January 1933, the two districts merged to become the Fanan District Committee. In January 1931, that name changed to the Fanan District Branch Leadership Committee. That name was changed in May 1933 back to the Fanan District Committee and remained that way until December 1934.

3. In January 1931, the two important labor districts merged to form the East Shanghai District Committee. In July 1932, this district divided into the East Shanghai Cigarette Factory District Committee, the East Shanghai Cotton Mill District Committee, the East Shanghai Qixi District Committee, the East Shanghai Qidong District Committee, East Shanghai District Committee. They merged in June 1933 to form the East Shanghai District Committee whose name was changed first in June 1934 to the East District Committee and returned in June 1934 to the East Shanghai District Committee. It remained so until September 1935.

determination of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee to break the lower levels of the Party into manageable groups capable of operating autonomously. Last, they illustrate the leadership's attempt to protect Party members. Behind this lay the idea that if a member of one district committee betrayed the Party, he or she exposed only a small group rather than one encompassing a major portion of the city. In July 1932, for example, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee divided East Shanghai's two district committees into two geographic (Qixi and Qidong) and several factory committees. Throughout this period, it was common in district committees for geographic, occupational, and organizational branches to coexist. Although this kind of subdivision occurred at other times, it was more pronounced during the 1931-1935 period.

The "white terror" was so intense between May 1933 and July 1935 and betrayal inside the Party so rampant that the Provincial Committee as well as all the district committees ceased to function at one time or another. As table 3.1 shows, in most cases, the district committees were restored to their original form but in some instances, as in the Central Shanghai, Zhabei, and West Shanghai districts, interim "Temporary Work Committees" were formed until conditions permitted the reinstatement of a formal committee. Nevertheless, between December 1933 and September 1935, beginning with the Wusong District Committee and ending with the East Shanghai District Committee, all the district committees at some point ceased formal operations.⁶⁹

The optimal district committee contained seven Party members

whose primary duties were propaganda and organization. Table 3.2 shows the structure of a typical district committee in 1934. When compared to the earlier structure of the Fanan District Committee (see table 1.5), we can see that the East Shanghai District was more dependent on secretaries than was the committee-directed Fanan District in 1927. Moreover, there is no evidence of horizontal or vertical meetings in the East Shanghai District as there had been in the Fanan District. The emphasis in 1934 was on protecting the hierarchy of the organization in a more flexible way. Table 3.2 reveals a district hierarchy devoted to education, organization, and intelligence gathering—all operations designed to keep a small secret group alive.

Table 3.2 The East Shanghai District (1934)

A. General Secretary

B. Secretariat

Investigations secretary

Training secretary

Women's secretary

Organization secretary

C. Directly subordinate committee

Special work committee

Various district subcommittees

D. Secretariat

Training secretary

Investigation secretary

Organization secretary

E. Subordinate subcommittees

Secretariat

F. Secretary

Organization

Investigations

Training

Source: Shanghai Action District, *Shanghai xingdongqu ershisannian gongzuo zongbaogao* [The 1934 work report for the Shanghai Action District] (Shanghai: n.p., 1935), 49.

Below the district committees were branches organized around factories, schools, shops, or geographic areas. In the extreme danger of the time, it was important to maintain utmost secrecy; it was also important to maintain communications. Under constant fear of exposure, district committee members had to remain in close contact with branch leaders under their direction but this was not as easy as it might sound. District committee members could not simply notify subordinates of a meeting via the telephone or the mail because it was too dangerous, nor could they have regularly scheduled meetings for fear of betrayal and raids. Therefore, committee members had to be creative in communicating with branch leaders. One convenient way to notify factory branch leaders of a meeting was to stand outside a factory or store and pass messages to the men and women as they left work. While this sounds innocuous enough, factory entrances were carefully guarded, so such a simple act exposed both district committee people and subordinates to the danger of recognition and arrest. Because most factories operated on two shifts, the danger doubled as those delivering the message had to imperil themselves twice. It also meant that since people could not attend a meeting held during their shift, two meetings had to be held, again doubling the risk of raids.⁷⁰

Other problems were more subtle. The Party's internal turmoil and its external suppression had caused many branches to direct their entire attention to survival and to ignore an essential ingredient of any Leninist organization—a vital political life. To strengthen internal bureaucratic controls, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee went about internal remedialism by instituting a mandatory program of training, organization, and discipline. The leadership ordered Party members to attend eight training sessions to be held over a period of five weeks where, in small groups, they would use diverse discussion techniques to tackle ideological questions such as imperialism, mass work, and the Party's organizational structure, and, then most important, the concrete application of these concepts to the work at hand.⁷¹

The Jiangsu Provincial Committee also attacked what it believed to be the cultural and political elitism of local cadres. Politically, it claimed that local cadres failed to grasp the Internationalists' idea of building upon workers' "revolutionary impulse"; instead, they dismissed workers as backward and "lacking a strong organizational character."⁷² Culturally, it maintained that cadres believed workers to be beneath them and "refused to don workman's clothes." Rather than intermingling with workers, local cadres stayed on the sidelines using "direct orders" to mobilize workers.⁷³ Provincial Committee leaders may have been correct in their assessment of the political and cultural elitism of Shanghai cadres but the danger inherent in any strike activity

or labor organizing gave cadres good reason to resist. He Mengxiong and Luo Zhanglong had been right when they argued that local conditions were too perilous for public displays of activism.

Lower-level cadres were not the only ones attacked for elitism. Party leaders also targeted higher-level cadres from the Provincial Committee on down whom they claimed were preoccupied with rank and hierarchy. The crux of the problem, as a 1933 article in one Party journal pointed out, was the upper echelon's ignorance of actual conditions in the city's district committees, and district committees' ignorance of actual conditions in local branches.⁷⁴ While Provincial leaders had worked to create a more disciplined party and to rebuild the organization to adapt to local conditions, they had failed to educate themselves about life at the lower levels of the Party.

The Provincial Committee instituted a new "leadership method" in which cadres were to "reject formalism" and "rely on detailed knowledge and research into problems by analyzing [concrete] conditions."⁷⁵ It ordered each level of the Party hierarchy to investigate the conditions and work of the levels under its direction. In addition, each level was to solicit the opinions of lower levels and help them to make decisions about practical work. None of this sounds much different from Party reforms of the late 1920s except for one thing. At each level a system of individual responsibility was to be adopted in the hope of expanding initiative and strengthening local work. It was also a means by which the Provincial Committee expected to improve the severely strained relations between provincial and branch-level cadres. Although as table 3.3 shows, the bureaucracy remained complex even after reform: the idea of individual responsibility did go a long way in allowing Party members freedom to adapt policy to local conditions.

At the very bottom of the hierarchy—the level where the real work of the Party was done and the level at which men and women experienced the most danger—was the cell. Although Party leaders encouraged initiative, cells never really existed as independent units. What the Jiangsu Provincial Committee wanted to avoid was a repeat of the dissident movement of He Mengxiong and others in the Shanghai Party. The typical cell was composed of three to five Party members and could be found just about anywhere—in schools, factories, mass organizations, and streets. The cell leader was elected by its members and, together with other cell leaders, formed the branch. Branch members, however, did not elect the branch secretary who was appointed by the next level of the hierarchy.⁷⁶

At the same time that the Provincial Committee was imposing its new leadership method, it was also working to raise cadres' commitment to the Party and to accepting the individual's subordination to the collec-

Table 3.3 The Shanghai Party's Operations Section Organizational Plan (August - December 1934)

General Bureau		
Head of Bureau		
Assistant Head of Bureau		
General Services:	Training:	Operations:
Writing	Head and Assistant	Head and Assistant
Communication	Printing	Investigations
Routine	Editing	Cells
Meetings	Persuasion Writing	Writing
Intelligence:	Public Communications:	Communications:
Head and Assistant	Women	Central
Advance group	Subcommittees	Districts
Reregistration	Organizations	
Spy group	Subcommittees	
Reactionaries	Investigations	
International	Training	
Social	District subcommittees	
	Various subcommittees	
Specially Appointed Members		
Special Services (Public Security)	Assistant	

Source: Shanghai xingdongqu ershisannian gongzuo zongbaogao, 37.

tive good. To assure that dedication, the leadership standardized the collection of dues, required that all members supply the Party with personal information, and worked to ensure ideological conformity by increasing collective pressure.⁷⁷

Finances

Regularizing the collection of Party dues was very important because finances were of critical concern to the local organization. As the Communist movement increasingly turned to the countryside, top Party leaders believed the expense of maintaining the urban apparatus outweighed its importance to the overall revolution. Nevertheless, since the Central Committee and the Comintern still paid lip service to the revolution in China's cities, it was necessary to provide funds to urban Party organizations.

Although there is no individual breakdown of dues or records of budgets for this period as there was for the period 1927–1929, existing materials do allow us to reconstruct a general picture of the Provincial Committee's financial situation. Money came from various sources: areas held by the Red Army as well as from within the city itself. The Committee also received irregular and insufficient grants from the Comintern of around \$15,000 (U.S.) a month.⁷⁸ As the situation in Shanghai grew more dangerous, outside funding sources had to exercise great creativity to get money into the city. On 24 July, 1930, Shanghai newspapers reported that the government of the Soviet Union had sent secret agents to the city to apprehend an agent of the Soviet Gold Mining Company of Vladivostok who allegedly absconded with two million dollars. According to the *China Weekly Review*: "Chinese officials are convinced that this report was put out by the Soviet Union as a camouflage to cover up a large shipment of gold sent here for the purpose of financing communist intrigue."⁷⁹

Other funds came from sources inside Shanghai and from the Central Committee. "Red mass organizations" (which will be discussed in the next chapter) contributed to the city organization's coffers, as did individual Party members. Each member paid dues of 2 jiao per month and an income tax of 50 percent of his or her total income. In return, each received between 12 and 15 yuan a month for his or her expenses.^{*80} In 1933, according to CCP documents captured by the Shanghai Municipal Police, the Central Committee allocated 4,000 yuan a month to the

*This compares favorably with the figures given in table 1.7 for the year 1927. There Party members farther up the hierarchy received between 20 and 50 yuan a month for expenses.

Provincial Committee.⁸¹ This contrasts with the figure of 6,500 yuan a month given for the 1930–1931 period and lends credence to the explanation that as more and more members of the Provincial Committee left for the Jiangxi Soviet and as more of the CCP's activities took place in rural areas, the importance of Party operations in Shanghai diminished.⁸² However, the Shanghai Party was not forgotten. Another Shanghai Municipal Police report, based on captured documents, notes that during the first six months of 1934 more than 77 percent (around 23,000 yuan) of the CCP's total monthly receipts of about 31,400 yuan was allocated to the Party's central organs *and* to the Jiangsu Provincial Committee (with no breakdown of figures). Only 23 percent (7,400 yuan) was allocated to other provincial committees and the Youth League.⁸³ The funds helped to cover general expenditures of 41,481.24 yuan and special expenditures of 15,279.98 yuan that the Shanghai Party incurred in 1934.⁸⁴ These allocations indicate that, even though the focus of the CCP was being redirected to rural areas, Shanghai and the surrounding areas remained an important focus of Party activities.

The Composition of the Shanghai Party

Although the Shanghai Party was in more disarray during the 1931–1934 period than at any other time between 1927 and 1937, records do exist for the years 1932 and 1934 that provide us with valuable statistical data upon which to analyze the composition of the Party organization. One important component of the new leadership method was to keep accurate records of members, including their names, histories, past activities, and present responsibilities. Although they had to be carefully guarded so that they would not fall into the wrong hands, these kinds of records were an important means of keeping tabs on members and allowed cell and branch leaders to notify next of kin if Party members were killed. Such records also, in theory, helped Party members who had lost their Party contact to pass through the investigation process and reestablish ties. (Unfortunately, since almost all records in the city for those years were either destroyed or lost in Guomindang or foreign police raids, Party members were rarely able to take advantage of them to reconnect with the CCP.)

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 provide statistics on the social composition of Party members for the years 1932 and 1934, and allow us to gain a picture of the organizational culture of those who remained active. In 1932, membership in the Shanghai Party favored the working class

Table 3.4 Social Composition of the Approximately 700 Members of the Shanghai Communist Party (1932)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>% of Membership</u>
Heavy Industry	2.7
Transportation	8.4
City government/communication	6.2
Textiles	31.7
Printing	4.1
Chemicals	1.6
Foodstuffs	4.8
Construction	.9
Clerks	18.0
Peasants	2.7
Police	5.9
Students	2.7
Other	10.3

Source: "Zhibu jiancha weiyuanhui yige yue de gongzuo jiancha" [Branch investigation committee, one month's investigation work], *Douzheng* 21 (5 August, 1932): 10.

(49.4 percent) but not without significant representation from nonworking-class occupations (32.8 percent).*

What kind of profile did the Shanghai Party have in 1934?† Not surprisingly few Party members came from provinces beyond Jiangsu and Zhejiang both of which bordered Shanghai. Seventy-five percent, or 317 of the 426 Party members came from Jiangsu (including the large cities of Nantong and Taizhou) while only 14 percent or 59 came from nearby Zhejiang Province. Only 16 members of the city Party's organization or 4 percent were native Shanghai people. That small figure is no doubt due to the fact that few people who lived and worked in Shanghai

*I included in working class those in heavy industry, transportation, textiles, printing, chemicals, and construction. For intellectuals, I included those whom I believed needed a degree of education to carry out their jobs. These included city government/communications, clerks, police, and students.

†This discussion is taken from *Shanghai xingdongqu ershisannian gongzuo zongbaogao*, 15-103.

Table 3.5 Social Composition of the 426 Members of the Shanghai Communist Party (1934)

I. Breakdown According to Native Place:

<u>Place</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>% of Membership</u>
Shanghai	16	4
Jiangsu	184	43
Zhejiang	59	14
Nantong & Taizhou cities	133	32
Hunan	8	total = 7
Hubei	2	
Fujian	2	
Jiangxi	2	
Shandong	3	
Guangdong	6	
Guangxi	1	
Anhui	8	
Hebei	2	

II. Breakdown According to Age:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>% of Membership</u>
Under 20	20	5
21-34	185	44
35-40	150	35
41-50	57	13
above 51	4	1
not known	10	2

III. Breakdown According to Educational Level:

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>% of Membership</u>
Without education	91	21.3
Elementary	227	53.3
Middle	89	20.9
University	18	4.2
unknown	1	.3

(continues)

(Table 3.5 continued)

IV. Breakdown According to Occupation:

<u>Type of Work</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>% of Membership</u>
Coolie	94	22.1
Worker	130	30.5
Peasant	14	3.3
Store Owner or Professional	60	14.1
Factory Foreman	5	1.2
Students	15	3.4
Journalists or Educators	63	14.8
Soldiers	3	.7
Cultural Workers	42	9.9

Source: Shanghai xingdongqu ershisannian gongzuo zong baogao [1934 work report for the Shanghai action district]. (Shanghai: n.p., 1935), 54-59.

were actually born there. Most Party members (79 percent) were between the ages of twenty-one and forty, which is reasonable given the Party's appeal to young people discontented with China's status and eager for change. Over half of the members (53.3 percent) had an elementary education, while 20.9 percent had a middle-school education. Those without education accounted for 21.2 percent. Again, there are no surprises here since it helped Party members in carrying out their duties and comprehending complex directives if they had some education.

Another unsurprising statistic is the relatively low number of workers in the ranks of the Shanghai Party (but up 3.2 percent from 1932). Although they continue to constitute the largest single group (52.6 percent for workers and coolies), given the Party's emphasis on organizing among the proletariat, a figure just over half of the total membership reflected the Party's continued failure to elicit interest among workers. On the other hand, there was obvious interest among the educated classes (who composed most of the leadership ranks).⁸⁵ Store owners, clerks and professionals, students, journalists, educators, and cultural workers constitute 42.2 percent of the total membership. Thus, in 1934 the average member of the Shanghai Party was a young man around thirty years old, an elementary school graduate from Jiangsu Province who held a working-class job. Nevertheless, given the witch hunt taking

place throughout the city at this time, chances were slim that this young Party member would avoid arrest (see table 3.6).

The figures for arrests do not allow for the kinds of generalizations that the previous figures did. They provide no clarification, for example, as to how many Shanghai Party members were arrested and released, or how many were arrested more than once. Nor do they provide any information on the length of detention upon arrest. Certainly, the degree of perceived prominence determined whether a suspected Communist was released, given a jail sentence, or executed. Because most Party members and activists were in the twenty to forty-year-old age group, it is not surprising that this was the age group where most arrests took place. Nevertheless, the figures are important because they illustrate the danger to which all Party members were exposed.

Safeguarding Party Members

The final set of data we have for 1934 concern education and discipline within the Shanghai Party (see table 3.7). In creating a well-disciplined group of Leninist revolutionaries, the Provincial Committee wanted to weed out traitors, ensure unquestioning obedience, and guarantee commitment to the cause. This was to be achieved through mandatory training classes. The data outlined in table 3.7 reveal that, while the core of the political discussions held at the daily cell meetings was ideological, the Party did not ignore the very real issue of keeping Party members alive. Protecting and safeguarding cadres was a constant concern of the leadership at all levels, a sentiment made clear in a 1930 Central Committee directive: "The Party should make a concentrated effort to pay attention to secret work; to maintain already established organizations. All Party members, especially those in areas undergoing white terror, must enter production and take part in the society around them so that they merge with the masses."⁸⁶ Party leaders issued orders and provided guidelines, all directed at keeping the organization secret and its members alive. When one considers the danger involved, it is easy to understand the need for unquestioning compliance and ironclad discipline.

Two sets of documents captured by the Shanghai Municipal Police, for example, contained directives from the Provincial Committee with specific directions on precautionary measures to be taken. One questionnaire instructed comrades to provide details that could be used by the Committee when devising protective measures. Grouped under the headings of "Enemy Attacks," "Precautionary Measures," and "Attacks and Counterattacks," the questionnaire made such queries as:

Table 3.6 Breakdown of Arrests Among Members of the Shanghai Communist Party (1934)

I. Number of People Arrested:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
January	75	13
February	53	9.16
March	64	11.10
April	58	10.15
May	41	7.25
June	61	10.57
July	39	6.78
August	36	6.29
September	47	8.19
October	59	10.35
November	29	5.03
December	<u>12</u>	<u>2.13</u>
Total:	577	100.00

II. Breakdown of Those Arrested According to Sex:

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Number of People</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Men	512	88.73
Women	<u>65</u>	<u>11.27</u>
Total:	577	100.00

III. Breakdown of Those Arrested According to Age*:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Under 20</u>	<u>20-30</u>	<u>30-40</u>	<u>Above 40</u>	<u>Unknown</u>
January	8	63	20	9	7
February	2	27	10	5	16
March-May	16	104	23	15	0
June-August	21	101	32	16	0
September	15	36	12	0	0
October	8	33	7	2	1
November	15	53	10	4	6
December	<u>0</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total:	85	449	126	52	33

Source: Shanghai xingdongqu ershisannian gongzuo zong baogao [1934 work report for the Shanghai action district]. (Shanghai: n.p., 1935.) 77-78, 103.

*Note: These figures do not tally with the 577 arrests given in Section I above. No explanation was given for the discrepancy.

Table 3.7 Statistics for Training Sessions for Members of the Shanghai Communist Party (1934)

I. Statistics for Cell Meetings:

Fewest number of cell meetings:	July	24
Highest number of cell meetings:	November	64
Average number of cell meetings/month		40

II. Topics for Cell Political Discussions*†:

January	No assigned topic
February	National problems
March	Nationalism
April	Nationalism
May	Three People's Principles
June	Materialism
July	One's outlook on life
August	Party history
September	Party history
October	Party history
November	Nation building
December	Nation building

†Note: There was some variation of topics among cells but, in general, most cells discussed the topic listed above.

III. Topics for Discussion at Daily Training Classes*:

Nationalism
 Three People's Principles
 International Affairs
 Internal Political Situation (in China)
 Nation Building

Source: Shanghai xingdongqu ershisannian gongzuo zong baogao [1934 work report for the Shanghai action district]. (Shanghai: n.p., 1935), 93, 103.

*Note: Each day's discussion was led by a different member of the group. Attendance was mandatory. These took place within the cell or, if the cell was a large one, in groups within the cell.

1) Through your own practical experience, do you know of any plans the enemy has used to attack us? 2) What measures has the enemy adopted to penetrate our organization? 3) Upon what clues does the enemy depend? 4) How can we discover the activities of spies in our organization and how shall we deal with them upon discovery? 5) What shall we do in case we are unable to escape from an enemy shadowing us on the street? 6) How can we discover internal traitors and how shall we deal with them upon discovery?⁸⁷

Another document outlined the attitude Party members should adopt during interrogation:

1) Even when the Police and detectives have secured evidence and proof and are interrogating and identifying those arrested, you must not confess, and must not recognize your comrades nor the work of the Party. If you acknowledge the evidence seized by the Police through informers, it means that you are convicting yourself and betraying those comrades who are connected with the evidence.

Comrades who are arrested should at all times have prepared statements [i.e., cover stories] ready. All statements regarding your name, address, profession, parents and relatives' professions etc. should be prepared before arrest so that when you are suddenly arrested, you can answer the interrogation of the Police according to the prepared statements.

2) You must remember that Police often torture those who show fear, because they think it is easier to force timid persons to make true confessions by means of torture. Let fear be your enemy.

3) Don't think that through making a little confession you will be saved from being tortured. On the contrary, you will be interrogated even more and tortured even more, until you tell all that you know, and sometimes they will even force you to tell what you really don't know.

4) When you see your comrades being tortured and show fear, this will not save you from being tortured and will facilitate the work of the Police and the running dogs.

6) Pending your trial, when you are being kept in prison, the Police will place their informers in your cell. These secret informers will then attempt to secure information from you. You must be very careful and not talk about Party business.⁸⁸

While such precautions were important, what really saved many detainees were the prison-based Party organizations. At Shanghai's infamous Longhua Prison (and it seems the prison where most political prisoners found themselves), for example, there were three cell blocks, each containing twenty cells with a total prison population of between five hundred and six hundred.* During the day, the cell doors were

*Longhua was not the only prison with political prisoners. While the definition of what

opened with only the door to the main block remaining locked. This freedom gave the prison a life of its own. Because most of the prisoners were political, the population tended to be more stable and disciplined than usual, and subject to a power structure run by the CCP. Prior to the Party takeover, newcomers had been tormented by inmate bosses until their relatives bought the bullies off. Prisoners without financial means found themselves constantly maltreated. Under the Communists, newcomers—be they criminal or political—were taken care of by “old hands” who eased their way into prison life. Zheng Chaolin describes his incarceration at Longhua this way: “The political prisoners, led by [CCP leader] Wang Kequan, joined together with the other prisoners to sing songs, indulge in various sorts of merriment and uproar, play chess, and gamble. It was as if we had forgotten where we were. In such an atmosphere, we soon cast off our worries and anxieties.”⁸⁹ The orderly system created by the CCP prisoners worked so well that even hardened criminals and the jailers themselves adapted to it.⁹⁰ Despite this carefree attitude, however, Party life continued for imprisoned CCP members with study sessions, cell meetings and recruiting (from among nonParty inmates).†

Arrest and imprisonment was the worst-case scenario and the Party tried to create as many safeguards as it could within the organization itself to keep its member from falling into enemy hands. A document captured by the Guomindang listed nine rules of the Provincial Com-

constituted a political prisoner was vague (so therefore must be approached cautiously and may be much lower than Party figures), a 1932 Shanghai Municipal Police document provided a list of jails and the number of political prisoners in each. “District” denotes the area serviced by that jail.

<i>Prison</i>	<i>District</i>	<i># of Prisoners</i>
Hangzhou	Pudong	20
Military Jail, Suzhou	West Shanghai	40
Central Military Jail, Nanjing	West Shanghai	40
2nd Prison, Zhaowujing	Fanan	10
French Concession	Fanan	15
Ward Road Jail	East Shanghai	20
Jiangpu Xian	Zhabei	15

Source: Shanghai Municipal Police Files, G-2, Document 56.

*Wang Fanxi comments that when he was transferred from Longhua to a prison in Suzhou, he was horrified. According to him, conditions were so bad that nine-tenths of the prisoners who had been transferred from Longhua during the previous year had died. He concludes: “To be sent to this prison was to be sentenced to death by a form of execution which differed from the firing squad only in being slightly more drawn out.” See Wang Fanxi, 168–69.

†Party leaders were clearly in communication with prisoners. As we saw in our discussion of He Mengxiong, prisoners had been alerted that He was to be blacklisted. We also know that prisoners were aware of what was going on within the Party hierarchy. I found no data on how information reached prisoners but it is reasonable to assume that the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress and its successor the Mutual Aid Society served as liaison.

mittee's Organization Bureau, headquartered in the foreign concessions, issued to safeguard Party members at all levels of the hierarchy:

1. The departments of the Organization Bureau are arranged separately and their contact is limited to work communications. Those who carry these communications are trustworthy cadres of long-standing.

2. No documents are to be kept in the homes of important people and when a Party member goes on a journey he/she must carry no Party documents. If it is absolutely necessary to carry papers, they should be put in a place where they can be gotten rid of immediately.

3. Members of the Central Committee usually reside in upper-class residential areas with their own cars and clothing appropriate to their assumed economic status. They do no mass work.

4. In the international concessions, money should be used to bribe the police, buy informants, and control the courts.

5. Each organization should establish a series of "safe signals" to be placed at doors and windows.

6. Each Party member must always have a prepared statement ready to be used if arrested.

7. Because single men living by themselves attract undue attention, those in charge of living arrangements must find a female cadre to live with the man as "man and wife."

8. When the Central Committee or other important organs have a meeting, special agents must keep the location of the meeting secret and use arms to protect those attending.

9. Individuals and various levels of the organizations must have only the most circumspect relationships and must take responsibility for their individual actions.⁹¹

Party members were instructed to keep their membership a secret from even close family members who often only found out about the CCP affiliation when they received word of a loved one's arrest or death. Among comrades, there could be no discussion of operations except between those who worked together directly. When members were judged to have made political or practical mistakes, they were subjected to the process of criticism and self-criticism. All levels of the Party were called upon to admit to personal deficiencies through this process. As part of the Internationalists' program to increase rank-and-file involvement in Party affairs, provincial leaders also encouraged limited criticism of CCP policies and practices among the lower levels in order to cultivate a "critical spirit" (which they believed had been crushed by Li Lisan's demand for conformity).⁹²

If after a suitable period the member's mistakes or shortcomings were deemed to still exist, then he or she was asked to leave the cell and undergo an "isolation exam." This was a period of independent work

when the errant Party member was rigorously scrutinized as he or she performed mundane assignments. The member could be returned to the cell only if, after undergoing a second investigation, his or her errors were judged to have been corrected. If those mistakes were found to still exist, the member was expelled from the Party. In like manner, if a member missed a cell meeting or attended the meeting and did not speak, then he or she was expected to file a report outlining the reasons for the absence or silence. If the member missed two meetings in a row, then he or she had to undergo the isolation exam. Three absences or silences meant expulsion because the members were believed to lack sufficient commitment to the revolution.⁹³

The Provincial Committee also directed cadres to engage in theoretical study. Because ideological study had been relegated to the upper levels in the past, it was very concerned that lower-level cadres were susceptible to "incorrect lines." Cadres were to participate in daily study and discussion of important Party issues. This regimen was also designed to remold the ideological thinking of dissident elements in the Shanghai organization. Attached to this was a literacy campaign to teach illiterate cadres how to read.⁹⁴

The essential unit for all Party activity was the cell. Cell members had to put absolute trust in their comrades because at this level Party members had the most contact with the masses and faced the most danger. Any deviations from Party discipline or betrayal of Party secrets could be deadly. Although cell members might lack the education and political consciousness of comrades at higher levels, they were never considered expendable. The training invested in each Party member made it essential that upper-level leaders provide the best protection possible. It often took as many as three months to prepare a single cell member for his or her assignment. Then, it was not uncommon for that cell member to spend several more months working undercover to establish the right contacts before he or she could begin to carry out his or her duties.

To protect its investments, the organization had to do all it could to make sure only the most dedicated and committed entered the Party, and to screen thoroughly those who had lost contact with the Party before allowing them to reenter. Applicants for membership were rigorously investigated and, once in the Party, subject to iron discipline. Most people joined the Party from the ranks of the Youth League, although membership straight from red mass organizations or from the general population was not uncommon, particularly among people over twenty years old. When someone applied for membership, he or she first wrote an application letter that contained a detailed family history, personal history, list of personal property, ambitions, and all current

social relationships. Applicants also had to write an essay in which they analyzed the present situation among the proletariat. All applicants had to be sponsored by someone already in the Party and had to undergo investigation by the next higher level. Intellectuals, who came from a suspect class, had to have two sponsors.

Given the time invested in each member and the danger of lower-level work, it is no wonder that providing clear-cut instructions and protecting cell members was a primary focus of work at the branch level. Branch and district committee leaders faced the multifaceted problem of keeping comrades at the cell level informed of policy directives and changes in such a way that they were understandable and easily executed. Conditions in the area of the city covered by the district or branch determined how openly information might be disseminated or contacts made. After all, if a cell member was working undercover he or she could hardly take time off to attend a lengthy meeting or training session, or chance being seen studying policy directives or pamphlets. If a cell member was exposed, then he or she was removed from that district and sent elsewhere to work. Depending on his or her position in the hierarchy, expertise, and the extent of the exposure that reassignment might be to another area of the city, the suburbs, or another province. Nevertheless, reassignment was not easy. The cell member's branch had to find another branch who was willing to accept the transferred Party member. Before that branch would accept the new member, it undertook a time-consuming and complicated investigation of the transferee's credentials in order to protect itself from infiltrators.⁹⁵

Although members of a cell knew each other, the only contact they were supposed to have with higher levels of the Party was through their cell leader. This was known as the "single-link" and was designed to prohibit exposure of large numbers of Party members if one member was arrested. Although this was standard procedure, it often existed more in theory than in practice in the late 1920s when there were cases where members knew people beyond their own cell and higher up in the hierarchy. Under the Internationalists, this organizational carelessness ended and the "single-link" was strictly imposed. Cell leaders became the rank and file's lifeline to the Party as a whole. If the cell was broken up or the leader arrested, then its members lost their link with the Party. Regaining that link was no easy matter especially in as precarious times as the early 1930s when the CCP was full of infiltrators and traitors. As we will see later when we discuss the CCP's reassertion of control over the Shanghai Party at the end of the Nanjing Decade, readmitting members who had lost contact was a major concern of the underground leadership.

One Shanghai Party member, Gao Wenhua, has left a detailed description of the process he went through to regain his connection in the early 1930s. Gao lost contact while working in the peasant mobilization movement in Hunan in the late 1920s. Along with another comrade, he spent several years trying to reconnect first in Hangzhou and then in Shanghai. When the two men arrived in Shanghai penniless and knowing no one, they went to the docks where longshoremen gathered to find work. Because this was an area where the Party actively organized, the two hoped they might be able to make contact. Along the docks, Gao and his friend saw posters with such revolutionary slogans as “Down with the Guomindang” and “Down with Chiang Kai-shek.” They knew these to be the work of the Party and believed if they just waited in the vicinity, they would spot whoever was putting up the posters and could make contact through them. For several days, the men returned to the docks watching and waiting. Finally, Gao and his companion saw several people pasting slogans on walls but just as the two approached them, a crowd surged around the two lost Party members and pushed them along. When they escaped the crowd and returned, the people who were pasting up the slogans had vanished. The two realized they had been spirited away by “protection troops.”*

After a time, they concluded they were not going to be able to reconnect in a city as large as Shanghai so they went to Hankou where they contacted an influential newspaper editor whose family was a neighbor of Gao’s family and a man who, although a member of the Guomindang, had well-known sympathies with the Communists. Through his introduction, Gao and his companion met with a CCP member who told them: “I have only one Party contact in Shanghai and I’m not sure he would be willing to help you.” On that vague promise, the two men returned to Shanghai and took rooms at an inn the Hankou Party member recommended to await a rendezvous. After some time, a young woman of seventeen or eighteen approached them saying: “I’m the contact person.” When Gao began to thank her profusely, she responded sharply: “This is not the place for talking; come with me to find a place to live.” They rented a garret in the French Concession and settled in. One day, a short time later, the young woman again appeared and this time she asked each man to give her a detailed account of their work in Hunan, which she promised to pass on to Party leaders. The men complied and she left only to reappear several days later to tell them that

*“Protection troops” were used to shield Party members who were engaged in such open and potentially dangerous activities as posting slogans, writing on walls or sidewalks, or distributing propaganda literature. There would be a group of Party members hidden in the crowd watching for danger. If they spotted anything suspicious, they would create a diversion to allow time for their exposed comrades to escape.

two leading party members, Li Weihan and Mao Zemin were in Shanghai and had vouched for Gao and his companion. They had even sent the two men \$500 to buy food and clothes.

Gao was then sent to a retraining center in the International Settlement for Party members who had lost their link, where he spent more than a month in an ideological reeducation program. He was then assigned to Wuhan to work at the Yangzi River Bureau but when that bureau was destroyed, he again lost his contact. This time, he took the highly unusual step of contacting his younger sister, who had in the interval joined the Party and was working in the French Concession, and reconnected through her.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The Internationalists left contradictory legacies to the Shanghai Party. They imposed policies that, in the extraordinary danger of the times, almost completely destroyed that organization. Between 1931 and 1934, they gained nothing by making anti-imperialist appeals to the working class. To succeed, ideology (and the policy devised to implement it) had to conform to the demands of the community, and the Internationalists never capitalized upon the concrete economic or the emerging patriotic demands of Shanghai's citizens. Although they talked about building support among anti-Japanese groups, they never translated the generalities of anti-imperialism into the specifics of patriotism. This kept them from productive—and potentially empowering—collective action with groups that shared common interests. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, when the times demanded utmost secrecy, Shanghai Party members were sent to participate in highly visible and potentially deadly strikes and demonstrations.

Nevertheless, the reforms of the Internationalist-influenced Jiangsu Provincial Committee did result in a more Leninist Party organization. The Provincial Committee reshaped the local unit into a more disciplined structure capable of grass-roots level initiative. Those reforms created internal bureaucratic controls and better trained operatives thereby allowing the city's Party to achieve the streamlined professional quality that had eluded it during the reforms of the late 1920s. Those changes may well have saved the organization during these years.

By 1934, the Shanghai Party stood alone and decimated with, some claim, as few as one hundred members.⁹⁷ There were not enough survivors to implement the activist policy left in place by the Internationalists when they evacuated the city. Those who remained were practical men and women who knew that the organization as it had existed to

that point was not viable in the dangerous environment of mid-1930s Shanghai. They were also committed revolutionaries who were capable of capitalizing on the Provincial Committee's legacy of organizational reform and grassroots initiative. As we will see in the next chapter, the small core of professional revolutionaries left in the city had to make some difficult choices about their future.

Chapter 4

The Red Mass Leagues (1932–1935)

Even though Shanghai's Party organization suffered terrible losses during the first years of the 1930s, it continued to operate in the city, albeit in a severely reduced form. An essential ingredient to its survival was the presence in Shanghai of a strong and ever-expanding enemy: the Japanese. From the time of the Manchurian Incident in September 1931, the anger generated by Japanese incursions into China and the frustration produced by the central government's refusal to confront the aggressor consolidated people from all classes and social strata. For the severely weakened Shanghai Party, it was an unequalled opportunity to exert power through cooperation with a strong base of allies. Although the Party continued to ignore the potentially powerful elite, it worked strategically to unite with the masses through organizations known as the Red Mass Leagues (*hongse minlian*). Through these, the Party sought to overcome the absence of a working-class base and to generate power by capitalizing upon general discontent and patriotism. Party activity in these groups led to the eventually fruitful cooperation with multiclass national salvation organizations. It was at this point that the Shanghai Party entered into its most profitable alliance—that with the progressive patriotic elites of Shanghai.

Before turning our attention to the city's Party organization, it is useful here to look at the economic and political situation in Shanghai at this time. Following the skirmish with Chinese troops outside of Mukden on the night of 18 September, 1931, Japanese forces invaded the three provinces making up Manchuria. All strata of Shanghai society reacted vehemently to the news of the invasion. Activists called upon the Guomindang government in Nanjing to boycott Japanese goods and to act immediately to recover the lost territory. Anti-Japanese associations, which had been active since July, came together under Guomin-

dang auspices to form the National Salvation Association for Resistance to Japan (kangRi jiuguohui). These demands for retaliation along with the increased voracity of anti-Japanese sentiments combined with the presence of nearly thirty thousand Japanese residents in Shanghai and a large military force put the municipal government in a very difficult position.¹ On the one hand, it had to recognize the driving force of the anti-Japanese sentiments sweeping the city. On the other hand, if it allowed full rein to those sentiments, it risked a confrontation—most likely armed—with Shanghai's Japanese residents.*

By late September–early October, an anti-Japanese boycott was in full force. Business people broke their ties with Japan; transport and dock workers refused to move Japanese goods; and employees of Japanese companies were encouraged to quit. Soon it became almost impossible to buy or sell Japanese goods in the city. Although the boycott produced no violence, it did create feelings of anger and humiliation among the city's Japanese residents. Mayor Zhang Qun assured those residents that, while he could not restrain lawful anti-Japanese activities of Shanghai citizens, he would do everything he could to protect Japanese interests. Many in the Japanese community refused to believe him and organized raids against Chinese shops in Hongkou (the section of the city where most Japanese lived) and against the offices of the National Salvation Association. The situation in the city grew increasingly tense.

Despite the municipal government's good intentions, the situation declined in Shanghai throughout the fall of 1931. On 9 January, 1932, the Shanghai daily, *The Republican* [Minguo ribao] printed an article that Japanese residents claimed insulted Emperor Hirohito. Only partially satisfied by the mayor's apology and a printed correction, elements in the Japanese community convinced International Settlement authorities to suspend publication when the newspaper printed an article on the Japanese army. Nine days later, a group of Chinese attacked some Japanese monks, killing one of them. In reprisal, Japanese residents set fire to the textile factory from which they claimed the assailants had come.

The Japanese consul demanded reparations from the mayor, punishment for the guilty, a formal apology, and the dissolution of the National Salvation Association. Again, Shanghai's mayor was put into a

*Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of the political conflicts in Shanghai and the Anti-Japanese boycott is taken from Christian Henriot, *Shanghai, 1927–1937: Municipal Power, Locality, and Modernization*, trans. by Noel Castolino (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 65–94; and Coble, *Facing Japan*, 39–50. For further discussion of the boycott see Donald A. Jordan, "China's Vulnerability to Japanese Imperialism: The Anti-Japanese Boycott of 1931–1932," in *China at the Crossroads: Nationalists and Communists, 1927–1949*, ed. F. Gilbert Chan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980).

difficult position. Acquiescing to the Japanese by dissolving the National Salvation Associations risked riots among an extremely tense population; ignoring them risked attack by the Japanese navy. The central government was embroiled in its own power struggles and had left the municipal government to its own devices. Preferring riots to war, the mayor suspended the National Salvation Association and told the Japanese consul at 3:00 P.M. on 28 January that the municipal government would accept all his demands. Extremist elements among the Japanese military were angry that the mayor's prompt action had denied them the opportunity to occupy Shanghai. Late that same evening, the Nineteenth Route Army clashed with Japanese marines who had entered the Zhabei section of the city. Although the municipal government took quick action to thwart violence, it was too late as fighting raged and rapidly spread to other areas of the city and beyond.

For the next thirty-three days the two sides fought a brutal war in the midst of China's most populated city. The Japanese had only six thousand men as compared to twenty thousand Chinese troops so it relied on incendiary bombs, tanks, advanced artillery, and planes. On 5 March, Chinese troops withdrew but a peace agreement was not concluded until 5 May. When the agreement came, it humiliated the Chinese. One clause, for example, stipulated that Chinese troops could not be stationed inside Shanghai or within a radius of thirty kilometers. Authorities had to form a civilian force to replace them. But the damage went beyond humiliation. Fighting had devastated the economic life of the city, which, at that time, was the crucial source of funds for the central government. The bond markets on which Nanjing floated its deficits were closed for weeks and major institutional lenders faced bankruptcy. Moreover, patriotic groups within the city publicly opposed the peace agreement. Although some among the business community did support it because they believed the agreement would restore business to normal, most Shanghai citizens vehemently opposed it and blamed the government for its imposition.

Moreover, the Shanghai Incident was far more costly in terms of lives than was the Manchurian campaign. Japan suffered 3,091 casualties of whom 769 died; China suffered 14,000 casualties of whom 4,086 died. Chinese civilian losses were estimated to be between 10,000 and 20,000.²

Japan's attack on Shanghai only made an already tense situation worse. In the early 1930s, China was also in the midst of the world depression, and because Shanghai conducted 53.4 percent of China's foreign trade, and 25.6 percent of all shipping, and it also contained 1,200 of China's 2,435 modern factories, it was affected more than other areas.³ The devaluation of the pound sterling and the U.S. dollar

created a rise in silver prices that was made worse by the U.S. Silver Purchase Act of 1934. According to Tim Wright, the existence of these problems created the impression among Shanghai capitalists that the depression was actually worse than it was. In reality, however, China did not suffer as badly from the world economic collapse as did other nations. When the value of silver against gold fell, the Chinese dollar was automatically devalued by almost 50 percent against the currencies of its major trading partners. Domestic prices and output kept up well with only the silk and soybean industries—both heavily dependent on exports—badly affected. While the output of those industries declined, that of other products either held their own or grew. Based on these findings, Wright concludes: “The figures show that the depression touched China rather lightly. Despite a considerable fall in the level of prices, output, especially in the modern sector, was much less affected. On the whole, the depression remained mild by world standards.” Recovery began at the end of 1935 with a sharp rise in the wholesale price. This continued to rise in 1936 and by the first half of 1937, Shanghai industries were operating at capacity.⁴

The question of the actual effects of the depression is not as important as the question of *how* Shanghai residents perceived it. The fact that they believed it to be worse than it was and blamed ineffectual policies of the central government for the crisis only weakened their relationship with Nanjing. To complicate matters, the “leftist” anticapitalism, which had been of the hallmark of Guomindang rule, was replaced in the early 1930s by rightist anticapitalism overlaid with Confucian precepts and fascist slogans. Although this new anticapitalism sought to justify itself by claiming a revolutionary past, the rightist feeling, in many cases, arose from traditional antimercantilist attitudes.⁵ All these factors worked to alienate many of Shanghai’s bourgeoisie from the municipal and central government and made it susceptible to political groups who appealed to its patriotism. Nanjing’s relationship with Shanghai’s national bourgeoisie had already been seriously eroded with the 28 January attack on the city. Many business people were forced to declare bankruptcy because of the destruction and the resulting decline in business. Faced with losing everything, they blamed Nanjing for its failure to stand up to Japanese aggression and for its failure to provide Shanghai capitalists with much needed support. As a result, many of these business people became politicized and called for reform in the Guomindang and for more assertive action against the Japanese.⁶

Thus, between 1932 and 1935, we find an explosive Shanghai frustrated by the central government’s ineffectiveness, angry at its repressive measures, humiliated at concessions made to the Japanese, and divided as to how to respond. These were not events experienced by

one class or group but ones that affected all strata of society. What existed in Shanghai during these years was a fertile field for Party organizing. By forming the Red Mass Leagues, the city's Party organization capitalized on the environment by joining forces with frustrated masses. The question that remained, however, was whether or not the remnants of the city's Party organization were cohesive enough to seize the opportunity presented by disaffected elites. The answer to that question will be the subject of the next chapter but, first, we must look at Party alliances with mass-based organizations.

The Red Mass Leagues

Shanghai Party-CCP Relations

The Central Committee's departure for Jiangxi in 1933 ended direct contact between the city's Party organization and CCP leaders. Up to that time, communications between Shanghai and the rural soviets had been maintained through an unreliable and irregular system of messengers. Often months elapsed from the time a directive left the Central Committee to the time it arrived at its destination. Before leaving Shanghai, the Central Committee tried to solve the problem by training radio operators and establishing a transmitting station. Its efforts were in vain, however. Although the Jiangxi Soviet had acquired radios in 1930, it had no trained personnel to operate them.⁷ As for the Shanghai station, Guomintang agents destroyed it in August 1934. When the Central Committee abandoned the Jiangxi Soviet and began the Long March in late 1934, communications all but ended.⁸ What news the Shanghai Party received of the Central Committee, the Red Army, and the Long March came through Guomintang-controlled newspapers, foreign magazines, or third hand from travelers.⁹ Underground leader Wang Yaoshan later wrote: "Losing the leadership of the Party's Central Committee was really terrible. We didn't know the direction and policy of the Party. From [information found in] enemy newspapers, we could only guess at the spirit of the Red Army's Long March."¹⁰

It was equally difficult to keep abreast of Comintern policy. When the Guomintang government restored commercial relations with the Soviet Union in 1935 after a hiatus of some eight years, the Soviet Consulate on Nanjing Road opened a small bookstore, which sold foreign language newspapers and books. City Party members learned of Comintern policy through translations of publications they bought at the bookstore.¹¹ Communications did not improve much after the Long Marchers reached Northwest China. Commenting on the post-Long

March system of communication, Comintern adviser to the CCP Otto Braun stated: "Such contacts were maintained occasionally by authorized agents and messengers who for weeks were trying to get to their places of destination."*

The Central Committee did not deliberately abandon the Party organization in China's largest city. When it evacuated Shanghai, the Central Committee created the Shanghai Central Committee Bureau (Shanghai zhongyangju, also known as the White Districts' Central Committee Bureau) to take charge. Li Zhusheng became the bureau's secretary. The new bureau did not escape the terror and betrayal rampant in the city, however. In 1934, Li was arrested and defected to the Guomindang, followed shortly thereafter by the second bureau secretary, Sheng Zhongliang. On 19 February, 1935, the third bureau secretary, the heads of the organization and propaganda bureaus along with more than thirty other people were arrested. The losses were so great that CCP leaders transferred a temporary team to the city to take control of the Shanghai Central Committee Bureau. In mid-March 1935, a five-person Shanghai Temporary Central Committee Bureau (Shanghai linshi zhongyangju, also known as the Five Man Team [wurentuan]) was created to restore communications between white and soviet areas, and between the Shanghai Central Committee Bureau and the various systems of the underground Party organization remaining in the city.† At the end of May, the Five Man Team was reorganized into a Three Man Team made of up Kong Yuan, Liu Zhonghua, and He Changchi. The new team organized the Liaison Committee (lianluo weiyuanhui) to be responsible for communications with white areas and the military, a publications office to be responsible for the propaganda and technical

*Quote from A. Pantsov, "Life Given to the Struggle for Freedom," *Far Eastern Affairs*, 1(1983): 127. I found no exact date for the start of regular radio communications between Shanghai and Yan'an. One source states that at the time of the Xi'an Incident (December 1936), the Central Committee was learning of conditions in Shanghai only through cadres who were arriving in Yan'an from white areas. However, by 1941–1942, there were radio bases in Shanghai transmitting regularly to Party headquarters. When the Japanese occupied the entire city after Pearl Harbor, the Shanghai Party and CCP returned to using messengers. See Liu Xiao, "Shanghai dixiadang hui fu he chongjian qianhou" [The Shanghai underground party's restoration and reconstruction from beginning to end], *Dangshi ziliao* 1(1979): 34; Li Peiqun, "Huiyi jiefangqian dang de dixia jiaotong gongzuo," [Recollections of the communication work of the party underground before liberation], *Dangshi ziliao* 1(1982): 28–32.

†Wang Yaoshan lists the operable parts of the organization with active members at this time as: the Literary Committee and Eight Big Leagues—100 members; the Communist Youth League—50 members; the Labor Alliance—100 members; the Self-defense Committee—20–30 members. The *tewu* or spy branch of the Party remained in operation in the city. He writes that he had no information as to how many operatives remained or what their activities entailed. I found no other information to add to his statement. See Wang Yaoshan, "Guanyu Shanghai dixiadang chongjian de jingguo," 51–52.

bureaus, as well as departments to be responsible for coordinating what remained of the city's Party organization.¹²

In early June 1935, while still on the Long March, the Central Committee dispatched Chen Yun, head of its White Area Work Department, and Pan Hannian, who in 1930 and 1931 was in charge of Shanghai's Anti-imperialist Alliance and the International Relief Society, to Shanghai to restore the radio station and revive the city's Party organization.¹³ The two never carried out their mission, however. Between 22 and 27 July, 1935 the Shanghai Temporary Central Committee Bureau was raided and a number of important cadres, including those responsible for white area communications, the publications office, and the Youth League's Temporary Work Committee along with thirty to forty other cadre were arrested. In addition, the contents of the offices of the Liaison Committee were confiscated. This raid was part of a spectacular series of raids that took place during this five-day period. A total of nineteen suspected Communist offices and hideouts were raided, including in addition to the Temporary Central Committee Bureau a safe house used by leading CCP members when in Shanghai, the Youth League's communication office, and the offices of the Cultural Committee and the Self-defense Committee. Clearly the situation was too dangerous for the likes of such prominent Party leaders as Chen Yun and Pan Hannian, so in August, along with Three Man Team member, Kong Yuan, they left for Moscow. On 26 August, 1935, the Shanghai Temporary Central Committee Bureau received a letter from Wang Ming and Kang Sheng (both acting in their capacity as CCP temporary Comintern representatives), which stated: "At present, Shanghai does not require any Central Committee organization."

Consequently, the Shanghai Temporary Central Committee Bureau declared its dissolution and all important cadres left the city.¹⁴

The Communist Youth League

That did not mean that all Party activities ceased. On the contrary, a small core of Party members continued to work in the city, as did a small group of Communist Youth League members who, despite undergoing the devastation described in the last chapter, still operated. League District Committees that still had members continued to work albeit independent of each other and without any contact with the League Central Committee. During the last part of 1934 and the beginning of 1935, the Shanghai Central Committee Bureau tried to reactivate the severely damaged Youth League. A number of cadres were transferred from North China to Shanghai with orders to help revitalize the organization. They established the Youth League's Central Commit-

tee Shanghai Temporary Work Committee in the spring of 1935. Xu Ya and Chen Guodong headed the Work Committee and it was through them that the committee maintained its links with the Red Mass Leagues, schools, and factories. Through the Shanghai Central Committee Bureau, the Work Committee contacted what remained of the Communist Youth League's Jiangsu Provincial Committee. When the Temporary Work Committee was destroyed in July 1935 and the league secretary and Organizational Bureau head arrested, the link with the League's Provincial Committee was broken. Most of the league cadres who were not arrested left the city for safer areas.

The approximately fifty to sixty league members that remained continued to work and there is evidence that during the last half of 1935, the league was still active, albeit in a very limited way, in the West Shanghai, East Shanghai, Fanan, and Zhabei Districts as well as in the international radio station, the post and telecommunications office, the railroad, the YMCA, and the customs office. More than fifty league branches still operated in the city's cotton mills, cigarette and silk stocking factories, and middle schools.* Nevertheless, until the high tide of the National Salvation Movement in the mid-to-late 1930s, the Communist Youth League maintained a very low profile.¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite devastating raids and arrests, the Shanghai Youth League was active in the Red Mass Leagues and in the Party's continued efforts with the city's working class. It was not particularly active among students, however. According to Jeffrey Wasserstrom, in the early 1930s league activists showed little interest in working with students who had not already been converted to the Marxist cause.¹⁶

Red Mass Leagues

With ties to the Central Committee broken, what remained of the Party organization was on its own. There were about three hundred Party members left in the city in 1934. Although the formal Party hierarchy had disappeared, pockets of Party activity remained in peripheral organizations known as Red Mass Leagues. These consisted of (1) proletarian groups concerned with political rights and (2) intellectual groups concerned with culture. The Cultural Committee and its Eight Big Leagues, the Red Trade Unions, the Self-defense Committee, and

*I find this figure from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao*, 193, which is an otherwise reliable source, to be very high. The same source reports that there were approximately three hundred league members active in Shanghai in 1935. Again, I find that high and believe the figures provided by Wang Yaoshan to be more in line with what we know to be the devastated state of the Party organization and league organization in Shanghai at that time.

the Chinese Association to Relieve Distress are all examples of Red Mass Leagues. They were all part of the initial national salvation movement, which sprang up in response to Japanese aggression, Guomindang repression, and capitalist exploitation. Many Party people from all over China, who had lost their connection with their cells and branches, flocked to Shanghai to join these periphery organizations in hopes of contacting the Party through them.¹⁷

Members from the redesigned Leninist Party organization infiltrated all these groups. None of these peripheral organizations had formal contact with the CCP's Central Committee (although they were known to be sympathizers) nor any horizontal relationship between themselves. They were left-leaning public organizations exercising their right to protest through legally sanctioned means such as strikes and demonstrations.¹⁸ All independently represented the interests of their members in the hard reality of Shanghai and all were dedicated to the overthrow of the Guomindang. Municipal and Nanjing authorities considered these organizations—with some good reason—to be synonymous with the CCP and targeted them for destruction in the same manner that they struck at the Party organization.

The Red Mass Leagues were crucial to the maturation process of the Shanghai Party because participation in these was the first concentrated attempt of the city's Party organization to adapt its goals to the political and economic environment of Shanghai. Although they were class oriented in the sense that they were directed at raising the political consciousness of the masses, the Red Mass Leagues were a critical first step in what would become successful multiclass national salvation alliances during the mid-1930s. Through the leagues, the city's Party organization became increasingly involved in the burgeoning anti-Japanese movement and strengthened its links to progressives throughout Shanghai.

Although the Red Mass Leagues played an important role in the survival of the Shanghai Party, they ultimately failed for many of the same reasons CCP policy had failed before. The leagues were too narrowly focused and undertook activities that unnecessarily exposed members and the general public to danger. Although the concept diminished with time (and lack of success), during the period between 1932 and 1935, the idea of fomenting immediate revolution as preached by the Internationalists still formed the core of Party policy in the city. The conditions described in chapter 3 did not lend themselves to large-scale strikes and demonstrations that continued to be the mainstay of Party activity. There was by the mid-1930s a move away from the kind of activity that exposed people needlessly to danger but not before a great loss of life

and many arrests. Before examining that activity, let us take a closer look at the different components of the Red Mass Leagues.

The Cultural Alliance and the Eight Big Leagues

One of the few Party organizations in Shanghai that had survived the white terror was the Literary Committee (*wenhua gongzuo weiyuanhui*, shortened to *wenwei*), which at various times counted Qu Qiubai, Zhou Yang, Lin Baixiu, Tian Han, and Xia Yan among its members.* Under the Literary Committee was the Chinese Cultural Alliance (*Zhongguo wenhua zongtongmeng*, shortened to *wenzong*), which became the principal Party organization in Shanghai between 1934 and 1936. Pan Hannian was the original Party secretary for the alliance; after his transfer in 1931, Zhu Jingwo, Feng Xuefeng, Yang Hansheng, and Zhou Yang successively took charge. Zhou was secretary when the Alliance was disbanded in 1935. The Cultural Alliance, in turn, controlled what became known as the Eight Big Leagues (*ba dalian*): the Leftist League (*zuolian*), News League (*xinlian*), Education League (*jiaolian*), Socialist League (*shelian*), Drama League (*julian*), Film League (*yinglian*), Music League (*yinlian*), and Beauty League (*meilian*).

Officially these were public organizations whose membership included both Party and non-Party people; unofficially they were controlled by the Party's Cultural Alliance. All sought to "penetrate the lives of workers and peasants, reform their thinking, temper their revolutionary will and help them obtain experience in struggle."¹⁹ Put simply, they advocated the overthrow of the Guomindang. To achieve that goal, league members initiated night schools and reading associations, published propaganda tracts, and instigated strikes and demonstrations. Each league targeted a particular segment of the population and had its own objective. For example, the Leftist League (also known as the League of Left-Wing Writers) promoted proletarian literature and sent intellectuals to propagandize in factories, in shops, and among the general population, while the News League worked through the media and the Education League engaged in teaching and study.

The Eight Big Leagues evolved out of changes in Shanghai's environment that affected the Party during the early 1930s. As we saw in

*I found no definitive evidence but from the various discussions of the Literary Committee, I conclude that it belonged to the CCP's Central Committee not to the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. If it did belong to the Central Committee, the ties were weak at best.

Except where noted, this discussion of the Eight Big Leagues comes from *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai*, 137–55; Wang Yaoshan, "Guanyu Shanghai dixiadang chongjian de jingguo," 47–53; Wang Han, "Yu dang zhongyang shiqu lianxi zhihou" [After losing contact with the Party], *Dangshi ziliao* 1(1980): 129–30.

chapter 3 and as we will see again later in this chapter, labor organizing had become too dangerous in a city fraught with terror during the first years of the 1930s. For the few gains made, the price in terms of cadre exposure and arrests was far too high. The working class remained the Party's targeted class, but given the situation in the city, alternatives to approaching that class by means of labor organizing and strikes had to be found. Through the leagues, the Shanghai Party found a roundabout means of propagandizing for the cause. Moreover, because of their specialized focus, the leagues were better equipped to capitalize upon the growing anti-Japanese sentiments in the city than were Party branches and cells based on geography or occupation. Anti-imperialism had, for several years, been the rallying cry of CCP policy but as we have seen in Shanghai, very few people responded to that cry. Why? Because a theoretical issue like anti-imperialism was a more difficult political message to get across than an immediate need like resisting the Japanese encroachment in the city. To be effective, cadres had to deliver a message in the language of the audience. After the September 1931 incident in Manchuria and particularly after the January 1932 bombing of the city, the language of aggression was all too real for the citizens of Shanghai.

Nevertheless, the primary emphasis of Internationalist policy continued to be anti-imperialism and the overthrow of the Guomindang. A survey of the Party journals *Lenin life* [Liening shenghuo] and *Struggle* [douzheng] for the years 1932–1934, for example, reveals that the number of articles attacking imperialists and the Guomindang far outweigh the number of articles specifically condemning Japanese actions.* In like manner, CCP resolutions concentrated on the amorphous issue of imperialism rather than the more concrete issue of the Japanese presence in China. There was even an “Anti-imperialist struggle day” (1 August, 1932, the anniversary of the Nanchang Uprising) with resolutions calling for the elimination of imperialism in China and the recovery of rights and land along with slogans decrying imperialist attacks on the USSR and the imperialist occupation of China.

This is not to say that the CCP's Central Committee ignored the Japanese takeover of Manchuria. Following the Manchurian Incident, the Comintern called upon the CCP to form a “united front from below” that would unite all “genuine” patriots against Chiang Kai-shek and the Japanese. In April 1932, Party leaders in the Jiangxi Soviet declared war on Japan. Nine months later, in response to the Twelfth Plenum of

*This changed by 1935. If a similar survey is taken of the journal *Mass Leagues* [qunzhong de tuan] for 1935, we can see that the theme of almost all these issues is anti-Japanese.

the Executive Committee of the Comintern, which had met in September 1932, the Central Committee called for mobilization against Japan conditional on the immediate cessation of the Guomindang military campaigns against the Communists, the immediate guarantee of popular rights and freedoms, and the arming of the masses against Japan. The summer of 1934 brought further appeals for the formation of an anti-imperialist united front to fight Japan and other imperialists.

Despite the declaration of war and calls for anti-Japanese resistance, the *main emphasis* of CCP policy continued to be the overthrow of the Guomindang, which Party leaders saw as a prerequisite to ridding China of the Japanese. The Central Committee's emphasis on anti-imperialism was manifested in Shanghai not only in abstract slogans and policies but also in the formation of the Shanghai Great Alliance Against Imperialism (Shanghai fandi datongmeng) in the spring of 1931. Its charge was to advocate and organize strikes, and to hold rallies and demonstrations.²⁰ Anti-imperialism was not a viable issue for the Shanghai Party, however, especially in the early 1930s when the imperialists and the "capitulationist" Guomindang were so successfully exposing Party activity and destroying its organization.

The evacuation of the Central Committee from Shanghai and the break in communications between what remained of the Party organization in Shanghai and the main body of the CCP along with the anti-Japanese environment in the city put the city's Party on the road to multiclass alliances. Its newfound independence allowed the Party to create its own course. A united front from below against Chiang Kai-shek and the Japanese as dictated by the Twelfth Plenum provided the outlet the badly damaged Party organization needed to revitalize its work. Although, as we saw in chapter 3, overt Party work implemented through the few remaining functional branches and cells in the city was not feasible, covert Party work in conjunction with fellow travelers implemented through the Red Mass Leagues was. Not only did the leagues provide *limited* protection from authorities, but also, by working through larger "neutral" groups, the few remaining Party members in Shanghai could make a bigger impact. Until they disbanded in late 1935–early 1936, the leagues were the most important Party organization in Shanghai, far outweighing either the Communist Youth League or the All China Federation of Labor. Although all eight leagues played important roles in their area of expertise, for the purpose of illustration, let us look at three leagues where Party influence was particularly strong: the Leftist League, the Film League, and the Socialist League.

The Leftist League

The free-wheeling world of Shanghai was a magnet for China's post-May Fourth writers who sought a safe haven where they could write

freely about China's ills. Literary societies espousing various theories and trends sprang up as writers searched for a framework in which to relay their message. Many of this disaffected group of young writers were left-leaning and, while few were members of the Party, a large number were sympathetic to the CCP's goals. In the late 1920s, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee took control of one of the most influential of these literary societies, the Creation Society, which had been founded in 1921 by Guo Moruo, Yu Dafu and Cheng Fangwu and which had taken a decidedly Marxist turn after 12 April, 1927 when it began to advocate proletarian literature.* The Creation Society formed a coalition with the Sun Society, a group also concerned with proletarian literature founded in January 1928. Several reasons accounted for the Party's desire to penetrate the literary movement, the most important of which was the decision made at the Second Plenum (June 1929) to promote proletarian revolutionary literature under the slogan "Propaganda is another kind of weapon."²¹ At that meeting it established the Cultural Alliance under Pan Hannian to lead the Party's "cultural front members."

One of the Party's goals was to bring together China's disparate revolutionary writers who during the late 1920s were hotly debating the nature of revolutionary literature and the role of left-wing writers. All groups agreed that China must have a revolutionary literature movement and all were interested in Marxist literary theory but there the similarities ended. Members of the Creation and Sun Societies advocated explicit proletarian literature that concentrated on the conditions of the working class, while the group centered around Mao Dun, Feng Xuefeng, and Lu Xun adopted a less-doctrinaire approach. This group argued that the proletarian literary movement was not in the vanguard of revolutionary literature and that literature must reflect accurately the conditions of all society, not just the hardships of one class. Members of the CCP belonged to both camps and the Party itself played no part in the controversy. What it wanted to do, instead, was to capitalize on the common anti-Guomindang and anti-imperialist sentiments of the writers. To that end, it formed the Shanghai Research Association of Literature and Art in January 1930 to discuss organizing sympathetic writers. The following month the Preparatory Committee to Organize Left-wing Writers of the Country was created. Less than a month later, on 2 March, 1930, more than fifty writers met at the Shanghai Art College to form the Leftist League under the slogan "Use all public possibilities to broaden propaganda."²²

*Except where noted, this discussion comes from *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai*, 137-44.

†I use the term "Leftist League" instead of the more familiar term "League of Left-wing Writers" because I want the league to be seen as one of eight leagues not a unique entity of its own.

The Leftist League was never really a united group although its members did share common sentiments. Organizationally, the Creation and Sun Societies dominated the group but its principal personality was undoubtedly the renowned writer Lu Xun. Although not a member of the CCP, Lu Xun, along with Sun Yat-sen's widow, Song Qingling, was its most famous fellow traveler. His involvement in the league was not universally embraced by the Party, however; it was, in fact, controversial. While Lu Xun willingly lent his name to the CCP, he did not subscribe to its dogma. Moreover, he often found the actions required of Party cadre repugnant to an individualist like himself.

At first the league had little impact; its journals published only one or two issues before the authorities shut them down. Fearing the repercussions of the white terror, many of the original members of the league left it while others turned traitor and gave names of league members to police. By the spring of 1931, the league's membership was depleted and its publications nonexistent. At that time former CCP General-Secretary Qu Qiubai, a respected literary figure in his own right, took charge of the leftist cultural movement and undertook a series of reforms. In November 1931, shortly after the League's Implementation Committee passed a resolution entitled the "New Responsibilities of the Chinese Proletariat in Revolutionary Literature," which stated that all literary themes and situations should emphasize political propaganda. The document urged all League Members to participate in mass work through propaganda, demonstrations, and rallies. It also ended the League's strict anti-imperialist, antifeudal line by advocating the formation of anti-Japanese patriotic literature and art circles.

As part of his revisions, Qu Qiubai revitalized the League's publications so that they would include articles and essays by nonleftist writers as well. He also utilized the League's relations with powerful people in the publishing world to distribute literary supplements to the large number of city newspapers and periodicals. These legal supplements contained articles, film reviews, cartoons, and short stories, all opposing the Guomindang and advocating revolution.²³ Perhaps the biggest boost to the league was that, even with Qu Qiubai in charge, the league no longer was as closely identified with the CCP leadership as it once had been. When Li Lisan was general-secretary, the league had received limited organizational and financial support from the CCP to underwrite its intellectual opposition to the Guomindang. In return for this support, league members accepted Li Lisan as head of the Chinese literary movement. But, when the Internationalists ousted Li and took control of the CCP, the league no longer felt a bond with the new leadership and saw no reason to adhere as strictly to the Party line. Moreover, Pavel Mif, the power behind the Internationalists, had been instrumental

in Qu Qiubai's expulsion from the CCP's Politburo in January 1931. Thus, when the former general-secretary of the Party took control of the literature movement that same year, he felt no obligation to the new Party hierarchy.²⁴ The changes Qu undertook in the league reflected his independent position and did not necessarily reflect the Party line.

As long as Qu Qiubai was in charge, the leadership of the Leftist League worked harmoniously together. This success was due in large part to the personal friendship between Lu Xun and Party members Qu Qiubai and Feng Xuefeng. Qu and Lu Xun, both men of the old literary class, wrote some twenty articles together. High on the Guomindang's most-wanted list, Qu and his wife, Party activist Yang Zhihua, sought asylum more than once in Lu Xun's home in the Hongkou section of Shanghai during the height of the white terror. When Qu was captured by the Guomindang in western Fujian in March 1935, Lu Xun personally went to the prison and unsuccessfully tried to obtain the Party leader's release. Despite their friendship, however, the two men did clash when, as representative of the CCP in the league, Qu promoted ideas contrary to those of Lu Xun.²⁵

Lu Xun developed an entirely different, but no less strong, relationship with another Party member—Feng Xuefeng. Feng had attended Lu Xun's classes at Beijing University and developed a student-teacher relationship with the writer after being introduced to him in 1928. For a time in 1929, Feng even lived in the house of his mentor. It was Feng who approached Lu Xun on behalf of the Party to ask him to participate in the formation of the Leftist League, and it was these two, along with the writer Mao Dun, who were the principal antagonists in the debate with the Creation and Sun Societies over the nature of revolutionary literature. The relationships between Lu Xun and these two men were what gave the league its strength. When Qu Qiubai and Feng Xuefeng left for the Jiangxi Soviet in 1933, the delicate balance of power in the league's leadership was irrevocably upset.

Problems in the league extended beyond the leadership, however. Like all of the Eight Big Leagues, the Leftist League was too narrowly focused. The leagues were designed to appeal to a specific social category and, while they often worked successfully within that category, their influence did not extend to society in general. Moreover, they often resorted to activities promoted by the Party rather than to activities more appropriate to the individual league's membership. According to Wang Yaoshan, who took over as head of the Leftist League in 1934, although the league did some propaganda and educational work, it concentrated primarily on strikes and demonstrations. On major revolutionary holidays like May 1, league members would distribute leaflets and post slogans. They would also organize demonstrations that would

make sudden violent assaults called “flying assemblies.”²⁶ All of these were futile activities that brought undue attention upon the league and alienated many non-Party people who were sympathetic to the league’s larger goals but not to the methods used to attain them.²⁷

Eventually, the uneasy alliance among the various camps of revolutionary writers fell apart. Ostensibly, the clash was over the cultural policy of the United Front but in reality it was over the question of who would lead the literary movement. Zhou Yang, a CCP stalwart better known for his doctrinaire administrative capacities than his creative writing, took control of the literary movement as Party and Communist Youth League secretary after Qu Qiubai left for Jiangxi. Lu Xun and his supporters bridled at Zhou Yang’s aggressive attempt to assume total control and his insistence that writers write only about class struggle. A clash between the two developed and came to a head over the question of slogans for national defense.

During the high tide of the national salvation movement following the December Ninth Movement in 1935, narrowly defined local mass organizations such as the Leftist League ceased to be as effective as they had been earlier. A more appropriate format was multiclass organizations that capitalized upon national discontent. Therefore, while the Eight Big Leagues contributed to the Party’s survival in Shanghai during the terrible first years of the decade, by late 1935, they had lost their usefulness. In early 1936, Zhou Yang, without consulting Lu Xun, disbanded the Leftist League. He replaced it with the United Association of Chinese Writers, an organization of his own devising that assembled cultural workers of all political persuasions nationwide under the slogan “Literature for national defense.”* Lu Xun and the writer Hu Feng (who had replaced the departed Feng Xuefeng as Lu Xun’s confidant) opposed the slogan because they believed it defused revolutionary fervor. To replace it, they suggested the slogan “Mass literature of the national revolutionary war.” Zhou Yang rejected the suggestion and insisted that his “national defense” slogan must become the central theme of all writings except those by “the nation’s traitors”—a not so subtle reference to the Lu Xun group.²⁸ Lu Xun refused to join the association and counterattacked: “As to the serious works of National Defense Literature, there will be none. . . . They will entangle themselves in such trifles, until they themselves become bored and the readers become bored too. And then their association will fold without having made any noise or leaving any trace.”²⁹

This was an important and interesting twist in Party policy because,

*Although they had not yet fully embraced it, by this time, the CCP under Mao Zedong was talking in terms of a united front.

under Zhou Yang, policy now championed a position based solely on patriotism. The new Party stance was that it did not matter whether the cat was black or white as long as it was anti-Japanese. In contrast stood Lu Xun, a man without party affiliation who remained true to the principles of revolution. For the Shanghai Party, it was a real dilemma: national salvation multiclass alliances were the most promising opportunity to gain adherents the Party ever had and a fertile field for organizing. But what was the Party organization to do? Its most famous sympathizer openly opposed the united front policy and it was unthinkable to either attack or denounce him. Fortunately or unfortunately, the Party was spared having to confront the matter directly because in October Lu Xun died.*

The Film League

Because of the famous writers attached to it, the Leftist League has received the most scholarly attention but it was not necessarily the league with the greatest impact. That honor may well go to the Film League. Film reached both literate and illiterate people and, in the 1930s, China was a country of filmgoers, with Shanghai dominating the country's film industry.† During the period when Qu Qiubai directed cultural activities, the Party infiltrated the Shanghai film world and came to control most of the film studios, even those run by the government. The Leftist League began its expansion into the film industry in 1932 when it infiltrated the Yihua, Lianhua, and Mingxing film studios. Through the Mingxing Film Company, which the Party controlled, the Cultural Committee was able to invite left-leaning screenwriters and directors to attend a series of discussions with Qu Qiubai. During those talks, Qu pointed out that film was the richest medium for propaganda work among the masses and proposed a league for the film world under the leadership of Xia Yan, Qian Xingzhun, and Zheng Baiqi. Xia Yan, the dominant force in the Film League, established the league's first Party cell in March 1933. At first, the Film League concentrated on organizing screenwriters, a group it considered more important than directors who, in its opinion, simply transported the written product to the screen. From there, it began organizing Shanghai film critics to oppose any film that was not patriotic in nature. Finally, it turned its attention to Shanghai's large community of actors and began to preach the

*The debate between the two slogans was the source of bitter controversy for years. When the Gang of Four made Lu Xun into a cult figure during the Cultural Revolution, those who had opposed Lu Xun found themselves in very hot water.

†Except where noted, this discussion comes from Jay Leyda, *Dianying* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), 85–101, and *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai*, 144–46.

virtues of Soviet film theory. Its organizational activities proved successful because within a year, there was a significant group in the city's film industry producing such leftist films as *Twenty-four Hours in Shanghai*, *Three Modern Women*, and *Spring Silkworms*.

Xia Yan wrote the screenplay for Mao Dun's gripping short story of peasant life, *Spring Silkworms*, and for *Twenty-four Hours in Shanghai*, a series of short stories about intersecting lives. The leftist playwright Tian Han wrote the script for *Three Modern Women*, a tale of a popular male film star who found his political consciousness through interaction with the three women who loved him. Produced by the Lianhua studio, it became hugely popular. Tian Han was rewarded for this success by being given artistic control of a small new studio, Yihua Film Studio.

Guomindang authorities retaliated against the new leftist trend in film making. In June 1932, its Propaganda Bureau issued a general order to the Shanghai film industry to stop making films that were anti-Japanese or revolutionary in nature. On 12 November, 1933, government authorities sent agents to smash the smallest and the weakest of the three leftist studios, the new Yihua Film Studio. The next day, Guomindang authorities sent a message to all Shanghai cinemas demanding that they boycott the works of Tian Han and other known leftist authors. It read: "Films made by [Tian] Han . . . that promote class struggle, pit poor against rich—such reactionary films may not be shown. If they are shown, there will be violence and we cannot assure you that what happened to the Yihua Company will not happen to you."³⁰ Determined to resist Nationalist demands, the Film League established the Diantong Film Company, an alliance of film people and the Party.

The new film company produced one of the most stirring films of the period, *The Song of the Fishermen* which was released on 14 June, 1934.* The film was hugely popular with people enduring the unair-conditioned Jinshen Cinema during a record-breaking heat wave to see this moving tale of a fisherman's family on the East China Sea. The following is a summary of the plot: A fishermen's family is left helpless by the death of the father in a storm. The impoverished mother turns her twin children (a beautiful young girl and a dim-witted son) over to others to raise and goes to work for a wealthy boat-owner named He. He's son plays with the twins until he goes abroad to study industrial fishing techniques. The twins join the fishing fleet but the upheaval of the warlord period forces them to leave the village with their now blind mother and move to Shanghai where they join an uncle who is a street

*Although both acknowledge the Party's influence, Leyda writes (93), that *The Song of the Fishermen* was made at Second Studio while *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai* (145), indicates that the film was made at the Diantong studio. No matter where the film was made, the role of the Film League was crucial.

singer. There, the twins meet He's son who is now working in his father's company, which is allied with foreign capitalists. The son gives them money that originally belonged to them. They are (in an unexplained way) jailed for possessing this money; and upon their release they return to find their uncle's home burned and their mother and uncle dead. He's son comes to the rescue giving them shelter in his father's house where they see other kinds of unhappiness—one of the father's wives absconds with all the family's money and the father commits suicide. The son sees how social conditions are thwarting his hope for rebuilding China's fishing industry and goes to work with the twins on a fishing boat. The film ends with the death of the dim-witted brother.³¹

The Song of the Fishermen is an excellent example of how leftist film making changed in the mid-1930s. Prior to 1934, the struggle between left and right film making in Shanghai had been fairly open. Film League members sought to make politically correct films without offending the Guomindang censors. For example *Twenty-four Hours in Shanghai* took three months to shoot but a year to edit (to make it as inoffensive as possible) and ten viewings by censors. What resulted were bland and rather ordinary films. After the Yihua studio was destroyed, progressive film makers abandoned the easy and often superficial portrayals of social evils and revolutionary solutions that had defined their films. These were replaced by more serious character development and more sophisticated story telling that relayed a message but evaded censorship. *The Song of the Fishermen* is one example of this new trend.

Like every area of creative and Party life in Shanghai during the early and mid 1930s, the film world saw its share of arrests. Despite the thinning of its numbers, the film community continued to produce important films until the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in the late summer of 1937. Nevertheless, the Guomindang-enforced closing of the Diantong Studio at the end of 1935 ended an important era in China's film making and meant an effective end to the Film League. An editor of the film *Scenes of City Life* summed up what had been an important and productive alliance between the Party and progressives: "Underground film-workers put on no airs—we all ate and rested together."³²

The Socialist League

The Socialist League was responsible for communications and propaganda work among the masses.* Cranking up its old mimeograph ma-

*Except where noted, this discussion of the Socialist League comes from Wang Han, 129–31.

chine, it published the *Alliance Newspaper* (mengbao) and a newsletter, both of which contained anti-imperialist, anti-Japanese, and anti-Guomindang articles. They also contained articles describing what members knew of the activities of the Red Army. According to former League member Wang Han, the Socialist League received no funds from any outside group.* As a result, a significant portion of League members' time was spent in raising money to keep their publications afloat and to subsidize members who had no outside sources of funds. The league disbanded late in 1935 after coordinating student activities in Shanghai in the December Ninth Movement.† As in all the leagues, the Socialist League had its own Party cell, which was headed originally by Lin Baixiu. Along with Wang Han, the members included Chen Chutai, Huang Yuqi, He Dinghua, and a man Wang Han identifies only as Old Xia. Xu Dixin replaced Lin Baixiu as cell secretary after Lin's arrest in 1934; Chen Chutai replaced Xu after his arrest in 1935. In November 1935, Chen in turn was arrested in connection with an assassination attempt on the Guomindang leader Wang Jingwei. These rapid changes in leadership did not really present a problem because, due to arrests and transfers, the cell's membership changed about as frequently as did its leadership.

The Socialist League suffered from the same critical flaw as did several of the other leagues including the Leftist League and the Education League. Party influence in these groups was so great that these supposedly mass-based, left-leaning organizations of "wide-ranging character," in essence, became Party branches complete with Leninist discipline and organization. What this kind of authoritarianism did was alienate leftists who were sympathetic to the leagues' goals but who were not Party members nor interested in becoming members. Take the case of Professor Deng Chumin, an elderly member of the Socialist League and a prominent scholar, who was ordered by league leaders to go out onto the streets and distribute propaganda. Embarrassed by an assignment he considered beneath him, Professor Deng refused and was

*I found no information confirming whether or not financial self-sufficiency was true for all eight leagues. The Leftist League may well have received some funds from the CCP but, given the internal situation in the Party during the mid-1930s, the loss of contact between the Shanghai Party and the CCP, and the general trend throughout the underground years for the city's Party organization to be financially independent of the CCP, it is quite possible that all leagues were responsible for raising their own funds.

†On 9 December, 1935 thousands of students rallied in Beijing to protest Japanese expansion in North China. The Beijing police locked the city's gates trapping the students upon whom they turned water hoses in the freezing weather. Many among the protesters were beaten and arrested. Rather than quelling the disturbance, the actions of the police set off demonstrations around the country. The CCP was active in the demonstrations and in the period thereafter when cadres used patriotic appeals to attract a broader base of the population to the movement.

subjected to humiliating criticism by league members who wanted to expel him. Needless to say, the league lost a valuable member.³³

While organizational tyranny may have had its place in the city's Party organization during these years of white terror, it was inappropriate in the Eight Big Leagues. By 1935, when the anti-Japanese, anti-Guomindang fervor in Shanghai was at a peak, it became a severe detriment to the leagues' ability to attract new members and work effectively among the masses. In other words, the Eight Big Leagues could no longer carry out the tasks that were their *raison d'être*. It was time to capitalize on the growing anti-Japanese environment in Shanghai and to redefine the Shanghai Party's presence in such a way that it was acceptable to everyone, no matter the class.

The Self-defense Committee

A different kind of Red Mass League was the Chinese People's Self-defense Committee (Zhongguo minzu wuzhuang ziwei weiyuanhui), known simply as the Self-defense Committee.* It was established in 1934, when the Central Committee issued "The Chinese People's Basic Principles Regarding the Japanese Battlefront," which called for all Chinese to arm themselves against the Japanese. Lower-level Party organizations were ordered to begin working among the masses to form public self-defense committees. By this action, the Central Committee attempted to merge its anti-Guomindang/anti-imperialist policy with the nation's rising anti-Japanese tide.

When the Shanghai Party received word of the directive in April, it formed a Self-Defense Preparatory Committee Youth League with Li Dingnan (and then Lin Lifu) as secretary and supervised by the Shanghai Central Committee's Military Committee. Liu Zhiyuan served as the liaison between the two committees. Sun Yat-sen's widow and prominent leftist, Song Qingling, was the first to sign a petition calling for the formation of a nationwide self-defense committee and by mid-July, the petition had between three thousand and four thousand signatures. At the beginning of May, the All China Self-defense Preparatory Committee was established with Song Qingling as chair. At June and July meetings, the committee discussed ways to develop the organization and expand propaganda. On 1 August, the anniversary of the Nanchang Uprising, the Preparatory Committee issued a manifesto proclaiming its formation. It set up the East Shanghai District Subcommittee in September and the Central Shanghai Subcommittee the fol-

*Except where noted, this discussion comes from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai-shi zuzhishi ziliao*, 190-92, 196-97.

lowing January. During the latter part of 1935, the Zhabei, West Shanghai, and Fanan Subcommittees were formed as well as various neighborhood committees and committees at Jiaotong, Fudan, Datong, and Daxia Universities. Subcommittees were also established for South China, North China, and Jiangsu as well as for overseas Chinese in the United States and the South Pacific. Within a year of its founding, the Self-defense Committee had expanded to between five thousand and six thousand members. Of that number, there were between twenty and thirty Party members.³⁴

The committee and its subcommittees did relatively little in the way of self-defense but did organize demonstrations calling for the release of political prisoners. It also demanded a nationwide anti-Japanese defense and continued to adamantly oppose Chiang Kai-shek. After the 9 December incident began, the Self-defense Committee also mobilized members to join the growing national salvation movement. Primarily, that meant organizing Shanghai students to go to Nanjing to present petitions to the central government and establishing national salvation societies in Shanghai's colleges and universities.

Nevertheless, the grandiose plans for powerful mass-based self-defense committees never came to fruition in the terror that pervaded Shanghai during those years. The Shanghai Party was an outlaw organization and, even though the Self-defense Committee claimed to be a public organization with prominent patrons like Song Qingling, Guomindang authorities labored under no illusions as to who was the real motivating force. The Self-defense Committee joined the Eight Big Leagues, Red Trade Unions, Communist Youth League, and the city's Party organization as targets for Guomindang destruction. When the Shanghai Central Committee Bureau and its Military Committee were destroyed at the beginning of 1935 and a Temporary Central Committee Bureau established, its Liaison Committee for Organizations (lianluo weiyuanhui) formed a relationship with the Self-defense Committee's Youth League.

The destruction of the Liaison Committee in the winter of 1935 caused the Self-defense Committee's Youth League to lose contact with the Party organization and left it to carry on its work independently. A devastating roundup of Self-defense Committee cadres in July 1935 forced the committee to cease operations entirely in order to protect its members. The committee's league secretary, Lin Lifu, fled to Nanjing. A year later, another raid took place and those few committee cadres who remained evacuated to Suzhou. At the beginning of 1937, Lin Lifu made his way to CCP headquarters in Yan'an where he, along with other self-defense cadres who had lost their Party connections, reconnected through the Central Committee's North China Bureau. The bu-

reau directed the reinstated cadres to return to Shanghai to continue the work of developing a mass self-defense effort, which they did, without apparent success, until the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War.³⁵

Red Trade Unions

The last of the Red Mass Leagues to be examined are the Red Trade Unions. Disillusionment with the repressive Guomindang government would eventually cause a resurgence in the Communist-led labor movement but, between 1932 and 1935, the Shanghai Party made little headway gaining the support of Shanghai's severely alienated working classes. That alienation grew out of the Party's radical policies and its refusal to address issues of real concern to the city's workers. In 1929, the Party had repudiated cooperation with the Guomindang-approved yellow unions and recommended the formation of Party-controlled Red Trade Unions (*hongse gonghui*), which would be responsible for aggressive street action. The plan was to infiltrate yellow unions while simultaneously strengthening the Red Trade Unions. This would be achieved by (1) disclosing the underhanded methods of Guomindang leaders in the yellow unions and exposing their opposition to bettering the lives of workers thereby eradicating workers' confidence in them; and (2) establishing cells in Red Trade Unions that were in communication with each other, and supporting fully all workers' demands thereby gaining their confidence.³⁶ At the Third Plenum of the Sixth Party Congress in September 1930, the Li Lisan policy that had encouraged political strikes and working-class insurrections was criticized. Nevertheless, these radical policies continued to have their supporters as is evidenced at the Fourth Plenum in January 1931 where an influential faction still opposed cooperation with the yellow unions and militant street action.³⁷ The outcome of the Plenum directed cadres to step up their organizing among workers and to become more involved in labor activities and the city's nascent anti-Japanese movement.³⁸

Because the Shanghai Labor Alliance, which supervised the Red Trade Unions, had been a stronghold of the "right oppositionist" He Mengxiong and his supporters, it had a very precarious relationship with the Internationalists. With the patriotic surge after the Manchurian Incident and the January 1932 bombing of the city, however, the Labor Alliance and its Red Trade Unions reached an agreement with the Party hierarchy and began to work actively among the large number of unemployed and non-unionized workers. Later we will discuss strike activity in general during this period, but suffice it to say here that during the last half of 1931 and the first half of 1932, the Red Trade Unions took part in strikes in Japanese commercial establishments and factories in

East and West Shanghai, and in citywide strikes among tramway, telephone, and printing workers, and among sailors. The Jiangsu Provincial Committee particularly targeted strikes in Japanese and foreign-owned plants.

During this same period, the Labor Alliance established district labor alliances in six areas of the city. These incorporated about 2,500 union members (of whom nearly 100 were Party members) in city government; silk, hardware, and printing industries; dockyards; cotton mills; cigarette factories; and commercial establishments.³⁹ Until the late summer of 1934 when the Labor Alliance ceased operations, the strongest base of Red Trade Union support was in the cotton mills of the East and West Shanghai districts and in the dockyards of the West Shanghai District. About five hundred people were involved in union activities in these two districts. Despite this kind of organizing activity, the Red Trade Unions never firmly cemented their relationship with the Party hierarchy. On more than one occasion, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee found fault with the Labor Alliance's Youth League and, therefore, the unions themselves "for not implementing a general strike to oppose Japanese imperialism, for not seizing upon the task of arming the workers, for not expanding opposition to yellow unions, and within those unions for not expanding the struggle to oppose reactionary cliques, for not expanding Red Trade Unions."⁴⁰ It was decided that the Alliance's Youth League would undergo "a thorough reform" and that the Provincial Committee would take a more aggressive role in directing the activities of the Red Trade Unions. It ordered the unions to become more involved in movements to oppose Japan and imperialism, and those to help the Red Army. Unions would be in charge of mobilizing and organizing commemorative demonstrations as well as strikes at factories and commercial enterprises.⁴¹

No policy could have been more damaging to the Party's labor movement. As the white terror in the city worsened, the Red Trade Unions found it increasingly difficult to carry out their charge. Most workers ignored the unions while a significant portion of those who did join were arrested. The decline in membership is an excellent example of the unions' ineffectiveness. In 1930, some two thousand Shanghai workers belonged to Red Trade Unions; in 1932, five hundred, and in 1935, forty.⁴² To make matters worse, many of those who were arrested defected to the Guomindang. Given the plummeting membership, it is no wonder that by the fall of 1934, the Labor Alliance and its Red Trade Unions had all but ceased operations. It still had contacts in the cotton mills, the dockyards, the utilities, the transportation system, and also among sailors, but it had no system of printing and distribution and no communication lines. There was an attempt at the beginning of 1935 to

restore the Red Trade Unions by transferring outside cadres into the city. Although these efforts kept the alliance alive, for all intents and purposes, Party labor organizing was at a standstill.⁴³

In addition to the Party leadership's dangerous policy of militant street activity, the Red Trade Unions were hampered by two other obstacles in their attempt to attract members. First, despite the Party's official anti-Japanese line, cadres continued to try to harness working-class support through vague calls of anti-imperialism and opposition to the Guomindang. Given the realities of Shanghai in the early-to-mid 1930s, these had little bearing on the lives of the average worker. Indeed, for most Shanghai workers, life was bleak. In 1935, there were 3,600 factories in Shanghai with over 300,000 workers. Two-thirds of the factories were located in the International Settlement, with the remaining concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of the city. Contract labor for women and children was common, and workers more likely than not labored from nine to twelve hours, six to seven days a week under conditions that had little regard for health or safety. To make their meager existence even worse, the cost of living had risen substantially in the city during the early 1930s.⁴⁴ A June 1930 *China Weekly Review* article reported that the cost of living in Shanghai had increased 30 percent in the last year. During the months preceding the article, prices for all goods had gone up with the price of rice rising from ten to sixteen yuan per one hundred catty. According to the article, recent studies showed that the average worker spent 50 percent of his or her salary on rice alone.⁴⁵

This kind of economic hardship made for a large working-class audience receptive to any group that might help it find relief. While the Communist Party acknowledged the economic plight of the Shanghai worker and expressed sympathy for him or her, it never made hardcore economic reality a central focus of its appeals to workers. The Guomindang-approved yellow unions, on the other hand, made important inroads among Shanghai's skilled and unskilled workers because they succeeded in bettering the lives of many of their members.* In 1936, the Red Trade Unions were disbanded, as Party members were ordered to work through legal unions as part of the united front. Since

*There was a segment of the Party leadership that wanted to enter the yellow unions and, through them, attract workers to the revolutionary cause. One among them was Liu Shaoqi who in 1932 was secretary of the Labor Alliance's Youth League. He wanted Party members to enter the unions, develop close working relationships with other members, and then organize CCP cells among them. The idea was to unite within the yellow unions to oppose the yellow unions. See Zheng Canhui and Shi Shouquan, "Shilun 'er-zhan' shiqi Liu Shaoqi zai Shanghai kaizhan geming huodong de celue sixiang" [Explaining the second front period: the tactical thinking of Liu Shaoqi in Shanghai to launch revolutionary activities], *Zhongguo xiandai shi* 1 (1981): 66.

the Japanese prohibited unions in areas under their control, organizing activities were extremely limited.

Strikes and Demonstrations

While the terror that pervaded the city continued to break down their ranks, members of the Shanghai Party attempted to promulgate the CCP's ill-defined anti-imperialist, anti-Guomindang policies. They did this through the Red Mass Leagues and through labor organizing but neither activity produced the kind of results the remnant Party organization desired. At this point, the Party leadership was still holding onto the dream of imminent revolution. To foment that event, they persisted in sending Party members and activists out onto the streets to organize the masses into large public displays. It was an oddly contradictory course of action because on the one hand, the organization's leaders saw the advantage to protecting their members in more diverse groups while, on the other, they then demanded that the group expose itself to undue risk and danger. In the early-to-mid 1930s, the primary activities of the Party in Shanghai, whether through the Red Mass Leagues or independent, were strikes and demonstrations—dangerous focal points in an era of harassment and suppression.

Strikes

We have already seen that between 1932 and 1935 the Party's efforts to organize labor into Red Trade Unions failed, as did its efforts to organize cells and branches in factories and their attempts to work through the yellow unions. Lack of recognition of the primacy of economic demands over political ones, and of the need to emphasize covert activities over overt were among the reasons why the Party continued to lose ground among its targeted social class. A work plan for Party labor organizers seized in a Municipal Police raid at 339 Tongshan Road on 14 February, 1930 listed approximately forty industries and enterprises in the city's various districts that were to be targeted for strikes. These ran the gamut from the Shanghai Tramway Company, to cotton mills, to electrical workers, to dock workers, to the telephone company.⁴⁶ Even though the document targeted industries that employed skilled and semiskilled workers along with industries that employed unskilled workers, Party policymakers, still deeply affected by "leftist" thinking, ordered cadres to concentrate on organizing strikes among Shanghai's unskilled workers. As Elizabeth Perry argues, this segment of the labor force was a poor choice for strike organizers because those

who belonged to it lacked the job security and interaction that allowed for greater militancy among more skilled workers. Compounded with this was the widespread illiteracy and attachment to rural origins among unskilled workers, which made them less aware of the larger issues affecting the world around them.⁴⁷ As a result, even if Party strike organizers had focused upon economic issues—the real concern of workers—they would not have made much headway.

Nevertheless, until the Shanghai Party began to pursue an independent course in 1934 and 1935, it continued to follow a policy that concentrated on organizing strikes. A 1932 Central Committee directive for a “Red May,” captured by the British police, instructed Shanghai Party members first and foremost to “direct and develop strikes.”⁴⁸ Even as late as May 1934 when the Shanghai Party was replacing the ineffective CCP policy with its own more moderate one, the Youth League journal, *Building the League* [tuan de jianshe], listed as the League’s top priority “inciting the masses to strike under revolutionary leadership.”⁴⁹

Recalling the strike activity of the period, Wang Yaoshan commented that the whole emphasis on strikes ran counter to the conditions in Shanghai and were “blind and rash” activities. If a factory had no Party connection, then the Party would do everything it could to establish one. It would send activists dressed as street peddlers to wait at the factory gate for a chance to make some contacts. The hope was that these newfound connections would inspire economic struggles that would lead to political struggles that would lead to armed struggle. But, more often than not, that hope was in vain; in many cases, according to Wang Yaoshan, activists would fight among themselves about organizational methods and lose more ground than they gained.⁵⁰

Another problem activists faced was the Provincial Committee’s insistence that they expand Party membership among the working class. That the city’s leadership organ would even consider such a demand displays a remarkable denial of the true situation in the city and was, needless to say, impossible to carry out. Nevertheless, on 3 April, 1932, the Provincial Committee decreed that from 5 April to 12 May there would be a “movement to oppose the anti-USSR battle and the attacks on the soviet districts and the Red Army”; part of the movement would be a drive to expand membership in the Party, leagues, and Red Trade Unions under the slogan “One comrade should develop one new Party member.” Later that same year, the Provincial Committee issued a directive that during the October Revolution commemoration, the Shanghai Party was to fill a quota of five thousand new members. Several months after that, during the first anniversary commemoration of the 28 January bombing of the city, the Provincial Committee issued a public appeal for people to join the CCP and foresaw a Red May in which

there would be over ten thousand Party members in Shanghai. That may have been a difficult goal to achieve considering that in December 1932 the city's Party organization had only five hundred members.⁵¹

Despite official policy declarations and unrealistic demands, there was a significant, and growing, segment of League and Party membership that saw the futility of emphasizing the political strike over the economic one as well as the futility of concentrating on unskilled workers. This group had little impact within the organization until after the Shanghai Party lost contact with the Party hierarchy and was left to its own devices. At that time, there was a move away from vague anti-imperialist, anticapitalist rhetoric directed primarily at unskilled workers and an adoption of patriotic, economic appeals directed at semi-skilled and skilled workers. Nevertheless, before that change took place, city Party members followed the Party line and focused upon unskilled workers.

Organizers paid particular attention to dock workers and rickshaw pullers but achieved scant success among any of them. Because the shipping industry linked Shanghai to the world, both Communist and Guomindang organizers worked harder to convert dockers to their cause than they did other members of the unskilled sector of the transport industry. Both the Shanghai Party and the Youth League made inroads among the workers along Shanghai's docks but the number of dockers they attracted never justified the time and effort spent on their conversion to the revolutionary cause. Elizabeth Perry argues that three factors inhibited Party success among the dock workers: (1) the lack of a stable following because the majority of workers on Shanghai's docks were temporary workers; (2) the more than 250 docks in the city were owned by a variety of enterprises and, therefore, were difficult to penetrate; (3) the power of labor contractors stopped many outside agitators from organizing among their employers.⁵²

The second group targeted by Party organizers was rickshaw pullers. This was an attractive focus for organizing particularly during the early thirties when cadres were ordered to concentrate on Shanghai's most downtrodden. In 1934, pullers averaged a monthly income of under nine yuan with their family expenses averaging more than sixteen yuan. Consequently, many rickshaw pullers fell deeply into debt. In addition, most pullers were of rural origin and returned permanently to the countryside when circumstances permitted. This meant a high rate of turnover replenished by a steady stream of peasant refugees. It also meant intense competition among pullers, which resulted in exploitation by rickshaw companies and gangsters. Therefore, even though they suffered severe economic hardship, the fierce competition for scarce job

opportunities, the high rate of turnover, and the isolation of the working conditions made rickshaw pullers a poor target for strikes.⁵³

Nevertheless, Party labor organizers worked actively among this large segment of the unskilled labor force. One such organizer was Party member Lin Li who has left an account of the efforts to organize a general transportation strike:

When news was received of the Japan invasion [of Manchuria] and that the Red Army had broken through the [Guomindang's] third encirclement campaign, a new nationwide tide of revolution occurred. This was the "last ditch fight between the revolution and the counter-revolution." Now was the time to bring out the rickshaw drivers who had been so brave in the Great Revolution [of 1927]. If the Shanghai Party mobilized them to smash public buses and trams, the entire city would rise up against imperialism.

We went to where the rickshaw pullers hung out and convinced them to take action. The next day, activists ambushed bus and tram drivers in out-of-the-way places. When the buses and trams came through [the rickshaw pullers] hit the drivers on the head. At first, the Police could not determine who was at fault so [it was believed] the Party had scored a victory. But soon the police began to make arrests and the rickshaw drivers refused to act.⁵⁴

The lack of success of Party strike organizing among unskilled workers carried over to semiskilled and skilled workers. The 1934 strike at the Meiya Silk-weaving Company, which was the most publicized strike of the Nanjing decade, is a good example.* Shanghai's once prosperous silk industry was hard hit by the world depression and the expanding Sino-Japanese conflict. As the city's largest silk weaver, Meiya remained prosperous when other smaller silk weavers were forced to shut down. The strike came about because Meiya managers decided to cut labor costs by reducing workers' wages 10 percent in 1933 and a further 15 percent in 1934. There were so many unemployed silk weavers in the city at that time that they reasoned employees would accept the cuts just to retain their jobs. The second round of wage cuts, however, caused workers at all ten Meiya factories—4,500 men, women, and children—to go out on strike. Meiya's prominence in the city and the size of the strike brought out the Party labor organizers in full force. Under the pretext of looking for friends or relatives, young Communist activists frequented tea houses popular among the strikers and propagandized among those who looked sympathetic. They succeeded in

*Except where noted, this discussion of the Meiya strike comes from Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, 181–200.

making contacts among strikers at Number One and Five factories. Perhaps a bit prematurely, the West Shanghai District Committee, the Youth League's Provincial Committee and even the Central Committee all issued resolutions calling for more aggressive action. However, despite the attention given to the strike, the Party failed to make much headway in gathering support. One inner-Party document captured by the Municipal Police in early April admitted that "although the attitude of the [M]eiya strikers is good, our own activities still remain outside the struggles." The report placed the blame for this firmly on a strike committee that was unreceptive to outside direction.

Communist agitators may have failed to gain the leadership of the strike committee but they were quite successful in gaining the attention of Meiya's management and Guomindang authorities. When, on 11 April, police and security agents attacked the Civic Center, which strikers had occupied prior to a mediation meeting with management and the Bureau of Social Affairs, the tide of the strike turned. The attitude of both the government and Meiya management stiffened as activists were arrested and factory dormitories were locked forcing workers out onto the streets. Tired and defeated, the weavers returned to work after fifty-one days. On 27 April, the Nanjing government responded to an appeal from the Meiya general manager and instructed authorities to deal harshly with all "reactionary troublemakers." The forty previously arrested workers received prison sentences varying from twenty to forty days while the Party secretary at Number Four Factory, betrayed by his fellow cell members, received a sentence of five years. As for the silk weavers, their strike had been in vain: wages were cut 30 percent, workers' dormitories were closed, and food prices went up in all factory cafeterias.

Demonstrations

The leagues and Party did not fare much better in organizing demonstrations. Although the U.S. Consulate reported in May 1931 that Party leaders planned to discontinue their tactics of street demonstrations in favor of strengthening labor organizing, there is no evidence that the Party ever did any such thing.⁵⁵ In fact, labor organizing had become so dangerous that Party leaders began to pull organizers out of factories in 1932 and by the following year, demonstrations had replaced strikes as the primary activity of Party and league members. Whenever there was a revolutionary anniversary such as May 1 or May 30, league members demonstrated. These activities were just as dangerous for activists as was labor organizing because by holding protests on well-known dates, league members became easy targets for police. Recalling his

own experience in a 1933 demonstration, Shanghai Party leader Wang Yaoshan commented: "The enemy [realized] we met on holidays and demonstrated. Our movements were in reality 'biting the hook' and delivering ourselves to the enemy."⁵⁶ Although participating in protests followed the Executive Committee of the Comintern's Twelfth Plenum's directive to form united fronts with anti-imperialist groups, demonstrations, like strikes, weakened the already depleted Party even further. Since they knew when, and usually where, demonstrations were to take place, Guomindang and foreign authorities were well prepared to deal with the demonstrators. One 1932 Shanghai Municipal Police document reported that "the [police] took strict precautionary measures to thwart plans to celebrate International Labor Day (i.e., May 1)." The document then cited several sporadic attempts to hold demonstrations—a group of one hundred people at 10:15 A.M., another of two hundred at 2 P.M., and a third of forty also at 2 P.M.—and declared that all three attempts were stopped.⁵⁷

From the memoirs of Shanghai Party members, it appears that few major demonstrations were successful. Labor organizer Lin Li recalled a demonstration that was scheduled to take place on the first anniversary of the Manchurian Incident:

The Great Shanghai Anti-imperialist League and the Great Shanghai Anti-Japan League organized a demonstration for the entire city. On the morning of the demonstration, many shop assistants, workers, students and teachers milled around Nicheng Bridge where the rally was to take place awaiting a secret signal to start the demonstration. At 9:00 a.m., a worker raised a red flag in the center of the staging area signifying the demonstration had begun. People came from all directions shouting slogans. After several brief speeches, the demonstrators began to march down Nanjing Road where the police were waiting. The demonstrators immediately fled.⁵⁸

Wang Yaoshan recounted a similar experience at Nicheng Bridge during a demonstration to commemorate May 1 in 1933:

On the morning of May 1, 1933, the Literary Committee of Nicheng Bridge organized a demonstration. At first, a few hundred people assembled and some activists distributed leaflets. From there the demonstrators advanced toward the street where Chinese and Sikh police dispersed the crowd. That same day, in the afternoon, we organized a demonstration to go to the Chinese City for a rally at the sports field. The Guomindang police blockaded both ends of the street and closed the main gate of the sports field. They seized all the people who had gathered there including myself.⁵⁹

Demonstrations were held for many reasons: to condemn the Guomindang, to commemorate revolutionary anniversaries, and to decry imperialism. Some of the most interesting demonstrations were held by the Self-defense Committee to demand the release of political prisoners. The white terror of the early 1930s had led to many arrests of Party members, suspected members, leftists, suspected leftists, and just about anyone else Guomindang and foreign authorities thought threatened their power. While the Party's definition of who constituted a political prisoner was vague, the men and women incarcerated for their political beliefs were a real concern not only because of their personal and family needs while in jail but also because it was important to be able to communicate with imprisoned comrades in order to keep them abreast of events on the outside and to keep them supplied with materials for propaganda work inside the prisons. A captured 1932 document listed the Party's priorities with regard to political prisoners. It sought to maintain secret communications with political prisoners and to establish relations with lawyers and doctors who were sympathetic to the Party cause and who might aid those under arrest or already jailed. That same kind of relationship was also sought for sympathetic newspaper reporters, photographers, shopkeepers, and pharmacists who could assist in publicizing specific cases and in providing relief. The Party formed committees to compile statistics on those arrested while other groups were formed to collect money for relief work. Finally, it inaugurated a kind of support group called the Federation of Relatives of Martyrs of Various Incidents in Shanghai to financially and emotionally help relatives of those martyred.⁶⁰

While the activities mentioned above played an important part in the Party's efforts on behalf of those arrested, no activity was more important than the demonstration itself. The coverage of these large displays of protest and anger were not lost on the publicity-minded Shanghai Party. In 1932, for example, it held rallies on 1 May and 30 May in the French Concession, the Chinese City, Pudong, and the West Shanghai District to protest arrests and to collect money for prisoner aid.⁶¹ No evidence was found on how effective these demonstrations were but from the attention the municipal police gave them and from the list of prestigious supporters such as Song Qingling, it can be assumed the Party made its point. When the Shanghai Party embarked upon its independent course in 1934, it paid increasing attention to the dangers of large public displays. No longer hindered by outside directives, it began to concentrate on covert acts. Nevertheless, the city's Party organization never completely abandoned the demonstration and, as we will see in our discussion of the December 9 Movement and the high tide of the National Salvation Movement in the next chapter, continued to use it

quite effectively under select circumstances. Those circumstances did not include every revolutionary holiday, however.

Wang Yaoshan writes that so many people were arrested or became disillusioned with large-scale demonstrations that such displays were no longer feasible.⁶² While his point is well taken, the problem extended beyond that. By 1934 and 1935, supporters of the revolution, no matter their class background, were too afraid or disenchanted to risk exposing themselves to the danger of public strikes and demonstrations. In addition, the ranks of the city's Party organization had been so depleted that it lacked the people necessary to agitate in these kinds of large groups. A 9 May, 1935 issue of the Youth League journal *Mass Leagues* [qunzhong de tuan] advised activists: "Do not use public or semipublic places to go mobilize young people or workers, or to help them in their struggles. We have not been successful in youth or workers' meetings."

Consequently, beginning in 1934, there was a move toward more covert activities that were still anti-imperialist and anti-Guomindang in nature but increasingly directed toward a general audience. According to Wang Yaoshan, "We realized that big demonstrations weren't safe so, instead, we sent people out every evening to street corners to distribute leaflets or to write slogans on the sidewalks. This cut down the number of people we lost."⁶³ A Shanghai Municipal Police report on the May 1 activities in 1934 commented that Shanghai citizens awoke to find slogans such as "Oppose the Guomindang government who betrayed North China," "Uphold the Red Army," "Uphold the Soviet Government," and "Commemorate May 1" chalked onto the sidewalks. Leaflets of "a communist nature" also appeared on the streets but, the report concluded, the day passed without major Communist Party activity.⁶⁴

Changing Directions

As we saw in the last chapter, by 1935, the fortunes of the Shanghai Party were at a low ebb. To many members of the city's Party organization it had become obvious that, while the narrowly based, narrowly focused Red Mass Leagues had been a useful tool to garner support for the Party during the early 1930s when the beleaguered Shanghai Party needed the protection the larger public bodies provided, strikes, and demonstrations—the Leagues' major activities—were not the best means of implementing revolutionary objectives. These had not worked under Qu Qiubai or Li Lisan and they were not working now. Nor were the leagues themselves viable organizations. The situation had changed drastically during the period between 1932 and 1935. First of all, the

ranks of the Party and the leagues were greatly diminished with arrests, lost contacts, and departures of those who became disillusioned and left the movement. To make matters worse, the Party was not replenishing the ranks with new adherents to the cause. The circumstances were too dangerous, and was the cause worth it? To most potential supporters, the answer was a resounding "No!" For many, the anti-imperialist, anti-Guomindang direction of Party propaganda and organizing efforts was too vague and lacked a tangible link to the reality of their lives. Risking abuse and arrest to remove a central government that, in the minds of most people, might only be replaced by a more repressive regime was simply not worth it. Nor was retrieving the foreign concessions worth the risk when the land and factories in those areas would undoubtedly be taken over by others who would exploit workers.

Moreover, by 1934–1935, the leagues themselves did not offer an environment in which fellow travelers felt comfortable. We have already discussed the problems Lu Xun and others like him faced in the Leftist League and the disillusionment of people like Professor Deng Chumin of the Socialist League. Most of the leagues had become extensions of the Party—Leninist in discipline and organization. People who shared the Party goals but not its ideology were alienated and many abandoned the leagues. Moreover, Guomindang and foreign authorities had come to consider the leagues as synonymous with the Party organization and went after league members with the same vigor that they pursued Party members. Certainly, alliances were created between league and Party members that advanced causes to which they were committed. The writers of the Leftist League, the filmmakers of the Film League, and the prominent patrons of the Self-defense Committee are excellent examples. But these were only a few people among a growing number of the middle and upper classes who despaired at the growing Japanese domination of the city and the lack of governmental response; who believed themselves to be damaged by the world depression; and who longed for stability in their war-ravaged country. This was a whole portion of the population that remained untouched by the Red Mass Leagues.

In 1935, freed from the orthodoxy of the Party hierarchy, those Party members remaining in Shanghai changed direction. It was imperative to marshall the remaining forces in the most expedient way possible. First and foremost that meant protecting the operatives remaining in the city. On 16 September, 1935 a document listing thirty rules for secret activity was seized by municipal police. Among them were:

- 1) Observance of secrecy in all matters is one of the best ways of showing that you are a good worker for the Party.

2) You must keep the affairs of the Party absolutely secret. You must not speak about them to your wife, friends, relatives or anybody else. . . . Casual conversation on Party affairs is an offense.

3) It is not a sign of curiosity, but an offense when you question your comrade about the affairs of the Party. . . . Your curiosity for information will place your loyalty to the Party under suspicion.

4) You must not divulge any Party information. . . . You must carry out your work energetically.

5) Every member of the Party must assume a fictitious name. . . . You must not tell a new comrade your name nor must you ask a comrade his name. Whenever an organ of the Party is destroyed, which may affect you, you must immediately assume another name and also instruct the members of your cell to assume other names.

6) You must not ask a comrade his address nor must you communicate your address to a comrade. . . . You must observe social customs in your home and you must act in the manner normally expected from a person in the profession to which you have declared you belong. You should maintain good relations with your chief tenants and neighbors because your failure to have intercourse with them may arouse suspicion.⁶⁵

Renewed emphasis on covert activities and reducing involvement in strikes and demonstrations were significant beginnings to a new direction for the Shanghai Party. Important also was making sure that direction was attuned to what the city's Party organization understood to be policy within the Communist hierarchy. Because the city's Party organization had little or no contact with the CCP Central Committee on the Long March, it followed what it could learn of Comintern policy. To keep abreast of the latest news, underground Party members Lu Zhiren and Wang Yin translated into Chinese publications from the Soviet Union purchased at the consulate's bookstore. Through translated copies of the *International Newsletter*, Party members read of the Comintern's Seventh Party Congress (25 July–20 August, 1935). That congress called for a united front against Japan among *all* concerned parties. For the city's Party this was a go-ahead signal for what many had already concluded was the only logical course of action. As seen in the formation of the leagues, the Party under the direction of the Internationalists had begun experimenting with the concept of a united front as early as 1932.

By 1935, however, Wang Ming had concluded that a united front from above could coexist with one from below and that conditions were favorable in China for the formation of an alliance of anti-imperialist forces. On 15 June, an appeal was issued by the CCP's delegation in Moscow (in the name of the Central Soviet government and Red Army), which called for the formation of a "united people's front" to embrace

everyone who opposed Japanese imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek.⁶⁶ Contrary to later claims of Mao's role, the CCP's August 1 Declaration (1935), which called for the formation of a united front and an end to hostilities with the Guomindang, was not a Maoist document at all. Wang Ming drafted it in Moscow. To make people think it was issued in China and then sent to Paris via Moscow, publication was withheld until 1 October, 1935 when it appeared in the Comintern's Paris newspaper, *Salvation News* (Jiuguo ribao).⁶⁷

It was clear to Shanghai Party members that it was time to revise its organizational structure to take advantage of the highly explosive situation among all strata of Shanghai society. Leftist League member Wang Yaoshan later wrote:

The organizational structure of the Eight Big Leagues was no longer suitable to the conditions of the times. The expansion of the situation demanded that we unite the broad masses and develop the anti-Japanese national salvation movement.

At that time, as the national crisis got more and more serious, the masses' anti-Japanese morale increased daily. The broad masses and higher level progressives demanded that anti-Japanese organizations be formed. The mass organizations which had already been formed, for example the Ant Society (yishe) of the professional world . . . originally all were mass cultural organizations. Now these were one after another transformed in anti-Japanese national salvation movements.⁶⁸

It was a good time to make a change. On 19 February, 1935, the Cultural Alliance (whose Literary Committee was the Party group that led the Eight Big Leagues) was raided and three of the five alliance members were arrested.* Only Zhou Yang and Xia Yan remained. In July, Zhou Yang and others formed a "new" Cultural Alliance with Zhou Yang as secretary and Xia Yan, Zhang Hanfu, Qian Yishi, Yang Fangzhi, and, later, Qian Junrui as members. That new alliance began preparations to disband and be replaced by the Provisional Work Committee (linshi gongzuo weiyuanhui, simplified to linwei). The original Cultural Alliance had concerned itself primarily with matters of culture while the Provisional Committee incorporated the Cultural Alliance, the Youth League's Provincial Committee and the Self-defense Committee.† In September, following the July-August meeting of the Com-

*This discussion is taken from *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao*, 188–89; Wang Yaoshan, "Guanyu Shanghai dixiadang chongjian de jingguo," 52; Liu Xiao, "Lue tan Shanghai dixiadang de gongzuo," 4; and Wang Han, 131, 134–35.

†The relationship between these groups was largely undefined. *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao*, 189, says that because none of these groups had a relationship with the CCP hierarchy and no horizontal relationship between themselves, the exact nature of their relationship within the Provisional Committee was difficult to work out. What they did agree upon was the need to concentrate on the city's growing national salvation movement.

intern's Seventh Party Congress, the decision was made to begin disbanding the Eight Big Leagues and the Cultural Alliance. By the time the December 9 Movement exploded, the Party organization in Shanghai had already made the transitions necessary to capitalize on the city's burgeoning patriotic fervor. In February 1936, the Provisional Committee, charged with directing anti-Japanese mass organizations of "wide-ranging character," took control under secretary Deng Jie of the city's Party affairs.

Conclusion

In this chapter and chapter 3, we saw how the Shanghai Party organization survived the white terror of the early 1930s. The Shanghai Party organization functioned throughout the period despite repeated arrests and raids by Guomindang and foreign agents, and despite losing contact with the CCP and Comintern hierarchy. Part of the reason for that survival was the Leninist organization put into place by the Jiangsu Provincial Committee. Its emphasis on decentralized decision making and on unquestioned discipline meant the difference between life and death for the local Party. Another equally important reason for survival, and the subject of this chapter, was the formation of the Red Mass Leagues. These organizations gave the city's Party the protection of numbers that it needed to continue to pursue its revolutionary goals.

When Party historians in China today write about this period, they generally conclude that the Party organization in Shanghai disappeared by 1935.⁶⁹ Although decimated and without centralized leadership, pockets of the city's Party organization did, in fact, continue to function. These historians are correct that no formal organization existed in the city—that it did not revive until the appearance of Liu Xiao in the spring of 1937—nor was there official linkage to the CCP hierarchy from the time the Central Committee departed for Jiangxi. Since the city's Party organization went outside the CCP structure, they conclude it did not exist. But that was not the case; in fact, the period was an important maturation period for the Party organization and set the stage for the years to come.

In the early 1930s, the revolutionary focal point changed from China's urban areas to its rural areas. What transpired in Shanghai no longer demanded particular attention from a Party hierarchy locked in an internal power struggle and concentrating on its own survival. Moreover, as Mao Zedong consolidated his position within the Party after his arrival in Shaanxi Province in October 1935, the idea that the urban revolution would play only a supporting role to the more important

rural revolution gained dominance. For the Shanghai Party, this was a blessing in disguise. As long as it adhered to the CCP's anti-imperialist/anti-Guomindang policy directed at the working class, the city's Party organization was in a no-win situation. It was only when the city's Party organization pursued a policy adapted to local conditions that it began to make real progress in the city.

Red Mass Leagues were a major first step in creating workable alliances and helped to keep the Party alive during the early years of the 1930s. While they had their faults, they did advance the interests of the Shanghai Party. Although they were intractably linked to the Party in many people's minds and their focus was narrow, the leagues forced Party members to integrate themselves into larger groups composed of Party and non-Party people. Although the leagues were weighed down by those who lacked any influence, they allowed Party members the opportunity to make contact with influential people like Lu Xun and Song Qingling. Finally, even though they were founded on an unworkable anti-imperialist/anti-Guomindang premise and promoted dangerous strikes and demonstrations, the leagues were an important step in getting the Shanghai Party more attuned to its environment.

By 1935, Party members in the city were in a good position to seize the initiative presented in the rising anti-Japanese fervor. Recognizing the opportunity, they put long-term revolutionary objectives on the back burner in favor of short-term patriotic ones by incorporating themselves into the city's growing number of patriotic associations. The period of the Red Mass Leagues was a critical period of transformation from the radical orthodoxy of the late 1920s to the moderate pragmatism of the late 1930s and 1940s. Constricted as it was by an unworkable policy given the conditions in Shanghai, the city's Party organization did the best it could. Once released from that policy, the Shanghai Party was free to take command of its own world. It was only then that the city's Party organization truly came into its own.

Chapter 5

The High Tide of National Salvation (1936–1938)

From its outset, the National Salvation Movement (*jiuguo yundong*) demanded resistance to Japanese aggression, an end to civil war, and the formation of a united front of all anti-Japanese political groups. Although a national salvation movement had existed in Shanghai and elsewhere since the early 1930s, it reached its heights in the mid-1930s. A number of reasons account for its growth but the most important one was the belief among many politically aware Chinese that Nanjing was going to abandon North China altogether and accept an agreement subordinating China to Japan. Events during the summer of 1936 only added to their fears. Extremists in the Japanese North China Garrison (based in Tianjin) and the Kwantung Army (based in Manchuria) were in the process of implementing their plan to reorganize North China as an “autonomous” area. Their success was underscored when, in June, the Chinese general in charge of the region acquiesced to the Japanese ultimatum to close Guomindang offices in the provinces of Hebei and Chahar and evacuate Nationalist troops. That same month, Nanjing issued a Goodwill Mandate that outlawed explicit expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment by Chinese citizens. On 2 July, Chinese authorities arrested the editor of the popular journal *New life* [*xinsheng*] for violation of that mandate when he published an article containing “offensive” remarks regarding the Japanese emperor. Two months later the commander of the Japanese North China Garrison announced that all Nanjing’s authority had ceased in the five newly “autonomous” provinces of North China.¹

Chiang Kai-shek’s lack of response to these events underscored his commitment to the policy of “first internal pacification then external resistance” (*annei rangwai*), which meant appeasing the Japanese while continuing to fight the CCP. Rumors persisted that Chiang would suc-

cumb to Tokyo's pressure and sign an anti-Comintern pact with Japan and Manzhouguo. As Parks Coble points out, although Chiang eventually did resist the Japanese and never signed an anti-Comintern pact, in 1935 his intentions were not at all clear.² Many Chinese urbanites were convinced that he was about to sign away North China and join forces with Tokyo. Their anger exploded in a nationwide salvation movement spurred by the December Ninth and December Sixteenth student demonstrations in Beijing.* Deeply affected by these demonstrations, anti-Japanese activists began to organize multiclass patriotic groups. This restiveness allowed the Shanghai Party to utilize the rising tide of national salvation to achieve Party goals. To do that successfully, it had to expand its activities in the city to include middle- and upper-class progressive elites who, at that time, provided the intellectual energy for the movement.

The Shanghai Party, still committed to the central Party leadership but now operating largely on its own, had seen the advantage of allying with diverse groups when it became involved in the Red Mass Leagues. Its participation in the leagues had taught it a valuable lesson: The way to succeed was not to try to shape people's thinking (as it had attempted unsuccessfully to do in the leagues) but to capitalize upon existing ideas. The city's Party organization put its revolutionary ideals on the back burner to seek power through alliances with groups that shared similar short-term goals. Its intent was to work within patriotic organizations, gain their members' confidence, and win them over to the revolutionary cause. Pragmatism had replaced the orthodoxy of the late twenties and early thirties. That lesson in combination with the revision of the CCP's official line did more than anything else to ensure the local organization's success in the city.

Party integration into anti-Japanese organizations doing legal progressive work was a process rather than a sudden turn. Patriotic organizations had been a part of city life since the Wanpaoshan affair in the summer of 1931 and the Party had been involved in them.† By that fall, these groups were actively supporting the central government's Nineteenth Route Army, which was stationed in the Shanghai area. On 31 January, 1932, following the Japanese bombing of the city, an amalgamation of student, labor, women's, and business groups organized

*On 9 December, 1935, thousands of students in Beijing rallied to protest Japanese aggression. The police locked the city gates, turned freezing water on the protesters, and beat and arrested the students in hopes of thwarting any further protests. But the demonstrations moved the nation and a little over a week later, more than 30,000 marched in a second demonstration while thousands of others protested in China's major cities.

†The Wanpaoshan affairs was a dispute over land rights between Koreans and Chinese which occurred north of Changchun in Manchuria. See: Coble, *Facing Japan*, 46.

the Federation of Anti-Japanese National Salvation Associations. Other patriotic groups, such as the Shanghai Civic Association, were also established and many provided intelligence to the Nineteenth Route Army on Japanese activities. Eventually a large number of these organizations were suppressed, died away, or merged with other groups but, in the fighting immediately after the Japanese bombing of the city, their impact had been enormous.³

Provincial Party leaders were well aware of the burgeoning patriotic movement in the city and, while continuing to target the working class with anti-Guomindang, anti-Imperialist policies, had begun to instruct Party members to take part in the city's resistance activities. To represent the interests of the Party and to counteract the Guomindang's semi-official alliance of resistance associations, the National Salvation Association for Resistance to Japan (kangRi jiuguohui), the Provincial Committee established the Shanghai People's Anti-Japanese National Salvation Alliance (Shanghai minzhong fanRi jiuguo lianhehui, hereafter known as minfan) following the Manchurian Incident in September 1931. Minfan was also intended to replace the Party-led Anti-Imperialist League, which had been driven underground by the Guomindang. On 5 December, 1931, the Propaganda Bureau chiefs of the Central Committee and the Jiangsu Provincial Committee held an organizational meeting for minfan consisting of more than one hundred representatives from fifty-some anti-Japanese organizations. Its manifesto called for the citizens of Shanghai to struggle against Japanese imperialism and to oppose the capitulationist policy of the Guomindang. Eventually, minfan expanded from fifty-four groups to more than three hundred, with its own publication, *Anti-Japanese People* [fanRi minzhong] and its own Party branch.

Minfan's most significant achievement was an anti-Japanese rally of about ten thousand people held on 13 December, 1931 outside the city's West Gate from where, after several emotional speeches, the participants marched through the city. Although it mobilized another citywide demonstration of more than five thousand people following the All-China Federation of Labor's call for a general strike after the 28 January bombing, it never again matched the success of its 13 December rally. It did, however, establish district "Courageous soldiers' committees" with a membership of two to three thousand and a "Courageous soldiers' office" to provide intelligence for the Guomindang army and to help wounded soldiers. Minfan also cooperated with the West Shanghai District Committee to mobilize the West Shanghai Japanese Cotton Mill strike.⁴

The organization never became the leading force for resistance in the city that Party leaders had hoped. It rapidly dissolved into factions and

when Chiang Kai-shek announced his resignation from office on 15 December, the movement lost momentum. These national events account for part of that lost momentum but, equally important was the Party's continued failure to accept the political realities of Shanghai. Party member Lin Li summarized the problem when he wrote years later that, although the Party supported national salvation groups, it mistakenly believed that the fight against Japan would eventually extend to all imperialist nations. It also failed to discern the difference between fighting Nanjing and opposing all factions of the Guomindang.⁵

Although working-class anti-imperialism continued to dominate formal Party policy in the early-to-mid 1930s, the Shanghai Party incorporated a call for anti-Japanese resistance into its propaganda message. Handbills and pamphlets appeared all over Shanghai exhorting people to join the resistance forces, implement anti-Japanese strikes, and generally support the resistance movement.⁶ Party members also participated in anti-Japanese demonstrations but, like the anti-imperialist marches of the period, most were failures. One example was a 4 March, 1932 demonstration to celebrate the "victory of the Nineteenth Route Army over the Japanese" held at 2:00 P.M. opposite Yingquanli Alleyway on Robinson Road. Police quickly dispersed the rally when one hundred protesters moved out onto the corner of Robinson and Ferry Roads.⁷

The Party organization had also played a major role in the International Antiwar Congress held in Shanghai in the late summer and early fall of 1933. On 10 August, a commission of antiwar activists headed by Lord Marley arrived in Shanghai where they were met by the American writers John Dos Passos and Agnes Smedley along with other delegates from the United States, Australia, and Canada. The commission had come to Shanghai at the invitation of Song Qingling who headed the League for the Protection of Civil Rights (*minquan baozhang tongmeng*) for the purpose of holding a congress to investigate Japanese imperialism, the collapse of Chinese resistance, the attitude of foreign powers toward Japanese aggression, the position of the USSR in the region, public opinion regarding the war, and the social and political forces working for peace in the region.* In addition to the foreign dele-

*The League for the Protection of Civil Rights was organized by Song Qingling, educator Cai Yuanpei, and journalist Zou Taofen in January 1933. The group attacked the Guomindang government over the issues of unlawful arrests and use of torture. It became involved in the cases of radical writers Ding Ling and Pan Zunian who disappeared on 14 May, 1933 and who were suspected of being murdered by Guomindang police. Nanjing struck back at the League warning leaders to halt their activities. To drive the point home, Yang Qun, secretary of the league, was assassinated outside of a building in the French Concession on 18 June, 1933. The assassination effectively ended the league's protests. See Coble, *Facing Japan*, 85–86.

gation and prominent Shanghai citizens, the congress also had delegates from various working-class, peasant, and professional organizations as well as representatives from Korean anti-Japanese organizations. Guomindang authorities never officially sanctioned the congress and, in fact, remained silent about the whole affair. Because of the strength of the Japanese position in the city, international authorities had to approach the congress, scheduled to convene in the French Concession, with great delicacy. Although they finally allowed the commission to go about its business unimpeded, municipal and French Concession police kept close tabs on its activities.⁸

While the Guomindang chose to ignore the congress, the Party and Red Mass Leagues greeted it with great enthusiasm. When the fifty-nine delegates to the congress finally met on 30 September, those named to the presidium included CCP chairman Mao Zedong and Red Army leader Zhu De.⁹ Given the high price on their heads, Mao and Zhu De could not attend but, according to Municipal Police informants, the local Party organization did send a delegation to the congress to report on local industrial oppression, and to request that the commission, along with Song Qingling, negotiate for the release of political prisoners and for the end to arrests of political activists by foreign authorities.

It also dispersed propaganda teams citywide to chalk slogans supporting the congress on walls and sidewalks and to distribute handbills. All over the city there were appeals: "Defend the World Anti-war Congress," "Oppose the imperialist war to divide China," "Oppose the imperialist attack on the U.S.S.R.," and "Overthrow the fascist clique which massacres laborers and peasants."¹⁰ Party activists even wrote a song for the occasion:

Welcome the warriors for righteousness!

Welcome the Anti-War Mission!

The oppressed masses throughout the country anxiously desire your arrival!

See, numerous cities have become heaps of ashes!

Hark, cries for help are heard on all sides like thunder

We have come to the eve of the Great War, the Revolutionary spirit is again at its high tide!

Come up! Toiling masses throughout the country!

Welcome the Anti-war representatives and support the Anti-War Congress.¹¹

Despite its participation in the antiwar congress and other anti-Japanese activities, as long as the Central Committee and the Jiangsu Provincial Committee resided in the city, the local Party organization never gave the National Salvation Movement the kind of attention that it gave

to labor organizing and anti-imperialist demonstrations. Once the leadership left for Jiangxi in 1933, however, the way was open for the Shanghai Party to immerse itself in the National Salvation Movement. The way was made even clearer when the Comintern's Seventh Congress (25 July–20 August, 1935) called for a united front against Japan among all concerned parties.

The United Front

The Evolution of the United Front

Aware of the potential threat to the Soviet Union by Germany and Japan, the Comintern's Seventh Congress (July–August 1935) called for a united front against fascism among all classes and nations.* Wang Ming, who headed the CCP's Comintern mission in Moscow and whose own ideas had been evolving during the past few years from a united front from below to a united front from above, was responsible for applying the new policy to China. The concept of a united front was not completely alien to the CCP's Central Committee. In late January 1933, it had sent a letter to Party organizations suggesting a united front against the invading armies in Manchuria.¹²

The "August 1 Declaration" issued in Moscow in the CCP's name and Wang Ming's 15 August statement that the CCP did not desire the death of Chiang Kai-shek, both of which were carried in the 1 October issue of the Paris publication *Salvation News* (jiuguo bao), sent a clear signal that the new emphasis would be on a united front, not civil war. Both documents pledged that if the Guomindang stopped its attacks, the CCP would work with it to defend China against Japan. They also implied this cooperation would be carried out through a united front from above.

There is evidence that CCP leaders knew of the policy shift as early as October; however, they officially received the news in November from Comintern Courier Lin Yuying. The following month, CCP leaders met to discuss the new strategy at Wayaobao in Shaanxi Province. That meeting resulted in two important resolutions. The first advocated combining the civil war with the war against Japan and declared that the main task for 1936 was preparing anti-Japanese resistance. The sec-

*Unless otherwise noted, this discussion of the evolution of the united front comes from Saich, 655–73 and John W. Garver, "The Origins of the Second United Front: The Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party," *China Quarterly* 113 (March 1988): 29–59.

ond stated that the Japanese invasion of the Northeast had created a new revolutionary situation in China, which necessitated a broad political front against Japan and Chiang Kai-shek. Under CCP leadership, such a united front would include workers and peasants along with members of the national and petty bourgeoisie, small landlords, and rich peasants. To demonstrate its sincerity, the CCP issued a moderate ten-point program that called for flexibility under changing circumstances.¹³

Mao Zedong was not initially an enthusiastic supporter of a united front. According to John Garver, Mao did not believe that Chiang Kai-shek was willing to unite with the CCP or resist Japan, and, therefore, concluded that a policy created on such a premise would court a disaster of the order of 1927. Moreover, while the security concerns of the Soviet Union might make a CCP-Guomindang coalition desirable, the realities of Chinese politics did not. Evidence of Mao's reluctance to embrace the united front fully is found in the CCP's refusal to include Chiang Kai-shek (still referred to as the "chief of the national traitors") and the Nanjing government in the Wayaobao proposal calling for a united front.¹⁴

Further evidence is found in the CCP's continued military operations against the Guomindang. On 20 February, 1936, the Red Army crossed the Yellow River and launched the Eastern Expedition, a full-scale offensive in eastern Shaanxi against Chiang Kai-shek and the warlord Yan Xishan. The CCP abandoned the Expedition soon thereafter for several reasons, one of which was Comintern censure. That reproach and the collapse of the expedition itself led to important changes in the CCP's approach to the united front. Up to this point, the Politburo had refused to abandon its position of unity with various anti-Chiang warlords and its use of military means to pressure Chiang. The Comintern, on the other hand, advocated supporting Chiang Kai-shek whom they saw as the only viable leader of a national anti-Japanese united front, and using only non-military political pressure to influence him.

During the spring and summer of 1936, the CCP came to accept the Comintern point of view. In April, Zhou Enlai concluded an agreement with Zhang Xueliang to end the fighting between the Red Army and his Northeast Army and to open trade. With the conclusion of that accord, the Central Committee adopted a more conciliatory approach toward Chiang Kai-shek. That same month, the Politburo published "The Manifesto for Establishing the People's Front of All Parties and Groups of the Whole Nation" and on 5 May it sent a circular telegram declaring an end to military operations against Chiang Kai-shek. It reinforced that message in a secret dispatch to the Guomindang on 20 June. It also approved a more amenable slogan for a united front. On 25 August, the Politburo published an open letter to the Guomindang in which it

embraced the idea of a united front between the CCP and the Guomindang led by Chiang Kai-shek.* In early September, after the CCP submitted a draft of a very moderate united front proposal to the Guomindang, an agreement between the two groups was within reach.¹⁵

Internally, Mao Zedong criticized the Comintern for not understanding the realities of Chinese politics and warned that the new policy did not mean an end to the CCP's drive for unity among anti-Chiang, anti-Japanese armies. Publicly, however, Mao accepted the need for a united front on the Comintern's terms. On 16 July, he told American reporter Edgar Snow, "We want to stop civil war and create a people's democratic government with the Guomindang and other parties, and fight for our independence against Japan." In September, he sent a personal letter to Song Qingling asking her to act as intermediary between Pan Hannian and top Guomindang officials in talks for a united front. He also wrote to leading political and educational leaders seeking their support for the CCP's proposed national defense government and democratic republic, and asked them to put pressure on Nanjing to reverse its policies.¹⁶

Talks between the Guomindang and the CCP had taken place intermittently throughout the fall and winter of 1935–1936 but in the spring of 1936 they took on a new earnestness. Pan Hannian, a delegate to the Comintern, emerged as the leading CCP negotiator. Shortly after the CCP's shift in policy in May, he, along with Zhou Enlai, met with Chiang Kai-shek's representative, Zhang Qun, to discuss the terms of a cease-fire between the Guomindang and CCP armies. The next month, Pan returned to Moscow to continue his earlier talks with the Chinese military attaché to the Soviet Union, Deng Wenyi. From there he went back to Shanghai for discussions with Chen Lifu and then on to northern Shaanxi to brief Party leaders. When the Politburo issued a letter to the Guomindang on 25 August embracing the idea of a united front, it was Pan who was dispatched to Nanjing with the news.

The Formation of a United Front

Ignoring the growing sentiments of his subordinates for united action against Japan, Chiang Kai-shek disregarded the judgment of his advisors and flew to Xi'an in early December to undertake a military campaign, which he hoped would destroy the Communists once and for all.

*According to Li Haiwen, Pan Hannian arrived from Moscow with instructions for the CCP: in an effort to form a united front led by the Guomindang and Chiang Kai-shek, the CCP should, on condition that it retain leadership of both, subordinate its army and the areas under its control to the Guomindang. See: Li Haiwen, "Gongchan guoji he Xi'an shibian" [The Comintern and the Xi'an Incident], *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, (1988): 44.

This was all too much for Zhang Xueliang, commander of the Northeast Army, and his senior officers who were increasingly committed to a united front. At dawn on 12 December, Zhang's men kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in Xi'an.

The government in Nanjing simultaneously undertook a joint course of reprisal and negotiations to rescue their leader. Zhang Zhong, head of the Guomindang's Organizational Ministry and a representative of the powerful CC Clique, immediately went to Shanghai to talk with the official CCP liaison to the Guomindang, Pan Hannian. According to Pan's memoirs, he told Zhang that the CCP was serious about a united front and offered to travel with him to Xi'an where they could hold talks with CCP representatives to resolve the situation peacefully. Later Song Qingling, Chiang's sister-in-law, approached Pan and asked him to act as an intermediary and assure safe passage to Xi'an for her brother and close Chiang advisor, T. V. Soong.¹⁷ Again, Pan assured her of the Party's good intentions.

Within the CCP, the kidnapping caused great excitement; there was those who wanted to have Chiang killed while others argued it was a chance to rally the nation behind an anti-Japanese united front, which would strengthen the CCP's position. When Stalin opted for a united front and argued that Chiang Kai-shek was the only man strong enough in China to lead it, Zhou Enlai flew to Xi'an and began the delicate negotiations for a national united front. Although the CCP offered to submit its forces to Guomindang leadership if an agreement was reached, Chiang Kai-shek continued to refuse to commit fully. He held fast and by the time he was released on Christmas Day had verbally agreed only to consider the idea. Nevertheless, the rules had changed. Chiang had agreed to think about changing the direction of his policies but, more importantly to our story, the CCP had come out strongly and publicly in favor of a national united front. On 22 September, 1937, an agreement for joint cooperation against Japan was reached. CCP forces became part of the national army with the Red Army renamed the Eighth Route Army and the guerrilla forces in central China renamed the New Fourth Army.¹⁸

The Party's top leadership remained divided over the nature of a united front, however. At this point, Wang Ming was still a force to be reckoned with within the CCP. After returning to China in November 1937, he took control of the Party's new Yangzi River Bureau in Wuhan. There Wang clarified his ideas calling for a policy of "everything through the united front." According to K. K. Shum, Wang Ming followed Lenin's united front tactics arguing that the CCP should ally with bourgeois-reformist parties against the Japanese. He believed that the Party should use legal and parliamentary channels to expand its

influence among the urban and rural masses.¹⁹ Wang acknowledged that there were problems within the Guomindang but he believed that a foundation for a long-term cooperation between the two parties had been laid and would continue through the period of national reconstruction following the war.²⁰

Mao Zedong dismissed the “everything through the united front” concept, promoting, instead, the idea of “independence and initiative.” Under a policy of independent development, he argued, the Party would not miss the valuable opportunities to seize power among the masses presented by the war. Drawing upon the lessons of the defeat in Jiangxi, Mao knew that it was imperative to tone down the social revolution turning attention instead on the war against Japan. This strategy allowed the CCP to increase support for the Party among patriotic elites (simultaneously reducing support for the Guomindang among the same group), improve economic conditions in Party-controlled areas, and expand CCP influence among the masses. In Mao’s view, the United Front and the rural strategy were mutually dependent and, therefore, of equal importance to the Party.²¹

As Wang Ming and Mao defined their ideas concerning the United Front, Wang Jiaxiang returned from Moscow with news that the main Comintern leader for China, Dimitrov, had endorsed the CCP’s united front line and Mao’s leading position in the Party. Some believe that after Mao received this news, he convened the Party’s Sixth Plenum (September–November 1938). At first, the meeting was harmonious with Mao, in his opening speech, praising both the Guomindang and Chiang Kai-shek, and announcing that the CCP occupied second place to the Guomindang in the United Front. During the course of the plenum, however, tension between the two CCP leaders increased particularly after Wuhan fell and Wang Ming’s strategy fell into disgrace. By plenum’s end, Mao was blaming the Guomindang for denying the United Front a proper organizational form, and criticizing Wang Ming’s slogan of “everything through the united front” along with his strategy of using legal channels to expand the communist movement.²² Despite the final discord, the plenum’s political resolution stressed the importance of persisting in the resistance against Japan.²³

Reunited in Yan’an after the fall of Wuhan, CCP leaders decided to review and reform the Party’s organizational structure. The revised system permitted the secretariat to make decisions and issue them in the name of the Central Committee between Politburo meetings or in emergency situations. Under these rules, Mao Zedong, who was in charge of the daily work of the secretariat, now controlled the Party. Wang Ming’s position deteriorated further when the Party’s regional bureau system was reorganized and the area under the jurisdiction of the Yangzi

Bureau was divided between the Southern Bureau headed by Zhou Enlai and the Central Plain's Bureau headed by Liu Shaoqi.²⁴ Although Wang Ming continued a halfhearted challenge to Mao's preeminence into the 1940s, any chance he had of controlling the Party had ended.

The CCP's anti-Japanese united front policy is important because it so strongly affected the operations of the Shanghai Party and because it enhanced the image—and the power—of the CCP. It transformed the Party's reputation from a sectarian organization for workers and peasants to a truly national party fighting for national defense in cooperation with all classes willing to support resistance and moderate reform. It also provided a respite from full-scale Guomindang attacks and gave the CCP a legitimate banner under which it could accumulate strength. Finally, it reinforced the Party's status as the champion of national resistance by concretely demonstrating its willingness to subordinate class warfare to the national interest.²⁵ These events could not have happened at a more opportune time for the Shanghai Party. As we will see later in this chapter, by this time, the local unit had reestablished contact with the Central Committee, which moved immediately to bring the city's Party organization back into the fold. The CCP's official reinforcement of a direction the local unit was already covertly pursuing only strengthened the position of the Party among the city's anti-Japanese patriots.

The Movement's High Tide

The Shanghai Party and the City's Elite

Given its history and the political environment of Shanghai at that time, it is understandable that the Party organization allied itself with the anti-Japanese elite. Even before the Seventh Congress's directive and the CCP's official commitment to a united front, Party members were joining the growing number of middle- and upper-class organizations in educational and cultural circles and in the professional world that were turning themselves into national salvation associations. The local organization had seen the possibilities such associations presented and entered into them for its own preservation.

In addition to the legacy of creating a small disciplined Leninist organization in Shanghai, the Internationalists had also left a tradition of actively recruiting intellectuals and professionals into the local unit.²⁶ Although condemned for this policy later (because it supposedly weakened the Party's organizational strength), in fact it was a fortuitous move for the Shanghai Party. As figures cited in table 3.5 reveal, the

percentage of intellectuals and professionals in the Party remained relatively low in the mid-1930s but the precedent had been set for integrating middle- and upper-class men and women into the organization. Equally important to the actual number of elites recruited into the Party during the period was the ease with which the Shanghai Party shifted its focus to anti-Japanese work among all classes, particularly the elite. From the time of the Red Mass Leagues, the Party organization knew that if it was going to survive in Shanghai, it needed to protect itself through incorporation into larger, more diverse, movements. Implicitly or explicitly, it realized that power would evolve from relationships with those who had similar concerns.

We have seen in chapters 3 and 4 that while ideology was one thing, the realities of life in early-to-mid 1930s Shanghai were quite another, and to persist in an extremely repressive environment the Jiangsu Provincial Committee had undertaken a pragmatic course. Although the Red Mass Leagues eventually were found to be unworkable, they were, in fact, a crucial first step in the Party organization's evolution from a single-issue political group to a multi-issue one. In the leagues, the Shanghai Party saw the benefit of working with non-Party people who shared common goals in situations that were not always Party-controlled. Joining forces with the city's patriotic elite in a class-based (not party-based) United Front was a fortuitous move on the part of the Party organization and heralded a trend that would reappear several more times before 1949: the decision on the part of the local Party organization to adapt its goals to the political and economic environment of Shanghai and, in the process, create valuable alliances with non-Party groups. In the mid-to-late 1930s, the desire to repel the invader was a powerful unifying force.

The December Ninth Movement

The collaboration of the Shanghai Party and the city's elite began in earnest with the December Ninth Movement. On 12 December, 1935, more than 280 people signed the Shanghai Cultural Circles National Salvation Movement Proclamation, which demanded that China use whatever force necessary to rid China of the Japanese invaders.²⁷ On 21 December, the first formal national salvation association was formed in Shanghai—the Women's Circle Salvation Association. It was followed, in rapid succession, by the Cultural Circles Salvation Association, the Professional Circles Salvation Association, the Educational Circles Salvation Association, and the Labor Circles Salvation Association. Eventually, the most powerful of these were the Cultural Circles, the

Salvation Union of College Professors, the Union of Primary School Teachers in Shanghai, the Salvation Society of Film Workers in Shanghai, the Educational Society under the National Emergency, the Salvation Federation of College Students in Shanghai, the Shanghai Students' Salvation Federation, and the Chinese Students' Salvation Federation.²⁸ Oftentimes these groups were established around earlier associations. Other times informal gatherings at YMCAs or elsewhere were transformed into formal salvation organizations.²⁹

On 28 January, 1936, these associations merged into the Shanghai Various Circles National Salvation Alliance (Shanghai gejie jiuguo lian-hehui, hereafter known as the Alliance).³⁰ At its height, the alliance had approximately five thousand members and could rally for demonstrations or protests as many as twenty to thirty thousand Shanghai citizens. Some forty prominent Shanghai citizens served on its executive committee and spearheaded the movement's rapid expansion into other areas.³¹ On 29 May, 1936, the All China Student Alliance was established and on 31 May the All China Various Circles' National Salvation Alliance was established. Representatives from the Nineteenth Route Army and from several provinces and cities attended the meetings to establish the new organizations.

The National Salvation Association

Simultaneous with the formation of the salvation societies, thirty leftist intellectuals headed by Zou Taofen, the editor of the popular journal *Mass Life* (*dazhong shenghuo*), established what became the most influential of the salvation organizations, the Shanghai National Salvation Association (Shanghai jiuguohui) on 21 December, 1935. Its manifesto signed by two hundred people appeared in the journal demanding national sovereignty over Chinese territory, an end to concessions to Japan, withdrawal of Japanese troops from eastern Hebei and Manchuria, and resistance to foreign invasions. The National Salvation Association counted among its supporters many prominent citizens including the famous widows Song Qingling and He Xiangning (the wife of the late Guomindang leader Liao Zhongkai) as well as prominent educators Tao Xingzhi and Wang Zaoshi, the banker Zhang Naiqi, and the lawyer Shen Junru. It was never a tightly formed unit of the scope of a political party; rather, it was an informal umbrella-style organization composed of constituent groups who promoted their cause through rallies, petitions, marches, and proclamations.

The association elected Shen Junru, Sha Qianli, Zhang Naiqi, Peng Wenyi, and Shi Liang to travel to Nanjing to present a formal proposal to the Fifth Plenary Session of the Guomindang's Second Central Com-

mittee. That petition demanded an immediate declaration of war on Japan and an end to the civil war. On 15 July, 1936, the association issued a document entitled "A Number of Essential Conditions and Minimum Demands for a United Resistance to Invasion," which called for a united front against Japan. Within a month, Mao Zedong declared his support for the document. His endorsement strained already tense relations between Chiang Kai-shek and the association. Chiang accused the association's organizers of being allied with the Communists (a charge they adamantly denied) and labeled the association "illegal and reactionary."³² This was not the first time that Chiang had linked the CCP with the association. On 12 February, 1936, the Guomintang's Central Propaganda Bureau declared that the CCP was attempting to overthrow the central government by seizing control of cultural organizations and intellectuals, including the National Salvation Association.³³

Authorities in the foreign concessions also believed the National Salvation Movement to be Communist controlled. An American consular report from March 1936 describing a 24 March clash between students at Fudan University and police in which one policeman was fatally wounded concluded the demonstration was under "Communist leadership."³⁴ A Shanghai Municipal Police document reported that the Youth League had used its influence to incite students in Shanghai's universities.³⁵ Other documents claimed that the Youth League was actively organizing a strike among workers at the Da Kong [*sic*] Cotton Mill.³⁶ These allegations were not unfounded; there was significant Party involvement in the National Salvation Movement and there was contact between leaders of the National Salvation Association and the CCP. According to Guomintang documents, many of the leading members of the National Salvation Association had belonged to an earlier organization called the People's Defense Line (*renmin zhenxian*), an idea originated by the French CCP and adopted in 1935 by the Comintern's Seventh Congress to advocate opposition to fascism through adoption of people's defense lines. Guomintang authorities accused the Chinese People's Defense Line, which operated under the slogan "Oppose Japan, save China," of being CCP-led.³⁷

While many in the association shared common anti-Japanese goals with the CCP, there is no substantive proof that the association was a front organization for the Party. Certainly there were Party operatives among the members of the association as there were throughout all the salvation organizations and there were association members, including some its prominent leaders, who had ties to the CCP after the association's demise.* Pan Hannian, the CCP's chief negotiator with the Guo-

*In 1938 most of the association's leading members attended the National Meeting to

mindang in Nanjing and the head of the Party's office in Shanghai, for example, was a close acquaintance of several of the National Salvation Association leaders. But the fact that members of the National Salvation Association had contact with the CCP or joined forces with it later does not mean that the Party controlled the National Salvation Association.

Take the case of association leader Zou Taofen. According to Wen-hsin Yeh, after the war broke out in 1937, Zou Taofen was forced to move his Shanghai publishing business up the Yangzi River to the hinterlands. At that time, the CCP offered to help his Shenghuo Bookstore, an act, she concludes, not calculated as a takeover but, rather, as assistance to someone who shared common goals. So strong was the relationship that, in 1938, the location of many of the Shenghuo Bookstores was dictated by the presence of an Eighth Route Army liaison office in a particular town. Yeh argues that, despite support from the Party, Zou had no formal contact with the CCP until sometime in 1938.³⁸ From all accounts, it appears that while Zou often praised the CCP leadership for its patriotism and shared many of its goals, and while he became a hero in post-1949 China, Zou's ties to the CCP, like those of Lu Xun's, were those of common interest and patriotism, not ideology.

As we have seen in both the discussion of the decimation of the Shanghai Party organization in the early-to-mid 1930s and in the evolving ideas of a united front, it would be highly unlikely, if almost impossible, for the Shanghai Party organization or the main body of the CCP to direct the National Salvation Association or the movement in general. For one thing, there do not appear to have been enough Party members left in Shanghai to have taken control. For another, those that remained in the city, as we saw in our discussion of the Red Mass Leagues, were operating in a fragmentary and decentralized way. This does not mean, however, that the local organization did not give the National Salvation Movement its full attention—the organizing opportunities were too good to pass up. Nevertheless, if CCP sources are correct, not one of the salvation associations contained Party cells.³⁹

Who led the movement does not matter because it worked to everyone's advantage. The movement occurred at an opportune time for the beleaguered underground, affording remaining Party members much-needed protection while allowing them the opportunity to implement

Participate in Political Affairs held in Wuhan to establish the National Behind-the-lines Assistance Committee. According to Guomindang sources, that committee advocated creating a political party called the People's Alliance Central Committee (minmeng zhongwei), which would be directed by the CCP. See *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian*, 5: *Zhonggong huodong zhenxian* [Nationalist China's important historical materials first compilation, no 5: the Communist movement's true situation], (Taipei: Dangshi Weiyuanhui, 1985), 76.

the united front policy. According to Wang Yaoshan, Party involvement in the various salvation organizations and the National Salvation Association was the end of the local organization's "closed door" phase and the beginning of its more productive "work" phase.⁴⁰ Including Party members and Youth League members, an estimated five hundred men and women belonged to the salvation groups.⁴¹

If the Shanghai Party wanted to capitalize upon the rising nationalism being exhibited in the salvation societies, it had to formulate a flexible policy whereby Party members joined with progressive men and women from every class and political persuasion to fight the Japanese. Potential allies were no longer excluded because they did not come from a "revolutionary" group as all anti-Japanese people became allies. Party members operated under the premise that struggle had to occur voluntarily and independently without obvious Party participation and control. If activists became too dependent upon cadres they would deny their own potential.⁴² Then, too, many patriotic, but not left-leaning, activists might abandon the struggle if they believed the Party influence was too strong. Therefore, Party members had to work behind the scenes.

And they did. In December 1935, the Communist Youth League's Temporary Jiangsu Provincial Committee learned via the *Salvation News* that the league's Central Committee had decided to disband the organization as it presently existed and reorganize it into the Anti-Japanese National Salvation Communist Youth League. The league's Provincial Committee ignored the decision because it believed that such a move might hurt its chances of reconnecting with the League's Central Committee from which it had been cut off since July 1935. It did, however, stop using the name "Communist Youth League" and ceased all publications. League members plunged into the National Salvation Movement as patriotic—not political—activists and joined student and working-class organizations.⁴³

As for the Shanghai Labor Alliance and the Self-defense Committee, they also incorporated themselves into the National Salvation Movement. In 1935, only about forty Party members remained in the alliance, which continued to be active in the city's cotton mills, dockyards, power company, transportation systems, and among sailors. Its influence was limited not only by its small membership but also because it lacked publication and communication facilities. When the National Salvation Movement reached its peak in 1936, the alliance did not disband as much as decentralize, scattering what members it had left into appropriate salvation groups, which were mobilizing anti-Japanese strikes. The alliance did not reconstitute itself until 1937 when a delegation was sent to CCP headquarters in Yan'an to report on conditions in

the workers' movement and to reconnect formally with the Party hierarchy. Like the alliance, the Self-defense Committee had largely broken up by late 1935 with only scattered subcommittees in operation. After the December Ninth Movement began, these subcommittees worked to organize students in national salvation work. One of them helped to establish the Shanghai Institutions of Higher Education Student Anti-Japanese National Salvation Society and was responsible for the Society's propaganda bureau.⁴⁴

With Party members now widely scattered in salvation societies, the Provisional Work Committee, which directed Party operations in Shanghai, enthusiastically joined in the most common activity of these patriotic groups—and something with which it was very familiar—the demonstration. Unlike the protests of the early 1930s, these were clearly focused anti-Japanese marches. One of the largest rallies took place on 28 January, 1936 to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the bombing of Shanghai. Several hundred protesters filled the Chamber of Commerce auditorium on Henan Street to listen to speeches by leaders of the National Salvation Association. Outside, thousands of people assembled on the street in front of the auditorium. When the meeting ended, the crowd marched north to the floodgates where there was a monument to martyred soldiers. From there Shen Junru, a leader of the National Salvation Association, led ten thousand peaceful demonstrators to the Chinese City to present the Guomindang government with a petition. As the marchers moved through the French Concession, police watched from the sidelines and did nothing to impede the demonstrators' progress. Outside of the Concession, however, Chinese police blockaded the street where, in the ensuing clash between police and demonstrators, two marchers were injured.⁴⁵

Massive demonstrations and protests occurred all over the city. Over ten thousand women attended a rally and demonstration on 8 March, International Women's Day; on 7 June, seven hundred people gathered in the Chinese City to sing anti-Japanese songs and shout slogans; two days later, fifteen hundred students at Fudan University declared a strike to support the National Salvation Movement. Five hundred people held up rail traffic for six hours at Shanghai's North Railway Station on 21 June as they rallied to demand free transportation to Nanjing where they planned to present the Guomindang government with a petition asking that it declare war on Japan.⁴⁶

These displays of patriotism were multiclass and multi-ideological, a fact not lost on the Shanghai Party. By joining with progressive men and women from every class and political persuasion to protest Japanese aggression, the Party submerged itself in the rising tide of nationalism. If one applies Jowitt's definitions, the city's Party organization

was now functioning in a Leninist way. That meant it had qualities consistent with the defining features of the society it wanted to transform so, therefore, was able to appeal to various groups within the turbulent society who were themselves composites of secular orientation.⁴⁷ Through multiclass coalitions, the small core of revolutionaries left in the city created a relatively stable base from which they began work to expand Party influence. The marriage between the Party and the Shanghai's patriots proved successful and as national salvation reached its peak in 1936, the Shanghai Party moved into a new phase.

The CCP and the Shanghai Party

The importance of Shanghai in the National Salvation Movement made it clear to the CCP's Central Committee that it was time to reconnect with the local Party organization. In April, the Central Committee sent Feng Xuefeng, the confidant of Lu Xun and member of the Leftist League, to begin rebuilding the badly damaged unit. Feng brought with him a radio transmitter to reestablish communications between Party operatives in Shanghai and the Central Committee.* His orders were to consolidate those Party members remaining in the city while avoiding hasty—and potentially dangerous—expansion. First and foremost, he was to utilize “various kinds of organizational and life styles” to further mass anti-Japanese work.⁴⁸

When Feng arrived in Shanghai, he first contacted Lu Xun, Mao Dun, and other writers from the Leftist League before seeking out Zhou Yang, Wang Yaoshan, Deng Jie, and other members of the local Party organization. His oversight may have been due to the need to make contact with the Party organization through “safe” fellow travelers. Or, he may not have known how to contact his comrades. With the city's Party organization decentralized and secretive, it was difficult to determine where anyone was. Equally likely, however, Feng's slight of Shanghai Party leaders may have been a signal from Mao Zedong and his supporters that the “new” Party organization to be put in place by Feng would not be controlled by those among the members of the Shanghai Party who might still be loyal to the Internationalists. No matter the reason for Feng's decision, the slight made an impact on the city's Party organizations and hard feelings resulted.

In May, Pan Hannian and Hu Yuzhi arrived from Moscow. While

*Until Feng arrived with the transmitter, the Central Committee only knew what was going on in Shanghai through Party members who arrived in Yan'an. At that time, many cadres in China's urban areas abandoned the cities to travel to the Northwest where they believed the action was. See Liu Xiao, “Shanghai dixiadang huifu he chongjian qianhou,” 34.

Feng concentrated on revitalizing the underground organization, Pan and Hu publicly represented the interest of the Party in the spirit of the evolving united front. Hu's assignment was to ingratiate himself with the leading figures in the various national salvation associations. Pan, on the other hand, had orders to carry out the secret talks between the CCP and the Guomindang for cooperative action against the Japanese and for the release of political prisoners. On 10 November, he held unproductive talks at a Shanghai restaurant with Chen Lifu, head of the Organizational Department and a confidant of Chiang Kai-shek. After the kidnapping of Chiang in Xi'an, Pan went to Nanjing to talk with Nationalist leaders while Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu, and Ye Jianying traveled to Xi'an to talk with Chiang directly.*⁴⁹ As for Hu, he made contact with Feng Xuefeng through Mao Dun and Shen Junru two months after arriving in the city. Through him, Feng connected with Pan Hannian.⁵⁰

The Central Committee's goal was to conserve the strength of the Party organization in China's largest city and to avoid public displays that might expose Party members. In a thinly veiled attack on what it believed to be the Internationalist policies still in place, the Central Committee ordered the city's Party members to eliminate "adventurism" in practical work and to "conserve the abundant strength of the working class."⁵¹ Mao Zedong reinforced this idea when he said: "The method of shouting at the top of one's lungs and dashing around madly just doesn't work. Those things should be avoided even when the revolutionary situation is advantageous to us."⁵² Party members were to bide their time and advance the revolution slowly. This official statement simply reinforced the pragmatic course the Shanghai Party had been following for the past year and is an indication of how little the Central Committee understood about Party work in the city. Nevertheless, Mao's directive foretold the formal change in policy for urban underground work that would occur in 1937.

With this mandate, the first order of business for Feng was to determine what remained of the city's Party organization and to investigate individual Party members who claimed membership in the organization or who had lost their Party connection and wanted to reconnect. Because of the number of Shanghai Party members who went over to the Guomindang during the white terror and because of the substantial infiltration of the organization by Guomindang agents, it was necessary to examine "candidates'" backgrounds carefully, checking on their pasts and finding "reliable" Party members who could vouch for them. It was also a process in which Maoists tried to weed out organization leaders who had been closely associated with the Internationalists or with dissident groups.

*Pan remained the CCP's chief liaison with the Nationalists through 1937.

To assist him in assessing the damage to the city's Party organization and in investigating its members, Feng Xuefeng established the Shanghai Temporary Work Committee (Shanghai linshi gongzuo weiyuanhui).^{*} The committee was composed of Wang Yaoshan, who had lost his Party connection in 1934 and had reconnected through Feng and Zhou Wen; Liu Shaowen, a longtime Party cadre who was back in Shanghai after an absence of five years during which he worked in the Jiangxi Soviet and went on the Long March; and Lin Feng, Wang Yaoshan's older brother who had been active in Party work in the suburbs surrounding Shanghai. Feng directed the committee and Wang served as secretary.⁵³ According to Feng, its purpose was to "do the preparatory work of rebuilding the Shanghai underground party." The Temporary Committee set about implementing what the Party termed "the first level" of Party reorganization. It formed subcommittees to investigate individual Party members among workers, students, custom employees, cultural circles, and the national salvation associations. Those known Party branches that remained in the city were also investigated.[†] Shanghai Party members who passed successfully through the scrutiny would either engage in long-term undercover work, be assigned to public national salvation work, or be sent to Yan'an or some other Party-controlled area. One's assignment was contingent upon the outcome of the investigation, and only those with the purest and most unsullied records remained in long-term undercover work.⁵⁴ The 160 Party members who passed the Temporary Committee's examination became the core of Party operations in the city.⁵⁵

To publicize its united front stance, the CCP opened a public office in Shanghai's French Concession in July 1936. Pan Hannian headed it with Feng Xuefeng assisting him; Gong Yinbing and Liu Shaowen staffed it. None of the men came from inside the existing Shanghai organization but were assigned to the city by the Central Committee. Having represented the CCP in negotiations with the Nanjing government and having contacts within the city from his Leftist League days, Pan Hannian was a good choice to head the office. Officially, it cooperated with leaders of the National Salvation Alliance and other progressives in the movement. Unofficially, it supplied the Central Committee

^{*}These are the same characters used for the committee that replaced the Cultural Alliance in 1935. Both Wang Yaoshan's memoirs and *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao* make clear that these were two separate committees. To avoid confusion, I will call the committee that replaced the Cultural Alliance the "Provisional Committee" and the committee established by Feng Xuefeng the "Temporary Committee."

[†]When Liu Xiao arrived in Shanghai in May 1937 to take over underground operations, Feng turned the committee over to him. Liu carried out his own investigation of the members of the Temporary Committee before turning to other investigations. This kind of caution is a true indication of the extent to which the CCP feared traitors.

with intelligence on Guomindang and Japanese activities in the area.⁵⁶ When the public office located at 21 Duofu Lane, Fochi Road, became the Eighth Route Army Office after the outbreak of war, it split these activities with the underground and concerned itself only with public matters.⁵⁷

The day-to-day management of the Eighth Route Army Office was left to Li Kenong and Liu Shaowen. Its official responsibilities included maintaining relations with upper-level anti-Japanese groups, organizing propaganda work and publications for the CCP's New Fourth Army from its secret printing press, and supporting anti-Japanese operations of Party-led guerrillas and the New Fourth Army in South Jiangsu. Staff members did everything from printing general publications like *Shanghai Women* and *Translation Daily*, to publishing internal Party documents, to holding charitable bazaars to collect winter clothing for the soldiers of the New Fourth Army.⁵⁸

Part of the office's job was to capitalize upon the publicity power of cooperating with the elite. A few days before war broke out in July 1937, Zhou Enlai, accompanied by Lin Boqu and Bo Gu, traveled to Shanghai to meet with Pan Hannian and Liu Xiao to discuss work in the city and the impact of the United Front on it. According to sources who attended the meeting, one of Zhou's primary concerns was the need to maintain good relations with the city's elite through various legal salvation organizations. He expressed this several days later at meetings held in the Gold Theater with leading members of the National Salvation Alliance. Liu Xiao, Feng Xuefeng, Li Kenong, Pan Hannian, and Liu Shaowen, all Party members stationed in Shanghai, were also present.* At that meeting, during which those attending received news of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Zhou assured Alliance leaders of the Party's commitment to the anti-Japanese cause and the United Front.⁵⁹ After that, the Eighth Route Army Office under Liu Shaowen held biweekly symposiums led by Qian Junrui and Zhang Zonglin to discuss national salvation activities in the city and to coordinate various groups. Liu also sponsored the Tuesday Dining Club where about forty-five of Shanghai's elite met to discuss relief work and other national salvation problems.⁶⁰

The Shanghai Party remained a separate underground organization and its members continued to work covertly in the National Salvation Movement. There was almost no contact between the Party office and the Shanghai Party organization as the two were independent systems.

*I find it very interesting that Liu Xiao attended this meeting since his branch of the Party organization in Shanghai operated secretly. While the others were associated with the public Party operation, Liu Xiao was not.

Members of the Eighth Route Army office were under the direct authority of the Central Committee until transferred to the jurisdiction of the revitalized Jiangsu Provincial Committee in 1938. If an important political policy concerned both, then the appropriate people from each met. Also in emergencies, the Shanghai Party could use the transmitting equipment at the army office but such interaction was rare. Even when the United Front became official, it was imperative to keep the size and activities of the local Party unit as secret as possible.⁶¹ For security reasons, it was essential for the CCP to maintain a complete separation between the organization that publicly represented the broader interests of the Party and the organization that was working to expand Party support in the city.

Party Participation in the Movement

During the late summer and autumn of 1936, the Party office advanced the salvation movement through CCP-dominated professional and industry-sponsored groups. On the surface, these existed to give staff members a chance to socialize together; below the surface, they functioned to train activists, educate the masses, and raise national consciousness.* Patriotic clubs such as the Customhouse Club and the Ministry of Works Club were formed in the government. Other groups conducted classes to educate people about current affairs.† Student members took to the streets singing songs, performing plays, and doing charity work.⁶² The work of the YMCA and YWCA is a good example of salvation group activity. Because they enjoyed foreign patronage, the “Ys” avoided the heavy hand of the Guomindang even though nationalism and anti-imperialism ranked high on their agenda for workers’ education and made them hotbeds of anti-Japanese activities.⁶³

In addition, underground members infiltrated influential local organizations such as native place associations, religious groups, philanthropic organizations, sisterhoods, and mutual-aid societies. These groups sponsored activities such as night schools, libraries, and social clubs, all of which provided excellent opportunities for propaganda and educational work, and for active recruitment into the Party. To a lesser extent, the Party was involved in starting local mutual-aid groups. An

*These salvation groups included the Banking Association, the Foreign Firms’ Club, the Society for Benefiting Friends, the Medical Circle Association, the Hardware Circle Association, and the Association of Six Departments of Fruit and Delicacies from South China.

†They included the Ant Society (an oddly named group of professionals), the Liang Cai Library, the Chinese School of Continuing Education, the Liang Cai Continuing Education School, and the Lin Xin Accounting School.

example would be a local saving society where everyone deposited one yuan a month with ten people receiving 120 yuan in return at year's end. Because they were cooperative associations whose purpose was bettering people's lives, they made valuable targets for organizing.⁶⁴

Party national salvation work was not confined to participation in established groups, however. The local organization conducted its own propaganda campaign through pamphlets, slogans, and word of mouth. Shanghai Municipal Police reported confiscating numerous "communist" documents one of which was entitled "Manifesto Addressed to the People throughout the Country, Various Political Parties and All Troops, from the Chinese Communist Party." It urged people to unite with the military, end civil war, and fight against the Japanese.⁶⁵

The Guomindang government condemned all such united front activities and continued to pursue its policy of suppressing internal rebellion before resisting foreign aggression. In protest, the National Salvation Alliance published "Proclamation from the National Salvation Alliance Various Circles National Meeting," which demanded an immediate end to hostilities and discussions for the formation of a united front government.⁶⁶ According to Liu Xiao, "As long as the call put forth [by the national salvation groups] reflected the basic demands of the broad masses, the reactionary rulers regarded it as illegal because it turned into the powerful force of public opinion."⁶⁷ Convinced that the National Salvation Movement was taking orders from the CCP Central Committee, the Nationalist government cracked down in November 1936.

At that time, under the sponsorship of a number of groups including the Youth League, more than 15,000 Chinese workers went on strike in Japanese-owned cotton mills over wages and working conditions. The strike began on 8 November and was joined two days later by strikes of more than six thousand workers at other cotton mills. Other workers, including some 400 silk industry employees also walked out in a strike movement that eventually included more than 45,000 people. Japanese marines were sent in and between the beginning of the strike and 28 November, there were continuous clashes between Japanese marines, armored vehicles from the International Settlement, police from the Chinese City, and the strikers. Some strikers were killed; others were sprayed with boiling water, and still others were left without jobs as employers simply closed down their factories.⁶⁸

The Arrest of the Seven Gentlemen

Both the alliance and the National Salvation Association supported the strike, which soon spread to other cities. Japanese officials angrily

demanded that Guomindang authorities arrest the association's leaders who they believed were responsible. The authorities needed little persuasion and on 22 November, 1936 Chinese, International Settlement, and French Concession police cooperated to arrest Zou Taofen, Zhang Naiqi, Shen Junru, Sha Qianli, Li Gongpu, Wang Zaoshi, and Shi Liang without warrant under the Law for the Punishment of Crimes Endangering National Security. The charges against the seven were propagating doctrines detrimental to the Three People's Principles, instigating labor strikes in Shanghai through the National Salvation Association, advocating a new government, *and* being Communists.⁶⁹ Following the arrests, the Japanese consul general in Shanghai expressed his personal appreciation to the mayor of Shanghai.⁷⁰

The crackdown on the association was not unexpected. Chiang Kai-shek was deeply concerned over its growing power and had been actively trying to discredit it. Even though the association had no army and no formal political organization, in Chiang's mind, its authority and prestige presented a very real threat to his power. At this time, as Japan continued to swallow up large portions of the nation, Chiang was in the process of mounting a final campaign against the Red Army. Convincing people of the correctness of an anti-Communist campaign when ever-growing portions of the population were joining the salvation movement was very difficult indeed. The National Salvation Association stood in direct opposition to Chiang's policy of appeasing the Japanese who demanded that the Nanjing government suppress all anti-Japanese sentiment in China in order to demonstrate its sincerity in pursuing peace. To cap it all off, Chiang believed that the National Salvation Association was tied directly to the CCP.

With these concerns in mind, Chiang needed little persuasion to arrest National Salvation Association leaders. His actions backfired, however, because instead of suppressing the movement, the arrests fueled it. The Chinese press dubbed the defendants the "Seven Gentlemen," and they became instant heroes. To lessen publicity, the Nanjing government moved the seven to Suzhou on 4 December but that transfer did little to divert attention from the six men and one woman who were being heralded as patriotic leaders bravely standing up to Japanese imperialism. Support for the National Salvation Association grew so strong that it became the third most powerful political force in China after the Guomindang and the CCP. Among the prominent figures to visit the Seven Gentlemen in prison were the gangster Du Yuesheng, banker Qian Yongming, and Chamber of Commerce leaders Wang Xiaolai and Yu Xiaqing. The detention of the Seven Gentlemen was one of the reasons why Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, both supporters of the association, kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in Xi'an in De-

ember 1936. When news of his kidnapping reached Shanghai, celebrations broke out.⁷¹

In June 1937, the defendants went on trial in a blaze of publicity. On 13 June, some five thousand people led by five college professors demonstrated to demand the release of the seven.⁷² Several weeks later, one thousand workers and students assembled to march to the Shanghai headquarters of the Guomindang. Unfortunately for them, it was Sunday and all government offices were closed.⁷³ On 5 July, Song Qingling led a delegation of thirty to forty people to Suzhou for a rally in front of the Jiangsu Provincial Court where they demanded to be arrested because they were as guilty of patriotic crimes as those on trial. The pressure on it to release the Seven Gentlemen put the Nanjing government in a very difficult position. On the one hand, the support for those arrested had grown so great that the Guomindang knew it was a serious threat to its own power. On the other hand, Chiang Kai-shek still had to contend with the Japanese who were adamant that the seven be tried. Chiang's problems were eased when Chinese and Japanese soldiers clashed at the Marco Polo Bridge outside of Beijing on 7 July, 1937. This outbreak of war changed Nanjing's priorities and Chiang entered into serious negotiations with Zhou Enlai for a united front. On 31 July, the Seven Gentlemen were released on bail and when they returned to Shanghai the following day they were honored at a celebratory lunch at Dinty Moore's restaurant and at rallies of support throughout the city.⁷⁴

While public outrage at the arrest of National Salvation Association leaders is an excellent example of the kind of patriotism sweeping not only Shanghai but all of China, it did not necessarily advance the cause of opposing Japanese imperialism. Supporters of the Seven Gentlemen had become so involved in demanding their release that they concentrated on that issue and lost sight of the movement's real goals of ending Japanese aggression and of forming a united front of all patriotic parties under Nanjing's leadership. All that changed, however, with the outbreak of war, particularly after the fighting spread to Shanghai in August. The focus of the National Salvation Movement now turned to war relief and military assistance. Nevertheless, the cooperation the arrest of the Seven Gentlemen inspired among all patriots—no matter the class or political persuasion—and the vocal support it received from the CCP only cemented the alliance between Shanghai's elite and the city's Party organization.

Liu Xiao Takes Control

The Arrival of Liu Xiao

When the Guomindang and the CCP agreed to a united front against Japan following the Xi'an incident, the rules of the game changed in

Shanghai. Liu Xiao arrived at the end of June 1937 to direct the underground while Feng Xuefeng turned his attention to organizing the CCP's public outlet, the Eighth Route Army Office. Liu was a comrade of Mao Zedong's from the Long March and, although he had some experience in Shanghai, was not associated with the city's Party organization.* He brought with him Mao's instructions for operations in the city, which became known as the Sixteen Character Plan for Underground Work: conceal the keen-witted, accumulate strength, prepare for the long-term, and await opportunities (*yinbi jinggan, changqi maifu, jixu liliang, yidai shiji*).⁷⁵ By dispatching his own man with new instructions, Mao made a further move to bring the Shanghai Party organization under his control.

As China's largest and most industrialized city, and the gateway to the rich Yangzi River valley, Shanghai was indispensable to the Communist Party's united front strategy. The local Party organization was stigmatized in the minds of many Party leaders by having been heavily infiltrated by Guomindang agents during the "white terror" and by being associated with rival factions with the CCP. Therefore, it was important for the Central Committee to install in positions of power those people who were, in its opinion, above suspicion. One of the first things it did after sending Liu Xiao to the city was to reestablish the Jiangsu Provincial Committee as the governing body for the Shanghai organization and the supervising organization for guerrilla activities in the areas surrounding the city. Mao believed that support of anti-Japanese fighting in the rural areas surrounding Shanghai far outweighed events in the city.

Before beginning his assignment in Shanghai, Liu Xiao attended the Party's White Area Congress in Yan'an (17 May–10 June, 1937) where he participated in the debate over policy for enemy-controlled areas. As secretary of the CCP's North China Bureau, which included Beijing and Tianjin and as chair of the Congress, Liu Shaoqi took the lead in devising a plan for the white areas (i.e., areas not under Communist control). Practical rather than innovative, Liu argued that urban Party

*A native of Hunan Province, Liu Xiao joined the CCP in 1926 and was sent to Shanghai after the 12 April, 1927 Coup. In Shanghai he served as secretary of the Party branch at the middle school where he taught and later as secretary of a *xian* Party committee. He was arrested in 1929 while doing propaganda work in the French Concession and imprisoned. Upon his release in September 1930, he returned to his organizing work. At the end of 1930, he became the Party secretary of Jiangsu Province. A second arrest in 1931 led to imprisonment. In January 1932, Liu Xiao broke out of jail and fled to Fujian before moving on to the Jiangxi Soviet. When the Soviet was abandoned in 1934, Liu Xiao joined other Party members on the Long March. See *Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi de Zhonggong Zhongyang Shanghaiju* [CCP's Central Committee's Shanghai branch during the liberation struggle period] (Shanghai: n.p., 1989), 336–37.

organizations must covertly infiltrate the enemy ranks rather than overtly resist. This was not the decisive “success or failure” period of the revolution according to Liu; rather it was the time to concentrate on accumulating and expanding Party strength. It was also a time to garner mass support through whatever means in order to prepare for the future.⁷⁶ Liu’s ideas were not universally accepted but, in the end, he won out and from that time on, policy for white areas had a clearer definition than previously.

Liu Shaoqi argued that it was essential to analyze the concrete conditions in a particular area, the revolutionary environment, and the particular demands of the population before deciding upon tactics and slogans. Moreover, public work had to be entirely separate from secret work and no policy should be cast in stone. What was appropriate in one time and place may well be inappropriate in another. Liu Shaoqi also believed that cadres should concentrate on mobilizing the masses to demand that the Guomindang government permit public national salvation societies, freedom of speech, assembly, and strikes. Cadres should work through organized groups who were already doing legitimate progressive work, respecting their parameters and not remolding them into “red” bodies. The bottom line was this: The Party must transform the revolution in white areas from mechanical to creative, from subjective to objective, and from ideological to practical.⁷⁷ In essence, Liu Shaoqi advocated adapting policy to the political realities of a time and place—a policy the Shanghai Party was already following. The local organization’s practice of adapting to the environment was not the only thing that was in sync with Liu Shaoqi’s ideas on white areas. Liu also believed that a professional Leninist Party was essential to survival and he set about building such an organization in white areas. Again, the Shanghai Party was one step ahead of him.⁷⁸

Liu Xiao received advice of a different nature when he stopped in Xi’an on his way to Shanghai and met with Zhou Enlai. Zhou told Liu Xiao that he believed conditions in the city were excellent for building an effective underground Party organization. Nevertheless, he feared that the local organization was not secure and warned Liu Xiao to use only Party members who had “top membership qualifications” (i.e., who were above suspicion). In Zhou’s mind, the role of the underground was mass organizing not upper-level united front work, which was the purview of Feng Xuefeng at the Party’s public office. Therefore, anyone admitted into Liu Xiao’s organization must be readily absorbed into the masses.⁷⁹

Zhou’s comments portended important changes for the Shanghai Party. The staff of the Party’s public office—the leading members of which were sent in from outside—would now concentrate on working

with the upper classes while the local underground organization, under Liu Xiao, would focus more on mass organizing.* This division of labor made sense. The early days of the United Front were an excellent opportunity for the CCP to drop its revolutionary rhetoric and build a positive image at the national level by playing a leading role in the resistance effort. While defeating the Japanese was at the top of the CCP's agenda, so, too, was expanding the Party's influence among the masses through resistance activities and moderate reform programs. This was where the underground organization could be used most effectively.

As we have seen, the city's working class had been largely disaffected and unreceptive to CCP's organizing efforts since the late 1920s. As the political consciousness of other classes grew with Japanese aggression, it made sense for the beleaguered Shanghai Party to ingratiate itself with those who shared its patriotic goals. Therefore, the local organization had focused its attention on middle- and upper-class patriotic organizations. There is no record of what Liu Xiao's specific instructions were regarding underground activity among the elite but the record of activity of the local unit under his leadership indicates that he realized the importance of what was already in place and, in accordance with the now accepted united front line, continued to work covertly among this influential group.

There were other exciting possibilities for mobilization as well. The Japanese takeover of large portions of the city created real chaos for many workers who suffered as the cost of living rose, who lost their jobs as factories shut down, and who became refugees as fighting forced them to leave their homes. Hatred of the enemy made many previously unreceptive workers open to Party organizing. An alliance with the working class had a powerful potential so, in accordance with Liu Shaoqi's guidelines, Liu Xiao sent his elite band of revolutionaries out to harness that capacity. Through their efforts, many unemployed or dislocated workers joined guerilla forces in the Shanghai suburbs or the

*The underground was a top-secret organization and all those who worked in it did so under the guise of outwardly respectable job. One of the reasons why Liu Xiao was sent to Shanghai was that the father of his wife, Zhang Yi (an important revolutionary in her own right) was a well-known doctor with a large number of social contacts and sympathies toward the revolution. Liu Xiao's job in the life insurance industry came via contacts that Party member Lin Feng had. Other Party members also found suitable covers. Liu Changsheng opened a rice store while Sha Wenhan lived under the protection of his mother-in-law. Gong Yinbing fronted as president of an embroidery company. Wang Yaoshan and Liu Changsheng were so successful in their guises as small businessmen that they were appointed leaders of their local "baojia" during the Japanese occupation. See Liu Xiao, "Shanghai dixiadang huifu he chongjian qianhou" [The reconstruction and restoration of the Shanghai underground Party from beginning to end], *Dangshi ziliao* 1(1979), 35; Wang Yaoshan, "Guanyu Shanghai dixiadang chongjian de jingguo," 59.

New Fourth Army, which operated in the neighboring provinces. Others became couriers or provided technical know how for the war effort. Still others thwarted the Japanese war machine with everything from industrial sabotage to acts of terrorism. It is not within the time frame of this study, but the Anti-Japanese War created a real bond between the Party and Shanghai's working class.

Juggling underground work among various social strata was only one of many problems Liu Xiao faced when he arrived in Shanghai in June 1937. Another area of immediate concern was "securing" the local organization. The Temporary Committee established by Feng Xuefeng had investigated and readmitted Party members who had lost their connections and, at the time of Liu Xiao's arrival, had approved some 160 applicants. Nevertheless, conditions within the city and within the CCP itself were such that Liu Xiao believed it necessary to begin the whole process over when he arrived in the city. First and foremost, in consultation with CCP leaders Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu, and Lin Boqu, he reviewed the records of the Committee members themselves. The twenty Party members they passed then carried out the investigations of other Party members. Unless a person's Party record was continuous and absolutely without tarnish, the Shanghai organization would not readmit him or her and the case was forwarded to Yan'an for review by the Central Committee. It was a laborious process designed in part to protect the organization by weeding out infiltrators and in part to insure that all those in the local Party organization were loyal. Liu Xiao later wrote that one of the reasons why he believed the underground survived and even flourished during the war years was because this minute process of investigation had left only the most reliable and dedicated comrades.⁸⁰

Liu Xiao's achievements in Shanghai were to a certain extent due to the cohesive organization he built but, equally important, they were also due to the functional base he found when he arrived in the city. What made the years under Liu Xiao so successful was that he recognized the workability of what the local organization already had in place. All the changes he instituted acknowledged the importance of adapting to the environment and seeking power through alliances with those who had common interests, two lessons the Shanghai Party had learned well.*

*I am indebted to Timothy Cheek for pointing out, in correspondence dated 17 January, 1995, that there were similarities between the situation in Shanghai and the situation in the Jin Cha Ji Base Area. In Cheek's opinion, both were, in their respective environments, precursors to the "Maoist" line, which emerged in the late 1940s. The difference between the two was that leaders of the Base Area got credit for their contribution in the Mao-centered version of revolutionary history while leaders of the Shanghai Party did not. For examples of scholarship on Jin Cha Ji see Kathleen Hartford, "Step by Step: Reform, Resistance and Revolution in Chin-Ch'a-Chi [Jin Cha Ji] Border Region" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1980); Kathleen Hartford, "Fits and Starts: The Chinese Com-

Moreover, what Liu Xiao found in place conformed to the direction the CCP was taking as part of the United Front. Under him, members of the local organization continued to work covertly in the National Salvation Movement, while the Eighth Route Army Office openly represented the Party's interests with anti-Japanese groups. Simultaneously, however, he also directed members of the city's Party organization to once again organize among the masses. Activities in highly visible public organizations were extremely risky in occupied Shanghai, so by 1938, Liu Xiao was placing more focus on covert activities.

The High Tide of National Salvation

The danger in the city increased dramatically when war with Japan broke out. On 7 July, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred outside Beijing and on 13 August, fighting erupted in Shanghai. Although the Chinese fought bravely, the battle's outcome was never in question. By mid-September, the Japanese, reinforced by more than 200,000 men, 100 aircraft, 30 warships, and large numbers of artillery and tanks, forced the Guomindang's Nineteenth Route Army to evacuate the city and retreat to the west.⁸¹ Shanghai became an "isolated island." The Japanese gained control of 3,205 out of 5,583 acres of the Hongkou section of the International Settlement north of Suzhou Creek, an area containing most of the settlement's heavy industry, shipping, and food storage areas. Once they controlled that area, they exerted increased pressure on what remained of the International Settlement and western powers did little to stop them. On the contrary, they acquiesced readily to Japanese demands. Within days of the Japanese attack on Shanghai, the International Settlement and French Concession authorities initiated curfews and a system of permits to enter their areas.⁸² On 28 November, 1937, Settlement authorities allowed Japanese censors in the Chinese Telegraph Administration. That was only the beginning. The Japanese moved quickly to control the Shanghai Customhouse, the post office, the radio station, and the major banks causing angry employees to strike the customhouse and, shortly thereafter, the post office.

Many national salvation organizations were already operating under foreign protection in the International Settlement or the French Concession; when war broke out, most of the remainder moved to the safety of

munist Party in Rural Heibei, 1921–1936" in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans Van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995): 144–74; Timothy Cheek, "The Honorable Vocation: Intellectual Service in CCP Propaganda Institutions in Jin-Cha-Ji, 1937–1945" in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, 235–62.

foreign-controlled areas. But they found little safety there. The Shanghai Municipal Council, which governed the International Settlement, had not actively suppressed the anti-Japanese movement in areas under its control prior to the occupation. Now it openly harassed it.* The council restricted the Chinese press and announced that it would turn over to the Japanese without trial any Chinese caught committing acts of terrorism. It implemented Article I of the Emergency Measures Act, which said that an individual could be refused sanctuary in the International Settlement and where that individual had committed an act of aggression against an armed force represented in foreign-controlled areas, he or she would be turned over to that armed force. On 7 July, 1938, Shanghai Municipal Police put that policy into practice when it turned over to Japanese authorities a Chinese found in possession of a bomb. Shanghai citizens reacted in outrage. A *News* (xinwen) editorial on 1 August, 1938 announced:

If the Shanghai Municipal Council holds the view that Article I of the Emergency Measures can be applied to any terrorist, then the Chinese residents can expect no protection from the law, because the Police, at the insistence of the Japanese, can always distort the meaning of the law.⁸³

Nervous about their own position with the Japanese and about the violence that had erupted after the occupation, Shanghai Municipal Police attempted to close down all national salvation associations operating in the International Settlement. On 21 October, 1937, the Shanghai Municipal Council issued a directive that prohibited the printing, publication, or distribution of any unregistered newspaper, magazine, periodical, or pamphlet; and the operation of any unregistered association, organization, labor union, or club in the International Settlement. It instructed salvation associations to end their anti-Japanese activities and confine themselves to relief work. Furthermore, the council did not intend to register any new publications or organizations. Three weeks after the directive appeared, K. M. Bourne, district commander of the Special Branch of the Municipal Police, issued a statement:

I do not propose to register *any National Salvation Societies*, or [news]-papers, in the Settlement at this time. Applicants had better be advised that if they are unable to take a broad hint, it may be necessary to use drastic measures but they would be well advised at this time to drop the names locally.⁸⁴

*Within days of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Municipal Police were arresting anti-Japanese demonstrators. See *Shanghai Municipal Police Files*, Box 64, D7999; Box 70, D8118.

Police estimated that some fifty-two national salvation associations were operating in the International Settlement during the autumn of 1937. Authorities raided fourteen offices between 5 and 30 November and seized large quantities of resistance literature. Such raids scared off the remainder of the associations, which, municipal police claimed incorrectly, moved to the interior or dissolved. If the police thought they could stop the National Salvation Movement and close down salvation associations, they were wrong. The day after the Shanghai Municipal Council issued its directive, members of the Shanghai Vocational Circles National Salvation Association (which was headquartered in the International Settlement) proposed a two-week campaign to be known as the "Shanghai Municipality Defense Solicitation Movement." They planned to solicit funds along the settlement's major streets beginning on 24 October, 1937. Shanghai Municipal Police halted the proposed drive but that did not stop the Vocation Circles' anti-Japanese activities. A week later, their members along with those from the Shanghai Cultural Circles Race Salvation Association distributed anti-Japanese handbills to passers-by and pasted them on vehicles and walls. Police arrested forty-three people.⁸⁵

The combined humiliation of occupation, foreign indifference, and economic disruption fueled the existing flames of anti-Japanese feeling among citizens of all classes. According to one police document:

All Chinese public organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce and other bodies of long and more or less respectable standing, augmented by numerous other organizations of unsavory character which sprang into being overnight commenced to engage in political movements and propaganda work on a scale hitherto unknown.

[The] traitor menace [has] resulted in unprecedented political activity and people suspected of traitorous acts were kidnapped and secretly interrogated by these bodies despite warnings of the Council and regardless of prohibitive measures adopted by the police.⁸⁶

Threats to their country were more important than threats to members' personal safety so, despite warnings by police, national salvation associations operated unabated out of the International Settlement and the French Concession.* Nevertheless, while associations continued to collect donations of food and clothing, transport supplies and wounded soldiers to and from the front lines, provide moral support for soldiers, and aid refugees, they did so much more cautiously.⁸⁷ A Shanghai Municipal Police document described that change:

*Not only did already established salvation groups continue their work but new ones sprang up after the 7 July Incident. See *Shanghai Municipal Police Files*, Box 77, D8189; Box 70, D8144; G-2 Document 67; Box 87, D8640; Box 77, D8191.

Despite action taken by the Shanghai Municipal Police in suppressing all political activity in the International Settlement, local Chinese national salvation elements are determined to carry on their propaganda activities in order to maintain the morale of Chinese living in the foreign settlements of Shanghai.

[We] believe that [they] will use private houses of individuals who are members of various organizations, to avoid detection by authorities, and no centralized point will be maintained or kept for longer than necessary. Cells will be established in each alley-way under the title of tenants' associations and each cell will be responsible for propaganda activities among residents of that particular alley-way.⁸⁸

Shanghai Party leaders took advantage of the explosive situation. Remembering the mistakes of the Internationalists in the early 1930s, they moved to contain mass fervor rather than encourage it. Party policy used public outrage as a foundation upon which to build collective actions. Slogans of "protect the Post Office," "protect the courts," and "protect the schools" cut across class and political lines to attack the common enemy. Tensions between the western powers and the Japanese proved a fertile field for the underground who played upon the contradiction to step up its organizing efforts among national salvation associations.⁸⁹ The Party moved quickly to place operatives in groups where it had the most influence. Female Party members, for example, were ordered to write articles for patriotic women's magazines, to join relief work at hospitals and in refugee camps, and to participate in neighborhood sewing circles and relief groups.⁹⁰ Operatives also returned to labor organizing and mobilizing workers for strikes, which were implemented through working-class national salvation organizations. Among those sponsoring anti-Japanese strikes during the first part of the war were the Cotton Mill Workers National Salvation Assistance Society, the West Shanghai National Wartime Service Group, the South Shanghai Youth National Salvation Group, and the Printers Wartime Service Group. In November 1937, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee established subcommittees for both women and labor and began to actively recruit among both groups. Among the working class, the Party was particularly successful in the silk and cotton mills and among printers, city government employees, and transportation and post office workers.^{*91}

*This should not be mistaken for the kind of organizing or the show of support the Party received during the later stages of the war or during the civil war. In late 1937, 1938, there were only an estimated ninety Party members spread throughout Shanghai's factory system. See Yin Ge, "Kangzhan chuqi Zhonggong Jiangsu shengwei zhongjian de Shanghai gongchang xitong dang zuzhi zhuangkuang" [The state of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee's rebuilding of the Shanghai factory system's Party organization during the first period of resistance], *Shanghai dangshi* 6(February 25, 1990): 28.

In addition, the Provincial Committee established subcommittees to target groups it considered important but over which, up to this time, it had not exercised much influence. Students are a good example. At the time of the Japanese attack, there were only about thirty Party members in the Shanghai Student Circles National Salvation Society but when the Jiangsu Provincial Committee created its student committee, it ordered committee members to infiltrate patriotic student organizations. Party members were to organize what appeared on the surface to be apolitical salvation associations but which contained, at their core, a Party group. Because the class background of most students was suspect in an increasingly class conscious Party, student groups were never fully integrated into the underground. That does not mean, however, that Party leaders did not consider them important. Harnessing student energy, commitment, and patriotism was essential to the Party's expanding propaganda machine. By the winter of 1939, there were Party cells in most university and middle schools.⁹²

Strange Bedfellows

Supporting the War Effort

External threats make for strange bedfellows and there were none stranger than the Communist Party, the Guomindang, and Shanghai gangsters at the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War. The Shanghai Party was not the only group actively involved in anti-Japanese activities; the other two groups were deeply involved as well. Because the Guomindang was the recognized government of China, the Japanese immediately targeted it for destruction upon taking control of Shanghai. Consequently, Guomindang agents had a much more difficult time implementing their anti-Japanese activities than did either Shanghai's gangsters or the Communist Party. In addition, the Guomindang had little leverage in either the mass or cultural salvation societies. It did control the Shanghai Various Circles behind Enemy Lines Assistance Association formed on 22 July, 1937. This group of patriots from the business, commercial, and banking worlds initiated the Soliciting National Salvation Funds movement to raise money for the war effort and prominently advocated the Guomindang's policy of "one 'ism'" (yige zhuyi, i.e., one leader, one government).⁹³

Where the Guomindang had a real impact was not in salvation organizations but, rather, in subversive activities such as assassinations and kidnappings. Its intelligence operation was particularly effective and, according to CCP sources, provided the Shanghai underground with

important information. The liaisons between spies did not come about easily, however. According to Yang Fan, the Party's intermediary with the Guomindang's spy network, cooperation between the two groups began soon after the United Front was established in 1937. Through Xu Langxi and other leaders of the Red Gang, Party member Zhang Zhiyi negotiated an agreement with Dai Li, head of the Guomindang's Military Commission, to establish a joint Special Detachment of the Jiangsu and Zhejiang's Military Committee's Operations Committee (hereafter known as the Special Detachment). Although the Red Gang, the Shanghai Communist Party, the city's salvation societies and the Guomindang all committed men to the detachment, it was never effective because nobody trusted anyone else. Yang Fan cites as an example of this the Third Squadron, composed of gangsters, Party people, and members of national salvation societies, which was sent out to battle by the Guomindang supplied with hand grenades but no guns.⁹⁴

Despite these tensions, the link the Special Detachment created between the Party's and the Guomindang's intelligence operations was important to underground operations during the war. After Guomindang troops withdrew from Shanghai in November 1937, the Special Detachment was reorganized into the Loyal and Righteous National Salvation Army and put in charge of subversive operations in the city's suburbs. When Liu Shaowen of the Eighth Route Army Office directed Yang Fan to link up with the Guomindang spy network (which remained active in the city), he did so through Zhou Hua, the Loyal and Righteous Army's director of propaganda. Yang later recalled one incident where, after he gave Zhou information on a suspected traitor, Zhou responded by providing Yang with what information the Guomindang had on the man and said that his agents would take care of the situation. Shortly thereafter, the man was assassinated.⁹⁵ Although a small network, Guomindang agents remained active in Shanghai throughout the war and were particularly successful in infiltrating the city's puppet government.⁹⁶

Shanghai gangsters carried out their anti-Japanese activities through the Rural Society of Shanghai backed by the infamous gangsters Du Yuesheng and Huang Jinrong. Many among the national bourgeoisie supported the Rural Society, and when Du evacuated the city, the directors of the Zhonghui and Shanghai-Zhejiang banks, a prominent lawyer, and a member of the Chinese Vocational and Educational Society continued the work of the Rural Society as his agents. Yao Huiquan of the Chinese Vocational and Educational Society served as liaison with the Shanghai Party through his brother who was among the patriots working with the New Fourth Army. The Rural Society concentrated its efforts on refugee relief and on supporting the CCP's New Fourth Army.⁹⁷

Although the three groups carried out separate operations, they also worked jointly—and not always harmoniously—to promote the anti-Japanese cause. One example of cooperation was the Literature and Art Circles National Salvation Association. Composed of such prominent, and politically diverse, writers as Mao Dun and Ba Jin, the association was the collective effort of cultural workers and progressives, many of whom had previously been divided over the issue of National Defense Literature. The Guomindang had responsibility for the association's board of directors while the CCP published the association's newspaper, *Salvation Daily* (jiuguo ribao). Representatives from both parties consulted on the newspaper's finances and editorials.⁹⁸

Another collective undertaking was the National Salvation from Extinction Association (jiuwang xiehui), which was formed from the National Salvation Alliance after the 13 August attack on Shanghai. More broadly based than the original organization, the new association was directed by members of both the Guomindang and the CCP with the Shanghai Party organization largely controlling the lower levels. Its Cultural Circle composed of four departments (organizational work, propaganda, general affairs, and finance) is a good illustration of how it was jointly controlled. The Guomindang supplied the funds so it determined who directed the general affairs and finance departments while the CCP took charge of organizational work and propaganda. The range and influence of the association's activities were not inconsequential; there were subgroups for literature, art, drama, and folk art. Its drama circle, for example, established thirteen (eventually thirty with over two thousand members) National Salvation from Extinction Performance Teams. The Cultural Circle also published the *National Salvation from Extinction Daily* (jiuwang ribao), edited by CCP members Xia Yan and A Ying and Guomindang members Wang Fuguan and Ye Lingfeng. Although the National Salvation from Extinction Association was an effective cooperative effort, it was not a harmonious one. In the Cultural Circle, for example, Guomindang and CCP interests clashed when the Guomindang contingent wanted to limit mass organizing while the CCP, determined to penetrate the masses and harness their revolutionary potential, argued for expanding it. Friction between the two groups became so serious that the "two Pans" (Pan Gongzhan of the Guomindang and Pan Hannian of the CCP) were called in to negotiate.⁹⁹

Not all cooperative efforts were formal or controlled specifically by one group or another. After the outbreak of war, the city's leading newspapers collected donations for soldiers fighting at the front. Donations were turned over either to the National Salvation from Extinction Association or the Rural Society. Representatives from the CCP, the

Guomindang and the gangsters decided jointly on the funds' dispersal and organized delegations to go to the war zones to distribute them and to express the city's appreciation to those fighting at the front.¹⁰⁰ Collecting donations through newspapers was an excellent public relations ploy and resulted in substantial funds being raised to aid relief work. When groups or individuals sent a donation, their names were published in the newspaper. Not only did the lists recognize the patriotic contributions, they also influenced others to donate money.*

There were other cooperative humanitarian efforts as well. Several weeks after hostilities broke out, Song Qingling and He Xiangning approached prominent Shanghai women to form the Women's Behind Enemy Lines Support Association.† When Song Qingling's sister, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, established the Chinese Women's General Committee to Console Self-defense Resistance Soldiers on 1 August, the Shanghai group changed its name to the Chinese Women's General Committee to Console Self-defense Resistance Soldiers Shanghai Branch, better known as the Women's Consolation Committee. It elected the wives of Guomindang leader Yu Hongjin and gangster Du Yuesheng as vice-chairwomen and invited wives of other prominent leaders to sit on the board of directors. The Women's Consolation Committee became the most active women's group in the city.¹⁰¹ Many of these same women also supported the "Shanghai Resistance Period Wall Newspaper Work Responsibility Group," which published the first *Resistance Voice Wall Newspaper* on 15 September. Through pictures, figures, and simple language, the wall newspapers advanced the cause of resistance by making war news easy for the average citizen to comprehend. Originally, the newspaper appeared in ten locations but that soon rose to eighty with a readership that included coolies, workers, vendors, shop workers, students, and housewives.¹⁰²

Other similar groups were the National Salvation Society for Professionals, which incorporated professionals and business people and the Cultural Association. Several of Shanghai's leading capitalists such as the general manager of the Sino-French Medicine House and the owner of one of Shanghai's largest silk factories sat on the board of directors of the Professional Society whose purpose was to encourage and support all employee salvation groups. When the Resistance Committee of the Shanghai Happy Peace Silk Factory held a meeting to formally es-

*Nevertheless, the practice did not last long because not only did the published lists influence other patriotic Shanghai citizens to contribute, they also alerted the Japanese to activist elements in the city.

†Among the women who joined were Song Ling and Yu Fengzhi, the wives of Sun Ke and Cai Yuanpei; the wives of leading Guomindang officials Yu Hongjin and Yan Hu; as well as the wives of gangsters Du Yuesheng and Huang Jinrong.

establish a salvation organization, for example, the chair of the National Salvation Society for Professionals attended the meeting as a sign of support, as did a member of its Organization Committee and members of the National Salvation Association and the Ant Society. The Cultural Association trained more than 1,300 self-defense and first-aid workers at 100 Xiafei Road in addition to teaching unemployed relevant technical skills.¹⁰³

The Eighth Route Army Office was actively involved in all these activities in addition to its own work with the city's elite. It made significant inroads into banking circles, foreign firms, the Ministry of Works, and charity organizations, and in the process, won support from many of Shanghai's most influential citizens. With their cooperation, Party members and activists infiltrated the Japanese and puppet military, economic, and intelligence offices, and the offices of the Guomindang. Patriotic businessmen, bankers, and educators mobilized to go to base areas to lend support to those fighting the Japanese. Some among Shanghai's literati, including the American writer Jack Belden, organized to send supplies to the CCP's New Fourth Army fighting in southern Anhui. Sympathetic elite also provided legal cover for underground operatives.*

Under Liu Xiao, Party-supported activities moved beyond the elite to encompass all classes. Underground members became actively involved in those Drama Circle's National Salvation Performance Teams that went to the battlefield and those that stayed behind in Shanghai to present plays in refugee centers, evening schools, and at mass organizations. The teams also rented the Green Treasure Theater near the New World Market for Sunday amateur productions.¹⁰⁴ Such productions were an excellent way to propagandize the goals of the movement while simultaneously providing entertainment. Education also extended to the print medium. The salvation movement published many magazines and tracts to encourage people in the struggle against Japan. The *National Salvation from Extinction Daily* edited by the Cultural Circle dominated the scene but others included *Resistance* (dikang), *Citizens Weekly* (guomin zhouban), *New Knowledge Semimonthly* (xinxueshi banyuekan), *Inland Correspondence* (neidi tongxun), *Public Opinion* (minzu gonglun), *National Voice* (minzu husheng), and *Current Events Survey* (shi-

*For example, Jin Xiecheng covered the propaganda and cultural offices; Shen Tilan of Malan School, Liu Xiao and his wife, Xu Yanfei, the confidential secretary and the secret radio stations run by Gong Yinbing. Cai Shuhou obtained the release of many underground members arrested by Japanese and puppet police. See Zhang Chengzong, "KangRi banian de Shanghai dixia douzheng," 15 and 17; Yao Huiquan, "KangRi jiuwang gongzuo huiyi" [Recollections of anti-Japanese salvation work] in *KangRi fengyun lu*, 202.

lun congkan).¹⁰⁵ Publishers, fearing for their safety, initially moved their operations to the foreign concessions. Many also increased their protection by “transferring” ownership to foreigners, who were paid a small sum to lend their names to a particular publication.

Two cases in point were *Translation Daily* (yibao) and the *Translation Weekly* (yizhoukan), Communist-front publications that were published in the French Concession. Both were virulently anti-Japanese but were published with impunity because they listed as editors, J. A. E. Sanders-Bates and N. E. Bonner, foreigners as yet unscathed by the Japanese occupation.¹⁰⁶ The editors received \$200 a month to leave the real work of the newspaper to Party members. At the *Translation Daily* (the official newspaper of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee and the Eighth Route Army Office), Party members Dai Pingwan edited Shanghai news, Mei Yi national news, and Yang Fan international news. To camouflage the real meat of the paper—national salvation news, which appeared on the back pages—pages one and two reprinted news reports from foreign newspapers, hence the name.¹⁰⁷

Anti-Japanese publications did not escape censorship by moving to foreign-controlled areas or pretending foreign ownership, however. On 13 December, 1937, the Shanghai Newspaper Censorship Bureau, established by the Japanese with headquarters in the International Settlement, sent a letter to all Chinese newspapers stating: “Notice is hereby given that this Bureau has decided to censor proofs of all news items to be published by newspapers from 15 December.”¹⁰⁸ Rather than submit, most major newspapers suspended publication or moved inland.*

Refugees

To aid soldiers fighting the Japanese in areas surrounding the city, Shanghai businesses, national salvation organizations, and political groups (including the Shanghai Party) bought and transported medicines and equipment to the front lines. They organized squads to rescue wounded soldiers and mobilized people to visit area hospitals. In addition, the Shanghai newspapers *Shanghai News*, *News*, *National Salvation from Extinction Daily* and *Translation Daily* collected donations of money and clothing to send to soldiers at the front.¹⁰⁹

While sustaining those at the front was important to the war effort,

*Among those closing by the end of 1937 were *L’Impartial* (dagongbao), *Shanghai News* (shenbao), *People’s Tribune* (in English), *National Salvation from Extinction Daily*, and *Resistance*. Even the creative *Translation Weekly* could not stand up to the pressure; it ceased publication on 30 March, 1938, five months after its first issue. See *Shanghai Municipal Police Files*, Box 77, D8187. The document contains the names of other newspapers and magazines that either suspended publication or moved inland.

Shanghai's national salvation groups, political organizations, and even its foreign citizens faced an even greater problem in the autumn and early winter of 1937: what to do with the growing number of refugees crowding into the city. It was a problem that soon consumed local relief agencies. For the Shanghai Party, work with war refugees provided a legal means—and one totally in tune with the United Front—through which it created among the lower classes the kind of workable alliance the Party had established with the city's elite through the national salvation associations. Along with supporting soldiers at the front, it was also a legitimate public activity through which the Party continued its alliance with patriotic elite.

When the Battle of Shanghai began on 13 August, fierce fighting broke out in the Shanghai suburbs, along the Yangliu Stream, North Sichuan Road, and in other areas. Dodging bullets, residents fled to the International Settlement and French Concession where they packed into the streets without food and housing. The Shanghai Charitable Groups Disaster Relief Society established the Committee to Relieve War Area Refugees on 15 August. All national salvation groups, along with the Communist Party, the Guomindang, and the Rural Society backed it. It established 167 collection centers in the International Settlement, twenty-two in the French Concession, and several in the Chinese City. Here refugees were assigned to camps, of which at the outset there were twenty-six, housing anywhere from forty to one thousand people. By May 1938, these centers had housed about 500,000 refugees, collected 200,000 pairs of gloves and several thousand winter coats, and distributed thousands of sterilized cigarette cans to be used as gas masks. Eventually, the camps were opened to displaced foreigners as well. In addition, these organizations also established schools and self-help programs.¹¹⁰

The situation in the city was desperate by November 1937 as thousands of Chinese civilians fled the fighting in Zhabei, Hongjiao, Pudong, and Nandao. It was impossible to determine how many refugees there were because not all the refugees found places in a camp, and not all the camps were registered. On 27 November, 1937, the Shanghai Municipal Council reported that there were 151 camps registered with the Public Health Department housing 90,900 refugees. A month later, John Earl Baker, director of the Shanghai International Red Cross, said that 375,000 refugees had been returned to their native provinces while an estimated 700,000 remained in Shanghai (of whom only 140,000 were in registered camps). He believed that there were an additional 125,000 refugees in the Nandao Safety Zone, an area bounded by Fong Pang Road [*sic*] on the south and the French Concession on the north, east, and west established by Chinese-Japanese agreement. A registered

camp housed between four hundred and five hundred refugees in large bamboo sheds with each family assigned one of three shelves stacked in tiers. Under these deplorable conditions, official deaths in the camps ran about two hundred people a day; unregistered deaths ran much higher.¹¹¹

Refugee relief was truly a cooperative effort with work divided among three groups: the Emergency Refugee Relief Committee (organized and run by the Guomindang), the Benevolence Association (the largest relief organization and the one in which the Shanghai Party was most actively involved), and the Shanghai International Refugee Relief Association (the smallest group with only two camps).¹¹² Political affiliations mattered little, however, as everyone rallied to help the homeless. Various city newspapers advertised the plight of the refugees and collected money for them. *L'Impartial* ran daily stories during September highlighting their dilemma and the efforts being made to help them.* On 23 October, 1937 in a page-five article, it announced a special radio program to raise money for refugee aid. Similarly between 13 March and 1 May, 1938, *Translation Daily* ran eight special sections on refugees. For a month beginning on 11 July, it collected donations, publishing long lists of contributors and how much they gave.

During the winter of 1937, the Shanghai Party underground established its own Refugee Work Committee (nanmin gongzuo weiyuanhui) to direct Party operations in the refugee camps. Tang Lian and then Zhou Ke served as the committee's secretary. Party leaders were as concerned as the others about social welfare but their interest extended beyond that: Refugees, most of whom were from revolutionary classes, were seen as a vast pool of potential support for the Party. While some Party members worked openly in the camps as teachers, health workers, and administrators, others assumed the identities of refugees to spread propaganda and recruit young people to join the Party's New Fourth Army. Work with refugees was always seen as transitional with short-term goals of educating the masses, organizing them, and uniting positive elements. The most famous of the covert Party organizers was Zhao Puchu, a member of the Benevolence Association, who took the identity of a lay Buddhist monk to organize in the camps. Some camps even had their own Party cells with recruits continuing Party work after they returned to their villages or factories. One recruit, Zhang Yifan, established a suburban *xian* Party committee in his village, which became an important link between the city's Party organization and the Shanghai suburbs.¹¹³

*For examples see articles on September 10, 1937, 1 and 3; September 11, 1937, 4; September 12, 1937, 3; September 13, 1937, 1; September 1, 1937, 4; October 27, 1937, 1; November 4, 1937, 6.

The Party later claimed that it ran ten of the fifty to seventy (figures vary widely) refugee camps. Whether the Shanghai Party actually directed these camps does not matter since it was actively involved in most of the centers. The Refugee Committee had six subdivisions: housing, general affairs, support, finance, medical, and transport. Housing oversaw the work in each of the other areas and was led by Zhao Puchu assisted first by Liu Pingruo and then by Zhu Qiluan. It, in turn, had two subdivisions: education and production. The education committee, headed by Zhu Qiluan, concentrated not only on raising refugees' political consciousness but also on adult literacy and elementary education. Zhang Yifan headed the production committee, which trained and organized refugees to do various kinds of productive work.¹¹⁴ While those working with homeless and unemployed peasants, workers, and professionals knew full well that these were good candidates for recruitment into the Party (and did, in fact, recruit many refugees), that was not their only concern. First and foremost, their goal was creating a core of patriots committed to the anti-Japanese cause. Shanghai Party members concentrated on inculcating refugee men and women with ideas that would not make them "communists" as much as they would make them "patriots." They organized young men to go join the New Fourth Army and they sent progressive workers back into the factories to propagandize among the workers.¹¹⁵

During the last half of 1938, as the number of refugee camps dwindled, the Party's Refugee Committee changed its focus. The previous summer, the New Fourth Army asked the Shanghai Party to organize and send a group of refugees to Anhui to replenish the depleted ranks of the New Fourth Army. After some discussion, the Jiangsu Provincial Committee embarked upon a highly imaginative scheme dreamed up by Zhao Puchu in which Zhao, as a leading member of the Benevolence Association, would organize an "immigrant land reclamation" program to send refugees to the provinces surrounding Shanghai where they would either return to their native villages or farm uncultivated land. Zhao sold his plan to prominent Chinese and foreigners who embraced it enthusiastically and provided financial support. It was one of a number of such plans undertaken at that time, all endorsed by the Nationalist government.

It was, indeed, a brilliant plan. On the one hand, repatriating refugees relieved the pressure on the camps; on the other hand, it insured that the areas surrounding Shanghai would be occupied by anti-Japanese people. More important to the Shanghai Party, it was a means by which it would smuggle operatives and new recruits out of the city to join the New Fourth Army. The first group of six hundred (of which forty were Party members) left the city in borrowed British boats for Wenzhou in

Zhejiang Province. While some aboard did set out to reclaim land, many went on to Anhui Province to join the army. The project proved so successful that Zhao and the Benevolence Association were overwhelmed with applicants and soon were spending as much time legitimately repatriating refugees as they were transporting activists and Party members.¹¹⁶ Eventually, the local organization transported approximately three thousand people to fight in the New Fourth Army and ten thousand to reclaim land in Jiangsu Province and Shanghai's suburbs.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

As the danger for overt operations increased in the occupied city, the Shanghai Party blended into the local environment and established relationships with discontented groups from all classes.¹¹⁸ The Eighth Route Army Office continued to represent the Party's interest publicly among the elite while the local Party organization worked among the masses and concentrated on getting supplies and information to the New Fourth and Eighth Route Armies. This revised strategy reflected changes in both the external and internal situation. An occupied Shanghai was a very dangerous Shanghai; Party members simply could not move about as freely or work as openly as they had prior to the outbreak of fighting, nor could they seek the safe haven of the foreign-controlled areas as they once had. Overt cooperation with the public salvation societies was not as appealing as it once had been as Party leaders grew increasingly concerned about the lack of organizational unity in the National Salvation Movement. This had not been a particularly troublesome issue before occupation, but the absence of cohesive leadership endangered operations afterward.¹¹⁹ Added to the stressful situation in Shanghai was the increased tension over the United Front itself. By the end of 1938, signs of friction between the Guomindang and the CCP were appearing. Chiang Kai-shek mistrusted the Party's reentry into the Guomindang and told Zhou Enlai and Wang Ming that he intended to incorporate the entire CCP into the Guomindang in such a way that the Communists would be forced to relinquish their separate Party membership.¹²⁰

The change in strategy also reflected the ideological battle between Mao and Wang Ming over the nature of a united front. That conflict came to a head at the Central Committee's Sixth Plenum held in Yan'an from 28 September to 6 November, 1938. There, Mao openly opposed Wang's "capitulationist" line of "everything to the United Front." According to Mao, Wang's position would "deny class distinctions in the war . . . and subordinate under [the Guomindang] all communist pro-

grams.”¹²¹ Although Mao did not assume undisputed leadership of the CCP until the rectification campaign in the early 1940s, the Sixth Plenum was a significant victory for him and his interpretation of the United Front. Under his strategy, while championing national resistance, the Party also worked to expand its strength among the masses.

As a result, Party work in Shanghai began to shift in the late 1930s from national salvation to mass organizing. That change did not mean a return to the policies of the late 1920s–early 1930s, however. At that time, the local Party had organized for an urban revolution; now it organized for resistance against the Japanese in a rural-based revolution. On 15 July, 1938, the Central Committee issued “How to Work among the Shanghai Masses,” a plan to rebuild a workers’ movement under Party leadership. According to the document, past and present political conditions had caused many working-class associations to disband; therefore, organizers first had to unite disparate groups of workers and then ensure their cooperation with the unemployed, anti-Japanese bourgeoisie, and Guomindang organizations seeking the same ends. They also had to gain support for the Party by raising political consciousness.¹²²

Nevertheless, because they realized that elements from all classes could be mobilized by the Party, leaders of the local organization continued to place great importance on the alliance with Shanghai’s upper classes. In its mind, work with the elite was an issue entirely separate from work with the masses. Although the elite-based National Salvation Movement lost strength under Japanese and foreign suppression, what remained of it provided protection for the mass movement because many patriotic elites wielded enormous political and economic power. A June 1939 Party directive entitled “Regarding the Decision to Defend and Improve the Lives of the Shanghai People” proposed ten ways the upper classes could help the lower classes. Among these were stopping inflation, establishing a welfare fund, establishing public canteens and dormitories, organizing consumer cooperatives, and investing Chinese money in industry.¹²³ Although the focus had changed, many among Shanghai’s elite continued to cooperate with the Party.

Those who had been class enemies a decade before had now become allies in a desperate effort to save China. The Shanghai Party had made the important first step in creating that alliance during the early days of the National Salvation Movement. Although in the heyday of the United Front, the CCP’s Eighth Route Army Office had publicly taken it over, it was up to the underground Party organization during the darkest days of war to preserve and expand it.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The course of seeking power through alliances that the Shanghai Party followed after being cut off from the Central Committee ensured its survival. Severely depleted in the early 1930s by internal factional struggles and by the Guomindang's extermination campaign, the organization endured because it entered into collective actions with discontented elements. As we have seen, this was done in a decentralized and fragmentary way, and workable coalitions were not necessarily the first ones the local Party organization attempted. Nevertheless, participation in the Red Mass Leagues and in national salvation societies guaranteed the durability of the Shanghai Party and created a core of experienced men and women who became the foundation of the wartime underground.

It was clear by the late 1930s that what had worked during the high tide of national salvation would not necessarily work during this period when Shanghai was an "isolated island." Not only was the enemy a very real—and very dangerous—presence but also the cooperative spirit of the United Front was evaporating rapidly. In short, the situation had changed radically. The public outrage that fueled the National Salvation Movement dissipated as the citizens of Shanghai settled into life under a puppet government. Declining interest in the movement itself and the breakdown of the United Front were also reflections of changes taking place in the CCP itself. As Guomindang pressure escalated against the Party, it adopted a less-conciliatory approach and, while policy never returned to the radicalism of the late 1920s–early 1930s, class issues and revolutionary rhetoric reappeared. Most important for our story, the events of the late 1930s allowed Mao Zedong to bring the Party organization in China's largest city under his control. This determination is well illustrated by the fact that when the Jiangsu Provincial Committee was reborn in November 1937, it reported directly to the Central Committee in Yan'an and not to the Yangzi River Bu-

reau—Wang Ming’s power base—which would have been the more logical reporting unit.

Under these conditions, Liu Xiao and leading members of the Provincial Committee followed the “independence and initiative” concept for the United Front, implementing a strategy that recognized not only new realities in the city but also tactics that the local Party had found workable. Although members of the Shanghai organization worked to expand the strength of the Party among the masses, the local unit did not abandon alliances it had formed with elites. Its goal was to consolidate established relationships while accumulating Party strength. The core 130 Party members who had passed scrutiny in the fall of 1937 grew to 1,610 members in 169 branches by the fall of 1939.¹ New and old members worked to mobilize mass groups with political influence (e.g., unions, YMCAs and YWCAs, secret societies, and native-place associations). While professional and student groups remained important under Liu Xiao, there was a renewed emphasis on labor organizing to harness the discontent generated by the city’s high unemployment and soaring cost of living, and to incite working-class subversion of the occupation economy.² Whereas labor organizing had failed in the post-1927 period, it was quite successful during the war years. By 1939, there were Party branches in seventy-six “major” factories with 760 Party members who had organized an estimated 12,400 workers.³

The concentration on labor organizing did not mean that the local Party organization had chosen to ignore the benefits and protection that alliances with the elite provided. Through “public and legal means” it continued cooperative efforts with all classes to further the war effort. It was a strategy that reflected both CCP policy for white areas and what the local Party organization had found workable in Shanghai. Equally important to the success of the underground was Liu Xiao’s recognition of the survival instinct that had kept the Shanghai Party alive during the 1930s. By staffing the leadership with people like Wang Yaoshan from the local unit, Liu Shaowen with some early experience in Shanghai, and Liu Changsheng from outside, Liu Xiao maintained the best of the city organization while, by introducing new blood, bringing the Shanghai Party back into the main body of the CCP.* It was a difficult assign-

*Liu Xiao was, above all, a practical man so he understood the necessity of utilizing knowledgeable local people in the new Provincial Committee. Nevertheless, Liu was also a Maoist and it can be readily argued that he may have incorporated Wang Yaoshan into the new organization as a token gesture while keeping others with equal experience out. It is important to remember that Mao was in the process of consolidating his power at this time and establishing himself as unchallenged, charismatic leader of the CCP. The Shanghai Party unit was very closely associated with Wang Ming who remained, until the late 1930s, a very real threat to Mao. Therefore, it may well have been the case that, in the minds of the ascending Maoists, the Shanghai Party could not be trusted unless first

ment because from the very beginning Liu Xiao had to cope with the trauma of occupation and war, a Party hierarchy committed to a rural-based revolution, *and* a local Party organization not used to direct control from above.

Given these constraints, establishing a governing body for Shanghai and the provinces surrounding it was no easy matter. Under orders from the Central Committee, Liu Xiao had established the CCP's Three Man Team (Zhonggong sanrentuan) in July 1937 to direct the "rebuilding" of the Shanghai organization (table 6.1). While Liu Xiao and Feng Xuefeng officially led the group, its core work of investigating and re-admitting Party members was left to two mainstays of the local Party organization, Wang Yaoshan and Lin Feng. Wang's Mass Committee investigated Party members from national salvation groups while Lin's Workers' Committee investigated those from industry, the postal system, and the docks. Their role in the team indicated that Liu Xiao was very much aware that he needed the expertise of local leaders to create an effective underground organization.

In November 1937, the Three Man Team relinquished its power to

Table 6.1 The Three Man Team (July 1937)

Secretary: Liu Xiao	
Members: Feng Xuefeng and one unknown	
The Workers' Committee (Secretary: Lin Feng)	The Mass Committee (Secretary: Wang Yaoshan)
Cotton Mills	Women's Circle
Docks	Employees' Circle
Printing	Students' Circle
Postal System	Education Circle
Silk Mills	Secret Leagues
Other industries	National Salvation Societies

Source: Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao, 204-05.

purged of local power holders, hence, the absence of all but one local Party member from the new power structure. For an excellent analysis of Mao's consolidation of power during this period, see Frederick Teiwes with Warren Sun, "From a Leninist to a Charismatic Party: The CCP's Changing Leadership, 1937-1945," in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 339-87.

the reconstituted Jiangsu Provincial Committee, which directed Party work primarily in Shanghai but also in the surrounding provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and along the Nanjing-Shanghai and Shanghai-Hangzhou railroad lines. Liu Xiao served as committee secretary with Liu Changsheng as his assistant. Once again, however, Liu Xiao recognized the need to build upon what was already in place when he included Wang Yaoshan on the committee and named him head of the important Organizational Bureau (see table 6.2).

Furthermore, in setting up the hierarchy of the Provincial Committee, Liu Xiao and Liu Changsheng acknowledged that various groups required different kinds of interaction—a concept the local organization had accepted for the past several years. So many dissimilar elements were functioning within the organization that only a loose system of vertical relationships could work (see table 6.3). And this was exactly what was put into place. The new Jiangsu Provincial Committee was composed of committees based on common interest not a system of geography-based district committees as had existed earlier (see tables

**Table 6.2 The Jiangsu Provincial Committee
(November 1937-April 1943)**

Secretary:	Liu Xiao
Assistant Secretary:	Liu Changsheng
Committee Members:	Liu Xiao
	Liu Changsheng
	Wang Yaoshan
	Sha Wenhan
	Zhang Aiping (left end of 1937)
	Liu Dingyi (Nov. 1939-July 1942)
Organizational Bureau:	Wang Yaoshan, head
Propaganda Bureau:	Sha Wenhan, head
Security Bureau:	Lu Dingyi, head
(established Nov. 1939)	
Publication Supervisor:	Sha Wenhan

Source: Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi zuzhishi ziliao, 208.

Table 6.3 The Four-Level Hierarchy of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee (November 1937-April 1943)

- A. Jiangsu Provincial Committee
 - B. Military Affairs Committee
 - Labor Committee
 - Professional Committee
 - Student Committee
 - Educational World
 - Cultural World
 - Women's Committee
 - Refugee Committee
 - Suburban Areas' Committee
 - Intelligence Committee
 - Outer xian Committee
 - Customs' Special Branch
 - Police Special Branch
 - C. Branches
 - D. Cells
-

Source: Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao, 210.

1.1 and 3.1). Party members mobilized among those with common purposes, a process that had proven workable in the Red Mass Leagues and quite successful among national salvation societies. Committee subdivisions were based on common interest, occupation, geography, or all three depending on the kind of committee it was (see table 6.4 for an example). All communications were vertical, with each committee, branch, and cell operating independently. It was a period of intense danger, and Party members were under strict orders to remain hidden and to keep all operations secret.

The organizational system of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee put into place by Liu Xiao reflected the successful combination of local and national strategies for anti-Japanese resistance. It also was an acknowledgment on the part of Liu Xiao of the contributions of the Shanghai Party and of the role it had played in creating a valuable network of partners. Under the revised system, the underground settled into the work of the war years providing intelligence and supplies to the CCP's armies fighting in the region, transporting people in and out of the war zone, and infiltrating and subverting enemy and puppet operations in the city. These activities were carried out with the cooperation of men and women from *all* economic classes.

**Table 6.4 Subdivisions of the Professional Committee
(November 1937-September 1945)**

- A. The Professional Committee
 - B. Financial Work Committee
 - Department Store Party Committee
 - Friend and Mentor Society Branch
 - Commercial Work Committee
 - Foreign Firms Work Committee
 - Enemy-occupied Industry Work Committee
 - Women's Work Committee
 - Customs and Police Special Branch
 - Telecommunications Branch
 - Shanghai Professional World National Salvation Fraction
-

Source: Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaishi zuzhishi ziliao, 229-39.

The story of the Shanghai Communist Party during the Nanjing Decade is the account of how one local unit survived years of suppression and turmoil to become an integral player in the city's political world. Through a close examination of this organization, we have moved beyond the framework of the rural revolutions, which has informed much of our knowledge of the Communist Revolution to date, to examine the revolutionary process within a broader context. By successfully combining local initiative and CCP United Front policies, the Shanghai organization was well positioned by the late 1930s to expand the Party's base of support in Shanghai. It was not an easy process by any means nor was it one that was determined by a defined long-range plan. Nevertheless, the local Party was successful within its milieu and was able in the late 1940s to contribute the lessons of its experiences to the emerging CCP strategy for urban areas.

There is no question that the Nanjing Decade was a pivotal period in CCP history. It was during these years that the Party clarified itself organizationally and ideologically, redefining its focus from revolution among the urban working class to revolution among the rural peasants. It is clear to us now that this was not a unified process and that there were inherent differences in the Chinese Revolution. Caught up in this redefinition, the Shanghai Party delineated its own direction through a series of organizational reforms during the early 1930s—a procedure that resulted in a particular variety of Leninist organization that distin-

guished the local unit from its rural cousins and set the stage for serious rifts to come.

The historical legacy of the Shanghai underground organization has yet to be adequately assessed. Nevertheless, as Party history becomes less Maocentric, and as documents detailing the organization become more widely available, it is only a matter of time before such an evaluation takes place. To be sure, the course of events surrounding the Shanghai Communist Party during these years did not win or lose the revolution but they did create a set of experiences for a group of men and women that determined their outlook from that time forward. For some, that outlook—or perceived outlook—had an unfortunate impact on their future lives. During the 1950s, many former underground members found themselves discriminated against or even imprisoned because they did not have the correct political heritage.* Moreover, these men and women were said to lack the proper “revolutionary attitude” so important to Maoist strategy and gained only through tenure in the rural revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, many cadres with underground backgrounds found themselves targeted in a virulent struggle with city cadres of base area backgrounds.⁴

Times have changed, however, and in the urban-oriented world of Dengist and post-Dengist China, the skills of discipline and group solidarity that men and women from the underground learned in the complex setting of urban Shanghai are more appropriate to building a new world than the charismatic emotionalism of the rural revolution.⁵ It remains to be seen what place in history the Shanghai Party of the Nanjing Decade will occupy. What is certain, however, is that as we gain a clearer understanding of the revolutions that comprised the Chinese revolution, the contributions of the Party’s urban branches will no longer be eclipsed.

*One of the problems many of these people faced was their inability to prove a “clean revolutionary heritage.” This occurred through one of several ways. (1) When Party members lost contact during the years of white terror, many were unable to account for their activities between the time when they lost contact and regained it. As a result, they were later accused of working for the Guomintang during the interim period. (2) Many men and women, fueled by anti-Japanese patriotic fires, became members of underground resistance units. To them, it did not matter what political group backed the unit only that it fought the Japanese. After the war, these underground members were unable to prove that they had been members of the CCP underground and were accused of being members of Guomintang units. (3) Particularly during the early 1930s when the Guomintang and foreign witch hunt was in full force, many Party members lost the records of their membership in raids. In later years, they were unable to prove their Party heritage or find people to vouch for them. (4) Many Party members worked closely with the Guomintang during the war, especially during the United Front years. After 1949, these men and women (Pan Hannian an excellent example) often found themselves accused of being Guomintang collaborators or, even worse, Guomintang spies.

Notes

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Chapter 3

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A Glossary of Major Figures

- Bai Chongxi** Guomindang military strongman in control of Shanghai in the early to mid 1920s
- Bo Gu** prominent member of the Internationalists and General Secretary of the CCP 1931–33
- Cai Zhende** Trotskyist, who opposed Li Lisan's efforts to centralize Party structure
- Chen Duxiu** first General Secretary of the CCP, later condemned as a Trotskyist
- Chen Gefu** head of the Guomindang Secret Services
- Chen Guodong** head of the Youth League's Central Committee Shanghai Temporary Work Committee in 1935
- Chen Lifu** head of the Organizational Department of Guomindang and confidant of Chiang Kai-shek
- Chen Yannian** Jiangsu Provincial Committee's General-Secretary, 1927, arrested the day of the Committee's founding, and executed one month later by Guomindang
- Cheng Fangwu** one of the founders of the Creation Society in 1921
- Dai Li** head of the Guomindang Military Commission and the Blue Shirts
- Deng Chumin** member of the Socialist League and prominent scholar
- Deng Fa** head of the Workers and Staff Committee of the Jiangsu Provisional Committee in the late 1920s
- Deng Yingchao** wife of Zhou Enlai and Party activist
- Deng Zhongxia** General-Secretary of the Jiangsu Provisional Committee in the late 1920s, East Shanghai District Committee's Propaganda chief in the early 1930s
- Du Yuesheng** prominent Shanghai gangster
- Feng Xuefeng** prominent writer sent to Shanghai in 1935 to reconnect it to CCP Central Committee
- Gong Yinbing** member of the CCP office in Shanghai during the United Front, ran radio stations in Shanghai during Anti-Japanese War
- Gu Shunzhang** member of the CCP's Red Brigade who betrayed the Party in 1931
- Guang Huian** member of the CCP's Security Bureau in the early 1930s
- Guo Moruo** one of the founders of the Creation Society in 1921
- He Changchi** member of the Three Man Team to restore relations between the Shanghai Party and the Central Committee in 1935

- He Mengxiong** labor leader and local Party leader who opposed Li Lisan and Wang Ming, arrested and executed by Guomindang in 1931
- He Xiangning** widow of Guomindang leader Liao Zhongkai, and National Salvation Activist
- Hu Yuzhi** public representative of CCP in Shanghai in 1936
- Huang Jinrong** Shanghai gangster
- Kang Sheng** head of the Central Committee's Organizational Bureau, member of CCP Security Bureau during the early 1930's
- Ke Qingshi** member of CCP Security Bureau during the early 1930s
- Kong Yuan** member of the Three Man Team to restore relations between the Shanghai Party and the Central Committee in 1935
- Li Fuchun** member of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee and opponent of Li Lisan
- Li Gongpu** one of the Seven Gentlemen
- Li Kenong** CCP agent in Guomindang's secret service, head of the Eighth Route Army Office
- Li Lisan** labor leader who, as head of the Propaganda Department, dominated the CCP after the Sixth Congress in 1928
- Li Qiushi** member Standing Committee of the Youth League and Shanghai dissident
- Lin Baixiu** head of the Socialist League's Party Cell and member of the Literary Committee in the early 1920s
- Lin Feng** member of Shanghai Temporary Work Committee, member of Three Man Team to restore relations between the Shanghai Party and the Central Committee in 1935
- Lin Li** Party member and labor organizer
- Lin Lifu** CCP Member of Self-Defense Committee
- Lin Yunan** head of Propaganda Bureau and Shanghai dissident
- Liu Changsheng** assisted Liu Xiao, the Jiangsu Provisional Committee secretary, in rebuilding the Shanghai Party in the Late 1930s
- Liu Shaoqi** early labor leader, headed White Area Conference
- Liu Shaowen** head of the Eighth Route Army Office during the United Front
- Liu Xiao** sent by Mao Zedong in 1937 to rebuild Shanghai Party, Secretary of Jiangsu Provisional Committee
- Liu Zhonghua** member of Three Man Team to restore relations between the Shanghai Party and the Central Committee in 1935
- Lu Xun** famous writer, founder of the Leftist League, and CCP fellow traveler
- Lu Zhiren** translated Russian language news to keep Shanghai Party members informed of current happenings
- Luo Yinong** member of CCP Central Committee, arrested in 1928
- Luo Zhanglong** head of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, one of Shanghai dissidents
- Ma Yufu** Trotskyist, who opposed Li Lisan's efforts to centralize Party structure
- Pan Gongzhan** Guomindang representative who negotiated with Pan Hannian during the United Front

- Pan Hannian** member of the Party Security Bureau early 1930s, original secretary of the Cultural Alliance, negotiator with Guomindang for the United Front
- Peng Shuzhi** prominent Trotskyist
- Qian Junrui** member of the Cultural Alliance and, later, Eighth Route Army Office
- Qian Xingzhun** Member of Film League
- Qian Zhuangfei** Red Brigade agent placed in Guomindang Special Services Bureau
- Qu Qiubai** General-Secretary of the CCP (1927–28), later head of the leftist Cultural Movement
- Ren Bishi** head of Youth League
- Sha Qianli** one of the Seven Gentlemen
- Shen Junru** one of the Seven Gentlemen
- Shi Liang** one of the Seven gentlemen
- Song Qingling** widow of Sun Yat-sen and National Salvation activist
- Tang Lian** head of the Refugee Work Committee during Anti-Japanese War
- Tian Han** playwright and member of the Literary Committee
- Wang Fanxi** Trotskyist and party activist during the late 1920s and early 1930s
- Wang Fengfei** Shanghai Party dissident in the late 1920s
- Wang Han** member of the Socialist League
- Wang Jiaxiang** Internationalist who helped to restructure the Party after Li Lisan was ousted
- Wang Jingwei** Guomindang leader who became the leader of the Japanese puppet government
- Wang Kequan** member of the Shanghai City Committee and Shanghai dissident in the late 1920s
- Wang Ming** leader of the Internationalists, General-Secretary of CCP 1931–32, opponent of Mao Zedong
- Wang Roufei** A Trotskyist and short term General-Secretary of Jiangsu Provisional Committee, leader of Shanghai Party
- Wang Yaoshin** member of the Shanghai Party who helped Liu Xiao rebuild the local unit in the late 1930s
- Wang Zaoshi** one of the Seven Gentlemen
- Wu Tonggen** driver killed by French Marines, thus setting off the French Tramway Strike
- Xia Yan** dominant force in the Film League, organized first Party cell in that League
- Xiang Ying** labor organizer and military leader
- Xiang Zhongfa** General-Secretary CCP 1928–31
- Xu Enzeng** Guomindang Special Services head who captured Gu Shunzhang
- Xu Xigen** member of the Shanghai City Committee and dissident, later member of Jiangsu Provincial Committee, collaborated with Guomindang
- Xu Ya** head of the Youth League's Central Committee Shanghai Temporary Work Committee in 1935
- Yang Fan** CCP's intermediary to Guomindang spy network

- Yang Hucheng** supporter of the National Salvation Association who helped Zhang Xueliang kidnap Chiang Kai-shek in 1936
- Yang Yingfo** assassinated leader of the Chinese League for the Protection of Human Rights
- Yang Zhihua** party activist and wife of Qu Qiubai
- Yao Huiqian** member of Chinese Vocational and Educational Society, served as liaison with the Shanghai Party in coordinating anti-Japanese activities
- Yu Dafu** one of the founders of the Creation Society in 1921
- Yun Daiying** famous revolutionary writer
- Zhang Guotao** Party activist and opponent of Mao Zedong who left the CCP in the late 1930s
- Zhang Naiqi** one of the Seven Gentlemen
- Zhang Wentain** Internationalist who helped to restructure the Party after Li Lisan was ousted
- Zhang Xueliang** commander of the Northeast Army, behind the kidnaping of Chiang Kai-shek in 1936
- Zhang Yifan** refugee who established suburban *xian* Party committee
- Zhang Zhong** head of Guomindang's Organizational Ministry and representative of the CC Clique, negotiated the United Front
- Zhang Zonglin** member of Eighth Route Army Office
- Zheng Baiqi** member of the Film League
- Zheng Chaolin** a Trotskyist, elected to leadership position with the Chinese Oppositionists, arrested 1931 by Guomindang
- Zhou Enlai** led CCP Security Bureau in the early 1930s, architect of the United Front in 1937
- Zhou Puchu** member of the Benevolence Association, covert Party organizer, creator of highly successful repatriation plan for refugees
- Zhou Yang** member of Literary Committee, secretary of Party and Communist Youth League after Qu Qiubai.
- Zhu Jingwo** one of the Party secretaries for the Cultural Alliance
- Zhu Qiluan** assistant to Zhao Puchu, in the housing subdivision of the Refugee Committee
- Zou Taofen** editor of *Mass Life*, founder of National Salvation Association, one of the Seven Gentlemen

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About the Author

Patricia Stranahan is Director of the Asian Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh and Professor of History. She is the author of *Yan'an Women and the Communist Party* and *Molding the Medium: the Chinese Communist Party and the Liberation Daily* as well as numerous articles on the Chinese Communist Party. Formerly, she was the Executive Director of the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China.