

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



# Anarchists and the May 4 Movement in China

Nohara Shirō

Nohara Shirō  
Anarchists and the May 4 Movement in China  
January 1975

<https://libcom.org/library/anarchists-may-4-movement-china>  
(translated by Philip Billingsley)

**[theanarchistlibrary.org](https://theanarchistlibrary.org)**

January 1975



workers killed, *was a leader of the rightwing labour movement*, which had its base in the industrial school students and was opposed to us, but we supported them in this case and in many other struggles. *Anarchists were also influential in the trade unions, which were then organised in an All-Hunan Labour Syndicate, but we compromised and through negotiation prevented many hasty and useless actions by them.* (stress added)

By this time, of course, the label "right-wing" when applied to labour unions or Politicians generally meant "anti-CCP", and "hasty" meant "before Leninist hegemony was achieved".

## Contents

The rise and fall of practical activities . . . . .	5
A man named Li Dazhao . . . . .	23
Appendix: Huang Ai & Pang Renquan in Hunan . .	38

secretly to workers. From No. 14 on, after the suppression of the HWA, it was put out in Shanghai.

Following the Changsha tragedy the HWA's members scattered throughout the country, and various publications subsequently appeared dedicated to the memory of the two martyrs, including *Sacrifice of Blood (Xuezhong)* in Shanghai and !! (a double -exclamation mark) in Tianjin. In 1926, after the capture of Changsha by the armies of Jiang Jieshi's Northern Expedition, the HWA was revived and a new paper, *Resurrection (Fuhuo)*, began to appear.

Huang's and Pang's deaths made them the Chinese labour movement's first martyrs, and tribute was paid to them from every quarter. Zhou Enlai, who had worked with Huang in Tianjin as a student organizer, wrote a special poem to their memory, and Li Dazhao wrote an article praising their role as "pioneers of the working class". Mao Zedong also added his voice. In later years, however, Mao was to be less charitable towards the pair, claiming many of their successes for himself. Relating his life story to Edgar Snow in 1936, he described the Hunan events as follows, and his version was faithfully transcribed in Snow's *Red Star Over China*.

In May 1922, the Hunan party, of which I was then secretary, had already organised more than twenty trade unions among miners, railway workers, municipal employees, printers and workers in the government mint. A vigorous labour movement began that winter... Most of the big mines were organised, and virtually all the students. There were numerous struggles on both the students' and workers' fronts. In the winter of 1922, Chao Heng-t'i ... ordered the execution of two Hunanese workers, Huang Ai and P'ang Yuan t him. ch'ing, and as a result a widespread agitation began against Huang Ai, one of the two

ers themselves - this was one of the first instances in China. of organized labour actually achieving some of its demands. Marxists all over the country, until then concerned only with education and study of theory, began to prick up their ears. Among them was Mao Zedong.

Towards the end of 1921 a general movement began in Changsha to secure a bonus to offset reductions in pay or non-payment of wages. In January 1922 the mill workers demanded an extra month's salary. The management refused, the workers struck, and mill guards were palled in to disperse them. Two workers were killed in the melee, and when the others refused to call a halt to the strike warlord governor Zhao Hengti, a major shareholder in the mill, called in troops. After martial law was declared within the mill compound the workers began passive resistance, refusing to work, and finally the management asked Zhao to force a solution. Zhao promptly summoned Huang and Pang Renquan for "negotiations", but as soon as they arrived rested them and threw them into jail. They were executed before dawn the next day, and their heads were publicly displayed.

Although the Hunan Workers' Association was banned after this most of the strikers' demands were met. Non-Hunanese were out from management positions and a New Year bonus was paid, yet conditions in the mill remained abysmal. Elite supporters of the union were given control over the mill ownership, and were thus able to suppress any hint of a revival of labour activity in Changsha until 1926.

From January to October 1921 the HWA published its own magazine, *The Workers (Laogong)*. At this stage the union, though it led several actions in Changsha, did not favour a general strike, and the magazine reflected its moderate position. After October it was succeeded by the *Workers' Weekly (Laogong zhoukan)*, in which Huang's and Pang's anarchist ideas were much more strongly reflected. Because of its radical position, however, the paper had to be distributed

## The rise and fall of practical activities

How did the anarchist students initially seek to realize their plans for social reconstruction? The activities of the 'Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps' (*Gongdu huzhutuan*) movement, which spanned a period of some six months following the Corps' founding at the end of 1919, were one example.<sup>1</sup> Centred on Beijing University students and supported by Hangzhou students from the *Zhejiang New Tide* group, members included the founder Wang Guangqi, Luo Jialun from Beijing, and Shi Cuntong and Fu Linran from Zhejiang. Financial support was provided by several well-known intellectuals including Cai Yuanpei, Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi, Li Dazhao and Zhou Zuoren.<sup>2</sup> The movement also seems to have sprung up among students in Shanghai and Tianjin.

What the Corps students did, basically, was to promote in one small corner of Beijing a self-sufficient group lifestyle in which members, in addition to their studies, would work at least four hours a day, contributing their income to a pool which paid for living expenses and other outlays. Some opened

<sup>1</sup> Hu Shi later claimed that <http://libcom.org/node/add/library?parent=3613> Mao Zedong had also shown great interest in the Corps at this time (Nohara's note). Recent research has shown that Mao actually considered himself an anarchist until at least the end of 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Shi Cuntong (1890-1970) had become notorious in November 1919 for writing an article in *Chejiang New Tide* attacking not only filial piety (the basis of the traditional Chinese family) but also Confucian society as a whole. The government accused him of treason, the magazine was suppressed, and Shi moved to Beijing to join the Corps. The following June he went to Tokyo, where he became a founding member of the Communist Party group there; at the same time, however, his contacts with the Japanese anarcho-syndicalist Osugi Sakae convinced him of his anarchist beliefs, and he subsequently became one of the most energetic exponents of the "essential unity of Marxism and anarchism". See Dirlik 1989a: 203-16. Zhou Zuoren (1885-1968); younger brother of the writer Lu Xun (see Part One), a liberal professor at Beijing University, was also a strong advocate of the New Village Movement mentioned below and in the first part of this translation. For background on the other figures, see Part One.

printing shops, restaurants and laundries for students and teachers; others even tried selling handicrafts and so on. While there was little to distinguish this superficially from the life of the average student, their programme was in fact a sincere effort to tackle the problem of what was to become of China in the post-May 4 era. Believing that the class contradictions in society stemmed from the separation of mental and physical labour, they sought to create, by their own efforts in one isolated enclave, the prototype of a new society in which the two would be reunited, and from where they could begin to spread their influence to society at large. Wang Guangqi summed up their aspirations in issue No. 7 (January 1920) of their magazine *Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps*:

The Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid groups are the embryo of the new society, and the first step in the realization of our ideals ... On paper we advocate a social revolution every day, but we have yet to begin to put it into practice. Our mutual aid organization is just the starting point for our real movement... If it is successful, we can gradually expand it and simultaneously begin to realize the ideal of 'from each according to their ability; to each according to their needs'. This movement should indeed be called 'a peaceful economic revolution'.<sup>3</sup>

Similar ideals were invoked in an article in issue No. 2 (August 1919) of *Young China (Shaonian Zhongguo)*.<sup>4</sup> Entitled 'My

---

<sup>3</sup> Wang Guangqi (1892-1936), at the same time as being a prime mover of the Corps, was also a founder and leading member of the Young China Association (see next note). Though basically a liberal, he was then in a strongly anarchist phase and advocated social revolution. He had previously participated in the work-study programme in France.

<sup>4</sup> This was the organ of the Young China Association (*Shaonian Zhongguo xuehui*), founded in June 1918. Mao Zedong, Li Dazhao, Zhang Guotao

mental and physical labour (as well as that between the practitioners of each kind of labour) much more easily than their predecessors had, and as a result became leading figures in the early Hunan labour movement. Huang, after graduating from the Jiazhong Technical School in Changsha, had gone to Tianjin to continue his education and there become involved in the May 4 agitation. Pang had remained in Changsha and had taken part in the successful popular movement to oust the bloodthirsty provincial warlord Zhang Jingyao.

While working in Changsha factories as technicians, both Huang and Pang had become involved with local anarchists. Later they organized a workers' reading society, which in November 1920 was formally reorganized into the Hunan Workers' Association. The founding meeting was attended by representatives from the printers, tailors, mechanics, foundry workers, dyers, miners, surveyors, rattan and pottery workers' guilds, though most of the original seven thousand members, at the outset at least, were technical students. In these early days, moreover, since local merchants wielded much more control over the Association's executive than the anarchists did, the organization fell far short of being a syndicalist union.

The struggle at the No. 1 Textile Mill in Changsha had first begun in March 1921, but had been easily bought off by the mill-owners. Indeed, over and above the struggle by the workers at the mill was a battle for control between Hunanese and non-Hunanese capitalists. Conditions at the mill were appalling: ten people slept to a small room in the dormitories, the walls of which, through a lack of toilets, were lined with piles of excrement. The food was inedible, beatings were frequent, and the pay was barely enough to live on. Several workers did indeed die on the job rather than ask for sick leave without pay. After the strike began in April, Huang Ai was arrested and held in jail for a month, but the owners were forced to admit some of the strikers' complaints. Despite the limited nature of the victory won at this stage—which included few gains for the work-

On the basis of this conviction, Li Dazhao freely adapted and put to use any and all theories. For instance, in appraising the failure of the Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps, he did not advise total rejection of their programme, but merely pointed out the number of obstacles posed for such an experiment by the urban environment, and advised instead that it be tried out in the countryside. ('The Weakness of the Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps in the Cities', in *New Youth*, vol. 7 No. 5, April 1 1920)<sup>36</sup> Unlike Hu Shi, Li took the Corps' experiment as a serious attempt to build the new society. Though one of the very first to initiate the study of Marxism, therefore, Li Dazhao did not assume its correctness from the start. Rather, while taking part-sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly-in practical activities addressed to national problems, and while simultaneously investigating other political doctrines, he began only gradually to lean towards Marxism.<sup>37</sup>

## Appendix: Huang Ai & Pang Renquan in Hunan

Huang Ai and Pang Renquan were products of the introduction of technical education to China during the 1910s, representing a new class of working intellectual quite different from the philosophical variety that had dominated traditional Chinese society. They were thus able to bridge the gap between

<sup>36</sup> Mutual aid and federalism had become key planks in the anarchists' platform by 1907. Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* had been published in 1902, and was soon translated into Chinese for serialization in the magazine *New Century*.

<sup>37</sup> Epilogue: early in 1927 the reactionary warlord then in control of Beijing, Zhang Zuolin, began a purge of radicals in the city. Li and others took refuge in the Soviet Embassy, from where Li continued to issue radical polemics against the Chinese authorities. In April Zhang's soldiers raided the embassy and Li was arrested. He was executed by strangulation soon after.

Plan for Creating a Young China', it too advocated the establishment of 'Small groups':

We must escape from the confines of the old society and head for the wilderness and forests, where we can create a truly free, truly egalitarian association. Then, by promoting economic and cultural autonomy through cooperative labour, we can cut ourselves off completely from the corrupting influence of the old society. After that we will set about the rebuilding of the latter on the pattern of our own society. Unlike the socialist parties of Europe, we do not declare war on the old society by the method of armed insurrection.

Strongly reflecting the influence of the currently-popular 'New Village' movement of the Japanese utopian Mushanok6ji, the group's proposals ultimately amounted to a mere caricature of the concept of 'uniting with the toiling masses'. Yet these students threw themselves dedicatedly into the work they chose, and, when Hu Shi dismissed their typical 'poor student', haphazard ways of making ends meet as no different from those of American students, they must surely have been deeply resentful.<sup>5)</sup>

The previously-mentioned Work-Study Society of Beijing Higher Normal School, on the other hand, openly advocated anarchy, and made a fundamental distinction between their own doctrine of work-study and the position of the Mutual Aid Corps. Still, there was nothing to choose between them

(see below) and others of varying political persuasions joined, making it one of the strongest of the May 4 organizations (Nohara's note). After 1920 it split into Marxist and liberal factions. The article cited in the text was by one Zong Zhikui.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Fu Linran, 'Before and After May 4' (in *Recollections of May 4 - Wusi yundong huiyilu*, 1959, p. 170).

as far as practical activities were concerned, and both experiments ultimately ended in disappointment. Shi Cuntong, in a self-critical piece, described the failure of the Mutual Aid Corps as follows:

Present-day society is organized on a capitalist basis, and the capitalists keep a firm grip on all capital resources. There is absolutely nothing we can do about that, and to imagine regaining control of those resources is a mere pipedream! Pitting our feeble strength against such a treacherous, vicious society as this-how could we but be defeated? We tried to rebuild society, but found we could not even penetrate it, even after creating the Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps. Rebuilding society? It was never even on the cards! From now on, if we want to rebuild society we must plan to do it wholesale and from the very roots!

Piecemeal reforms will get us nowhere. As long as society is not reformed at the roots, no experiments in new lifestyles are possible. So long as such experiments fail to distance themselves from everyday society, it follows that they will always be under its sway, and consequently come up against countless obstacles. The only way around this is a joint uprising of the peoples of the whole world, which will uproot those obstacles once and for all... 'To rebuild society, we must gain entry into the capitalist controlled means of production.

' This is our conclusion.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Cited from 'Experiences and Lessons of the Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps', in *Weekly Critic (Xingqi pinglun)* No. 48, May 1 1920, a special May Day issue. "These experiments perhaps offered more to the young people who took part in them, in the form of an escape from their oppressive families, than to the future of China itself. As an exercise in creating new

that of the whole. That is, individuality too was to undergo ideological reconstruction so as to bring about the spirit of mutual love based on class affinity: in other words, "all for one and one for all". Therefore, when he explained the meaning of reconstruction as the establishment of horizontal organization, he implied also ideological reconstruction. And so Li Dazhao's theory of 11 material change combined with ethical change", however rudimentarily developed, was an early hint of the thought reform movement later to become one of the most remarkable features of the Chinese revolution. With such a conception of individuality, needless to say, ideological reconstruction could not stop at mere closet enlightenment.

As a thinker, Li Dazhao was quite out of the ordinary. Spencer, Tolstoy, Kropotkin, perhaps even Dewey, all found a temporary lodging side by side with Marx within his mind. There was even a time when none of them could be easily singled out. This was what made Li stand out even among May 4 intellectuals. Neither-and this too was remarkable -could Li be labeled a mere haphazard, opportunist syncretist. By way of the May 4 Movement, Li Dazhao became aware that the task confronting the Chinese people ever more clearly with each passing day, that of striving for both national independence and democracy for the labouring poor, was closely connected with the fate of humankind and of the world at large.

At the risk of repetition we can put this another way: after absorbing the impact of the October Revolution in Russia, Li Dazhao then turned out, not a paean to Pure Marxism, but the idea of a "toilers' democracy" (see his article 'Victory of the Poor'). One might even say that this formed the very core of his thinking; any consideration of Li's post May 4 Political development must therefore take this idea into consideration. Li Dazhao, that is, from this new standpoint, became convinced that the age-old problem facing the Chinese people - national independence and prosperity - could be solved only in conjunction with a movement to liberate all of humankind.



Kropotkinist, he began with Marx's dictum that "all history to date is the reflection of class struggles", acknowledged the role played by class struggle in the pre-history of humanity, and proclaimed that the one racking the world at present was the last they would be required to undergo. Unless this last struggle was definitively carried through, however, the world of mutual aid of the proletariat, in which that principle would reach its highest expression, would not be reached. Moreover, Li asserted, even in the pre-historical period the evolution of the social fabric had been brought about by the moral dictates of mutual aid in conjunction with class struggle. The ideal society would therefore be attained by means of one final class struggle in tandem with an upsurge in the spirit of mutual aid - in other words, through a combination of material and spiritual remoulding.

Present-day Chinese scholars have attributed this standpoint to Li's so-called "dualism", on the grounds that his thinking had yet to be fully permeated with Marxism. However, in another article titled 'From Vertical Organization to Horizontal Organization' (*Emancipation and Reconstruction-Jiefang yu gaizao*, vol. 2 no. 2, Jan. 15 1920), we read that "vertical organization" -i.e. all organization based on exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled-is created through force; while "horizontal organization", such as in China's case the various federations formed by students, teachers, merchants, workers, peasants, women and so on as a result of May 4, is created through love. Horizontal organization, the article continues, uses the spirit of mutual aid to resist vertical organization. To overthrow vertical organization is emancipation; to establish horizontal organization is reconstruction.

In saying that the *individuality* of every oppressed person would also be restored through the liberation struggle of horizontal versus vertical organization, as we noted earlier, Li Dazhao was displaying his reluctance to treat the problem of the individual separately from that of the organization, from

Dai Jitao too, then a supporter of Marxism, looked back on the failure of the Mutual Aid Corps and counseled the students to go into the capitalist-controlled factories where, toiling side by side with the workers, they could then try to seize their leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, a number of the more serious anarchists, among them one Huang Ai, began to throw themselves into syndicalist activities. In May 4 days Huang had been a Tianjin Students' Union delegate. Subsequently, at a joint preparatory meeting for the 'May 30 Petition Movement' Huang clashed bitterly with the General Secretary of the Beijing Students' Union Zhang Guotao over the advisability of such a movement.<sup>8</sup> He and his supporters' position - that even though it would not achieve much in itself such a movement would effectively expose Premier Duan Qirui's collusion with the Japanese, prevent direct Sino-Japanese negotiations on the Shandong question, and awaken the entire people to the

---

kinds of social relations, they were a high point in anarchist idealism; their failure consequently had dire results for the future of Chinese radicalism, allowing Marxist notions of conflict to win out over anarchist values of mutual aid and cooperation. For a fuller discussion, see Dirlik 1989a: 91ff." Shi's self-criticism is assessed sympathetically in Dirlik 1989a: 189.

<sup>7</sup> From his 'The Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps and Capitalist Production', in *New Youth*, Vol. 7 No. 5, April 1920. Dai Jitao (1891-1949) was a co-founder of the CCP who later defected to become an important theorist on the right of the GMD.

<sup>8</sup> Zhang Guotao (1897-1979) had been a student founder of the Commoners' Education Lecture Corps discussed in the first part of this essay. Later he was to be a co-founder of the CCP, a labour organizer and a Red Army commissar, and would eventually become Mao Zedong's most dangerous rival for the Party leadership. During the 1934-35 Long March when the Communist armies moved their base from southeast China to the north, Zhang lost out in a fierce power struggle with Mao, and finally led a dissident contingent of the force to Tibet. In 1938 he defected to the GMD side, and after 1949 moved to the United States where he spent the rest of his life. Zhang has published an important though self-seeking volume of memoirs titled *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party: the Autobiography of Chang Kuo-t'ao* (University of Kansas, 1971-72).

situation -eventually triumphed. Huang was arrested twice during the May 4 agitation, and early in 1920 returned to his native Hunan province in central China. There, in November he and another comrade named Pang Renquan organized the syndicalist Hunan Workers' Association (*Hunan laogonghui*) in the provincial capital of Changsha.<sup>9</sup>

The Japanese historian Suzue Gen'ichi writes of another incidence of syndicalist organizing activities:

In Shanghai there was an organization known as the Chinese Wartime Labourers' Corps (*Canzhan Huagongtuan*), a section of which showed syndicalist tendencies. In practice, though, the part it played was minimal, and it amounted to little more than a loose group of Chinese workers of various kinds linked solely by the fact that they had all worked along the French border during the war in Europe. There was very little of the labour union about it, whether of the industrial or the craft variety.

On the other hand, there was also a second group of French returnees, the Diligent Work and Frugal Study Association (*Qingong jianxuesheng tuan*) students. Sent to France after the war ended

---

<sup>9</sup> Huang Ai's presence at the debate is recalled by a communist veteran of the May 4 Movement, Zhang Jinglu, according to whom Huang (then using the name of Huang Zhengpin) was "the most vociferous detractor" of Zhang Guotao's proposals, and "resolutely insisted" that the petition march go ahead "regardless of the consequences". Since Huang was then acting as a student radical rather than as an anarchist, Zhang Jinglu's assessment of him is as positive as his attitude toward the party renegade Zhang Guotao is negative. Regarding Huang's later activities (see below), he reluctantly admits that Huang had "considerable success" in organizing Hunan workers, but explains that he was subsequently "reformed by Chairman Mao" and "took refuge in Marxism". The fact that Huang's successes were achieved through syndicalist methods is completely ignored.

the warlords' attempts to impede the democratic movement. Ultimately, the variety of Social Darwinism that grew up in China, since it contained elements of both determinism and fatalism, in fact became an obstacle to the development of revolutionary theory. Li Dazhao's essay 'New Era' provided a critique of these problems:

Up to now all the natural evolutionists have been telling us about the 'survival of the fittest': that the strong must prey on the weak; that the weak must sacrifice their right to life and happiness to preserve the position of the strong; that the strong must eat their fellows and the weak be eaten by them, etc. But today the fallacies of this argument have become abundantly clear. Biological evolution depends not on struggle but on mutual aid. If humanity desires life and happiness, we must love one another, not use force to exterminate one another.

Furthermore, as Germany's initial run of victories turned to defeats, and as revolution spread from Russia to Germany and then to Austria, Li saw the cast-iron proof of his case in the ongoing disintegration of the 'survival of the fittest' society which had been the original cause of the war.

The starting point for this new interpretation of evolution had been Kropotkin's 'theory of mutual aid'.<sup>35</sup> This is clear from Li's article 'Class Struggle and Mutual Aid' (*Weekly Critic* No. 29, July 6 1919), which also raised a new and quite separate problem. Li, as a Marxist, felt compelled to unify the principles of mutual aid with those of class struggle. In no way a pure

---

<sup>35</sup> Mutual aid and federalism had become key planks in the anarchists' platform by 1907. Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* had been published in 1902, and was soon translated into Chinese for serialization in the magazine *New Century*.

At the root of the world lies the will to live, and the struggle for existence forms the true core of evolution. States grow out of the will to live, while militarism is the extreme manifestation of the struggle for existence. In the past the great powers were constrained by mountains and seas, and contacts between them were rare. Each possessed its own territory and people, and, since their boundaries did not touch, conflicts between them were not violent. However, the modern age brought considerable easing of communication and increasingly frequent contact between the powers. As their economic systems also expanded, the struggle for existence grew accordingly more fierce. The end result was militarism, which sprang up to meet the demands of the time. The only way for nations of this age to protect their boundaries and their peoples is militarism. The only way to avoid- becoming the slaves of others is to take the road of militarism. The world today is a militaristic world. (*New Youth*, vol. 2 no. 3, Nov. 1916)

The theory of natural evolution imported into China since the late Qing period, as well as inspiring Liang Qichao's 'Theory of National Imperialism', had been highly stimulating for the nationalists of that period.<sup>34</sup> Under the conditions of May 4, however, by which time the Chinese people were suffering under the crushing burden of warlord rule, it naturally had the adverse effect of promoting feelings of inferiority and defeatism, and of encouraging a trend toward militarism which supported

<sup>34</sup> Liang Qichao (1873-1929) was a historian, philosopher, journalist and politician active in the anti-Manchu movement and subsequently as leader of a reformist party after 1911. For a discussion of his significance, see Grieder 1981: Ch. 5. The importance of evolution theories for Chinese intellectuals in general is also discussed in the same book, especially on pages 148-52 and 245-8.

through a scheme arranged by Wu Zhihui to help poor students, on arrival they had found their lives to be all work and no study, and had promptly returned to China. Among them were not a few who had been deported for their attempts to form a communist party while in France, but many others had returned as syndicalists, and were becoming involved in practical activities.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> In contrast to this Shanghai group, returnees in Guangzhou (Canton) used their experiences to organize 26 new unions, later considered among the first modern unions in China. Almost 200,000 Chinese workers were sent to France after 1917 to help the Allied war effort, building roads, railways, factories, barracks and arms depots, and sometimes handling the dead (they were not considered sufficiently trustworthy to be put in uniform). For details, see Michael Summerskill, *China on the Western Front* (self-published, 1982). Not all the 'coolies' who came back from Europe got involved with workplace organizing, by the way; most of them had no place to work except for those who found jobs as rickshaw-pullers. Many of them seem to have turned to what was then more or less a staple sideline in China: banditry. In May 1923, for example, the luxury 'Blue Express' from Shanghai to Beijing was derailed and several foreign captives taken for ransom along with scores of Chinese. The negotiations over the former's release lasted several months, and the 'Lincheng Affair' as it became known developed into an international cause celebre (it later inspired the 1932 Greta Garbo film *Shanghai Express*, directed by Josef von Sternberg -screenplay published in 1973 by Simon & Schuster). Most of the media, both in China and elsewhere, treated the affair as no more than yet another of the 'bandit outrages' for which China was then so notorious, but certain sources have pointed to a minority political faction within the gang, some of whose members spoke French, a fact which seems to link it almost unquestionably to the returned wartime labourers. The group (which according to reports may also have had connections to Sun Yatsen's radical movement) held out for a political solution to the incident, demanding the resignations of rapacious warlords and rejecting the time-honoured pattern of merely demanding a cash ransom for the prisoners. How far the attack on that specific train had been planned is not clear. One of the passengers, named Lucy Aldrich, was actually the niece of the American millionaire John D. Rockefeller, but if the bandits were aware of this they certainly did not exploit it, for the women and children among the captives were released almost immediately. Eventually most of the gang were enrolled in the local military, in accordance with their

This latter group evidently owed something to the influence of the New Century Society formed in Paris at the end of the Qing dynasty by Wu Zhihui and Li Shizeng, but little is known about the actual activities of either of these two factions.<sup>11</sup>

---

leaders' demands. A few months later those leaders themselves were quietly bumped off and their followers chased back into the mountains -presumably in retaliation for the 'loss of face' the local army commanders had suffered over the affair. What became of the political faction, meanwhile, has never been investigated. For more details, see my book, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford University Press, 1988: page 73). Suzue Gen'ichi (1894-1945) was a Japanese writer and activist very close to the Chinese labour and revolutionary movements. He wrote several books based on his intimate knowledge of Chinese affairs, including a biography of Sun Yatsen and a history of the proletarian movement. The citation here is from his *History of China's Liberation Struggle* (*Chugoku kaihō tōsō shi*).

<sup>11</sup> The link between the New Century Society and the post-war work-study scheme was the Society for Frugal Study in France (*Liu-Fa jianxuehui*), founded by Wu, Li, and others in 1912 (for information on these figures, see Part One). Its principles were very close to those of the Society for Promoting Virtue and the Conscience Society (see Part One). The Society for Frugal Study in France also helped conclude contracts for the Chinese recruits sent to serve in France, who as a result came to enjoy all the liberties of French citizens, including (perhaps thanks to pressure from the then-syndicalist French CGT-General Confederation of Workers) that of forming trade unions (this would probably also account for the syndicalism of the Shanghai organization). Although the first recruits consisted entirely of illiterate workers, little by little teachers and students came to be included, principally as interpreters, and by 1918 their numbers had reached almost 30,000. (One of them was the anarchist author Ba Jin; for details, see Olga Lang, *Pa Chin and his Writings*: Ch. 6). The consequences for the Chinese mass movement were huge, for this was the first time that intellectuals had had the chance to live side by side with workers and to establish relationships of trust with them. Several industrial and social organizations were formed in France as a result, and between 1916 and 1918 there were at least 25 strikes by Chinese workers protesting against industrial conditions there. Incidentally, the communist organization formed in France was not a party as such but a preparatory cell known as the New People's Study Society. Many of its members, however, were people who would take place in the founding of the CCP in July 1921. The work-study programme reached a peak in 1921 when 1,000 or more students were sent to France, and anarchist activities continued among students and workers in Paris until well into the 1920s. In January 1922 the

to the revolutionary ferment enveloping all China, went into a sudden decline.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, as even a Chinese scholar has confirmed, anarchism left behind it one remarkable contribution to Chinese thought.<sup>33</sup> During the early years of World War I, as Germany's armies went from victory to victory, ideas like the following enjoyed a vogue in China:

---

<sup>32</sup> Idealistic as the anarchists, projections may sound, they have been borne out by developments in China since 1949. Basically their position was that, unless the entire structure of authoritarian conditioning in the Confucian canon was torn down and a new I society built in its place, any revolution in China, particularly one carried through by a bolshevik party, would merely result in a despotism more sophisticated than ever before. In short, a revolution could only be as good as the forces that brought it about; an organization that behaved dictatorially, both internally and in its relations with other social forces, could never bring about a truly revolutionary, egalitarian society. Whatever they lacked in terms of concrete methods for bringing about a revolution in China, and however overoptimistic they may have been about the possibility of achieving cultural change in a short time, this crucial insight by the anarchists has only now begun to be given the recognition it deserves. The anarchists lost influence over the revolutionary process in China because, as well as refusing to espouse patriotism (meaning love of the nation-state, which anarchists distinguish from nationalism, meaning cultural or regional pride), they saw that China was not ready for a proletarian revolution and would suffer even more if one were imposed willy-nilly from above. Insisting on the need for social revolution before political revolution, however long it took, they therefore counselled consolidation of the revolutionary forces instead of expending them on useless putsches. As a result, they were submerged not only by the tide of anti-imperialism sweeping the world in the aftermath of World War I, but also by the revolutionary romanticism of the Leninists. The latter, by their slogans of "high tide of the working-class movement" and so on, succeeded in convincing many Chinese workers that the revolution was "just over the crest of the next wave". How many people would be swallowed up by the wave was evidently immaterial to them.

<sup>33</sup> This point is raised by the Chinese scholar Li Longmu in an article titled 'Comrade Li Dazhao and the Propagation of Marxism during the May 4 Period', carried in the magazine *Historical Research* (*Lishi yanjiu*) No. 5 (1957), page 12. (Nohara's note)

tive cultural traditions, Li displayed a somewhat different attitude. With regard to the criticism of Confucius, for example, Li advocated the overthrow not of Confucius himself but of the power bestowed on him by the idolatry of generations of rulers. ('Natural Ethics and Confucius')

These points presented problems for the anarchists. They too had voiced their opposition to the foreign powers' invasion of China, but in their case, since it stemmed from their abstract position of resistance to all arbitrary power, it never developed into straightforward national sentiment. From their standpoint, naturally, such things as race and tradition did not even merit consideration. The Reality Society's *Notes on Liberty*, for example, declared its rejection of such concepts as 'patriotism' and 'national essence' (Issue no. 2, 'Revolution and Conservatism'). In the Liu Sifu Commemoration Issue of *Progress*, too, we read:

Happily, not only did Liu Sifu not manifest the typical characteristics of Chinese civilization; on the contrary, he fervently hated them, and by overcoming them managed to preserve the spirit and the dignity of anarchism. ('The Reason for Publishing a Liu Sifu Commemoration Issue')

Although many other factors entered into it, this was surely a major reason why anarchism as an ideology, unable to adapt

non-existent. Although the roots of this kind of thinking were embedded in the ancient concept of China as the centre of the world, Li Dazhao, unlike later right-wing, ex-Marxist ideologues, did not include bureaucrats, "evil gentry" and Chinese compradores representing foreign interests among the ranks of Chinese proletarians. Insisting that -China's internal class struggle be intensified, he condemned Chinese capitalists as fiercely as he did foreign ones, and consistently attacked warlords and landlords although they were theoretically part of the "Chinese proletarian nation". Nevertheless, the contradictions showed through. One result was the massacre of Beijing-Hankou railway workers in February 1923 by the warlord Wu Peifu, with whom Li, in charge of organizing labour in north China on behalf of the CCP, had reached an 'agreement'.

Meanwhile, following the foundation under Comintern auspices of a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) core group in Shanghai in May 1920, similar communist groups were established in Beijing, Wuhan, Changsha, Jinan and Hangzhou, as well as in Paris and Tokyo (the names varied from place to place: some were simply called Societies for the Study of Marxism),<sup>12</sup> and members began to apply themselves to

---

Chinese monthly *After Work* (*Gongyu*) was established, and put out 23 issues before October 1925 when it was merged with the Shanghai magazine *Free Person* (*Ziyouren*) following its editors' return to China. *After Work* (edited initially by the two sons of CCP leader Chen Duxiu, who until 1923 were among the most active anti-bolshevik polemicists) attacked the communists in France (represented by Zhou Enlai) on the grounds that the workers and peasants in the Soviet Union had actually lost their freedom since 1917, and that the Chinese communists were misleading the labour movement. These were perhaps the same students whom the Japanese anarchist Osugi Sakae tried to organize during his visit to Paris in 1923. For details on 6sugi's trip, see the small magazine *Libero International* No. 5 (Sept. 1978), available from the present translator. For details on the work-study scheme, see Paul Bailey, 'The Chinese Work-Study Movement in France', *China Quarterly* No. 115 (Sept. 1988), 441-61, and Scalapino and Yu 1961: pages 44-54.

<sup>12</sup> The original Shanghai group, for example, took this name, though it seems to have included more anarchists than communists at the beginning. In those early days of Marxist activity, the meaning of 'Marxism' was extremely broad. As late as 1921 Marxian socialism was being acknowledged by Chinese communist leaders as including orthodox Marxism (represented by Kautsky), revisionist Marxism (Bernstein), syndicalism, guild socialism, and bolshevism (Lenin and Trotsky). There were even some who considered bolshevism to be a faction of anarchism rather than of Marxism because of its militant tactics; others saw socialism as comprising two branches: collectivism (Marxism) and communism (Kropotkinism). It's not so surprising therefore that we find so many anarchists in at the founding of the CCP and working on the local communist groups, magazines and so on. The differences were sorted out within a year or two, under the influence of the returned students and of Comintern emissaries, but for a short period there was a genuine mood of revolutionary solidarity in China. Following the ascension of the communists it was never to return. For a discussion, see Dirlik 1989a: Ch. 8 and 10. Some examples of this collaboration can be traced. The original Beijing nucleus of the CCP, the Society for the Study of Marxist Theory (based on the membership of the Commoners' Education Lecture Corps

the task of organizing labour unions. The following 201 or three examples were typical. In mid-1920 the Shanghai group established in Xiaoshadu a Workers' Spare-Time School, where they began political education classes in Marxist theory; in November and December of that year China's first communist-led labour unions, the Shanghai Machine-workers' Union and the Shanghai Printers' Union were formed; and in January 1921 the Beijing group followed with another Workers' Spare-Time School in Zhangxindian leading to the establishment of the Zhangxindian Labour Union that May.<sup>13</sup> With the membership of these groups as its nucleus, in July 1921 the CCP was finally inaugurated, followed by the Chinese Labour Union Secretariat, whose avowed role was to promote the development of the labour movement by setting up workers' organizations and directing strikes.

During this period, arguments between anarchists and communists continued unabated even within the communist

---

discussed in Part One), was almost exclusively anarchist when formed in September 1920. Before their final decision to walk out in November, these anarchists took responsibility for worker-oriented propaganda. According to Zhang Guotao's autobiography noted above, in those early days the anarchists were strong enough to insist on and secure a non-hierarchical form of organization for the group. The Guangzhou branch too, formed at the same time as the Beijing one, was almost totally anarchist. Its weekly magazine *The Worker (Laodongzhe)*, first published in October, promoted anarchism, with contributions from Huang Lingshuang on the general strike and the role of labour unions in the revolutionary struggle. The *Workers' World (Laodongjie)* of the Shanghai communist group (later renamed *The Communist, Gongchandang*) also carried, among others, an article by Huang Ai on the founding of the Hunan Workers' Association (issue 17).

<sup>13</sup> Zhangxindian had already been the site of an anarchist-organized preparatory class for students intending to go to France on the work-study programme. The communist school was presumably built upon this basis. Many of the students who supported the school's activities were former members of the Work-and-Learning Mutual Aid Corps. Situated along the Beijing-Hankou railway line, the town already had a strong nucleus of militant railway workers who had recently been organized into a union by Zhang Guotao.

revealed his nationalistic yearnings, he recalled his departure for Japan:

Not long ago I left my homeland and sailed east across the sea. The sun set into the wind-lashed waves, all was a Jadecoloured moment. Once past the Yellow Sea the land of Korea came into view. I looked to glimpse some trace of our 1894 debacle [i.e. in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-51, but all was swallowed in mist. I could only listen, the angry waves a doleful roll of drums as the waters flowed eastwards. It was as if the lonely ghosts of those who had died for China had buried their hatred there.

Xu Deheng recalls in his 'Recollections of May 4' how impressed he had been by Li Dazhao, who during 1918-19 had backed the Shanghai-based National Salvation Corps of Chinese Students in Japan, wrote constantly for the *Citizens' Magazine*, and was the only intellectual to consistently support the student movement from the students' own standpoint. At the time of May 4 itself, because Li had grasped the relationship between the Chinese people and the rest of the world in terms of anti-imperialism, he never became a mere chauvinist or cosmopolitan.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, while the May 4 New Culture Movement is generally said to have been destructive of China's na-

---

<sup>31</sup> In order to incorporate his fierce nationalism into his vision of the revolution to come, Li subsequently developed the curious notion of a "proletarian nation". The theory was that economic changes leading to the impoverishment of China resulted from outside forces, while those in the Western nations arose from internal causes. Hence the suffering of the Chinese people under world capitalism was worse than that of the Western proletariats, who were oppressed only by their indigenous capitalists. Thus "the whole country has gradually been transformed into a part of the world proletariat". In other words, China as a nation had become a revolutionary class, embodying revolutionary ideas, and therefore qualified to participate in the world proletarian revolution even though its own proletariat was almost

which, based on Ukita Kazutami's idea of a Sino-Japanese alliance, is intended to bolster the status quo. Our proposal is based on national liberation, and assumes fundamental social change. The peoples of Asia, now in the thrall of foreign annexation, will be liberated and become capable of self-determination. From there they must build one big federation, providing the third corner of the triangle alongside Europe and America. Then all three will cooperate in forming the World Federation, and so advance the well-being of all humankind.<sup>30</sup>

At the time of the '21 Demands' controversy in 1915 (see Part One), Li Dazhao was a student in Japan. Towards the end of that year, on behalf of the Association of Chinese Students in Japan, he wrote 'A Letter of Admonition to the Elders of the Nation' in which he began by describing in detail the foreign powers' invasion of China. After that he explained the disastrous crisis now confronting the country, exposed the real nature of the '21 Demands', and urged his elders, brothers and sisters to lose no time in joining hands to defend the beautiful mountains and rivers and the glorious historical tradition of their motherland. Later on, in a passage which unashamedly

---

<sup>30</sup> Many of Li's ideas on internationalism had already been expressed by the anarchist Liu Shipei (see Part One), another Tolstoyan, several years before. Liu had felt that the world revolution would be triggered off by an uprising of the colonial peoples against their imperialist oppressors. To cope with it, the latter would have no choice but to increase their exactions against the proletariat at home, who would then be forced to rise up in protest, thus completing the world socialist revolution. While Li Dazhao has been hailed for this breakthrough in theory, Liu Shipei's contribution, because of his subsequent apostasy, has been forgotten. Liu also took this internationalist position a stage further by insisting that such a world revolution would come about only if links were created with the socialist parties in the developed nations, who would then coordinate the struggle at home. Ukita Kazutami (1858-1945) was a liberal Japanese intellectual whose book *Imperialism* (*Teikokushugi*) had been translated into Chinese in 1895.

groups. The Beijing group, for example, originally numbered Huang Lingshuang, Ou Shengbai, Yuan Mingxiong and other anarchists among its members. During discussions on the provisional draft for a general party programme which the group had independently drawn up, however, Huang and the others fiercely opposed a clause advocating the dictatorship of the proletariat, and in the end withdrew from the group. As anarchists they were all in favour of revolutionary activities, meaning direct political action that negated the present system; they rejected totally, as strategies for the pre- and post-revolutionary periods respectively, both parliamentary politicking and the seizure of political power leading to a dictatorship of the proletariat under a revolutionary government.

In line with this kind of reasoning, the anarchists, unlike the communists, sought to promote the labour movement independently of everyday political activities. This debate was the keystone of the anarchist-communist struggle in all countries; in China, like elsewhere, it never managed to get beyond the realms of abstract polemic. To go into the details of the argument would be extremely tedious, and I propose to ignore it.<sup>14</sup> Even in Guangdong, where Shifu's influence persisted, the same conflict took place, and eventually the

---

<sup>14</sup> In actual fact, a classic in the way of political exchanges took place in 1920-21 between the Marxist Chen Duxiu and the anarchist Ou Shengbai. Originally carried in the magazines *New Youth* and *People's Voice*, an English summary is given in Scalapino and Yu 1961: pages 55-59. For an astute discussion, see Dirlik 1989a: Ch. 10, especially pages 234-45. For the communists, the attack on anarchism was intended more as a means to purify their own ranks than as an attack on political rivals. At this stage of the revolutionary movement the debate was still conducted in very friendly terms, focussing upon the means to achieve political change rather than the end. Fundamentally it was a clash between social and cultural revolution: the communists' rejection of the cultural revolution-type thinking that had characterized the May 4 period (see Part One) reflected not only changes in the political climate but also their growing loss of faith in the ability of the classes they claimed to represent to change their circumstances without coercion from

anarchists either withdrew from the communist group or were converted to Marxism.

Let us now pick up the string of Huang Ai's story once again. After returning to Hunan in June 1920, as I have said, Huang and Pang Renquan set up the Hunan Workers' Association (HWA) in Changsha in November. Its aims were to raise both the living standards and the educational level of local workers. The original membership consisted of students, mostly from Huang's and Pang's alma mater, Hunan Jiazhong Technical School. Gradually, technicians and workers of the No. 1 Textile Mill and the local mint joined, followed by construction workers, machinists and barbers. By the time of the December 1921 strike at the No. 1 Textile Mill, some 4000-5000 workers were said to be under the HWA's influence. This was perhaps the largest of all the workers' organizations established by the anarchists.<sup>15</sup> The mill, founded in 1912

---

above. In this sense the victory of bolshevism in China has to be seen as the failure of the egalitarianism and idealism that had characterized May 4.

<sup>15</sup> Anarchist and syndicalist labour organizations of the mid-1920s were somewhat stronger than is generally supposed. Even after control over most of the movement had fallen into the hands of the communists, anarchists continued to be active (see, for example, letters to the London anarchist journal *Freedom*, mentioned in Lang 1967: page 300). In 1925, for instance, anarchists predominated in the Shanghai-based Confederation of Labour Associations (*Gongtuan lianhehu*), said to comprise 37 unions with 50,000 members. The Confederation was anti-bolshevik and tended towards syndicalism, for which reasons it has been consigned by Beijing to the dust-heap of history and included among the so-called "yellow unions" in Chinese labour movement histories. It published its own periodical, the *China Labour Herald*. Even the veteran communist labour organizer Deng Zhongxia admitted later that the anarchists, despite their reputed decline, remained a significant influence over the Chinese working class for ten years, and were a force to be reckoned with by the communists until as late as the mid-1920s. In Guangzhou it was 1925 before the communists were able to make any headway in the labour movement at all, so strong were the anarchists there, and Chen Duxiu, first Secretary-General of the CCP, refused to allow the Party centre to move there on the grounds that "anarchists are all over the Place" (quoted in Dirlik 1989a: 214). Incidentally, Pang Renquan is the same individual referred

does not harbour any deep animosity toward the Japanese people themselves. We reject all those, Japanese or otherwise, who use force to stifle people's rights. I believe it inappropriate to view this movement as no more than a patriotic one. Rather, it is but one part of a movement to liberate all of humankind. Friends, if we proceed with such a vision in our hearts, we will be helping to bring about the happiness of future generations! ('Talk at the Anniversary Celebration of the *Citizens' Magazine*, in *Citizens' Magazine* (*Guomin zazhi*) vol. 2 no. 1, Nov. 1919)

This theme, that a movement for the liberation of humanity implied a movement for liberation from world imperialism, is made explicit in the following passage from Li's article titled 'Secret Diplomacy and the World of Robbers' (*Weekly Critic* No. 22, May 18 1919): "The reason why Japan can flaunt her aggressive policies around the world is simply that the world today is a world of robbers!"

However, was Li Dazhao's cosmopolitanism the same as that of anarchists like Wu Zhihui? Far from it, for beneath Li's approach, which otherwise resembles that of the anarchists so closely, lies a theory of *national* liberation. It can also be perceived in his piece titled, 'Pan-Asianism and New Asianism', published in the *Citizens' Magazine* vol. 1 no. 2, Jan. 1 1919:

From the general drift of world affairs, there is little doubt that in the future the United States will construct an American Federation, and Europe a European Federation. We in Asia too must create a similar organization. Together these will provide the basis for a World Federation. Asians must join together in espousing a 'New Asianism' in place of the 'Pan-Asianism' advocated by some Japanese



everywhere. Their weapon will be the general strike.

To put it bluntly, Li's interpretation of bolshevism was essentially no different from the programme envisaged by the anarchist Huang Lingshuang when he wrote in the second issue of *Progress* (*Jinhua*, Feb. 20, 1919) that "the new tide in today's world is the great anarchist revolution". For that matter, certain contemporary opinions even attempted to explain the May 4 Movement entirely in terms of the effect of anarchism and other theories upon the students.

This apparently cosmopolitan trend in Li Dazhao's thinking recurs throughout his writings, and the following passage is a good example of what was to be for him a constant preoccupation:

Our demand right now is for a free, liberated self, and for a world in which people can love and be loved without obstacle. The motherlands, social classes, and racial distinctions which now stand between the self and the world are obstacles to evolution and interference in our daily lives, and must be done away with one by one. ('The Self and the World', in *Weekly Critic* (*Meizhou pinglun*) No. 29, July 6 1919).<sup>29</sup>

Accordingly:

The May 4 Movement is directed against the aggressive policy known as 'Pan-Asianism', and

---

<sup>29</sup> *Weekly Critic* (*Meizhou pinglun*) was begun by Chen Duxiu in December 1918 as an endeavour to inform Chinese people of the events in the Soviet Union (Nohara's note). 37 issues appeared before the Beijing government suppressed it in September 1919. It was one of the first magazines to present a political (rather than cultural) critique of the Chinese situation. Other contributors included Hu Shi and Wang Guangqi.

under joint management of officials and merchants, had been brought to a standstill by successive years of warlord conflicts, though its doors remained open. In the meantime the Hua Shi company, a Hunan capitalist concern, had colluded with the local warlord to acquire the management rights to the mill. Since the company's policy of importing capital and technology from other provinces had aroused the common resentment of Hunan's industrial, commercial and educational circles, the HWA achieved great popularity when, in April 1921, it began an all-out struggle to restore the mill to the Hunanese.

Just about this time Mao Zedong was also setting about organizing Hunan's workers, though his efforts to alter the direction of the HWA did not readily bear fruit. To the Marxists' contention that government was necessary provided it was established by the workers themselves, the HWA retorted scornfully that whatever the government it would be no different from warlord rule. Mao, unabashed, continued patiently trying to convince selected workers. At the same time as supporting Huang's and Pang's fight against the warlords and capitalists, Mao candidly criticized their anarchist activities and finally, after mutual discussions, managed to call a halt to some of their more radical activities. His proposal that the HWA be reorganized to admit the collection of membership fees and other formal procedures was also accepted, and soon it began to look like a regular organization.

The Hunan branch of the CCP was probably founded in the first half of 1921, and by the end of that year Huang and Pang are said to have joined the Socialist Youth Corps (*Shehui zhuyi qingniantuan*) set up at the same time.<sup>16</sup> Shi Yang,

---

to in Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* as Pang Yuan-ch'ing (see also below, appendix).

<sup>16</sup> Rather than a formal branch of the CCP, which was not set up until July 1921, the organization mentioned was probably a Marxism Study Society. The SYC too, largely established in the aftermath of the anarchist-

another one-time believer in anarchism, had already changed his mind. After conducting on-the-spot investigations of working people's conditions and examining the problems of improving their livelihood, he had concluded that anarchy was but the product of a utopian dream, incapable in practice of liberating the working class; the idea of free organizations and federations in which people would work only according to their abilities and take whatever they desired, while a noble ideal, gave no suggestions for its practical realization. The only concrete and reliable programme, he had apparently come to feel, was that offered by communism.<sup>17</sup> The change of heart experienced by Huang and Pang was perhaps similar: even the most minor economic struggles should be taken immediately into the political arena; without such a combined struggle not even the basic goal of improving the workers' living standards can be achieved. For them, that is, as people who had done actual battle with conditions in China, the anarcho-syndicalist rejection of political activity had ceased to have any meaning.<sup>18</sup>

---

bolshevik split, was more or less a communist front. Anarchists have always denied the claim that Huang and Pang joined the SYC, and even some communist writers avoid stating categorically that they did so.

<sup>17</sup> Shi Yang was also known as Zhao Shiyun. Born in 1900, he had been an active student leader during May 4, and after working with the Commoners' Education Lecture Corps in Beijing in 1920 went to France on the work-study scheme. Forming a branch of the SYC in Paris, he led students there in a protest against the Nine-Power Washington Treaty (see below), and in December 1921 helped found a CCP cell with Zhou Enlai. Back in China he was one of the most active organizers of the 1927 strike which took over Shanghai, helping form pickets to take over the city from the warlord government. When Jiang Jieshi turned against the workers, however, Zhao was arrested and executed together with Chen Duxiu's son Yannian.

<sup>18</sup> It is not clear from Nohara's text whether this remark is being attributed to Huang and Pang themselves, to Shi Yang, or to some other source (Nohara himself?). At any rate we have to be careful of reading too much into this so-called "change of heart". For anarchists of the time, the crisis was not so much one of belief as one of organization: in other words, it was frustra-

all. The bolsheviks, uniting the propertyless poor of the whole world, will utilize the latter's powerful resilience to build a free homeland for everyone. The first stage will be a Federation of European Democracies, a base upon which to build the World Federation. This is the meaning of bolshevism.<sup>28</sup>

There is a common thread linking this proposal with the *Beijing University Students' Weekly* statement already mentioned, which foresaw how "workers of the whole world, irrespective of national boundaries, would organize labour boards at strategic points which would take over the duties historically assumed by so-called governments." As a matter of fact, just before the previously-quoted passage in 'The Victory of Bolshevism', there is a paragraph in which Li states that "the revolutionary socialist party of the bolsheviks, with Marxism as their standard, will strive to smash the national boundaries which today stand in the way of the growth of socialism". In similar vein, part of Li's January 1919 piece 'New Era' went:

In the future, a drastic change will affect the system of production. The working class, united across the world, will set up a single rational association of producers, break down national boundaries, and overthrow the capitalist class

---

<sup>28</sup> The closeness of 'bolshevik' proposals such as these to the ideas of anarchism may be seen from the fact that the same ideas had already been put forward in the pioneer anarchist magazine *Labour* (*Laodong*-see Part One) earlier in 1918 - and in fact were taken directly from the writings of the European anarchists Bakunin and Proudhon. Li's conception of the role of the "bolsheviks" was closer to Bakunin's image of a core of professional intellectuals and agitators moving among the people than to a Leninist vanguard mapping out the path from above. Like Bakunin, that is, Li saw the role of the intellectual as little more than that of a catalytic agent whose activities would release the spontaneous energies of the masses; he attributed no significant role to the vanguard party, and had little concern for party organization as such. His role in the founding of the CCP and the subsequent iconization of him by that party have tended to obscure the many profound differences between Li's thinking and that of Leninist-style revolutionaries.

With this manifesto, not only was the popular post-1911 political apathy overcome at last; it also marked the bolsheviks' first successful dissociation of themselves from the anarchists.

Let us now return to the beginnings of this process. As I have said many times already, the thinking of the earliest communists was heavily laced with anarchism. This tendency can be discerned, for instance, in Li Dazhao's October 1918 essay 'The Victory of Bolshevism' -regarded as one of the earliest Chinese Marxist texts. According to the 'bolshevik' proposals presented there, everyone regardless of their sex will be required to take part in labour, and all working men and women must organize a single federation in which membership will be compulsory. Each federation must have a supreme central council, and those councils must organize governments for the whole world. Instead of secret committees, parliaments, presidents, premiers, cabinets, legislatures and rulers, there will be only the councils of the workers' federations, with whom all decisions will rest. All industrial concerns will become the property of those who work in them, beyond which there will be no property rights at

---

fell by four-fifths and an official report admitted that the Party "did not have a simple healthy party nucleus among the industrial workers". Thus in their own way the workers passed their verdict on the party that had led them to disaster. They never did return to its ranks. The essentially nonurban character of the Chinese Communist Party, originating in these circumstances, was preserved right up until its conquest of Power two decades later. (*The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, Stanford, 1961, pages 273-4)" For all that the Maoist line of going to the villages to mobilize the peasants that formed some 90% of the Chinese population was attuned to the real circumstances of the Chinese situation, then, it should not be forgotten that the CCP's reluctant abandonment of the cities was to no small degree a decision forced upon it by its integrity having reached a nadir among the workers there. The anarchist workers, incidentally, remained aloof from the 1927 strike on the grounds that it was putschist and premature and bound to fail, bringing only suffering to those it was supposed to liberate. They were proved only too correct, and many underlined their better judgement with their own blood nevertheless, but their organizations have continued to this day to be condemned in orthodox histories as "scab unions".

Not long after these events, spurred by the Nine-Power Treaty passed at the Washington Conference,<sup>19</sup> the HWA organized an opposition rally followed by an anti-imperialism demonstration in which several dozen organizations and some ten thousand people, workers and others, took part. Mao Zedong, following the inauguration 'of the CCP, thus increased his efforts at cooperation with the HWA. In January 1922 the workers at the No 1 Textile Mill struck in support of their claim for a year-end bonus. Huang and the other anarchists began agitating to ensure the strike's success, but fell into the hands of Zhao Hengti, the local warlord who had been bought off by the Hua Shi company, and met an untimely end at his hands.<sup>20</sup>

Following these executions and the forced closure of the union which ensued, the leadership of the HWA fled to Shanghai, Tianjin, Hankou and other cities where they began the task of reconstruction. From that point on, however,

---

tion born of the inability to get themselves organized rather than loss of faith in the ideas of anarchism themselves that caused many anarchists to move towards the CCP, which they saw as the only available vehicle for carrying out the social revolution they advocated.

<sup>19</sup> The Washington Conference was held from November 1921 to February 1922. The Nine-Power Treaty passed in the latter month agreed in principle to respect China's territorial integrity and political independence, but did nothing in practice to alter the privileged position of foreigners themselves in China. To further incense nationalistic Chinese, Japan retained its railway and other rights in Manchuria and Shandong, and was allowed to strengthen its naval position in the Pacific.

<sup>20</sup> Anarchism had been as influential in Hunan as anywhere else in China at the time, and Changsha anarchist groups included the Youth Study Society, the Health Bookstore, the Hunan Rain and Poetry Society, the Enlightenment Society, and the Young People's Club. Anarchism, via Kropotkin's federalist ideas, also had a strong effect on the Hunan self-government movement which Mao Zedong espoused for a time in 1920 (see Angus McDonald, 'Mao Tse-tung and the Hunan Self-Government Movement', *China Quarterly* No. 68, 751-77). A detailed account of Huang's and Pang's role in the Hunan struggle may be found in the Appendix to the present translation.

their activities were solely concerned with resisting the CCP-controlled labour organizations. In Changsha, following the successful strike by construction workers and others in 1922, many former HWA workers began to join the CCP. Some, however, were bought off by local warlords, and others were later used in an attempt to destroy the great Shanghai strike which followed the May 30 Incident of 1925.<sup>21</sup>

On April 10 1924 the Labour Union Secretariat initiated an all-faction congress of labour unions in Shanghai, but the meeting was marked by constant and violent conflicts between Marxists and syndicalists. The Hunan anarchist delegate, Chen Xiaocen, was probably one of those who had fled the province following the execution of Huang and Pang. As usual, the syndicalists proposed a motion that unions should not engage in political activities, and fought bitterly against unification of the unions in the hands of the Marxists. Finally, they walked out of the congress altogether.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> The 'May 30 Incident' was the shooting by British police of Shanghai workers protesting conditions in Japanese factories that had led to the death of one female worker. The protest movement that ensued developed into a protracted boycott of foreign products and series of strikes which took up where the May 4 Movement of 1919 had left off. Nohara's allegation of strike-breaking by the syndicalists follows the argument set out in the Beijing publication, *Introduction to Periodicals of the May 4 Period* (see Part One), particularly Book 2, pages 153 ff, and is a good illustration of the care required in handling such materials. Reading between the lines of that publication, it becomes clear that what the syndicalist unions did was to encourage the strikers to act on their own initiative rather than follow CCP directives. The slaughter which followed the communist-organized 1927 strike (see below, note 95) showed the correctness of their position.

<sup>22</sup> Chen Xiaocen, a veteran of the Tianjin, Awakening Society (see Part One), had indeed worked on the *Workers' Weekly* in Changsha. He was also a strong supporter of women's rights, working on several magazines which took up that position. After 1922, after belonging briefly to the SYC, Chen was active in the Shanghai Confederation of Labour Associations mentioned above, and in 1926 was asked to return to Changsha by the provisional government there to organize a labour movement to counter the Leninist-controlled one. For this Chen has been castigated ever since as a "scab"

present in its infancy, to develop more speedily, and put it in an antagonistic position regarding the proletariat. When that stage is reached, the proletariat must launch the second stage of the struggle, allying with the poor peasants against the bourgeoisie to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. If the organization and fighting power of the proletariat have been sufficiently strengthened, our efforts in this second-stage struggle, following on from the victory of the democratic revolution, will surely bear fruit.

The CCP is the party of the Chinese proletariat. Its aims are to organize the proletariat and, by means of class struggle, to establish a dictatorship of workers and peasants and abolish private property, so as to arrive at a communist society. The CCP, in the immediate interests of the workers and poor peasants, should lead the workers to support the democratic revolutionary movement and promote a democratic united front of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Thanks to this opportunist pseudo -ideology, during the 'Great Revolution' of Shanghai in March 1927 when working-class organizations had taken over almost the entire city, the communists were so bewildered by theory that they were evidently unable to see that a social revolution was already under way in the city. They thus refused help from anti-Jiang Jieshi forces and ordered workers, once the city was in their hands, to lay down their weapons and surrender to the armies of the "bourgeois- democratic revolution" led by Jiang. The result, after Jiang unleashed death squads composed of reactionary secret societies and military units on the unarmed workers, was a horrific orgy of blood and cruelty which filled the streets with the rotting corpses of thousands who had trusted the judgement passed down from the CCP's Olympian heights. The aftermath as far as the communists were concerned has been described by the American writer Harold Isaacs, an eyewitness: "In the cities the workers left the ranks of the Communist Party by the thousands. In April 1927, it had been an organisation of nearly sixty thousand members, 53.8% of them workers. Within a year that percentage

During the stage of the anarchist-bolshevik debate, as was the case in every other country, the anarchists' criticism of the bolsheviks, centring on their demands for absolute liberty, rejection of political methods, opposition to proletarian dictatorship and centralized authority, and advocacy of an ideal society based on mutual aid, liberty and labour, raised from the latter no more than equally abstract, Marxist formulations. For the people of China, who since the revolution of 1911 had learned to mistrust all politics, they carried but little weight. Only after the sacrifice of Huang Ai and Pang Renquan and the struggle at the 1st Chinese Labour Union Congress, followed by the laying down of a tentative plan for the reconstruction of China at the 2nd Congress of the CCP in July 1922, did the bolsheviks begin to extract themselves from this quagmire:

The proletariat's support of the democratic revolution is not equivalent to its surrender to the bourgeoisie. It is a necessary stage in putting an end to the feudal system and in nurturing the actual power of the proletariat. We the proletariat have our own class interest. Even if successful, the democratic revolution would bring only some minor liberties and rights; it would be no total liberation. Indeed, the success of the democratic revolution will merely allow the bourgeoisie, at

---

first *social* revolution in history (as opposed to mere political turnovers), and because it was the anarchists in China who insisted that a social revolution took priority over the political one, the revolution came almost inevitably to be seen in anarchist terms. The most comprehensive source of information on Li Dazhao is the above-mentioned Maurice Meisner's *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Harvard University, 1967; Atheneum reprint, 1974). Unfortunately, Meisner's concern with Li's role as a pioneer communist leads him to skirt many of the issues that present Li in a different light, such as the analysis of horizontal versus vertical organization (see below). He thereby ignores much of the libertarianism implicit in Li's thinking. For a more recent and more penetrating critique, see Dirlik 1989a.

Thus it was that anarcho-syndicalist strength within the Chinese labour movement all but disappeared.<sup>23</sup> Huang

---

organizer (*gongzei*) in orthodox historical materials, but by 1926 everyone opposed to the CCP's position of centralizing the labour and political movements under its own leadership was being called either "scab" or "Trotskyist". Unfortunately, historians of the Chinese labour movement have all tended to accept uncritically Beijing's descriptions of its enemies, resulting in a distorted version of the country's revolutionary history.

<sup>23</sup> As these notes have already pointed out, syndicalist influence in the labour movement, though certainly weaker after the mid-1920s than earlier, did not decline quite as rapidly as communist materials have suggested. The HWA continued to affiliate to the Shanghai Confederation mentioned above, and their refusal to take part in communist-organized bodies, I was told by veterans of the struggle, was natural given the latter's intolerance of other factions. Allowing themselves to be taken under the communists' wing would have been tantamount to suicide, they pointed out, and the presence of several old anarchists in the upper ranks of the GMD suggested that that party would be more amenable to syndicalist demands than the communists could be. Indeed, for a time in the late 1920s, following the establishment in 1927 of the Shanghai Labour University, it seemed as if that might even be true. See the previous instalment of this translation, pages 305-6. For a detailed study, see Chan & Dirlik 1991. Outside the labour movement, too, anarchist groups continued to exist all over the country, following the establishment in August 1923 of an Anarchist Federation. In that year a list of existing anarchist groups appeared in the Beijing daily *Sea of Learning* (*Xuehui*), whose contributors included Huang Lingshuang, Ou Shengbai and Jing Meijiu. In 1922 the paper had reprinted the polemic between Ou and Chen Duxiu mentioned above, as well as carrying translations of Osugi Sakae, Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Bakunin, Oscar Wilde, Romain Rolland, Emma Goldman and others, all in the short space of nine months between October 1922 and its closure in June 1923. According to the paper's investigation, admitted to be incomplete, the following anarchist groups existed in China: *Sichuan* - Fit Society, People's Voice Society, Half-Moon Society, Equality Society, Light Society, People's Vanguard Society, Common Society, Youth Mutual Aid Corps, Red Society, Action Society, Levelling Society, Benefit Society; *Beijing* - Anarchist Alliance; *Nanjing* - Peace Society; *Shanghai* - Dao Society; *Hubei* - Light Society, Humanitarianism Study Society; *Guangzhou* - People's Voice Society. Other groups not mentioned included the Red Heart Society, Black Labour Society, Free Women Society, Chinese Village Movement Society, Beijing Daobao Press, Cock-Crow Society, Dawn Society, and the Village Movement Alliance. One of the longest-lived and most influential of all the anarchist

Lingshuang, one of its principal proponents in the post-May 4 era, left soon after to study in the USA and, after receiving a Ph.D., became professor of sociology at Zhongyang University. Subsequently, it is said, he became a lesser light in the right-wing 'CC Clique' of the Nationalist Party.<sup>24</sup> With other anarchists simply melting away and what have you, it was a dismal outcome to the movement. The ideological role played by anarchism, however, is a topic altogether separate

---

groups was that which formed around the *People's Bell* (*Minzhong*; also referred to in English as the *People's Tocsin*). Co-founded by Ou Shengbai and Huang Lingshuang in July 1922, the group continued to publish its magazine until July 1927, first in Guangzhou and later in Shanghai. Its aims were to establish an "anarchist-communist society", and to fight against the four "principal enemies of the Common people", namely: state and government (citing Bakunin); private property and private ownership (citing Proudhon and Kropotkin against Marx); religion (citing Marx and Nietzsche); and the family (citing Edward Carpenter and Emma Goldman). *People's Bell* also published translations of many Western and Japanese anarchists. Contributors included, apart from Ou and Huang, Liang Bingxian, Li Shizeng, Wu Zhihui, Jing Meijiu, and Ba Jin. Many of the founder-members had previously worked with Shi Fu (see Part One), and volume 2, number 3 of the magazine was a special Shi Fu commemoration issue. Another important journal of the time was the *Mutual Aid Monthly* (*Huzhu yuekan*), founded in Beijing in March 1923. It rejected all forms of power and authority, severely criticized Sun Yatsen and Chen Duxiu, and opposed the imminent union of the CCP and the GMD (a Moscow-inspired tactic to give the former a chance to seize power by tying it to the bourgeois -revolutionary forces represented by the latter; the two parties were united in 1924, but the alliance was reneged by Jiang Jieshi's coup against the Shanghai workers in 1927). In 1923 *Mutual Aid Monthly* conducted its own investigation of the state of the anarchist movement in China, and listed 21 different organizations. It also estimated that up to 1923 more than seventy anarchist books and periodicals had been published, not counting translations. For an overview of the situation up to the late 1920s, see Dirlik 1991: pages 10-26.

<sup>24</sup> Huang Lingshuang remained one of the most active anarchists in China until the mid-1920s, when he went temporarily to the United States to study sociology at Columbia University. He subsequently returned to China to teach at the Shanghai Labour University, and finally threw in his lot with the GMD right wing as an evil preferable to working with the communists.

from the fate of individual anarchists, and deserves further examination.

## A man named Li Dazhao

The anarchist-bolshevik controversy in China reached a crescendo between the establishment of the first communist groups in May 1920 and the inauguration of the CCP in July 1921. The principal arguments unfolded in the pages of the magazines *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*) and *The Communist* (*Gongchandang*), the latter a monthly put out by the Shanghai communist group.<sup>25</sup> The self-styled bolsheviks, however, at the beginning at least, cannot be said to have consciously differentiated themselves from the anarchists; on the contrary, some of them even interpreted bolshevism in terms of anarchist premises. A good example, as we shall presently see, was Li Dazhao, a typical Chinese intellectual who worked ceaselessly and dedicatedly for the cause of the Chinese revolution from the end of the Qing dynasty, through the 1911 revolution and the May 4 Movement, right down to the amalgamation of the Nationalist Party and the CCP in 1924.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> *The Communist*, successor to the *Workers' World* mentioned earlier, published several articles on anarchism, often enthusiastic ones. They included 'Kropotkin's Manifesto to the Workers of the World', which appeared in issue no. 3, April 1921.

<sup>26</sup> Although Li Dazhao never considered himself an anarchist as such, his ideas were fundamentally libertarian, and as we shall see he was later to be profoundly moved by the ideas of Kropotkin. As early as 1917-18, his instinctive reaction to the October Revolution in Russia was basically an anarchist one. Reflecting his early interest in Tolstoy, he welcomed the revolution as a victory for the "common people" that would bring them the "bread" they needed. Biographers such as Meisner, mistakenly equating anarchism with terrorism, have simplistically concluded that Li was opposed to anarchism because of his rejection of assassination, with the result that anarchistic influences on his intellectual development have been underrated, and 'populist' ones emphasized, when in fact they came from very similar Russian intellectual roots. The main thing was that the Russian Revolution was seen as the