

INSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS

Like most enduring political institutions, China's worker militias grew from multiple and intertwined roots. Although the Chinese Communists would link their militias to the tradition of the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution, the institution had more homely origins as well. Militias of one sort or another had been a staple feature of the Chinese countryside for centuries.¹ With the arrival of foreigners in the mid-nineteenth century, important changes in militia organization and operations occurred. In some cases, pre-existing rural militias redirected their defensive activities against the imperialist intruders.² In other cases, new urban militias sprang up—under foreign as well as Chinese auspices—to enforce order in the unruly treaty ports.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, local militias—often with secret-society connections—launched countless acts of tax resistance against predatory demands by government officials and warlord authorities.³ These were not revolutionary actions aimed at changing the basic structure of the state, however. Neither the organization nor the objectives of the rebellious militias would prove fully compatible with more ambitious political aspirations.⁴ When the CCP attempted to convert parochial militarized initiatives into a sustained and centralized movement, it came to the sobering realization that building a revolution would require patrolling the patrols.

URBAN PRECIPITATION

Shanghai, birthplace of the CCP, was born to a colonial and influential militia tradition. The Shanghai Volunteer Corps had been established by the Anglo-American authorities only ten years after the founding of the International Settlement in 1843. Its first military engagement, known as the Battle of Muddy Flat, was a border skirmish that pitted the 380 American and British volunteers against a much larger local detachment of the imperial Chinese army. Thanks to the intervention of sectarian rebels, the imperial troops were forced to retreat—an outcome that greatly enhanced the prestige of the foreign militia.⁵ The Shanghai Volunteer Corps remained a pillar of control in the International Settlement until the corps' disbandment in 1942. That the corps, along with the police, was regarded as a defining feature of foreign authority in Shanghai is evident from a local Chinese newspaper commentary in 1883:

When strangers first come to Shanghai, wander about the Settlement, and see how clean and broad the streets are, and how thorough the patrol maintained by the police, how regular the marching of the militia when drilling . . . they cannot help asking in delight: "Who has the power to do this?" We tell them: "The Westerners have established a Municipal Council, which has directors and holds an annual meeting every year for discussions. All permanent regulations are debated and resolved upon before being put into effect. The Council sees to the patrolling of the streets by the police, the drilling of the militia, and the cleaning and paving of the roadways . . . If the Chinese area is compared to the Settlement, the difference is no less than that between the sky above and the sea below."⁶

Militias were thus identified with modern municipal governance.

Soon the differences between the Chinese and foreign districts of Shanghai became less stark—at least in the matter of a government-sponsored militia. In 1905 the Shanghai City Council—which historian Mark Elvin describes as the "first formally democratic political institution in China"—was established in the Chinese part of Shanghai. This new city council, composed predominantly of merchants,

organized a Chinese division of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps. The Chinese contingent was actually a coalition of five groups of merchant militias, all of which had been formed in Shanghai in 1905–1906 as exercise societies (*tiaohui*) to suppress disorder after the closure of the city's opium dens. Each of the five units was under the command of one or more members of the city council. The militias preserved order during the opium den crisis as well as during rent resistance in the winter of 1910 and rice riots the following year. Elvin notes that, formally at least, these merchant militias were democratic, with the election of leaders and officers and the holding of mass meetings to decide upon policies.⁷

In 1910, additional merchant militias (*shangtuan*) were formed by Chinese businessmen in Shanghai: some by trade (cloth, grain, herbal medicine, etc.) or by enterprise (e.g., the Commercial Press); others along religious lines (e.g., Islam); and yet others according to city district (West Shanghai, Zhabei, and so forth). Guns and ammunition were initially supplied by the offices of the provincial governor-general and circuit intendant. In the Revolution of 1911, the Shanghai City Council and its armed militias (whose combined forces by this time numbered more than five thousand) threw their united support behind the insurrection. A Dare-to-Die Corps (*gansidui*) of handpicked militiamen led the way in storming the Jiangnan Arsenal, an incident that proved to be the turning point in Shanghai's rendition of the 1911 Revolution. Soon this vanguard was joined by the remainder of the merchant militias, which played a key role in removing and replacing imperial rule in the Chinese-controlled districts of the city. When revolutionary leader Chen Qimei resigned in July of 1912, city council officials gained control of the new military administration as well.⁸ Militia Director Li Pingshu, for example, became minister of civil affairs.⁹

From Merchants to Workers

The events of 1911 demonstrated the political power of merchant militias. When the Communists founded their party in Shanghai just a decade later, their primary targets of mobilization were of course workers rather than merchants. But the CCP was not the first

political party to champion the politicization and militarization of the Shanghai working class. Communist efforts to organize the proletariat followed upon a decade of similar attempts by concerned urban elites.

Within days of the founding of the Republic of China in January 1912, the Republic of China Labor Party (*Zhonghua minguo gongdang*) was inaugurated by progressive educators and industrialists in Shanghai. The leaders of the Labor Party, which soon spread to sixteen provinces and boasted a membership of 400,000, were drawn largely from the ranks of capitalists, factory foremen, and intellectuals.¹⁰ They viewed themselves as a forward-looking group, acting paternalistically on behalf of a proletariat that was unable to represent its own interests: "These days our country cannot do without a Labor Party . . . [but] workers are not capable of organization . . . If our Labor Party included only workers, social chaos would ensue."¹¹

The five stated goals of the Labor Party were (1) industrial development, (2) workers' enlightenment, (3) improved workers' livelihood, (4) workers' *military preparedness*, and (5) political participation of the industrial circles.¹² Its avowed interest in military instruction notwithstanding, it is unclear whether the Labor Party ever took steps to further this particular item on its agenda. Nevertheless, although it survived a mere twenty months, the Labor Party did succeed in establishing pharmacies, clinics, schools, and credit associations for workers, and it also contributed to a heightened public awareness of the plight of industrial labor. Moreover, its paternalistic mentality set a precedent for subsequent programs designed by nonworkers to improve the political position of the Chinese proletariat.

Despite the doubts of their would-be patrons, workers themselves were actually proving to be quite capable of militant organizing. Years before the inauguration of the CCP, striking workers in Shanghai and other industrial centers had established informally designated pickets (*jiucha*) to prevent strikebreakers from entering factory premises.¹³ During the May Fourth Movement of 1919, protesting students also formed pickets—often recruited from the ranks of Boy Scout troops—to keep tabs on their fellow classmates. One activist recalled of the May Fourth period that "thanks to the efforts of these monitors, discipline actually became *stricter* during the strike than it had been in ordinary times."¹⁴

When some May Fourth participants turned their energies to the establishment of a Communist Party, it was only natural that they would draw upon their own recent protest experiences in devising new revolutionary institutions. But whereas the earlier patrols had represented an impromptu effort on the part of striking workers and student demonstrators, their subsequent evolution was anything but spontaneous. From the start, the Chinese Communists appreciated both the ideological and the practical contribution that worker militias could make to the revolutionary enterprise. They were thus quick to develop plans for incorporating the picket precedent into their own emerging agenda of armed struggle. Partisan supervision by no means translated into a clear or consistent organizational program, however. The early history of CCP-sponsored worker militias is one of fits and starts, as inexperienced young revolutionaries sought to give direction and definition to their nascent movement. Disagreement over the meaning of proletarian revolution pitted the Chinese Communists against the Communist International (Comintern) and the KMT as well as against merchants and even workers. It also ignited fierce debates within the party itself.

Communist-Sponsored Militias

Once the CCP was founded in July of 1921, it lost little time in presenting itself as the official spokesman for China's working class. In addition to promoting labor unions, the early CCP devoted considerable attention to organizing the workers for revolutionary struggle. The Chinese Communists' interest in an armed proletarian force reflected the role that worker militias had played in the Russian Revolution only a few years earlier. In Russia as well, groups of armed workers had formed—first spontaneously and then by partisan design. Rex Wade writes of the Russian worker militias in the February Revolution of 1917: "The armed bands were a complex combination of spontaneity, voluntaristic action, and initiative from below interacting with ideas derived from outside political ideologies and attempts at control or influence by political parties."¹⁵ Initially Russian workers were a good deal more eager about taking up arms than were the party leaders. In fact, leaders of revolutionary parties often

explicitly cautioned against arming the proletariat for fear of uncontrollable violence. But after the inauguration of the Petrograd Soviet, partisans began to encourage the organization of factory militias in working-class districts across the city.¹⁶

Lenin, living in exile in Switzerland at the time, wrote to his comrades in Petrograd a "Third Letter from Afar" in which he described the creation of a proletarian militia as "the task of the day."¹⁷ Despite his evident enthusiasm for developments in St. Petersburg ("Comrade workers! You performed miracles of proletarian heroism"), Lenin's prescription for militia construction was far from clear or consistent. On the one hand, he described his objective as the creation of a "proletarian militia" in which the industrial and urban workers—as "the advanced class"—would play the leading role. On the other hand, he also referred to this new entity as a *people's* militia, i.e., one that, first, consists of the *entire* population, of all adult citizens of *both* sexes; and second, one that combines the functions of a people's army with police functions, with the functions of the chief and fundamental organ of public order and public administration." Echoing Marx's analysis of the National Guard in the Paris Commune, Lenin wavered between *class* and *community* in characterizing the social base of the revolutionary militia. Considerable ambiguity surrounded both the composition and the mission of this critical institution.

Lenin envisioned the militia not only as the essential expression of proletarian power, but also as the primary vehicle for drawing other citizens—young people and women in particular—into political life. The tension between universal and class-restricted citizenship was thus apparent in the earliest Bolshevik formulation of this revolutionary institution. Moreover, the militias were assigned an ambitious array of disparate functions. In addition to smashing the old state, militias were to undertake a lengthy list of duties in the new order. Lenin expected militias to assume the "military, political and economic functions of the state," which would range from arming and providing military training for the entire people to acting as "welfare police" and liberating women from "their stupefying house and kitchen environment." All this would be possible, Lenin assured his readers, because "such a militia would ensure absolute order and devotedly observe comradely discipline."¹⁸

The resultant bands of armed workers, which came to be known as Red Guards, were in fact never completely obedient to Bolshevik orders.¹⁹ Nevertheless, they played a critical role (along with the local garrisons of the Red Army) in the victory of the October Revolution some months later. Wade notes that "though not under firm Bolshevik control, the Red Guards did provide that dependable element of active support for a seizure of power in the name of the Soviet. That was their great significance in the October Revolution."²⁰

The October Revolution presented a compelling model for the young CCP, struggling to mount an armed insurrection in the adverse environment of warlord China. Comintern advisers, moreover, stressed the applicability of Lenin's ideas to the Chinese scene.²¹ Success in this attempt at cross-national transplantation was far from a foregone conclusion, however. Among other difficulties, the worker spontaneity and indiscipline that had bedeviled the Bolsheviks would prove at least as challenging in the Chinese context. The question of how to define the revolutionary citizenry—whether on the basis of class-specific or territorial criteria—would also turn out to be as vexing for the Chinese Communists as it had been a decade earlier for Lenin.

Strikes and Worker Pickets

In the year after the establishment of the CCP, an enormous nationwide strike wave erupted across China, involving some 300,000 workers at more than one hundred industrial sites. As these strikes developed, militias known colloquially as worker pickets (*gongren jiu-chadui*) formed spontaneously in many cities and factories to prevent potential strikebreakers from returning to work. Initially unarmed, the units ranged in size from several dozen to several hundred members. The Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of January 1922 evidently marked the first instance of a formally organized Worker Pickets Department, with a clear internal division of labor. Most of the seamen pickets performed the conventional task of preventing substitute workers (scabs) from replacing striking workers, but others stood guard at the local docks to block shipments of grain and vegetables from entering Hong Kong.²² As the ranks of the pickets expanded, a number of them were even dispatched to Guangdong to enforce the

blockade of Hong Kong by patrolling wharfs to the north.²³ Although this strike proceeded without direct instigation from the newly established CCP, the strike leaders (as well as some of the rank and file seamen) had been influenced by news of the Russian Revolution just five years earlier.²⁴

In September 1922, one of the first strikes to be directed by Communist Party operatives broke out at the Anyuan Coal Mine.²⁵ Mao Zedong, then party secretary of the Hunan District (which included Anyuan in Jiangxi), and Liu Shaoqi, who headed the Hunan Labor Secretariat, assumed overall command of the strike organization.²⁶ Before the walkout began, the charismatic Communist operative Li Lisan paid his respects to the local Triad secret-society boss to secure his cooperation in maintaining order in the surrounding Anyuan area. Persuaded by Li's argument that the strike would benefit his many followers among the miners, the Triad chieftain agreed to close down the opium dens, brothels, and gambling halls for the duration of the work stoppage.²⁷ Soon after the walkout began, several hundred worker pickets—presumably mostly Triad members—were mobilized under the supervision of Li Lisan and Liu Shaoqi. The pickets closely monitored comings and goings in the mining district, turning it into a tightly controlled zone that came to be known locally as "Little Moscow." A primary responsibility of the pickets was to conduct nightly patrols of the workers' dormitories, ensuring that the idled workers did not engage in gambling or other activities deemed corrosive of strike discipline. The patrolmen were credited with foiling several assassination attempts against Li Lisan, who at the time had a price on his head of six hundred silver dollars. Pickets also stood guard at a makeshift jail that at one point held 150 scabs and other opponents of the strike. These activities—maintaining public order, serving as bodyguards for top revolutionary cadres, and operating prisons—all anticipated key militia responsibilities in the years ahead. Armed with only wooden clubs, the pickets were nevertheless instrumental in bringing a victorious outcome to the strike. Afterwards, the Anyuan party branch expanded the pickets from strike teams (*dai*) to a standing regiment (*tuang*). A regimental banner was produced, and picket members who continued to work as regular miners were issued identifying armbands.²⁸

The Anyuan case represented a rare success story at a time when strikers faced overwhelming odds in their efforts to secure improved working conditions. In October of 1922, for example, a Communist-inspired walkout by fifty thousand Kailuan miners elicited a brutal response from the mine's British managers. Foreign and warlord troops opened fire, killing and injuring hundreds of workers. The workers responded by establishing a Picket Department (*jiuchabu*) that supervised twelve units, each with eleven members. Nicknamed the Hundred-Person Picket Regiment, the group was disbanded shortly after a strike settlement that resulted in few gains for the miners.²⁹

The largest Communist-directed strike of the period was the February Seventh Jinghan Railway Strike of 1923, in which more than seven hundred worker pickets enlisted under the auspices of the railway union. When warlord Wu Peifu, for whom the Jinghan Railway was an economic lifeline, dispatched troops to kidnap the two chief engineers in an effort to get the trains running again, worker pickets rescued the engineers and prolonged the stoppage. The victory was short-lived, however. Soon Wu unleashed a bloody suppression in which dozens of strikers (including the picket director) were killed and hundreds more wounded. As a result, labor leaders around the country went into hiding, and CCP-sponsored picket operations were abruptly discontinued.³⁰

THE UNITED FRONT

The Jinghan Railway debacle was a watershed event in the life of the young Mao Zedong, leading him—after a brief hiatus in Shanghai—to abandon labor organizing in favor of peasant mobilization.³¹ It was also a turning point for the CCP as a whole. As CCP leader Cai Hesen remarked at the time, "The February Seventh defeat is a lesson that independent working class struggles cannot attain victory . . . The working class must unite with all other classes so that the masses can carry out a free liberation movement (*ziyou de jiefang yundong*)."³² It was in this context of an ecumenicalism born of defeat and disappointment that the Chinese Communists—upon the advice of the

Comintern—agreed in January 1924 to enter into a United Front with their rival revolutionary party, the Guomindang (the Nationalists, or KMT). Under the terms of this arrangement, members of the CCP were admitted as individual members of the KMT, and both parties pledged mutual support for mass mobilization.

Although the United Front stressed cross-class cooperation in the name of Chinese nationalism, it had the ironic effect of facilitating a more militant labor movement than the CCP had been able to muster on its own. Within months of the agreement, a partisan-sponsored armed worker militia was established in Canton. At this time the Canton Merchant Corps, which had been founded by local businessmen shortly after the Revolution of 1911 and subsequently expanded, was poised to amalgamate its scattered units into a centralized command.³³ The composition of the Merchant Corps, however, had devolved from an initial contingent of entrepreneurs and their senior employees into an armed band of hired toughs. These developments aroused concern on the part of the newly formed Nationalist government, based in Canton, which suspected that the Merchant Corps was colluding with antigovernment warlords and foreign imperialists. Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party, recently reorganized along Bolshevik lines, approved the formation of a Labor Association Army (*gongtuan jun*) of workers to counter the merchant militias then active in the region.³⁴ In August 1924, approximately six hundred recruits were assembled under the aegis of the KMT-led government as its new Labor Association Army to assist "in suppressing counterrevolutionary activities."³⁵ Issued bright blue uniforms along with rifles confiscated from the Merchant Corps, the worker militiamen were trained by Soviet military instructors in Sun Yat-sen's employ.³⁶

Operating under the protective umbrella of the United Front, the KMT-sponsored militiamen were actually recruited by the Guangdong Regional Committee of the CCP and were led by a Communist labor organizer, Tan Pingshan. Soon Tan would become director of the Communists' first espionage and counterespionage agency.³⁷ From the start, then, armed worker militias and intelligence operations were closely connected. Although the Labor Association Army engaged in a brief battle with the Canton Merchant Corps,

historian Michael Tsing notes that the KMT's militia was poorly armed and trained, and "disappeared just as abruptly as it arrived."³⁸ Nevertheless, the United Front continued to provide a hospitable environment for Communist efforts to establish worker militias.

The May Thirtieth Movement

The strikes that triggered Shanghai's momentous May Thirtieth Movement of 1925 revived picket organization in a major way. When walkouts protesting inhumane working conditions swept through Japanese-owned cotton mills in the western districts of the city that February, teams of pickets formed to provide protection to the strikers as well as the general public. These units were rooted in preexisting solidarities among the workers, and the teams were organized along lines of gender, native place, and secret-society affiliation. As such, the pickets played a significant role in enforcing strike discipline.³⁹

In each of the six companies affected by the stoppage a strike committee was formed to organize pickets to maintain order and prevent strike-breaking. These were formed on a traditional decimal basis, with a team (*xiaodui*) of ten pickets electing a representative to a team of ten at the next highest level, and so on up to a supreme coordinating team of ten. At NWK [Naigai Wata Kaisha] sixty-seven teams of pickets were formed, including fourteen consisting of women. Some were stationed at landing stages on the north bank of Suzhou creek, where NWK employees crossed each day to go to work. Pickets confiscated the work books of those suspected of trying to break the strike. At the Doko mill, which employed 500 men, 3,000 women and 100 girls, mostly from Subei, there were sixty teams of pickets. And the Nikko and Toyota strike committees jointly formed sixty-four teams of pickets to maintain order in the Jessfield area. The picket at Toyota was said to consist exclusively of secret-society members.⁴⁰

After the stoppage had continued for more than a week without result, some employees prepared to return to work in defiance of union orders. As a result, male pickets were dispatched to all the nearby intersections to block strikebreakers from approaching the factories. Additionally, strikers formed an auxiliary force which they dubbed the

Righteous and Brave Corps (*yiyongdui*) to protect the union and augment the pickets. In the event that factory managers again tried to lure striking workers back to work, the "Braves" stood ready to storm the factories and forestall any attempted work resumption. On grounds that the organization of the Righteous and Brave Corps had been illegal, the police arrested its director, along with factory representatives and picket team captains, threatening them all with a repetition of warlord Wu Peifu's massacre of the Jinghan Railway workers two years earlier.⁴¹

The strikes at Japanese-owned cotton mills in Shanghai were unsuccessful in attaining demands for improved working conditions, but their brutal suppression—which resulted in the death of a Chinese mill worker named Gu Zhenghong at the hands of a Japanese security guard—led to a public outcry against Japanese imperialism. On May 30, 1925, students joined workers to march through the streets of Shanghai to protest foreign abuses. When police in the International Settlement fired on the marchers, killing ten and wounding fifty more, the May Thirtieth Movement was born. A general strike of unprecedented proportions was quickly mobilized in Shanghai. In other cities as well, large nationalistic protests involving workers, students, merchants, and ordinary citizens occurred.⁴²

The May Thirtieth Movement saw a concerted effort by the newly founded CCP, which was then headquartered in Shanghai, to incorporate and expand the picket organizations to serve more ambitious political goals. Picket development became a top priority of the CCP's Shanghai General Labor Union, inaugurated on May 31 under the chairmanship of Li Lisan and situated at the Huzhou Guild Hall in Zhabei district. The memorial service for slain worker Gu Zhenghong included in its entourage twelve pickets who guarded Gu's coffin as it wended its way through the streets of Shanghai.⁴³ Sustained by a generous strike fund from the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, Communist-sponsored pickets fanned out across the city to distribute leaflets directed to the citizenry (addressed as *guomin* or "people of the nation"), explaining the goals of the anti-imperialist protest. Worker pickets were now regularly assuming duties that went beyond the familiar responsibility of maintaining order during labor disputes. They were also being deployed as political propagandists and citizen activists.

The Canton-Hong Kong Strike

Shanghai's May Thirtieth protests were quickly replicated elsewhere around the country, most notably in Hong Kong, where a general strike to express sympathy for the victims of the Shanghai tragedy broke out in June 1925 among 100,000 workers. With Communist labor organizers serving as both director and deputy director of the strike committee, a picket force of two thousand workers was assembled in Hong Kong and neighboring Guangdong province to help sustain a work stoppage that would persist for an extraordinary sixteen months.⁴⁴ In the tradition of the Paris Commune and Russian Revolution, CCP leaders issued weapons to the Canton-Hong Kong pickets.⁴⁵

The Canton-Hong Kong strike began in solidarity with Shanghai's May Thirtieth protests, but it soon generated its own cause célèbre when foreign marines on the island of Shamian—in a move shockingly reminiscent of the recent confrontation in Shanghai—opened fire on anti-imperialist protesters. The toll proved even more deadly than the May Thirtieth's Nanjing Road massacre; at least 52 Chinese were killed and 117 were injured in the Shamian incident. The result was a huge public outcry, accompanied by a boycott of Hong Kong intended to liberate the city of Canton economically from the nearby British colony.⁴⁶ Building on the precedent of the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike three years earlier, contingents of worker pickets were organized as the main means of enforcing the blockade.⁴⁷

The Canton-Hong Kong Strike of 1925–1926 spawned a more elaborate administrative structure for CCP-sponsored militias than had been the case in previous work stoppages. A seven-person picket committee presided over five brigades (*dadui*), each of which supervised three branch teams (*zhidui*), under which were three teams (*xiaodui*), each with three squads (*ban*) of twelve men apiece. The ranks of the pickets quickly expanded well beyond the original two thousand recruits to encompass a much larger force equipped with guns and boats. For the first time, Chinese Communists were actively directing a large armed worker militia whose assigned mission was to "maintain order, detain running dogs, reserve grain, and confiscate enemy goods."⁴⁸ A foreign observer wrote at the time,

The boycott against British goods in Canton is controlled by a strike committee which operates through pickets, whose work is to prevent breaches . . . Wherever in Kwangtung [Guangdong] there is a highway for the transfer of goods, the pickets are present, ready to examine cargo, to open packages, to search individuals . . . Foreigners as well as Chinese are subject to search . . . The boycott is complete . . . [and it] must be regarded as a war on Hong Kong and Great Britain and the pickets as the soldiers in that war. There is no other possible interpretation of the completeness and ruthlessness with which it is carried out.⁴⁹

In addition to stationing pickets at all the major ports and roads in the area to enforce a total blockade, the strike committee dispatched pickets to the countryside to publicize the purpose of the strike and to assist in promoting peasant uprisings.⁵⁰ A few trusted pickets were also selected to serve as bodyguards for top Communist leaders, to protect them against assassination attempts by right-wing elements.⁵¹ A labor representative from Shanghai, visiting Canton, commented excitedly on the proletarian patrols: "Outside one sees pickets from the Hong Kong strike committee, alongside National Revolutionary Army soldiers and members of the peasant associations, patrolling the streets. Surely this is a bit of paradise!"⁵²

Deng Zhongxia, the Communist labor organizer who advised the strike committee, insisted that the meaning of the Canton-Hong Kong protest transcended that of any ordinary strike.⁵³ Deng stressed that the pickets were not engaged in an economic struggle for higher wages or shorter working hours, but in a "political struggle for the survival of the race and the dignity of the nation."⁵⁴ The mission of the pickets, in other words, was not primarily to advance the material interests of workers as a class, but to combat foreign imperialism in defense of Chinese sovereignty. The militia was lauded as the quintessential expression of revolutionary citizenship. As a cadre responsible for picket organization put it, "Many comrades say that the Canton-Hong Kong strike is the vanguard of a national revolutionary movement. In that case, our picket comrades are the vanguard of the vanguard!"⁵⁵

Highly valuing their new worker militia, the Communists assigned a group of graduates of the Whampoa Military Academy to instill military and political discipline in the picket forces.⁵⁶ Numerous

rules and regulations for the organization, training, and behavior of recruits were subsequently announced.⁵⁷ Uniforms and bugles were issued to enhance the martial demeanor of the militiamen. A Soviet adviser stationed in Canton in 1926 observed, "A trumpet sounded hoarsely and a picket of the strike committee appeared. The pickets were dressed in semi-military uniforms with armbands and were armed with rifles. On their service caps were twelve-rayed Kuomintang [KMT] stars, but everyone knew that the strike committee was under Communist influence."⁵⁸ The strike committee also established courts and jails to sentence and punish those arrested by the pickets.⁵⁹

In spite of all this attention to procedure and discipline, the outcome was not quite what the CCP had in mind. Like their Russian Red Guard prototypes, the Canton pickets proved stubbornly resistant to supervision, even by the very partisans who had called them into being. Michael Tsin explains:

In the words of Governor Cecil Clementi of Hong Kong, the strike organization, with its roving teams of pickets, had become an "imperium in imperio" in Canton shortly after the boycott commenced in early July . . . The problem, insofar as the government was concerned, was that the pickets were not always willing to subject themselves to direction and discipline. Nor were they, in fact, even effectively controlled by the Strike Committee, which was dominated by labor organizers and workers who were members of the Communist Party . . . [A]n internal report of the Communists confirms the complaints voiced in many different quarters about the pickets' activities. The Communists conceded that "illegal activities such as extortion, corruption, misuse and abuse of power were inevitable" on the part of the pickets. Worse still, the head of the pickets, Huang Jinyuan, was said to have connived at the misconduct of his followers. The result was "such lax discipline that there was no way to stop crimes being committed by the pickets even as one witnessed them."⁶⁰

Virtually all of Canton fell under the control of the thousands of armed militiamen who patrolled the city. With the individual twelve-man squads enjoying substantial autonomy over their own operations, the pickets degenerated into bands of rowdies who terrorized the local populace. Such lawlessness was perhaps only to be

expected, in light of the fact that the director of the pickets—Huang Jinyuan—was himself a member of the Triad Secret Society.⁶¹

In response to the Communists' strategy of militia formation, right-wing KMT unionists began to arm their own picket forces—to whom they issued uniforms identical in color and cut to those worn by militiamen associated with the CCP's strike committee.⁶² While party cadres may have seen the distribution of military-style dress as encouraging picket discipline, workers often regarded their uniforms as a license to kill with impunity. By the spring of 1926, rival groups of similarly clad militiamen—some aligned with the CCP and others with anti-Communist unions—were embroiled in internecine conflicts that exacted a mounting death toll on the Canton work force.⁶³

With hostilities spiraling beyond the control of Communist and Nationalist cadres alike, KMT authorities decided upon a crackdown. It was in this context that General Chiang Kai-shek—who had recently returned from training in the Soviet Union to take command of the Guomindang's newly established army—was able to triumph as a strongman able to impose order by sheer military might.⁶⁴

Preparing for Revolution

As this unhappy episode unfolded in the south, a parallel scenario—on an even grander scale—was taking shape in Shanghai. After the May Thirtieth Incident, the Communist Party in Shanghai advocated establishing a new clandestine network of worker militias known as Worker Self-Defense Corps (*gongren ziwetuan*) at major factories throughout the city. These armed militias, in orthodox Marxist-Leninist fashion, were increasingly envisioned by the CCP as the principal vehicle of revolution. Rather than simply taking advantage of ongoing strike actions by absorbing preexisting picket operations, Communists were now actively preparing to instigate political insurrection. In contrast to sports groups and reading groups, which could be openly organized among the workers, the Self-Defense Corps—like party branches themselves—were expected to keep their members and their activities secret.⁶⁵ To develop the militias, top party and union cadres enrolled in military training classes, convened by the party's organization department and military affairs

committee, after which smaller sessions were held at factories around the city.⁶⁶ By February of 1926, a leadership network of cadre conferences (*ganbu huiyi*) had been put in place to oversee the Self-Defense Corps work. The conferences were composed of one party and one Youth League representative from each factory corps within their jurisdiction.⁶⁷

A Communist Party meeting in Shanghai in the spring of 1926 designated the Worker Self-Defense Corps as "the most important work of the union."⁶⁸ In accord with this assessment, Self-Defense Corps Committees were established in seven working-class neighborhoods around the city.⁶⁹ Besides convening weekly meetings, the committees were charged with fulfilling quotas for Self-Defense Corps membership, based upon the number and size of factories in their district. Every factory with one hundred or more workers was expected to establish at least one Self-Defense Corps unit, with a minimum of ten members. The goal was to mobilize a force of twenty thousand or more workers in this manner.⁷⁰ The pattern of organization mirrored that of the Petrograd Soviet, where factories had also been directed to establish Red Guard militias of 100 members for every 1,000 workers; on the eve of the October Revolution, an estimated 25,000–30,000 Red Guards were active in St. Petersburg.⁷¹

Interest in arming the proletariat for revolutionary action was heightened by commemorations of the 55th anniversary of the Paris Commune, which were launched by revolutionary associations in Guangdong in March of 1926.⁷² These festivities made a direct link from the Commune and the Russian Revolution to the revolutionary efforts of young Chinese. Among the slogans shouted during the celebrations was "The proletariat is the main army of the national liberation struggle!"⁷³ Mao Zedong, in a speech at the KMT's Political Training Institute in conjunction with the anniversary celebrations, stressed that "in Russia's October Revolution and the Paris Commune the working class used its own strength to demand genuine equality and freedom for humanity. Their meaning was the same; the only difference was that one succeeded whereas the other failed . . . The Russian Revolution was the successor to the Paris Commune."⁷⁴ At a massive convocation on March 18 at Canton University, Zhang Tailei (secretary of the Communist Youth League)

emphasized that during the Paris Commune "virtually all 600,000 members of the National Guard were workers—the armed force of the proletariat . . . The bourgeoisie was deeply frightened, finding them more terrifying than the German army . . . Similarly, the bourgeoisie here in Canton is more afraid of the worker pickets than of the British gunboats."⁷⁵

PATROLLING THE PATROLS

The apprehension that Chinese merchants may well have felt toward worker militias was probably prompted less by the imminent prospect of class struggle than by the notoriously unrestrained behavior of this "armed force of the proletariat." Despite the growing significance that Communist leaders attached to militia organization, they were continuously frustrated in the effort to build a disciplined and effective fighting force. The CCP's post mortem on the first anniversary of the May Thirtieth Movement in Shanghai concluded that the Worker Self-Defense Corps had proved to be "stagnant, scattered, and of very little use" during the commemoration activities.⁷⁶ Having nominally enrolled approximately five thousand pickets, the party assumed it would be a simple task to organize one thousand of the finest of them into a May Thirtieth Self-Defense Corps to provide security on the occasion of the first anniversary in 1926. Arm-bands made of black cloth with a five-colored-flag logo had been optimistically prepared for the crack recruits. As it turned out, however, only eight hundred ill-trained individuals turned up to accept the party's honor. They constituted, in fact, the full complement of militiamen whom the CCP could call to action. And the motley crew of eight hundred had absolutely no idea of how to monitor a mass demonstration.⁷⁷ Disappointed by this performance, party leaders concluded that more attention must be devoted to militia work in order to prevent worker pickets from degenerating into worker thugs (*gongfa*).⁷⁸

While the militias' poor showing in the May Thirtieth commemoration could perhaps be excused on grounds that maintaining public order was something of a challenge for an institution based in

factories, they turned in an equally lackluster performance during a strike wave that swept through Shanghai's cotton mills in the summer and fall of 1926. The party admitted that these strikes "were initiated by the workers themselves and not incited by us."⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Shanghai Party Secretary Luo Yinong reported on plans for the CCP-sponsored Self-Defense Corps (with new weapons issued by the union) secretly to enter the mills and sabotage equipment in order to increase Communist direction over the disputes.⁸⁰ Such schemes proved difficult to implement for several reasons, however. Those willing to accept such assignments tended to be headstrong individuals, often secret-society members, who were inherently hard to control. They were attracted by the promise of daily meals and monetary allowances from the union, but reluctant to submit to partisan supervision. Moreover, the union and party leaders in charge of militia work did not see eye to eye, making it impossible to convene a general meeting. Having already attracted police notice, the militiamen were forced to adopt a low profile. In view of the bleak situation, some cadres proposed that it was "no longer appropriate to use pickets to sustain strikes."⁸¹

Disagreement among Communist leaders about the appropriate role of armed workers created confusion and disarray at lower levels. In a strike wave that gripped Japanese-owned cotton mills in western Shanghai in September 1926, those responsible for picket leadership in each factory drew up membership lists perfunctorily, without actually mobilizing or supervising the personnel so named. The rank and file pickets were quick to claim the free meals offered by the union, but slow to do much else. At some factories, male pickets reportedly refused to lift a finger, leaving all the fighting to the women workers. When the complimentary lunches were finally suspended on party orders, disgruntled pickets nearly mounted a mutiny. The party concluded that militia organization was indeed "very bad" and vowed to give it more serious consideration in future.⁸²

The CCP's follow-up investigations of the September strike wave confirmed that its failure was due to the deployment of unreliable pickets whose primary motives were pecuniary. Having been handsomely compensated by strike pay during the May Thirtieth Movement, those who acted as militia captains expected similar

handouts this time around. Their fabricated name lists were an attempt to squeeze money out of the party and union, and when strike pay was not forthcoming, they lost all interest in the enterprise. As one cadre summarized the situation, "Since May Thirtieth, bad habits have become ingrained... Now anyone serving as a picket expects to receive payment."⁸³

The disciplinary problems that afflicted worker militias in both Canton and Shanghai were indicative of a larger dilemma: the interests and agendas of determined cadres and desperate workers were often at loggerheads. Mao's famous injunction notwithstanding, for many of its participants a revolution was—if not exactly a dinner party—at least a free lunch.

Expanding the Pickets

Shanghai and Canton were not the only loci of picket organization at this time. The Northern Expedition—a military offensive launched in the summer of 1926 under United Front auspices to rid China of warlord satraps—led to a nationwide explosion of worker pickets. When the National Revolutionary Army, commanded by Chiang Kai-shek, began its drive northward from Canton, worker pickets were established in every city occupied by the expeditionary troops. In some cases, these were formidable forces. In Wuhan, for example, a worker pickets' headquarters was organized in the winter of 1926 under the Hubei Provincial Trade Union. With two large brigades composed predominantly of dock workers, the Wuhan pickets quickly grew to number five thousand people armed with more than one thousand guns (see photo 1.1).⁸⁴ A Soviet adviser working in Wuhan in early 1927 recalled,

The workers' pickets in their blue semi-military uniforms with a red, five-cornered star on their caps stamped with the character "kung" [gong] (labor) in the center were distinguished by their severity and smart appearance. Upon command, raising their clenched fists they snappily chanted slogans. Their ranks bristled with sticks as tall as a man and a couple of inches thick which they carried in token of their serving as upholders of revolutionary order. These workers' militia appeared right after the



Photo 1.1. The worker pickets of Wuhan in 1927, proudly sporting uniforms modeled on those of the Russian Red Guards. Taken from Zhongguo gongchandang 70nian tuiji [Collected photos from 70 years of the Chinese Communist Party] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1991), Volume I, p. 255.

liberation of the city following the emergence of the trade unions from underground, as strikes were begun by workers demanding wage boosts and improved working conditions. They evolved from strikers' self-defense forces to detachments for pre-serving order in the city at large.⁸⁵

The expansion of pickets during the Northern Expedition reflected the central role that they were expected to play in unfolding political events. Despite persistent disciplinary difficulties, worker militias were increasingly viewed—by Communists and left-wing KMT cadres alike—as the key to completing the national revolution that would follow in the wake of the Revolutionary Army's Northern Expedition.

At the first representative congress of the Hunan Provincial Trade Union in Changsha in December 1926, a Resolution on Workers' Armed Self-Defense stressed that "at present arming the

worker picket organizations is an urgent task that cannot be delayed." The congress also promulgated an Outline on Picket Organization that specified criteria for participation (union members eighteen to twenty-five years of age, physically fit, free from addictions); stipulated strict disciplinary guidelines; and spelled out the dress code (blue Russian-style military uniforms, red kerchiefs, yellow belts, blue cotton leggings, and red straw hats with "international" insignia).⁸⁶ The following month, at the first representative congress of the neighboring Hubei Provincial Union, a Resolution on Pickets emphasized that the mission of the pickets was not only to monitor scabs, but also to combat counterrevolutionaries.⁸⁷ But who were the counterrevolutionaries, or for that matter the revolutionaries?

CONCLUSION

The checkered ancestry of the worker militias contributed to the difficulties of drawing clear lines between friend and foe. Staffed—in successive incarnations—by everyone from foreigners to merchants to hired thugs, China's urban militias grew out of a complex historical tradition that was not easily converted to the purposes of proletarian revolution. The ambiguities inherent in Lenin's recipe for militia construction further compounded the problem of determining who exactly should be welcomed within the ranks of the worker militia and who should be excluded—or, more serious still, identified as its primary targets.

The various roles that worker pickets were assigned during the initial years of KMT and CCP sponsorship—ranging from promoters and protectors of strikes to crowd monitors, bodyguards, jailors, anti-imperialist propagandists, enforcers of boycotts and blockades, and adjuncts to national revolution—indicated the shifting agenda of the Chinese Nationalist and Communist Parties as they both struggled to incorporate and redirect the energies of this protean institution. The challenge was not simply one of importing or imposing Marxist-Leninist doctrine, which was often internally inconsistent, but also of coming to grips with the predilections of an urban populace that evidenced its own divided priorities and proclivities.⁸⁸

While firmly committed to "awakening" the masses, China's inexperienced revolutionaries were nevertheless often disappointed and distressed by the unruly activism that ensued.⁸⁹

Partisan paternalism notwithstanding, the difficulties of patrolling the worker patrols bespoke serious differences between revolutionary cadres and the members of their intended constituency. The indigenous worker pickets that had emerged spontaneously in the course of strike actions to combat scabs were narrowly construed organizations. When revolutionary partisans sought recruits for more ambitious and dangerous missions, they soon discovered that the people willing to accept these risky assignments were not the most docile workers—if indeed they were workers at all. Paraphernalia that revolutionaries saw as promoting accountability and restraint, such as military uniforms and numbered armbands, were often treated by the brash recruits (many of whom were gang members) as emblems of empowerment to be employed as they saw fit. Rather than enhancing obedience to party dictates, then, disciplinary practices often had precisely the opposite effect. How these inherent contradictions were to be resolved would help determine the shape of citizenship and state-building in China for generations to come.

NOTES

1. Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796–1864* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
2. Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839–1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
3. Kathryn Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes and Peasant Resistance: The Lower Yangzi Region, 1840–1950* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992); Lucien Bianco, *Peasants Without the Party: Grass-roots Movements in Twentieth Century China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).
4. Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China: 1845–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980).
5. F. L. Hawks Pott, *A Short History of Shanghai* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1928), 26–31. The rebels were part of the Small Sword Uprising, a Triad-inspired movement that had recently taken control of the walled Chinese city of Shanghai.

6. Quoted in Mark Elvin, "The Administration of Shanghai, 1905–1914," in *The Chinese City Between Two Worlds*, ed. Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), 247.
7. Elvin, "The Administration of Shanghai," 255.
8. Chai Degeng, ed., *Xinhai geming* [The 1911 Revolution] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1957), 7:86–90; Mark Elvin, "The Gentry Democracy in Chinese Shanghai, 1905–14," in *Modern China's Search for a Political Form*, ed. Jack Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 41–45, 58; Elvin, "The Administration of Shanghai," 255.
9. Joseph Fewsmith, *Party, State, and Local Elites in Republican China: Merchant Organizations and Politics in Shanghai, 1890–1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 44.
10. Qiu Qianmu, *Zhongguo zhengdang shi* [History of Chinese political parties] (Taiyuan: Shanxi People's Press, 1991), 338ff.
11. *Minli bao*, January 28, 1912; quoted in Qiu, *Zhongguo zhengdang shi*, 341.
12. *Taipingyang bao*, July 1, 1912; cited in Qiu, *Zhongguo zhengdang shi*, 342 (emphasis added).
13. For descriptions of these early strikes, see Liu Mingkui, ed., *Zhongguo gongren jieji lishi zhuanquang* [The historical conditions of the Chinese working class], vol. 1, no. 2 (Beijing: Central Party School Press, 1985).
14. Quoted in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protest in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 64–65, 83. For more on citizen patrols (in Anqing and Changsha as well as in Shanghai) during May Fourth, see Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of History, ed., *Wusi aiguo yundong ziliao* [Material on the May Fourth Patriotic Movement] (Beijing: Science Press, 1959), 357, 363, 370, 379, 386, 389, 412, 424, 452, 598, 800, 829–30, 860.
15. Rex A. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militias in the Russian Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984), 3–4.
16. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militias*, 37–41. The Menshevik/SR leadership of the Petrograd Soviet took the initiative in encouraging factory militias; the vision of a worker militia that would replace professional police and armed forces was as central to relatively moderate currents within the Russian socialist tradition as it was to the Bolsheviks. (I am indebted to Steve Smith for this clarification.)
17. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 23:320–32.
18. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 320–32.
19. A major challenge for the Russian Red Guards was to weed out the many potential recruits whose bad habits rendered them unsuitable for disciplined service. As a former Red Guard noted, applicants were "often turned down on the grounds that they were regularly drunk or engaged in hooliganism or had behaved coarsely with women." Edward M. Dune, *Notes of a Red Guard*, trans. and ed. Diane P. Koenker and S. A. Smith (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 51.
20. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militias*, 207.
21. Allen S. Whiting, *Soviet Policies in China, 1917–1924* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1953), chaps. 7–8.
22. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing* [Chinese militia] (Beijing: People's Press, 1983), 3–5.
23. Liu Mingkui and Tang Yuliang, eds., *Zhongguo gongren yundongshi* [A history of the Chinese labor movement] (Shenzhen: Guangdong People's Press, 1998), 2:310.
24. Liu and Tang, *Zhongguo gongren yundongshi*, 2:305. The main leader of the strike, Su Zhaozheng, had joined Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui in 1908 and later became a member of the KMT. As a seaman, Su traveled to a number of ports in Europe and America where he learned of the October Revolution and other international events of the day. Three years after the strike, he joined the CCP and served as an important labor organizer until his death in 1929. See *Zhongguo gongren yundong de xianqu* [Pioneers of the Chinese labor movement] (Beijing: Workers' Press, 1983), 1:5–69.
25. Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and Masses in Hunan Province, 1911–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 166–72; Lynda Shaffer, *Mao and the Workers: The Hunan Labor Movement, 1920–1923* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), chap. 4.
26. Municipal Committee of the Pingxiang Communist Party, ed., *Anyuan lukuang gongren yundong* [The labor movement at the Anyuan Railway and Mine] (Beijing: Chinese Communist Party History Documents Press, 1990), 1:8ff.
27. Zou Pei and Liu Zhen, *Zhongguo gongren yundong shihua* [Historical tales of the Chinese labor movement] (Beijing: Chinese Workers' Press, 1993), 1:217–18.
28. He Yunin, *Zhongguo renmin gongan shigao* [Draft history of the Chinese People's Public Security] (Beijing: Police Officer Education Press, 1997), 7–9; Zhou Zinan, "Jiuchatuan baogao" [Report on the pickets] in *Anyuan lukuang gongren yundong* [Anyuan Railway and Mine labor movement] (Beijing: CCP Historical Materials Press, 1990), 1:363; Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 5–6. The Anyuan pickets continued to impose discipline after the strike; on one occasion when workers tried spontaneously to slack off by leaving the pits early, Li Lisan dispatched the pickets to enforce regular working hours. See Zou and Liu, *Zhongguo gongren yundong shihua*, 1:236.
29. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 6. Another source says that groups of ten (*shiren tuan*) formed the backbone membership of the Kailuan pickets (*jiucha dui*), which were led by fifty activists designated as picket captains. This would put the number of Kailuan pickets at five hundred. See Liu and Tang, *Zhongguo gongren yundongshi*, 2:386.
30. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 7–8.
31. Brantly Womack, *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought, 1917–1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982).
32. Quoted in Zou and Liu, *Zhongguo gongren yundong shihua*, 2:3.

33. Dan N. Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), chaps. 9–11.
34. Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labor Movement, 1919–1927* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968), 243–50.
35. Michael Tsin, *Nation, Governance and Modernity in China: Canton, 1900–1927* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 89, 104, 109, 112.
36. Ming Kou Chan, *Labor and Empire: The Chinese Labor Movement in the Canton Delta, 1895–1927* (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1975), 61.
37. At this time, Comintern representative Michael Borodin played a central role in the executive committee of the CCP's Guangdong Regional Committee. A member of the Soviet Secret Police (GPU), working under Borodin, served as adviser to the new CCP intelligence service. Daniel Y. K. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement: A Study of Deng Zhongxia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 93, 115; C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920–1927* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 107, 177.
38. Tsin, *Nation, Governance and Modernity*, 112. For a general overview of these events, see Ku Hung-ting, *The Canton Merchants' Volunteer Corps Incident* (Singapore: Nanyang University, 1978).
39. For further discussion of gender and secret-society gangs among Shanghai workers, see Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919–1949* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986); Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); Brian G. Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organized Crime, 1919–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); S. A. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses: Nationalism and Labor in Shanghai, 1895–1927* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).
40. S. A. Smith, *A Road is Made: Communism in Shanghai, 1920–1927* (Richmond, Va.: Curzon, 2000), 80.
41. Shanghai Municipal Archives [SMA], ed., *Wusa yundong* [The May Third-eth Movement] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1991), 1:4. This three-volume collection, cited hereafter as SMA, *Wusa yundong*, includes a variety of archival materials from Communist Party and Youth League meetings, International Settlement police files, and the international commission to investigate the May Third-eth Incident.
42. Nicholas R. Clifford, *Shanghai 1925: Urban Nationalism and the Defense of Foreign Privilege* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, 1979).
43. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 9.
44. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement*; Tsin, *Nation, Governance and Modernity*, chap. 5.
45. He, *Zhongguo renmin gongan shigao*, 6–7.
46. Tsin, *Nation, Governance and Modernity*, 151–54.
47. Xi Yiyu, "Yuegang bagong jiuchadui fendou gaikuang" [Overview of the struggles of the pickets in the Canton–Hong Kong strike] in *Shenggang dabagong ziliao* [Materials on the Great Canton–Hong Kong Strike] (Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Press, 1980), 166.
48. He, *Zhongguo renmin gongan shigao*, 6–7; Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 10. In August 1925, the Canton Public Security Bureau reported instances of the pickets seizing grain smugglers, capturing spies from Hong Kong, and carrying out other operations in support of the strike. See Kuomintang Party History Archives (Taipei), #8822, #8825.
49. Quoted in Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), 71.
50. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 10.
51. He, *Zhongguo renmin gongan shigao*, 5.
52. Quoted in Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses*, 244.
53. Deng Zhongxia, "Shenggang dabagong" [The Great Canton–Hong Kong Strike] in *Shenggang dabagong ziliao* (see note 47), 52.
54. Deng Zhongxia, "Yinianlai shenggang bagong de jingguo" [The unfolding of the Canton–Hong Kong strike over the past year] in *Shenggang dabagong ziliao* (see note 47), 55.
55. Xi Yiyu, "Yuegang bagong jiuchadui fendou gaikuang," 166.
56. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 11.
57. *Shenggang dabagong ziliao*, 234–44.
58. Vera Vladimirovna Vishnyakova-Akimova, *Two Years in Revolutionary China, 1925–1927*, trans. Steven I. Levine (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 191–92. Another Russian adviser, S. A. Dalin, offers a similar account: "Under the same KMT banner marched a corps of worker pickets. Ahead a trumpeter played in time to the march of the pickets. They were dressed in military uniform, in peak caps with rifles. They were going to help the striking workers to defeat the unyielding entrepreneurs." Translated by S. A. Smith from Dalin's *Kitaiskie menuary, 1921–1927* (Moscow, 1975), 192. Personal communication from Prof. Smith.
59. Wilbur and How, *Missionaries of Revolution*, 163.
60. Tsin, *Nation, Governance and Modernity*, 157.
61. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement*, 80n.
62. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement*, 181. The Mechanics' Union, which had been an important anti-Communist force in Canton since the early 1920s, formed its own armed worker militia—the Physical Education Corps (*tiyudui*)—during the Canton–Hong Kong strike. Over the next couple of years, the corps actively engaged in terrorist assaults on Communist-affiliated workers. See Arif Dirlik, "Narrativizing Revolution: The Guangzhou Uprising (11–13 December 1927) in Workers' Perspective," *Modern China* 23, no. 4 (October 1997): 373.
63. Chan, *Labor and Empire*, 352–54; Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement*, 180–82.

64. Ts'in, *Nation, Governance and Modernity*, 158–67.
65. SMA, *Wusa yundong*, 1:76; *Central Archives and Shanghai Municipal Archives*, eds., *Shanghai geming lishi wenjian huji* [Documentary compilation on Shanghai revolutionary history], bk. 1, 1:34 (1986). This seventeen-volume collection of the archives of the Communist Party in Shanghai from 1925 through 1927, published for internal circulation only, includes detailed transcripts of party meetings as well as documents produced by the local party and its affiliated organizations.
67. Zhu Hua, *Shanghai yibainian* [Shanghai century] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1999), 156.
67. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 1, 1:140. Although party leaders emphasized that self-defense work depended entirely on how well the cadre conferences performed their responsibilities, they noted with alarm that very few members took their appointed task seriously. In light of the high levels of absenteeism that plagued Self-Defense Corps meetings, representatives were sternly reminded that they should attend cadre conferences with the same level of commitment with which they attended party meetings.
68. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 2:43.
69. The seven districts were Pudong, Yangshupu, Yinxianggang, Zhabei, Xiaoshadu, Caojiadu, and Nanshi. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 1, 3:170.
70. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 1, 3:171–72.
71. Wade, *Red Guards and Workers' Militia*, 40, 159.
72. In later years, Chinese commemorations of the Paris Commune were combined with remembrance of the March 18th massacre that took place on that day in 1926 when warlord forces in Beijing killed forty-seven demonstrators who were protesting against foreign incursions on China's national sovereignty. See Chen Shuping, *Bali gongshe yu Zhongguo* [The Paris Commune and China] (Beijing: People's University Press, 1988), 88ff.
73. Chen Shuping, *Bali gongshe yu Zhongguo*, 75–76.
74. Mao Zedong, "jinian bali gongshe de zhongyao yiyi" [Commemorating the important meaning of the Paris Commune] in All-China Federation of Trade Unions, ed., *Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin lun gongren jieji he gonghui gongzuo* [Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin discuss the working class and union work] (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 2002), 11.
75. Quoted in Chen Shuping, *Bali gongshe yu Zhongguo*, 81.
76. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 1, 1:255.
77. *Wusa yundong*, 1:185; *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 2:199.
78. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 2:281.
79. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 3:54.
80. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 3:267.
81. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 3:316, 427.
82. Although some CCP cadres argued that the pickets were of "no use," others countered that "the pickets were born from the requests of the unionists them-

- selves." *Shanghai geming*, bk. 1, 1:360; Shanghai Party History Materials Committee, ed., *Shanghai gongren sancu wuzhuang qiye yanjiu* [A study of Shanghai's Three Armed Workers' Uprisings] (Shanghai: Zhishi Press, 1987), 162–63. This internal circulation publication, cited hereafter as *Shanghai gongren sancu wuzhuang qiye yanjiu*, includes a range of archival and other primary sources.
83. *Shanghai geming*, bk. 2, 3:468–69.
84. Some of the arms had been confiscated from the defeated troops of warlord Wu Peifu, while others were issued by the Military Affairs Commission of the left-wing Wuhan government. Zhang Guangyü, "Wuhan gongren juochadui de jianli he shibai" [The establishment and demise of the Wuhan workers' pickets], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* 49, no. 11 (1992): 248–49.
85. Vishnyakova-Akimova, *Two Years in Revolutionary China*, 276.
86. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 12.
87. Fu Qiutao, *Zhongguo minbing*, 13.
88. On divisions within Chinese labor at this time, see Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*.
89. For a general discussion of the revolutionary attention to political awakening, see John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996).