

China's Forgotten Revolution: Radical Conservatism in Action, 1927-1949

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines Republican China's state-led revolution under the Guomintang. Since the anti-Communist purge in 1927, the party-state had strived to re-energize mass activism and dissolve proletarian political subjectivity with a rightwing program that stressed interclass and national unity. Under Chiang Kai-shek's leadership, the Guomintang put an end to the ideological ambiguity of Sun Yat-sen's national revolution, broke ties the party forged with the Communist International in 1923, and launched an all-round assault on the fledgling Chinese Communist Party. Refusing to challenge unequal power relationships domestically and abroad, Guomintang leaders promised to bring China and Asia back to their cultural essence and towards a superior ethical order. Despite its conservative socio-economic agenda, the party retained a radical organizational mode it derived from revolutionary socialism that prized Leninist vanguardism, reliance on mass involvement and cultural transformation. The Chinese nation-state under Guomintang rule experienced a conservative revolution and partook in a global fascist current that swept across Asia, Europe and Latin America during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

The distinctiveness of China's conservative revolution is demonstrated in this dissertation through a multilayered study of its ideological formulations, mass mobilization programs, and ability to garner support from outside the Guomintang domestically and abroad. Senior party ideologues among radical conservatives, who

produced tracts attacking the Guomindang's Communist allies in the mid-1920s, provided theoretical justifications for the April 1927 purge and heralded the party-state's drastic shift to the right. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Guomindang state deployed the scouting and wartime spiritual mobilization movements to re-channel mass activism towards strengthening the nation's organic unity and consolidating defense against Japanese invasion. Potentially subversive popular demands were diffused through a new focus on refining and rationalizing consumption habits, time management and other social mores. Instead of political participation, popular will found expression in public rituals, physical recreation and cultural entertainments.

Conservative revolutionaries were adept in building elite support. The state's goal of disciplining everyday life converged with liberal intellectual fear over a social order collapsing under mob rule. While uncomfortable with some authoritarian behaviors on the Guomindang's part, prominent liberals such as Zhu Guangqian shared the state's priority of reining in an intransigent mass society. Internationally, China's repudiation of Soviet-supported anti-imperialist activities led the Guomindang to appeal to cultural affinities in the overtures it extended to the Indian independence movement. The regime's celebration of Eastern spiritual superiority proved attractive to Pan-Asianists like Rabindranath Tagore and informed exchanges between the Guomindang and Indian National Congress at the height of the Second World War. In highlighting the ascendancy of radical conservatism in China and its transnational circulation across Asia, this dissertation sheds light on the distinct qualities, often downplayed in the historical literature, of the Guomindang's revolutionary enterprise vis-à-vis the radical left.

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INTRODUCTION

China's Other Revolution

At the risk of stating the obvious, this dissertation begins with the premise that Chiang Kai-shek's (1887-1975) Nationalist regime presided over a revolution. China's first nation-wide government since the fall of the dynastic system, having established its capital in Nanjing, claimed to inherit the incomplete national revolution (*guomin geming*) Sun Yat-sen bequeathed to his followers in 1925. The Guomindang (GMD) ran China until 1949 when its one-time coalition partner, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), forced it to flee to Taiwan.¹ On surface, there does not seem to be anything in this shorthand to which one would take exception. Upon closer observation, however, the narrative starts to unravel. Communist historiography typically characterizes Chiang's government as counterrevolutionary, a betrayal of Sun's leftist sympathies and accommodating attitude towards politicized workers and peasants. Historians tend to see the Nationalist regime's short tenure on Mainland China, particularly the ten years leading up to Marco Polo Incident in 1937, as a period of relative stability and state consolidation. While scholarly verdicts differ on how well the GMD's nation and society program fared, they agree that progress (or the lack thereof) in modern political governance, urban infrastructure, civil society, and cultural expression were results of revolutionary stagnation.² Authoritarian

¹ I use "Communist" to refer to the Chinese political movement that was founded in 1921, while using "communist" to denote political ideologies that aspired to a classless social order. The same distinction applies between the Italian Fascist Party and fascist ideologies in general.

² Two early works that represent contrasting assessments of the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937) were Paul K. T. Sih, *The Strenuous Decade: China's Nation-Building Efforts, 1927-1937* (Jamaica, N.Y.: St. John's University Press, 1970) and Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974). For a recent valediction to Nationalist achievements, see Frank Dikötter, *The Age of Openness: China Before Mao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

developmentalism marked Nationalist rule as distinct from the radical, tumultuous experimentation that otherwise permeated twentieth-century Chinese society and politics.

Yet, the GMD held dearly the rhetoric of revolution. Dai Jitao (1891-1949), an ideologist working under Chiang, promised in 1929 radical changes in social organization and popular customs. He spoke of sacrifices and disruptions, warning that false starts and setbacks must not sway perseverance in the tasks ahead. He lamented that China's inevitable revolutionary transformation saw little progress and too much suffering, blaming nihilistic faith among young people in Euro-American materialism and ideological platitudes imported from abroad. Impatience, lack of discipline and organization, desire for immediate results, and prurient interest in material comforts threatened to corrupt the nation. The most evil spirit (*mogui*) that haunted China, possessing gullible youths and flaming their instinctive luster for violence, was none other than communism.³

Inasmuch as the GMD claimed monopoly on China's revolutionary course, the rightwing party-state was a reaction against the ascendant Communist movement. The anti-communist purge on April 12, 1927 thus marked the beginning of a conservative revolution. Not only was the state apparatus aimed against political apostasies, motion was set in place to form a social and intellectual bloc that countered proletarian politics. In the following two decades, the GMD worked assiduously to neuter the leftwing opposition. Aside from brutal crackdowns on ideological opponents, the party-state also attempted to steer popular and elite consent away from leftwing or class politics, cultivate social movements and an everyday culture that privileged

³ Dai Jitao, "Zhong xuexiao yong qingnian xunlian jiaofan xu" [Preface to *Youth Training Manual* for middle schools], in *Dai Jitao xiansheng wencun* (hereafter cited as *DJTXSWC*) (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui, 1959), 492-495.

spiritual rejuvenation over realignment of property relations, and add an inter-Asian dimension to its otherwise staunchly nationalist project. This dissertation argues that the GMD, like fascist movements that raged from Berlin to Buenos Aires, represented a distinct quest for an alternative social order to capitalist modernity without challenging its structural premises. The regime stood at the vanguard of China's contribution to a globalizing radical right fervor between the two world wars that bemoaned the rise of working-class politics, the unevenness of capitalist modernization, and inefficacies of liberal democracy. The fact that throughout its existence the party was plagued with chronic factionalism and included contradicting elements in its ideological mix should not prevent us from drawing generalizations on the nature of the Nationalist program and its embeddedness in interwar worldwide and continental political currents.

The GMD's ill-fated alliance with the Communists was a testament to the tension between nation independence and social transformation, the two leitmotifs of China's political modernity. In 1911, a loose Revolutionary Alliance headed by Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) brought an end to Qing imperial rule by appealing to anti-Manchu feelings and promising to enhance political participation for the new urban elite who flourished on China's nascent industrial sector. The early promise of democratic republicanism quickly gave way to anger and disillusionment as military strongmen competed with one and another to mock parliamentary procedures, carve up the already fragmented country, and curry favor with various imperialist powers. Except for the Han nationalist goal of ridding off the Manchu ruling class, the founding of the Chinese Republic proved to be sorely inadequate, if not totally inconsequential, in establishing national and popular sovereignty. Events following the 1911 Revolution eroded faith in liberal politics and institutions, to which Sun and

his colleagues were originally committed. If the pressing problems facing China in the final years of the empire were to be addressed, the Republican movement had to be more than a seizure of power at the top. Young intellectuals and students in the 1910s and 1920s carrying the banner of what came to be known as the New Culture Movement (1917-1923) saw the wider society, and not merely state institutions, as the site of radical changes. Out of this broadened vision evolved political movements that recognized mass, and not only elite, participation as the ultimate source of legitimacy. While a vocal minority remained committed to liberal democracy, radical mass parties of both the left and the right soon dominated Chinese politics.

The Rise of Mass Politics

The New Culture Movement, which assumed a clearer political dimension following the May Fourth Incident in 1919, is best remembered as an iconoclastic attack on Confucianism, classical literature, feudalism and warlordism. Yet, energized by the northern-based Beiyang regime's failure to reclaim formerly German-occupied Shanghai from Japanese ambitions at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, May Fourth radicals were equally frustrated with the constitutional arrangements that a succession of warlords, thinly disguised behind the façade of parliamentary procedures, had appropriated to their own advantage. Qu Qiubai (1899-1935), who made tentative moves to communism during this period, was representative of radicalized May Fourth youths who felt themselves awakened from the nightmare of liberal democracy.⁴ Rapid industrial growth in coastal cities in the 1910s through the 1920s gave rise to an urban bourgeois and proletariat, and injected a sense of reality to

⁴ John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 191-92.

erstwhile abstract categories of class and socialism.⁵ At least to Qu and his radicalized colleagues in urban centers, the masses had emerged as a formidable new subject of revolutionary action. Genuine social transformation was to involve the wider populace, not left to the whims of corrupt and inept politicians in Beijing.

While the masses was making appearances in New Culture radical discourses, Sun Yat-sen was progressively turning his back on the liberal democratic ideals to which an earlier incarnation of the GMD was committed.⁶ To the dismay of parliamentarians among Sun's followers, the nationalist leader was also losing patience with what he saw as endless politicking among rival caucuses in parliament. Sun's redefined national revolution was to adopt the agendas of the party's radical wing which, like Qu, recognized the potential of mass society and was well-versed in discourses about class and socialism, albeit drawing vastly different conclusions about them than the communists. In organizational terms, Sun was attracted to the Leninist model whereby party functionaries simultaneously engaged and disciplined the masses in the revolutionary process.⁷

By the time the GMD reached a deal with the nascent CCP in 1923 to allow members of the latter join the national revolution and the Nationalist state, the two sides agreed that a mass movement led by a vanguard party was necessary to carry the revolution forward. Few had the appetite to fall back to the discredited 1912 revolutionary agendas of republicanism and constitutionalism. The prospect of mass revolutionary movements was indeed frightening for many liberals.⁸ Yet, as I discuss

⁵ Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 59.

⁶ Fitzgerald, *Awakening China*, 16-17, 190-191.

⁷ *Ibid*, 206.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

below, despite their suspicion over the involvement of the *hoi polloi* in political movements, Chiang Kai-shek's staunchly anti-communist GMD regularly received endorsement from among the liberal ranks. Liberals pledged support even though the Nationalist party-state had not jettisoned its role as a revolutionary vanguard in command of China's politically awakened, voluntaristic populace.

Disciplining Capitalism

The GMD's transformation into a mass party was accompanied by a heightened sense of China's induction into global capitalism among the upper echelon of the party. Even as the GMD agreed to an alliance brokered by the Comintern, few were under the illusion that Sun was about to convert to Marxism. To the contrary, the leader of the Guangzhou-based party-state, with his newfound fascination with political discipline, took pains to put forth his Three People's Principles – nationalism (*minzu*), democracy (*minquan*), and the much contended people's livelihood (*minsheng*) – as the ideological yardstick of his followers' loyalty to the revolutionary cause. Historian Yang Kuisong observes that Sun's approach was not to meekly admit Communists to a united front, but to actively absorb a potentially rival party based on the assumption that Marxism could be subsumed under his *minsheng* principle.⁹ This required Sun to take on the *problematic* with which Karl Marx grappled. Sun's assumption that national societies functioned as discreet units allowed him to see capitalism in the early twentieth century as being geographically circumscribed. He was nonetheless acutely aware of “the onslaught of Euro-American economic currents” in an underdeveloped China, citing land speculation in treaty ports like

⁹ Yang Kuisong, *Guomindang de “lian Gong” yu “fan Gong”* [Kuomintang: Unity with Communists and anti-Communism] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2008), 41-43.

Shanghai and Guangzhou.¹⁰ Yet, China's underdevelopment could also save the country from the excesses of capitalism and the hegemony of the bourgeoisie that plagued economically advanced societies. Intellectually attracted to the American political economist Henry George, Sun believed that the social crises facing Europe and North America could be kept at bay if a strong state could levy land taxes and redistribute future rises in land price to tenants. In other words, Sun was ultimately committed to private property and his self-professed agreement with communist ideals was limited at most to the adoption of a redistributive mechanism for newly accumulated capital.¹¹ The aim of the national revolution, as Sun declared in his lectures on the *minsheng* principle, was not to fight for a communist society through class struggle and the abolishment of capitalist production relations but to prevent a capitalist society from taking shape in the first place.

Against the typical Marxist position that capitalist development was (and still is) global but uneven, the idea that capitalism could be contained before being fully introduced into China held currency among Sun's disciples. Insofar as China's incipient capitalist economy was inseparable from imperialist intrusion, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century, the Nationalists' quest for national independence thus assumed a clear social dimension. Dai Jitao, who lent theoretical credence to the GMD rightwing in its opposition against the united front after Sun's death in 1925, was more explicit in linking the fight against imperialism and pursuit of social development. In fact, he argued in 1925 that while imperialism was prompted not only by socio-economic considerations alone, people's livelihood could not be

¹⁰ Sun Yat-sen, *Sanmin zhuyi* [Three people's principles] (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1978), 224.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 224-27.

pursued without first securing national independence.¹² In another treatise on the May Thirteenth Incident of 1925 in which police officers opened fire on protesting students and workers in Shanghai's International Settlement, Dai faulted the "unequal treaties" that privileged the operation of imperialist interests in China for depriving the country of export industries and monopolizing the flow of capital.¹³ To further the dual goals of securing national independence and building a modern economy, he recommended alliance with the Soviet Union and incorporation of selected socialist principles.¹⁴ In less than two years, however, the party polemicist would drastically change his mind.

Writing just after the death of Sun Yat-sen, Dai was concerned that the peasants and workers whom the Nationalist revolution had recently brought under its fold would fall under the spell of historical materialism and communism, despite what he felt as their questionable effectiveness as the basis for social programs.¹⁵ The GMD right's wariness of the Communists' growing ideological and organizational influence within China's mass political movement, along with the fear of proletarian internationalism and Soviet designs on Asia, would eventually derail the alliance Sun created and steer the national revolution in a conservative direction despite its continued commitment to mass politics and the professed rejection of imperial capitalism. It is this conservative revolution, which began with Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist *coup* in April 1927, on which my narrative in the following chapters will focus.

¹² Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang* [The Nationalist revolution and the Guomindang] (1925; reprint, Shanghai: n.p., 1928), 70 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

¹³ Dai, *Zhongguo duli yundong de jidian* [The basis of China's independence movement] (Guangzhou: Minzhi shuju, 1925), 18-30.

¹⁴ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 71-72.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

Conservative Revolution and China's Political Modernity

Dai's complaint of Marxism's foreignness and aloofness from the pressing issues an emerging nation-state faced was far from unique. The German philosopher Oswald Spengler wrote some six years before Dai that a materialist vision of history, with its emphasis on relations of production, was the ideology of cosmopolitan city dwellers wrenched off from religion and traditional values.¹⁶ At stake was not only the alleged inadequacy of Marxist social analysis, but also the idea that global communism was a symptom of a morally depleted, culturally adrift, and materially obsessed urban modernity which stood at odds with the quest for a coherent, conflict-free national community. A Nationalist, who identified himself only by the name Shiyong, echoed this sentiment when he wrote to Dai in 1927 and accused the CCP of enticing urban youths who knew little about the Three People's Principles with faint promises of vanity, money and sexual pleasure.¹⁷ Fear of communism as a foreign-originated and controlled threat to the fabric of the *ethnos*, along with a deep anxiety over the urban cosmopolitanism and social fragmentation that accompanied global capital, formed the lowest common denominator linking conservative revolutionary regimes that gained increasing influence around the globe during the interwar period.¹⁸

The origins of the phrase "conservative revolution" might be attributed to Frederick Engels, who described the 1830 Polish insurrection against direct Russian rule as an attempt on the part of the Polish aristocracy to return to the *status quo ante*

¹⁶ Oswald Spengler, *Preußentum und Sozialismus* [Prussiandom and socialism], in *Politische Schriften* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1933), 83-85, cited in Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 66.

¹⁷ Shiyong to Dai Jitao, 1927, *wubu*, 1339, Kuomintang Archives.

¹⁸ Neocleous, *Fascism*, 57.

of relatively autonomy under the Czar and defend their own narrow class interests. “The insurrection of 1830,” Engels declared, “was neither a national revolution ... nor a social or a political revolution; it changed nothing in the internal condition of the people; it was a conservative revolution.”¹⁹ In the twentieth century, conservative revolution was generally associated with such radical rightwing intellectual heavyweights as writer Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, phenomenologist Martin Heidegger and political philosopher Carl Schmitt. At the same time, it was also associated with mass movements and paramilitary squads on the far right of the political spectrum.²⁰ Given the German origins of conservative revolution, is it appropriate to apply the term to rightist movements elsewhere such as that led by the GMD in China?

While jealously guarding its revolutionary credentials against the Communists, the GMD did not identify its movement as conservative (*baoshou*). Nor did GMD theoreticians trace their ideas to German radical conservatives’, insisting that their only inspiration was Sun Yat-sen. By using conservative revolution as a heuristic and analytical category, I do not presuppose foreign influences and local reception. Rather, I am pointing to the existence of a constellation of economic and political forces in the tumultuous years between the two world wars with which rightwing movements, whether operating in China, continental Europe or elsewhere, had to tackle. Varying degrees of industrialization across the world led to the rise of the urban masses, whose dispositions and everyday habits were manifestations of an expanding global capitalist modernity. Young students and other urbanites engaged in frivolous consumption and individualist pursuits. Conservative nationalists in

¹⁹ Frederick Engels, “On the Polish Question,” *Marxists Internet Archives*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/02/22.htm> (accessed 21 September 2012).

²⁰ Wood, *Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, 3.

cosmopolitan cities were wary as they saw communism becoming a potent force as both a mass organization championing workers and an ideology embraced by radical students and intellectuals. That these “foreign” ideas were sponsored by political parties with deep links to Moscow exacerbated anxieties over their subversive potential. Frustration with the individualism of young cosmopolitans, spiritless consumerism of urbanites, and workers and intellectuals who privileged social revolution over national revival shaped radical conservative visions in different locations.

As products of the social and economic transformations that undergirded the nation-state system, conservative revolutions aimed for an alternative modernity that could overcome the excesses of capitalist globalization and political liberalism. Yet, unlike the left and particularly revolutionary socialists, conservative revolutionaries opposed egalitarian ideals that sought to empower the lower classes. Instead, they espoused “a form of revolutionary reaction” in their refusal to challenge the private property system that increasingly defined socio-political hierarchy in modern societies.²¹ As distinctly reactionary alternatives to liberal capitalism, radical conservative movements had enjoyed considerable influence across the world since the mid-nineteenth century. For example, it has been argued that the reform programs the new Meiji state implemented in nineteenth-century Japan constituted a conservative revolution. The heavy representation of the old samurai class among the new political elite, obsession with social order in the face of imperialist intrusion from the West, rejection of political liberalism, and search for a pristine authentic national culture amidst crumbling pre-industrial social relations were hallmarks of a form of

²¹ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 164.

radical conservatism that anticipated fascist politics in twentieth-century Japan.²² Furthermore, despite its traditional moralism, the Meiji conservative revolution was thoroughly modern, not least due to Japanese leaders' full embrace of the modern state apparatus and new mass mobilization tools such as political parties and the print media.²³ Of course, the social makeup of the mid to late nineteenth-century world differed drastically from that during the interwar period. In this earlier period, industrialization and the mass public were in their formative stage in most parts of the globe, the nation-state was a new concept, and communism had yet to emerge as a major force in the political scene. Yet, the high premium put on social order, the fear that class politics would exacerbate the deep crises brought on by capitalism and imperialist encroachment, and the mobilization of voluntaristic and classless citizenry would continue to drive radical conservative politics in the twentieth century.

Historiographic Treatments of the GMD-Led Revolution

There is a continuous debate among historians on how to place the GMD movement within the global circuit of interwar rightwing politics. Scholars differed rigorously on whether the GMD was a fascist regime. Implicit in these diverging views are disagreements over the nature of fascism and whether Republican China's experience of modernity, given the country's underdeveloped economy, largely agrarian society, and crumbling Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, was comparable to that of Euro-America. Despite the fact that radical conservative movements in the "core" European fascist states of Italy and Germany differed in many counts, historians have

²² Alistair Swale, *The Meiji Restoration: Monarchism, Mass Communication and Conservative Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 11-14.

²³ *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

been reluctant to include the GMD among their ranks. Rather than recognizing that Nazism and Italian Fascism formed parts of a worldwide conservative revolutionary trend, many students of modern Chinese history see the GMD as a faint facsimile of fascism in Europe. China's rightwing radicalism was therefore derivative and superficial, a Western import that had little basis in the specificities of the Republican period. Lloyd Eastman's classical study of the GMD regime caused considerable controversy by revealing the efforts made by such party groupings as the Blue Shirts or Lixingshe to emulate the organization, aesthetics, and ideological dispositions of the Nazi party in the 1930s.²⁴ Yet, Eastman also argues that the GMD as a whole lacked any ideological identity, as the party was staffed mostly by opportunistic functionaries who shunned the masses and merely pursued their own individual interests. In Eastman's account, young cadres who wished to re-engage the masses through fascist mobilization were on the fringes of the party and merely supplied Chiang Kai-shek with ammunitions to manage intra-party power struggle. The historian credited with unearthing the GMD's encounter with fascism considers Nationalist cadres to be too cynical to have fully embraced fascist politics.²⁵ The GMD revolution was never redefined by the April 12 1927 *coup*. The revolution, as the title of Eastman's famous book suggests, was simply aborted by its custodians.

The reluctance to count the GMD among interwar radical conservative regimes was expressed more clearly by those who denied any profound fascist current in Republican China. William Kirby, a specialist in twentieth-century Sino-German

²⁴ Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, chap. 2; Frederic Wakeman argues that contemporary and historiographical accounts often confused the Lixingshe with the Blue Shirts, which were in fact two distinct organizations (*Spymaster: Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Service* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003], 63). For an alternative viewpoint on the Blue Shirts, see Maria Hsia Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society: Fascism and Developmental Nationalism* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1985).

²⁵ Eastman, *Abortive Revolution*, 83-84, 303-306.

relations, argues that “there was no ‘fascist movement’ in China but rather a vogue that coincided with the emergence of a close Sino-German friendship.” Chinese admirers of the Nazi movement, Kirby points out, pursued competing political interests, had no agreement on what fascism meant, and were too enmeshed in factional struggles to have a clear grasp of National Socialism.²⁶ Chinese Nationalists, however, were apparently not the only ones who failed to understand fascism. The nature of fascism continues to elude scholars today, not the least because of the apparent contradiction between its radical activism and its investment in capitalist economics.²⁷ Perhaps the power of fascism lay precisely in its ideological ambiguity, that it put a premium not on conceptual rigor and clarity but spiritual devotion and sacrifice.²⁸ Kirby’s argument of a superficial fascist vogue within the GMD also assumes that the party’s functionaries and theoreticians were mere observers of foreign developments, thus denying that the staunchly anti-communist party was an active contributor to the global effervescence of radical right activism in its own right.

The insistence that the GMD was a different animal from Western political movements on the same end of the political spectrum is also informed by the belief among many scholars that Republican China itself was incomparable with Western societies despite its many connections with global socio-economic trends through imperialism, urban consumption, and the movement of people. The lingering influence of traditional social ideals is taken to mean that heuristic categories that originate from studies of Euro-America have limited applicability concerning China’s

²⁶ William Kirby, “Images and Realities of Chinese Fascism,” in *Fascism Outside Europe: the European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 233-68.

²⁷ Neocleous, *Fascism*, 43-44, 56.

²⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 82.

political modernity. Benjamin Schwartz wrote in 1976 that while conservatism in modern China, alongside liberalism and radicalism, was unmistakably a result of Western influence, it differed from its European and American counterparts because Chinese conservatives did not necessarily defend the political status-quo. Contrasting the late Qing revolutionary Zhang Binglin and “conservative modernizer” Chiang Kai-shek, Schwartz concluded that conservatism in China was a cultural position, not a political one that called for the conservation of existing state institutions.²⁹

The notion that traditional culture was a determining factor setting China apart from contemporary trends in the West even informs those who think that there are strong echoes of fascism in GMD ideology and organization. Frederic Wakeman suggests that Chiang’s regime embodied “Confucian fascism,” drawing attention to the radical nature of the GMD’s social engineering program in molding a disciplined national subject. Yet, despite Chiang’s fascination with the rapid ascendancy of Germany, Italy and Turkey as formidable interwar powers, the GMD strongman’s “nativist” Confucian moralism “lent a fussy air to his imitative fascism.”³⁰ For Wakeman, if the GMD party-state emulated the latest fascist organizational form, its ideological commitments were unmistakably indebted to China’s dynastic past and had little in common with movements led by Hitler and Mussolini. What is not acknowledged in studies that privilege China’s cultural uniqueness is that combining valorization of national communitarian values, entrenchment of capitalist social relations, and revolutionary modes of political activism was not peculiar to Chiang’s

²⁹ Benjamin Schwartz, “Notes on Conservatism in General and in China in Particular,” in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. Charlotte Furth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 16-19.

³⁰ Frederic Wakeman, “A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism,” *China Quarterly*, no. 150 (1997): 295-432.

government. These features were, in fact, common among contemporary conservative revolutions around the world.³¹ Restoring a primordial, hierarchal social order was the shared desire of radical conservative movements which saw their respective nations as being distinct and beleaguered by hostile forces from outside.

One alternative to narratives of Chinese cultural particularism is to reject fascism as a specific mode of politics altogether, to the point where the distinction between radical left and radical right is denied. This approach underpins political scientist A. James Gregor's study of twentieth-century Chinese revolutions. Rejecting what he sees as a misleading dichotomy between Marxist (leftwing) and fascist (rightwing) revolutions, Gregor suggests that fascism was "born of nationalism and Marxist revolutionary syndicalism." Having dismissed any qualitative difference between the left and the right, he goes on to lump Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong (1893-1976) together with figures as diverse as Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin as redemptive nationalists committed to developmentalism and an aggrandized state.³² As for the ideological dispositions of the post-1927 GMD, Gregor has the following to say:

It was not Italian Fascism or German National Socialism, *per se*, that Chiang Kai-shek or the Blue Shirts recommended to the revolutionaries of China. What the Blue Shirts found admirable in Italian Fascism and German National Socialism was the same thing they and Sun Yat-sen found attractive in Bolshevism. All these movements had succeeded in restoring dignity to their respective national communities.³³

The argument that mass political movements of all ideological hues, except perhaps parties committed to liberal democracy, were identical is well-established in Cold War-era studies on totalitarianism influenced by Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of*

³¹ Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 166-67.

³² A. James Gregor, *A Place in the Sun: Marxism and Fascism in China's Long Revolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000), 15-16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 80.

Totalitarianism (1951). It condemns successive Chinese states for leading the country through decades of continuous revolutionary turmoil and failing to build Western-style institutions such as elected parliaments, private property, and a media industry not controlled by the government. The strategy of eliding the specificities of fascism by collapsing radical conservatism together with communism serves to delegitimize critiques of reigning liberal capitalist norms.³⁴ It also obscures the fact that while radical rightwing movements aimed at entrenching capitalism and private ownership, their leftwing nemeses were committed to their demise.³⁵ Gregor's refusal to characterize the GMD as fascist is thus driven not primarily by how much or how little Chiang was attracted to the Fascist and Nazi movements. What more, indeed, could Mussolini or Hitler have offered to Chiang other than a way to extinguish his communist enemies, build a strong militarized nation, and thrive alongside Shanghai industrialists and financiers? Moreover, while fascist movements adopted the organizational strategies and anti-capitalist rhetoric of Bolshevism, they rejected everything that formed the core of a communist movement, including class struggle and the overthrow of private property. The goal of German and Italian fascists in setting up revolutionary regimes was precisely to snub the very possibility of social revolution.³⁶ Radical conservative activities were crusaders against communist parties, not fellow travelers of revolutionary socialists.

There are definitely more fruitful ways of accounting for the ideological import of radical right politics in relation to capitalist accumulation under China's

³⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarian?: Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001), 3.

³⁵ Harry Harootunian, "The Future of Fascism," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 136 (2006): 23-24.

³⁶ Neocleous, *Fascism*, 55-57.

fragmented sovereignty, limited but rapid urbanization, continuous political upheavals, and drastic cultural changes at both elite and popular levels during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Arif Dirlik's pioneering study on the New Life Movement, an elaborate attempt led by Chiang and his Methodist wife to combat communism by transforming the everyday habits of citizens, makes the brilliant observation that the GMD was *both* revolutionary and conservative. The regime was conservative in its valorization of traditional values and opposition to social revolution. Yet, the GMD's ideal conservative polity entailed radical mechanisms for mobilizing and managing the emerging urban and rural masses, with a view to incorporating these new forces into a carefully crafted revolution from the top.³⁷ What marked the GMD's conservatism and drew it to the ideological fold of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco were its vanguard party organization, a heavy dose of vehement anti-communism, and its determination to engage social forces and constituents that defined political modernity. This is precisely the point Michael Lestz makes in his study of the GMD "new right," comprising Dai Jitao and other party functionaries-cum-ideologues who played a crucial role in defining the post-April 12 *coup* order under Chiang. Rightwing agitators in GMD had limited understanding of Italian Fascism. Yet, their commitment to an anti-communist revolution, conscious adoption of Leninist organizational methods, and devotion to both native traditions and modernization put their party in the same league as European radical right movements.³⁸ The GMD's participation in the politics of reaction implied not studious copying of some supposed European prototype but partaking in a common approach

³⁷ Arif Dirlik, "The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1975): 946-47.

³⁸ Michael Lestz, "The Meaning of Revival: The Kuomintang 'New Right' and Party Building in Republican China, 1925-1936" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1982), 6-12.

to handling the advance of class struggle, drastic cultural changes in urban society, the threats of imperialist intrusion, and uneven development of global capitalism.

More recent works have, from multiple angles, shown that far from being a guileless imitator of fascism so that it could maintain its despotic elite control over an estranged populace, practices and agendas associated with radical conservative politics were engrained in the party across factional divides. They informed party-state behaviors in debates on economic development, in the administration of justice, and in the creation of a new national culture during the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937) when the GMD maintained an increasingly tight grip on its relatively urbanized and economically advanced stronghold in the southeastern provinces. While insisting upon China's indebtedness to radical conservative currents in Europe, Margherita Zanasi argues that intra-party confrontations between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei (1883-1944), and the latter's eventual collaboration with the Japanese, were underpinned by struggles between two competing fascist modes of economic planning and nation-building.³⁹ While not concerned with fascism *per se*, Eugenia Lean's study on the GMD's selective sanctioning of violence in the 1930s demonstrates how, by overriding the judicial process and granting state pardons to Shi Jianqiao (1906-1979) and presenting her murder of warlord Sun Chuanfang (1885-1935) as an act of filial heroism, the Nanjing regime not only shrewdly rode on the tide of public emotions that had swung to the assassin's favor and made clear the GMD's superior position vis-à-vis the judicial establishment. More significantly, however, the GMD state also sought to endorse the assassination as embodiment of what it lauded as the timeless Chinese virtue of filial piety and legitimize violence as a means to bring about order

³⁹ Margherita Zanasi, *Saving the Nation: Economic Modernity in Republican China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

and rebirth to the nation.⁴⁰

The valorization of irrational violence as an extra-legal means to justice, an appeal to a national essence, and a quest to manipulate and channel mass emotions were indeed salient elements of interwar radical conservative politics around the world. Revisiting the New Life Movement and cognate programs in social engineering, Margaret Clinton sees the GMD's fusion of restorationist sentiments vis-à-vis Confucianism and commitment to radical streamlining of society for mass industrial production as major ideological strains the Chinese regimes shared with fascist movements abroad.⁴¹ Under GMD rule, there might not be a clearly calibrated set of fascist agendas with which a disciplined mass movement could identify. Nevertheless, to borrow Antonio Gramsci's famous formulation, it would not be an overstatement to argue that the global politics of radical conservatism held hegemony over the Nationalist political class in the 1930s and 1940s.

China's Conservative Revolution: Consent and the Everyday

More importantly, the conservative revolution held sway not only among party cadres but also commanded consent from civil society, even if alignment of popular consciousness with party-state priorities was limited and ephemeral.⁴² Radical conservatism was an ideological formation *par excellence* in that it took individuals rather than socio-economic system to the heart of revolutionary action. Everyday life was elevated to become the main site for state intervention as the radical impulses of

⁴⁰ Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 150-62.

⁴¹ Margaret Clinton, "Fascism, Cultural Revolution, and National Sovereignty in 1930s China" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2009), 200-206.

⁴² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 273.

Nationalist cadres were displaced from confrontational political activities after the anti-communist *coup*. If the national revolution continued to thrive on engagement with the masses, its vitality under the new regime derived not from popular political insurgencies but from an overhaul of work attitudes, leisure activities, consumption and domestic habits. Students and workers who took to the street to fight against imperialists and exploitative industrialists under the GMD-CCP united front period were herded back inside classrooms and factory plants. Instead of taking the state to task on everyday injustices, citizens were exhorted to first put their own house in order. Quotidian personal behaviors and biases, thought to provide *the* material of social fabric, were where the conundrum of and solutions to China's difficult modern transformation resided. Whereas the call for non-militant mass activism reflected the state's own shifting role in mass society, it held genuine attraction for urban middle and intellectual classes who craved a more stable order that facilitated individual development and gradual improvement.

In recent years, historians of modern China have taken considerable interest in the everyday, seeing in the category a wealth of new materials and fresh interpretative angles to be pursued. Hanchao Lu identifies the everyday closely with material culture, specifically basic necessities such as clothing, shelter and food. Tracking how daily items of consumption – piped water, electricity, bean products, etc. – were received, rejected, and rumored on by poor urbanites through time helps recover popular voices beyond elite textual sources like newspapers, novels, or even popular entertainments. Lu's typical twentieth-century Chinese urbanite was an apolitical, toiling wage-earner who was either illiterate, or could afford little time and money on reading materials. It is only through examining common people's "material lives" and their intersection with state policies that historians can recover truly popular reactions

to revolutionary ideologies and elite politics.⁴³ Contrasted with Lu's empiricist approach, other scholars see the everyday as a philosophical concept deployed by historical actors to make sense of modern experiences and devise strategies for intervention. Taking the quotidian as the site where new capitalist economic and social realities clashed with traditional practices and moral norms, Rebecca Karl demonstrates how female labor was embroiled in reflections on family-based economic production under China's semi-colonial modernity. A practice once hailed by the late imperial state as a social virtue borne by elite women in the domestic sphere, female labor became associated with modern slavery and a lens through which Chinese feminists understood the everyday violence women endured in the national and global contexts at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ Rather than concrete artifacts and consumables, the everyday can be taken as a heuristic device for sweeping critiques on socio-historical formations.

A balanced approach between the tangible and the abstract treats everyday life as a space formed by the totality of human activities under capitalism. Under this conceptualization, the quotidian encompassed social beings' entire lived experience – not just arts, politics, or indeed material culture in isolation – as they negotiated the contradictions, unevenness, and reification of modernity.⁴⁵ As social spaces, the everyday lives of different communities were intertwined and in tension with one another. In 1910s China, for example, the New Culture Movement opened a space on

⁴³ Hanchao Lu, "Out of the Ordinary: Implications of Material Culture and Daily Life in China," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, eds. Madeleine Dong and Joshua Goldstein (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 22-51.

⁴⁴ Rebecca Karl, "The Violence of the Everyday in Early Twentieth-Century China," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, 60-63.

⁴⁵ Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 123-124; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 93-95.

the Peking University campus where individualism was prized, social hierarchy questioned, and political causes spontaneously organized by energetic and rebellious students. This everyday culture, centered on dormitories, libraries, classrooms, set in motion a political dynamic that gave rise to the May Fourth students' movement in 1919.⁴⁶ At the same time, the burgeoning print media in the 1920s elevated individuals' mundane manners and habits into important matters imbued with social significance. Matters such as the free-wheeling student culture, romance between men and women, and the commodified urban life became problems that came under intensifying elite intellectual scrutiny and state management.⁴⁷

The conservative revolution turned social criticism and activism attributed to the everyday since the turn of the twentieth century on its head. GMD theorists like Dai Jitao inherited late Qing intellectuals' interest in seeing everyday experience as suggestive of profound social processes. Yet, instead of interrogating the historical conditions that engendered cultural alienation, radical conservatives adopted the idealist position that mistook transforming individuals' private life for realigning social relations. Sun's ruminations on *minsheng* were repackaged by radical conservatives into a theoretical program that competed against historical materialism, with cultivation of individuals living contented, healthy daily routine identified as the revolution's top agenda. Intellectual and political intervention into power relations was de-emphasized as popular customs and tastes were invested with moral significance, detached from political economy, and placed under bureaucratic oversight.

⁴⁶ Fabio Lanza, *Behind the Gates: Inventing Students in Beijing* (New York: Columbia University, 2010), 48-50.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Karl, "Journalism, Social Value and a Philosophy of the Everyday in 1920s China," *positions* 16 (2008): 540-542.

Mass politics under Chiang's Nationalist regime focused on refining the minutiae of public and private behaviors – hygienic practices, leisure activities, diet, sleeping habits, etc – in the name of rebuilding the nation's spiritual strength. If progressive students' politics in the 1920s was contingent on an everyday culture formed from the bottom up without state control, the GMD state acted vigorously to blunt the subversive edge of organized politics by meticulously rationalizing daily routines.⁴⁸ It deployed nationwide campaigns and mass recreational bodies to guide the people in organizing their working and leisure hours. Recent studies have shed much light on the New Life Movement, Chiang's flagship social movement launched in 1934, as an attempt at creating a new popular culture in light of the GMD's militant anti-communism, strident nationalism, and commitment to industrial modernization.⁴⁹ Yet, the New Life Movement was but one facet of a political praxis that cast a longer shadow over civil society throughout the Nationalist reign. The GMD's striving for domination over time and space had a strong impact on mass organizations like the scouting movement and reflected the party's long-standing policy to neuter what Henri Lefebvre calls the "counter spaces" of spontaneous, non-hierarchical leisure activities.⁵⁰ In 1937, when the Nationalist government enjoined the entire population to fight against Japan, the prosaic department of producers and consumers became more tightly tied to the nation's epic struggle for survival. Similar to the fascist management of workers' leisure time in wartime Japan, total war in the late 1930s and 1940s consolidated everyday life as an object to be molded and beautified at will by

⁴⁸ Lanza, *Behind the Gates*, 8.

⁴⁹ Clinton, "Fascism, Cultural Revolution, and National Sovereignty," chap. 4; Guannan Li, "Reviving China: Urban Reconstruction in Nanchang and the Guomindang National Revival Movement, 1932-37," *Frontiers of History in China* 7 (2012): 106-135.

⁵⁰ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 383.

the political elite.⁵¹

Aestheticization of Everyday Culture

The pervasiveness of the conservative revolution rested also on its appeal, much more as a cultural position than a concrete political program, to the modern intelligentsia. By abstracting everyday life from socio-political structure, the GMD offered an aesthetic solution to social dislocation and moral malaise that struck a chord with many Chinese intellectual minds. Journalists and cultural critics, who abhorred the state's heavy-handed approach to intellectual dissent, shared with Nationalists the fear that the nation's spiritual vitality was in terminal decline. They, too, believed that social disaffection could be ameliorated by rechanneling popular desires from utilitarian concerns to pursuits in sports, art, and politically non-threatening activities.⁵² While the GMD had started to co-opt urban educators since the late 1920s with the rituals and hierarchies of scouting, it was during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) that the broader liberal-leaning intelligentsia was being asked to contribute actively to the radical conservative project. Cultural critic and cosmopolitan humanist Zhu Guangqian (1897-1986) began writing for the state-run press in 1942, calling on his compatriots to stop directing their angst over social injustice against the government. He argued that the masses should sublimate, with state guidance if necessary, their discontents in art and salubrious pastimes, thereby converging with the GMD's claim that it was uniquely placed to deliver a disaffected people from spiritual stupor.

⁵¹ Kim Brandt, "The Beauty of Labor: Imagining Factory Girls in Japan's New Order," in *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, ed. Alan Tansman (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 126-127.

⁵² Karl, "Journalism, Social Value, and a Philosophy of the Everyday," 543, 556-557.

Aestheticization also underwrote Nationalist China's appeal to foreign nationalists. Imperialism-driven capitalist development across Asia engendered an ideology that demanded Eastern societies to fight in unison against Western domination. The idealist version of Pan-Asianism envisioned Euro-American modernity as spiritual degradation to be overcome by the materially transcendent wholeness of Eastern cultures, and not as a historically-specific formation that governed global political and social structures. It proposed that peaceful exchanges of goodwill, philosophies and literatures between Asian peoples would cleanse the modern world of its fetish with material progress and technological violence. The pretension to leadership of a redemptive Pan-Asianist union informed the GMD's outreach to Indian anti-colonialists, as the former failed to persuade the Japanese to adopt a more conciliatory policy towards China in the 1930s. Nationalist China's self-representation as embodying a new Asia attracted measured sympathy from figures close to and affiliated with the Indian National Congress. As a project that professed to surmount social conflicts through the beautification of work, leisure, individual bodies and national spirit, China's conservative revolution aspired to rallying a unified Asia-wide response to the challenges of capitalist globalization.

Compared with the fascist regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan, Nationalist China was a weak government. Despite ideological compatibilities, popular and intellectual consent to GMD rule could be abruptly withdrawn. Rather than a set of clearly defined positions, radical conservatism in Republican China encompassed multivalent dispositions to which the GMD state was not always able to give an organizational form. In his introduction to a recent volume on fascism in Japan, Alan Tansman draws attention to "fascism in cultural (or political) work that does not speak

fascism's name.”⁵³ He describes a broad consensus among anti-communist politicians and intellectuals who believed that overcoming social alienation and fragmentation required rationalizing daily routines, aestheticizing labor, and fetishizing the nation. Similarly, China's conservative revolution was an effervescence of intellectual, mass, and state activism that often lacked effective coordination. Shared desirability for an orderly community that respected authority among elite and even popular opinions compensated for the GMD's failure to mobilize the masses with a clear set of political agendas and institutional networks.

Outline of Chapters

My narrative of China's other revolutionary experiment, one that has received far less scholarly scrutiny than communism, will be based on a variety of printed materials and unpublished archival sources. I study theoretical tracts attributed to major party ideologues, periodicals published at the national and local levels, official documents and training materials of GMD-initiated social movements, records of diplomatic activities, petitions sent by individual citizens to the Nationalist government, and memoirs of important and minor historical actors. Juxtaposing different genres of sources allows me to approach the conservative revolution as both discursive and organizational practices, and to engage the experiment as a fully fledged undertaking rather than mere aberrant developments or empty theoretical musings.

The chapters that follow are grouped into three parts: ideology, social movements, alliances. Part I, comprising chapter 1, examines the ideological

⁵³ Alan Tansman, "Introduction: The Culture of Japanese Fascism," in idem., *The Culture of Japanese Fascism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 17.

foundational of the conservative revolution, tracing it to the anti-communist purge on April 12, 1927 that cumulated in Chiang's dominance over the GMD. It reconstructs the radical conservative decoupling of revolutionary activism from communism, follows state-devised modes of mass mobilization at peace and at war, and excavates ideological and institutional links the GMD cultivated domestically and overseas. It reflects on the Nationalist experiment not only as a Chinese revolution, but also in the context of anti-Western (including anti-Soviet) nationalism in Asia. A distinct revolutionary identity united rightwing activists within the GMD who, in the mid and late-twenties, grew increasingly uncomfortable with the growing strength of CCP organization. They were alarmed by the ways that working-class militancy, Soviet influence and communist internationalism could sabotage national cohesion. While much scholarly attention has been expended on the struggle for control of the party-state machine between staunch right-wingers on one hand and Communists and their GMD sympathizers on the other, the import of the radical conservative ascendancy within the Nationalist movement vis-à-vis the global history of revolutions and counter-revolutions has received less attention. By focusing on Li Shizeng, Hu Hanmin and particularly Dai Jitao – GMD anti-communists who were familiar with Marxism but rejected it for a philosophy of people's livelihood – I chart out how the quest for a coherent social order that put premium on spiritual transformation of everyday life, inter-class cooperation, and a strong sense of cultural distinctiveness ran up against an ideology that promoted violent changes to property relations and internationalist solidarity. At stake in the redefinition of the GMD revolution from a national liberation movement to a conservative revolution were competing visions of how to deal with the challenges of colonialism, uneven economic development, and party and state-building that formed the core of modern national life. These issues,

over which the two revolutionary camps fought bitterly, were not unique to China but also weighed heavily on the minds of modern nationalist intellectuals and political activists in Asia and beyond.

Part II, which is consisted of chapters 2 and 3, explores execution of the conservative revolution as social movements. Nationalist-sponsored social movements aspired to simultaneously mobilize the masses and demobilize their independent political desires. Chapter 2 investigates the identification of urban youth as the embodiment of undesirable cultural changes and target of revolutionary transformation. Specifically, this chapter focuses on how the party-state appropriated the scouting movement and transformed it into an exemplary youth movement of urban China before and during the Nanjing Decade. As a treaty-port institution steeped in the ideals of individual responsibility and development, scouting struck a chord with the Nationalist desire to steer young people away from hedonistic urban pleasures and subversive political ideas in favor of docile labor, loyalty to the nation, and community service. The extensive adoption of training methods, personnel, aesthetics, and international network of the Chinese scouts demonstrated the affinity between conservative revolutionaries' visions of salubrious, productive everyday life and those of liberal educators. Meanwhile, the martial, authority-respecting culture implied in Lord Baden-Powell's brainchild appealed to Nationalists who envisioned the scout body as the party's youth wing that groomed future cadres and military officers. The restructuring of the scouts as a branch of the more ideologically distinct Three People's Principles Youth Corps during the Second Sino-Japanese War put to relief tensions between an interventionist, top-down approach to social mobilization and one that focuses more on persuasion among conservative revolutionaries.

Chapter 3 examines the National Spiritual Mobilization campaign, the rhetoric

and operation of which shared striking similarities with Japan's movement of the same name. The Second Sino-Japanese War was China's first total war against a foreign belligerent, to which the entire population, not just soldiers, was expected to contribute. The Nationalist regime, having retreated to the inland city of Chongqing, was uprooted from its relatively developed base on the east coast and confronted with both an overwhelming rural population in the hinterland and a restive refugee community. Yet, unlike the first decade of its reign when its legitimacy faced formidable challenge, Chiang's government emerged in the late 1930s as the unquestioned guarantor of national survival. Confronted with a foreign enemy, class struggle was further delegitimized and the CCP was forced to pledge loyalty to Chongqing for the sake of national unity. As in Japan and its East Asian empire, the Second Sino-Japanese War created an opportunity for the state to reassert hegemony over culture, the economy, and political life. Complete government control over society, much trumpeted by party ideologues in the early 1930s, came close to reality since 1937 with journalists and writers, producers and consumers, students and young children mobilized to join soldiers in an all-round fight against Japan. Under the slogan of "nation-building through the resistance war" (*kangzhan jianguo*), the Nationalists built upon its efforts in the 1930s and furthered the realization of a community bound by technological rationalization, aesthetic orderliness and spiritual authenticity that would last beyond the total war period. The valorization of ascetic productivism, engagement of popular cultural forms, and intensified vilification of communism as a foreign threat to the social fabric contributed to the quest for a new order of militant unity befitting a great nation. Out of the miseries and displacement of war, the GMD envisioned, would emerge an everyday regime of moral rectitude, cultural authenticity, and political docility.

Part III, comprising chapters 4 and 5, reveals the alliances the GMD built with nonpartisan figures to secure consent from wider elite communities in China and elsewhere in Asia. Disdain for mass moral apathy, divisive class politics, and an ignorant populace drew the intellectual elite to a state that could be relied upon to keep the peace and bring moral uplift to the public. As well, the GMD's preference for spiritual rejuvenation over social liberation gave rise to Pan-Asian sentiments with which Indian nationalists could connect. While support for the Nationalist project is hard to quantify, chapter 4 demonstrates the ideological bases of GMD's rapport with liberal humanism. I examine how Zhu Guangqian (1897-1986), a prominent humanist aesthetician who identified with the liberal tradition of Benedetto Croce, allowed his cultural criticism to be deployed by the party-state in its micro-management of citizens' collective consciousness and behaviors. For Zhu, the state was an imperfect guardian of intellectual individuality, a civilizing agent that ensured his young, immature compatriots became responsible members of society. In a country where manipulative demagogues and gullible youngsters threatened to run over classrooms and studios, the GMD state, despite its less than stellar record in protecting intellectual freedom, was counted upon to tame plebeian nihilism and safeguard culture from being swamped by politics and commercialism.

Chapter 5 discusses the little studied courtship between the GMD and prominent Indian anti-colonialists both within the Indian National Congress movement and without. Focusing on the remarkable story of the Nationalist-funded Cheena Bhavana, the sinological institute attached to Rabindranath Tagore's university Visva-Bharati, I argue that a common faith in the efficacy of spiritual renewal as an antidote to the mechanized modern civilization brought to Asia by Euro-America drew together the otherwise very different politics of the GMD on one hand and the Gandhian

movement on another. In this regard, a reaction against modern industrial rationality put into dialogue Dai Jitao, the Chinese Buddhist leader Taixu, and Tagore. Shared revolt against “Western” modernity formed the backdrop to the Congress’s sympathy for China. However, partnership between the two nationalist movements during the Second World War was ultimately determined by geopolitical and ideological considerations rather than cultural values. Moreover, this partnership unraveled as soon as India’s agenda of national liberation in the late 1940s diverged from the GMD’s gradual abandonment of any pretense to challenge the capitalist status-quo in favor of admission as a junior partner in the U.S.-led Cold War crusade against communism in Asia.

The dissertation concludes with an epilogue assessing the relevance of the conservative revolution in wider social discourse and its legacy beyond the Nationalists’ defeat by the CCP at the Chinese Civil War in 1949. It teases out the ways in which the language of anti-communism was internalized as a vernacular by local communities in the 1930s and 1940s. The same vernacular resurfaced in propaganda literature sponsored by the Nationalist state in 1950s Taiwan as the island saw the return of total war spiritual mobilization under the GMD’s reinvigorated struggle with communism. What became even less perceptible with the party-state and its revolution, which survived by courtesy of U.S. military patronage, was any commitment to an alternative to capitalism and imperialism.

PART I

IDEOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

**Theorizing Revolutionary Activism
Party Purification and the Rise of Radical Conservatism**

The set of events surrounding the GMD's April 12 rightwing *coup d'état* had a significant impact on the course of modern Chinese history and the history of global revolutions. In the early morning of April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, with the support of southern-based military strongman Bai Chongxi (1893-1966) and such Shanghai gang leaders as Du Yuesheng (1888-1951), launched a brutal crackdown on Communists and labor unionists. As a participant in the Nationalists' military expedition against the Beiyang regime and its affiliated warlords, the Communist-led labor movement had just wrested control of China's industrial and financial hub away from its enemies. The unionists subsequently set up a provisional municipal government that alarmed industrialists and foreign powers who held the economic reins of the metropolis. The *coup* catapulted Chiang Kai-shek and his rightwing coterie to the leadership of the GMD and the national revolution (*guomin geming*) the party was conducting with their erstwhile Communist allies. After a brief period of split with the Wuhan-based GMD left, the party-state which Chiang headed and transplanted to Nanjing became the internationally recognized national government of China.

This chapter reconsiders the April 12 *coup* as the foundational moment of a conservative revolution that found expression in a newly-established national state based in Nanjing. It reconstructs an anti-communist approach to capitalism embraced by key GMD intellectuals involved in the *coup*, basing their political activism on particular readings of Sun Yat-sen's principle of people's livelihood. "Party purification"

(*qingdang*), as the GMD called the purge, was widely condemned by the left as a counterrevolutionary act. Song Qingling (1893-1981), Sun's widow and a Communist sympathizer, had no doubts that the revolution for national liberation was betrayed. She did not mince her words when she chided her former comrades in August 1927 for "allowing the new militarist clique in the Yangtze to capture and utilize the Kuomintang," alluding to Chiang's military background and power base.¹ For party cadres in charge of the Nanjing-based government, however, the *coup* meant not the end of the revolution but recalibration of its objectives. Dai Jitao, the theoretician of the ascendant GMD right, was quick to reframe labor activism under the redefined priorities of the revolution, just as the new regime was busy subsuming the militant Communist-affiliated labor movement under a nexus of party and gangster-run "yellow" unions.² Praising labor for being the vanguard of the national revolution, Dai told workers in the former bastion of labor activism in Guangzhou in May 1927 to endure greater hardship and work cooperatively for the development of their industries instead of holding strikes and fighting for their own class interests. The harsh realities of imperialism that defined China's predicament rendered delusionary the striving of internationalist working-class solidarity as pursued by Communists, anarchists and others whom Dai branded as "reactionary elements" (*fandong fenzi*). National independence, formerly tied to a nascent proletarian political subjectivity, now required self-imposed bitter discipline (*woxin changdan*) on workers' part. Only by raising productivity could the state provide co-operatives, schools and

¹ Song Qingling, "Statement Before Leaving for Moscow," in *The Struggle for New China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1953), 9.

² Patricia Stranahan, *Underground: The Shanghai Communist Party and the Politics of Survival, 1927-1937* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 26-27.

insurance for the laboring masses.³ Anything that threatened the nation's fledging industries opened China to more imperialist domination.

Indeed, at stake in the party purification campaign were the heavily contested meanings of China's national revolution as institutionalized in the rivalries between the GMD and the CCP. The two parties disagreed on whether national liberation should also entail a wider attack on global capital or if the aim of securing China's survival in a hostile geopolitical environment was to be pursued without upsetting socio-economic relations domestically and abroad. Curiously, the ideological import of the April 12 *coup* has been downplayed in recent scholarly literature. After decades of competing historiographic orthodoxies imposed by the two Chinese states during the Cold War, historians are urged "to lay ideology aside and ... see Chiang not as a hero or a villain but as a human being," focusing instead on the GMD's pragmatic concerns over being outmaneuvered by the Comintern and the CCP.⁴ Yang Kuisong's majestic study of GMD-CCP relations sheds important light on the simmering ideological rifts between the two allies, but it still tends to see the collapse of the united front more as a result of raw power struggles between organizations and political figures than fundamental ideological differences.⁵

While I do not doubt the centrality of institutional power or even personal intrigues in political struggles, I believe one should confront the April 12 *coup* critically

³ Dai Jitao, "Gongren jiuguo de renwu you shi da youdian jiangci" [A speech on the ten items that workers should do for the sake of national salvation], *DJTXSWC*, 399-402.

⁴ Yu Miin-ling, "A Reassessment of Chiang Kaishek and the Policy of Alliance with the Soviet Union, 1923-1927," in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s*, eds. Mechthild Leutner et al. (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 98-99, 118-19.

⁵ Yang, *Guomindang de "lian-Gong" yu "fan-Gong"*, 61-174

in the wider politics of revolution in China without making a caricature of either Chiang or the party-state he led. The collapse of the GMD-CCP alliance was a culmination of deep-seated disagreements among modern Chinese revolutionaries on how a late developing, semi-colonized society could reclaim control of its political sovereignty, spearhead economic modernization, and construct a coherent subjectivity that encompassed the nation's diverse and uneven economic and cultural landscape. Like many fully colonized societies, China's quest for national independence was simultaneously a process of social and cultural remaking. Chinese revolutionaries confronted the danger that, under capitalism, formal political independence could just result in deeper economic dependence on Western imperialist interests.⁶ Although *geming*, which embodied the cosmological theory of the Mandate of Heaven, had long existed in the political discourse of imperial China, the character compound acquired distinctly modern significance as it became enmeshed in nationalist politics by the late nineteenth century. As political activists and intellectuals pondered on the events that created the modern French and Japanese nation-states, figures like Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) oscillated between advocating violent struggle against the Qing state and prescribing gradualist social reforms outside the political realm.⁷

⁶ Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), 53-54, 58. Republican China, where a weak nation-state co-existed with a plethora of formal and informal colonial possessions, encapsulated what Ellen Meiksins Wood identifies as the core dynamic of modern capitalist imperialism. Unlike earlier forms of imperialism, which relied mostly on territorial conquests for economic gains, imperialism since the nineteenth century employed a combination of formal state power and a network of economic pressures to maintain hegemony over subordinate societies. Furthermore, in addition to the imperialist nation-states, nations-states of peripheral societies were under constant pressure to act as "conduits of capitalism," making capitalist imperial domination much wider in geographical reach than the formal boundaries of individual empires. See her *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso, 2003), 14-22.

⁷ Jianhua Chen, "Chinese 'Revolution' in the Syntax of World Revolution," in *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, ed. Lydia Liu (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999). 361-70.

The debate between proponents of organized mass politics targeting the reigning socio-political edifice, and those who wanted a more limited program of cross-class national uplift continued into the Republican era. This debate is further intensified by the intellectual ferment of the New Culture Movement and the Comintern-engineered alliance between Sun's GMD and the CCP. The April 12 *coup* realigned the terms of the debate by bringing to the surface two distinct approaches to delivering China from economic underdevelopment and semi-colonial existence. On one hand, there was the Communist coupling of national liberation with class struggle. On the other hand, the radical right committed the GMD to a unique solution that was both *conservative* in its resolute opposition to class conflict and *radical* in its investment in mass politics as the harbinger of an independent nation free from the problems inherent in capitalist modernity. The radical conservatives' eventual victory brought about a program that promised an ethical and aesthetic, rather than social, revolution.

A Rightist Revolution

The conservative revolutionary paradigm was first and foremost a reaction against the rise of communism and labor militancy. Yet, due to the strong Soviet influence on China's national revolution in the 1920s, the stamp of Leninism was remarkably pronounced even on the prolific treatises authored by anti-communist GMD intellectuals in the days leading to and immediately after the rightwing seizure of Shanghai. The quest for organizational and ideological conformity that underlay Sun Yat-sen's fascination with democratic centralism remained as relevant for the radical right as it was for the left. But it was not only the Leninist model of state and party-building that survived the April

12 *coup*. Chiang Kai-shek's GMD regime also inherited priorities that confronted other national liberation movements inspired by the promise of the new Soviet Union: national independence and world revolution, engagement of workers and peasants, and the dialectic between vanguardism and the spontaneity of mass activism. In this sense, even as the GMD no longer challenged production relations between classes, the national revolution after 1927 continued to display the form of a Third World revolt against imperialist hegemony emanating from Euro-America and Japan.

The interwar years saw the increasing urbanization and industrialization of colonized and semi-colonized societies, which were more than ever incorporated into global capitalism as exporters to the metropolises. The laboring masses became a core component of nationalist movements led by westernized elites, pushing for both national independence and overhaul of social relations.⁸ In China, strikes against foreign capitalists and their governments in Shanghai and Guangzhou during the 1910s and 1920s left a strong impression on the GMD elite, convincing them of the need to enlarge the revolutionary bloc so that it included not only the educated few but also the mass of urban workers. Dai Jitao (1891-1949), Hu Hanmin (1879-1936), and Li Shizeng (1881-1973), who would emerge as ideologues of the radical right, were key contributors to the early debates on leftwing politics in China. The French-educated Li was one of the country's first anarchists and joined Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance in 1906 as an ardent advocate of mutual aid. In the 1910s and 1920s, he worked to bring young Chinese students to France on a work-study program, in which many future Communists had their

⁸ Beverly J. Silver and Eric Slater, "The Social Origins of World Hegemonies," in *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*, eds. Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 198-201.

first experience of industrial labor and became radicalized. As Chinese students and workers became politically active in the late 1910s, Dai and Hu were attracted to Marxism as they mused on the potential prowess of urban workers in furthering nationalist objectives in light of Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.⁹

In the immediate days after the purge, Dai and Hu still showed interest in Marxism and deployed it to criticize the CCP and the Soviet Union. They republished the German socialist Karl Kautsky's *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx* (1887), which Dai first translated from Takabatake Motoyuki's Japanese rendition from 1919 to 1920.¹⁰ Dai argued in one of the prefaces to his Chinese rendition of Kautsky, an ardent critic of Bolshevism, that many young activists were ignorant of Marx's writings. They failed, therefore, to discern the imperialist ambitions of the Comintern, subscribing blindly to the fallacious mission of world revolution with no concern for China's own survival.¹¹

Elsewhere, in a more provocative speech, Dai accused the CCP of sacrificing the "completely uneducated, utterly feeble and undisciplined" Chinese masses to the global struggle between imperialism and world communism. Without subscribing to strict discipline and organization under Sun Yat-senism, he warned, the nation and its people would never be recovered from their plight. To prevent talented youths from falling in droves to the Communist embrace, "faithful leaders" of the party had no choice but to

⁹ Herman William Mast III, "An Intellectual Biography of Tai Chi-t'ao from 1891 to 1928," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1970), 66-72.

¹⁰ Dai Jitao and Hu Hanmin trans., *Ziben lun jieshuo* (Shanghai: Minzhi shuju, 1927). The Chinese title drew directly from the Japanese version *Shihon ron kaisetsu*, literally "Explication of *Capital*". Paralleling the political trajectories of his Chinese translators, Takabatake Motoyuki (1886-1928) was a Japanese Marxist who became an ardent advocate of national socialism, claiming to have reconciled Marxism with the supposedly indigenous values of a corporatist national polity embodied by the Emperor. (Germaine A. Hoston, "Marxism and National Socialism in Taishō Japan: The Thought of Takabatake Motoyuki," *Journal of Asian Studies* 44 [1984]: 46.)

¹¹ Dai, "Xu yi" [Preface one], *Ziben lun jieshuo*, 2.

impose dictatorship, expressed in the namesake Chinese neologism *dikeweiduo*, on the Nationalist mass movement.¹²

Dai and his party colleagues presented in treatises published around the dramatic unraveling of the united front the GMD's utopian vision of mass politics that promised not only national independence but a new, salubrious form of moral and social existence. The national revolution purged of Marxist influences would prove superior to Soviet-style communism by eventually ending all forms of violent struggles that had been a feature of human civilization since the beginning of history. The socialist internationalism that inspired Third World revolutions and the GMD's own mobilization of urban workers in a common anti-imperialist struggle were transformed by the new custodians of the nationalist movement into a cosmopolitan utopianism, embodied in the Confucian ideal of *datong*, or Great Harmony.¹³

The party intellectuals explored in this chapter were early theoreticians among the GMD's radical conservatives. The group corresponded largely to the clique that the Wang Jingwei-led "left" faction in the party called the "new right," cadres who coalesced around Chiang Kai-shek in the months leading up to the April 12 purge and the consolidation of the Nanjing regime.¹⁴ It overlapped with, but was distinct from the coterie of GMD elders who met on Western Hills, Beijing in late 1925 to condemn the pro-CCP attitude held by Wang (1883-1944) and the Guangzhou-based Nationalist

¹² Dai, *Dai Jitao zuijin yanlun* [Dai Jitao's latest remarks], 2^d ed. (n.p.: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1928), 5-7.

¹³ It should be noted that *datong* had acquired socialist and communist connotations since the mid-Qing, as deployed by the Taiping rebellion leader Hong Xiuquan, late Qing reformer and philosopher Kang Youwei and even Mao Zedong. See *Zhongguo jinxindai shehui sichao cidian* [Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Social Thoughts], s.v. "datong."

¹⁴ Lestz, "Meaning of Revival," 5-7.

government he had led since Sun's death in March. Dai and Li, initially skeptical of the elders' hardline stance on the united front in 1925, ended up being fervent anti-communists in 1927.¹⁵ Ideologically, radical conservatives distinguished themselves from their leftwing and liberal critics primarily by claiming to remove foreign elements from the orthodoxy of Sun Yat-senism. It combined social conservatism with a party structure modeled on the GMD's former Soviet ally.¹⁶ In addition to similar claims of being committed to reviving their nation's primordial greatness, there was more that put the GMD radical conservatives in league with their rightwing equivalents active in Europe, Japan and Latin America. Most notably, party theoreticians who provided the ideological dimension of Chiang's China insisted that their regime was at the same time a revolutionary movement unbound by the crippled constitutional arrangements that Sun and his followers once supported.

In justifying the crackdown on Communists and the Shanghai labor movement, conservative revolutionaries like Dai and Hu took pains to differentiate themselves from ultranationalists and liberal politicians committed to the moribund constitutional order of the northern-based Beiyang warlord government against which the GMD was launching a military expedition. "The Chinese Nationalist Party," Hu stated brusquely, "does not sit about parliament and give flowery speeches, score applauses or cast votes." Its mission was to smash the existing order so that a new one guided by Sun's Three People's Principles could be built.¹⁷ They saw themselves as agents of pure revolutionary fervor

¹⁵ Yang, *Guomindang de "lian-Gong" yu "fan-Gong"*, 90-96.

¹⁶ Lestz, "Meaning of Revival," 12-15. Lestz compares the new right's conservatism to its ideological counterparts in Spain and Italy.

¹⁷ Hu Hanmin, "Qingdang zhi yiyi" [The significance of party purifications], in *Geming yu fan geming*, Lang Xingshi (Shanghai: Minzhi shudian, 1928), 158.

working to displace both the inertia of the party elite and the communist pseudo-revolution. Li, on the other hand, accused Marxism and Marxist-Leninism of being historically regressive and claimed what he called the revolution of *minsheng* -- people's livelihood or life of the masses – as more compatible with the latest advances in human civilization.¹⁸ The rightwing of the GMD branded itself not as a force of the part-warlord and part-parliamentary establishment, but one that was leading a mass political movement towards a third way that was neither capitalist nor communist as being practiced by imperialist powers in Euro-America or the Soviet Union.

Depoliticizing *Minsheng*

GMD ideologues' main complaint against communism was that it misrecognized capitalist imperialism as the ultimate reason for China's plight, when the country's most profound crisis was low level of national morale and development. In the summer of 1925, Dai published two influential polemics, *Philosophical Foundations of Sun Yat-senism* (*Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhexue de jichu*) and *China's National Revolution and the Guomindang* (*Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*). The pamphlets became so influential among politically aware readers that they were compared to Chen Duxiu's (1879-1942) famed magazine *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*). The GMD Central Executive Committee in Guangzhou, then still committed to the united front, censured *China's National Revolution*.¹⁹ Marxism, Dai argued in the two tracts, was philosophically too

¹⁸ Li Shizeng, "Xianjin geming zhi yiyi (yi)" [The significance of the current revolution – part 1], in *Geming yu fan geming*, 3.

¹⁹ Mast, "Intellectual Biography of Tai Chi-t'ao," 285; Circular No. 209, 17 October 1925, Hankou Collection, 163.7, Kuomintang Archives.

simple-minded, being premised on a materialist reading of history. He observed in *Philosophical Foundations* that Marxist politics was concerned only with the economic life of the people.²⁰ This lop-sided understanding of humanity informed Chinese Communists' flawed internationalism and neglect of the nation. It was pure "wishful thinking," Dai declared in *China's National Revolution*, that the competition between nations for survival would be overcome "once the economic structure was changed and capitalism eradicated."²¹ While claiming to remain unequivocal in his opposition to the infamous unequal treaties, Dai warned his country not to take part in a full-scale political struggle against imperialism, particularly any Comintern-led global initiative. China needed economic development (*jianshe*) and imports such as German science and American machines from industrially-advanced countries. "Not having developed our own country and rejuvenated our nation," Dai stated, "there could be no talk of world revolution."²² A resolute stance against imperialism had to wait until the all-important national "self-confidence" (*zixin li*) and "awakening" (*juewu*) were attained, which were themselves contingent on the development of the citizenry's material well-being (*wuzhi de jianshe*) with the input of global capital and technology.²³ Playing with the slippages inherent in the compound *geming*, Dai's national revolution was a plea for reformism even as it alluded to an end to capitalist hegemony and a world revolution against imperialism in the indeterminate future.

²⁰ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhaxue de jichu* (1925; reprint, Taipei: Zhongyang gaizao weiyuan hui wenwu gongying chu, 1951), 15 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

²¹ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 68-69.

²² Dai, *Dai Jitao zuijin yanlun*, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 9-10

In contradistinction to Marxist myopia on production relations, GMD ideologues claimed to offer a vision for humanity in its wholeness. They touted Sun Yat-sen as the premier theoretician of a total, instead of a narrowly materialist, revolution. Hu Hanmin claimed that Sun had unlocked the basis of human evolution, allowing the late leader to supersede European social theorists such as Rousseau and Marx. For Hu, all previous revolutionary theories were flawed for they erroneously considered particular episodes in history – struggles between church and monarchy in the Renaissance period, monarchy and civil rights leading up to the French Revolution, proletarians and the bourgeoisie in the twentieth century, etc. – as universal and timeless. Sun’s unique insight was to realize that humans had always been prone to struggle against one another. An exclusive focus on re-arranging political institutions or economic interests would therefore not solve the world’s problems. Only the Three People’s Principles – with their equal attention to the interlocked nature of nationhood, political structures, and economics – could address the totality of social life.²⁴ Only Sun Yat-sen’s total revolution could put an end to conflicts between peoples by preventing the degeneration of healthy nationalism into expansionary imperialism, developing a non-capitalist modern economy, and safeguarding genuine democracy from “hypocritical bourgeois democratic politics.”²⁵

While Hu was cautious in emphasizing Sun’s three-pronged approach to revolution, Dai performed a more creative reading of his mentor’s ideas, identifying *minsheng* as the core of revolution. The principle of *minsheng*, commonly rendered as people’s livelihood or socialism, was the most controversial aspect of Sun’s political

²⁴ Hu, “Sanmin zhuyi zhi renshi” [Understanding the Three People’s Principles], in *Geming yu fan geming*, 142-144.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 146.

theory that was contested by both Nationalists and Communists as vindication of their own social vision. Dai made two important interventions that effectively revised Sun's program. First, he subsumed the other two core elements of the Three People's Principles, nationalism and democracy, under the *minsheng* principle. He argued that the fight for an independent nation-state and the empowerment of the citizenry, including disenfranchised workers and peasants, was in the broadest sense part of a coherent endeavor to transform people's livelihood.²⁶ *Minsheng* was thus the ultimate goal of national and political revolution, a conceptualization of social life that is much broader and more ambitious in scope than the constitutional infrastructure of a political entity.

Having established the centrality of *minsheng*, Dai then went about redrawing the remit of people's livelihood so that it would not lend itself to calls for changes in the socio-economic structure. The faithful interpreter of Sun Yat-senism realized he was on rather flimsy ground here, as Sun died without delivering all his lectures on the issue.²⁷ That, however, did not deter Dai from building on what he saw as the revered revolutionary's inchoate theoretical impulses. Publicized lectures on *minsheng*, as Dai acknowledged, indeed covered the breadth of the people's everyday life with emphasis on material aspects such as clothing (*yi*), food (*shi*), housing (*zhu*), and transportation (*xing*). Conceptualized as the core site for such radical interventions as land reform and political enfranchisement of the masses, Sun's *minsheng* referred to the concrete everyday needs of a poverty-stricken population. As an ideological category, *minsheng* was what Harry Harootunian calls "the minimal unity of temporal experience," allowing one to

²⁶ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi*, 10-14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

understand the disorienting and violent social changes that global capitalism unleashed as one totality.²⁸ Dai inherited Sun's expansive vision of the social, but was evidently unimpressed by its mundane materialism. Claiming privileged access to Sun's handwritten notes and private conversations with his wife, Dai argued that the late leader was preoccupied with *yu* – the reproduction (*shengyu*), cultivation (*yangyu*) and education (*jiaoyu*) of the populace. On one level, *yu* was about population management, sustaining the living (*yangsheng*) and disposing the dead (*songsì*). It was concerned with entitlement to a good life among all its members, young and old. Combined with *le* (happiness), which Dai introduced with *yu* to complete Sun's theory of *minsheng*, the national revolution became a campaign to create for the citizenry “beautiful and elegant enjoyment” (*youmei gaoshang de xiangle*).²⁹ Sun's original emphasis on political economy – the seemingly commonsensical fundamentals of everyday life that nonetheless alluded to the complex social processes of a late developing, semi-colonial China – was transformed under Dai into a principle of aesthetics, a nebulous quest for the beautification of life. This politics of beauty, to which Sun's *minsheng* was attributed, was touted to have surpassed the epistemological naiveté (*danchun*) of communism and its exclusive focus on economic life.³⁰ Just as significantly, the *minsheng* “total revolution” also delegitimized any “narrow” campaign that aimed for a fundamental and

²⁸ Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 4. Harootunian observes that late industrializing societies like Japan experienced the cultural dislocations of capitalist modernity much more painfully than European societies, although the latter by no means hosted “complete” and conflict-free experience of the modern. What he does not mention is that for semi-colonized and colonized societies, the incompleteness of capitalism, otherwise known as uneven and combined development, was a matter of basic political survival.

²⁹ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi*, 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

immediate overhaul of production relations and imperialist privileges in China and the wider world.

Resetting the Agenda: A Revolution of Ethics

Dai's call for the aestheticization of life exhibited what Harootunian in a different context calls a phenomenological conceptualization of the everyday. Harootunian observes that attention to every minutiae of social existence might paradoxically result in a failure to reveal its underlying processes.³¹ Superficial phenomena overshadowed deeper structural determinants in Dai's understanding of *minsheng*. Ironically, Dai was among the first senior GMD cadres who coupled transformation of lived experience with reflections on cultural reification under capitalism. In his younger, more left-leaning days, the intricate ties between politics, culture, and morality were brought to bear under a critique on bourgeois culture and commodification of mass entertainment. In "Drama and the Common People" (*Yanxi yu pingmin*), a now obscure essay that appeared in a special edition of the party organ *Republican Daily* (*Minguo ribao*) marking the alliance between the GMD and the CCP, Dai reminisced about the pure bliss to which the masses were treated by drama troupes during temple fairs and other local festivals when he was a child in his native Sichuan province. China's belated encounter with modern consumerism meant that such carnivalesque scenes in which people freely put on colorful costumes and munched on their noodles while sitting randomly to soak in the free performance had become all but memories in just a few decades, even as this form of popular entertainment had been the norm for generations. In glittering Shanghai, one could only

³¹ Harootunian, *History's Disquiet*, 133.

find exclusive theaters in which prices were carefully calibrated, standardized and set prohibitively high for most common people.³² The rowdy but authentic happiness of folk entertainment was transformed into the genteel philistinism of urban consumer society. Far from sentimental nostalgia for an irrecoverable past, Dai's childhood memory provided the impetus for a revolutionary future. "What is the purpose of revolution?" Dai posed rhetorically. "It is," he continued,

to wrest the new culture which destroyed our old culture away from the minority so that the common people as a whole can reclaim the privileged position (*xingfu de diwei*) where they can partake of that new culture. Our goal is not excessive, for our ancestors had always possessed such privilege. In places where the encounter with modern civilization (*jindai wenming*) came somewhat late, even a man in his thirties like myself can recall the beauty of human sentiments and happiness of the common people.³³

The call to arms targeted at GMD cadres for the construction of a new national culture was all the more striking, given Dai's mature career as a traditionalist, considering how it implied not return to "old culture" but effort to reinvent the new. As a premier spokesperson of China's organized nationalism, Dai was echoing the theoretical and creative experimentations of his contemporaries in the New Culture Movement.

Indeed, in 1919, amidst the excitement of the May Fourth Movement, he wrote precisely that the rise of private property and the commodification of labor, which resulted in the displacement of workers from agrarian society, meant that Confucian ethics had become obsolete. Rather than seeking a return to antiquity, the imminent task facing the nation today was the creation of a new ethics that would address the inadequacies of capitalist social relations. He singled out in particular the

³² Dai, "Yanxi yu pingmin," in *Zhongguo Guomindang gaizu jinian Mingguo ribao tekan* (Guangzhou: Guangzhou Mingguo ribao she, 1924), 52-56.

³³ *Ibid.*, 56.

compartmentalization of morality into distinct public (*gongde*) and private (*side*) realms, a recent phenomenon that emerged from the ashes of an agrarian, family-centered economy.³⁴ Dai called for a socialist ethics that befitted a modern industrial society.³⁵ This new ethics entailed a utopian communist ideal of benevolence (*ren'ai*) and fraternity (*you'ai*) based on which the young and the old would be taken care of by the social collective as a whole and all members of society would treat each other as their own kin.³⁶ The state as an agent for moral change had yet to enter Dai's theorization. But his "socialist ethics," a decidedly idealist rendering of social relations, would justify the revolutionary state's active engineering of the everyday as a cultural, instead of politico-economic, project.

Six years later, when such key concepts as benevolence (*ren*) acquired conservative Confucian connotations in Dai's reinterpretation of the Three People's Principles, the nation-state was privileged as the agent and embodiment of an *ethical* construct. This contrasted with Sun's emphasis on economic life in his *minsheng* principle and Communist insistence on the transformation of production relations as the foundation of any revolutionary enterprise. The man who wrote in 1919 that Confucius was hopelessly harking back to ancient ideals that had lost relevance to the crumbling social order even during the philosopher's own lifetime now argued that non-compliance with Confucian tenets, the "foundation of peace and happiness," was to blame for all the chaos and carnage China had ever experienced since the Warring States period (475-221

³⁴ Dai, "Jiu lunli de benghuai yu xin lunli de jianshe" [The collapse of old ethics and the development of a new one], parts 1 and 2, *Xingqi pinglun*, no. 25 (1919): 2.

³⁵ Dai, "Jiu lunli de benghuai yu xin lunli de jianshe," *Xingqi pinglun*, no. 20 (1919): 1.

³⁶ Dai, "Jiu lunli de benghuai yu xin lunli de jianshe," no. 25 (1919): 2.

BCE).³⁷ He went on to observe that Sun Yat-sen had inherited the moral enterprise of the ancient Chinese thinker that was in sharp contrast to the alleged moral agnosticism of Karl Marx and Vladimir I. Lenin. “The basis of nationalism,” Dai declared in allusion to the Three People’s Principles, “is the ethics of filial piety (*xiaoci*). The basis of democracy is the ethics of trust and righteousness (*xinyi*). The basis of people’s livelihood is the ethics of benevolence and peace (*ren’ ai heping*).”³⁸

The GMD claimed to represent the unique Chinese moral ideals that Sun Yat-sen inherited from Confucius and his disciples. Dai’s reduction of Confucian universalist pretensions to the core of state-sanctioned national spirit (*Zhongguo minzu de jingshen*) served to establish what Antonio Gramsci calls “the autonomous, educative and moral activity of the secular State.” Unlike the cosmopolitan aloofness of premodern states run by an intellectual or ecclesiastical caste, Gramsci argues that modern political formations actively shape mass moral norms to serve the interests of the ruling classes.³⁹ The reconciliation of such abstract cosmopolitan ideals as benevolence and fraternity with the logic of modern nation-states was far from peculiar to rightwing Chinese revolutionaries. Extending Benedict Anderson’s famous thesis of the modern nation as an “imagined community,” Karatani Kōjin describes how the nation-state became the practical realization of fraternity. The Proudhonian ideal of mutual aid, which Marx had criticized

³⁷ Dai, “Jiu lunli de benghuai yu xin lunli de jianshe,” no. 20 (1919): 1; *idem*, *Dai Jitao zuijin yanlun*, 15.

³⁸ Dai, *Dai Jitao zuijin yanlun*, 15.

³⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 258-262. Joseph Levenson has identified the nationalist celebration of Confucianism, characteristic of the GMD in the 1930s, as signifying the final demise of its universalism. The hollowing of Confucianism’s philosophical heft coincided with the romantic yearning for a Confucian culture peculiar to the Chinese nation. (*Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968], 1: 107-108.)

as an empty romantic imaginary, was institutionalized in nation-states that promised equality under capitalism. Yet, as capitalism and equality were inherently incompatible, fraternal ideals degenerated into state-sponsored illusions that had no basis in social reality. Proudhonian or cosmopolitan political ethics as constitutive of modern nationalism, therefore, laid the groundwork for fascism insofar as it promised an egalitarian realm without confronting the private property system that governed social relations.⁴⁰ Karatani's insight is germane to our understanding of GMD radical conservatism not the least because among supporters of the April 12 *coup* were Chinese anarchists indebted to the French tradition.

Theorizing Revolutionary Vanguardism

While endowing the ethical state with the mission of building a benevolent, conflict-free nation, the exact composition of that state apparatus remained to be accounted for. Marxism might have become an anathema to all conservative Nationalists, but those who fought against the united front did not agree on whether the party should continue to operate along Leninist lines. The standard Proudhonian position would have favored a decentralized, local and participatory mode of government, a prescription that could not be further removed from a one-party state whose hold on power rested largely on the military. The jarring gap between anarchist ideals and a party-state engaged in violent internal power struggles proved slightly uncomfortable for the academic Li Shizeng who brought an anarchist critique of Marxist-Leninism to bear in justifying the

⁴⁰ Karatani Kôjin, "*Senzen*" *no shikô* [Considering "prewar"] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjû, 1994), 86-88.

GMD's clean break with communism.⁴¹ The Sorbonne biology graduate adopted an evolutionary notion of history and tied Proudhon's notion of human freedom to Sun's *minsheng* revolution, touting both as expressions of the latest stage of civilizational progress. He attacked communism for its economism and statism, the latter Li glossed in French as *statisme* or *etatisme*, and ridiculed dictatorship of the proletariat for being a pretext for an authoritarian polity (*zhuanzhi zhengti*) and the Third International for being a virulent form of imperialistic overreach. The best antidote to such revolutionary despotism was Proudhonism – class reconciliation (*quanmin zhuyi/reconciliation des classes*), universal harmony (*datong zhuyi/conciliation universelle*), decentralization, and anarcho-syndicalism, etc. “If what are better and new belong to the left and what are mediocre and old belong to the right,” Li quipped, “then it is obvious that Proudhonists are leftists and Marxists rightists.”⁴² In what might be best described as vivid anticipation of Cold World ideological moralism, Li contextualized the struggle between the Three People's Principles and what he called pseudo-communism as the global final battle between freedom and authoritarianism. He made the observation, twenty years before Hannah Arendt when the horrors of fascism were yet to fully manifest themselves, that Soviet communism and Italian fascism were different in name only.⁴³ “Should such a gigantic authoritarian country as Soviet Russia have its way and fulfill its ambition of establishing the universal authoritarian state that exists in the minds of a great many

⁴¹ Peter Zarrow argues, however, that Li and other anarchists' move to the right was a logical outcome of their desire for cultural changes under a stable, non-violent political order. Since the mid-1920s, the only possible guarantor of such order was Chiang Kai-shek's GMD. (*Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1990], 197-198, 202-204.)

⁴² Li, “Xianjin geming zhi yi (yi),” 3-6.

⁴³ Li, “Xianjin geming zhi yi (er),” in *Geming yu fan geming*, 12-14.

dreamers,” Li warned ominously, “the result would be no less disastrous than Shi Huangdi.” Recalling popular imagination of the maligned first emperor (259-210 BCE) of the Qin dynasty who maintained iron-fist control over a vast territory by suppressing intellectual activities, a much more powerful twentieth-century Soviet empire, Li declared, could only mean “the end of human freedom.”⁴⁴ The apparent Confucian indignation over the specter of a modern Qin empire writ large barely disguised the anarchist desire for a new civilization in which the coercive functions of the state machinery would be safely consigned to the dustbin of history.

All of this would have constituted a cogent and even prescient critique of the failings of Stalinism if Li had not been, at the same time, trying to present the GMD as compatible with the quest for personal freedom, participatory democracy and internationalism.⁴⁵ His dubious labeling of the Soviet bureaucracy as the latest installment of Oriental despotism aside, Li’s contemporary observation that the disciplinary power of both state socialism and fascism rested in their combination of organizational might and ability to demand unwavering political faith from activists was of tremendous insight.⁴⁶ Li was more equivocal, however, when he attempted to establish the link between the GMD’s rightwing *coup* and an anarchist program. He claimed that the GMD, like Proudhon, was conducting a political and social revolution based on the ideal of universal harmony, a program that was historically more advanced than economic revolutions and the simple competition for control over the state machinery.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-15, 19 n. 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

While Sun Yat-sen and his Shanghai-based successors were working to construct a new political and even world order, Soviet Russia was myopically obsessed with class struggle and the usurpation of state power, which Li dismissed as “court revolt” (*gongting geming*).⁴⁷ Having catapulted Sun’s *minsheng* revolution into the pantheon of revolutionary politics and evolutionary progress, Li backtracked slightly in his identification of the GMD with what he called the Proudhonian revolution (*Pu pai geming*). Li conceded that “China’s fourth-order revolution,” a more evolved form of political activism compared with class, political, and court revolutions, “is a revolution for the entire populace (*quanmin geming*) adapted to the complex demands of the situation.”⁴⁸ Proudhon favored absolute freedom, to which he admitted the GMD was not committed. Yet, the strength of the *minsheng* principle lay precisely in its ambiguity, thus allowing the Three People’s Principles as a whole to absorb various revolutionary ideas from abroad when circumstances so required. The catholicity of the Three People’s Principles meant it was ultimately compatible with anarchism. More specifically, Li argued that being a revolution for the entire populace – precisely that Sun’s expansive notions of nationhood and political right were not contingent on an analysis of class conflicts – the GMD movement was a good enough approximation of Proudhon’s *reconciliation des classes*. As Li concluded almost apologetically, “Although there are differences in the nature [of the two political perspectives, they] at least can co-exist, do not contradict each other and are not mutually exclusive. This is totally unlike the despotism (*zhuanheng*) and cruelty (*yanku*) of Marxists and the Communist Party.” The

⁴⁷ Li, “Xianjin geming zhi yiyi (yi),” 2-4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

affinity between anarchism and the Chiang's GMD derived as much from their inherent similarities as from their shared irreconcilability with communism, either at the theoretical level or in Bolshevik revolutionary practices.

Even areas where the two parties shared broad agreements did not escape Li's list of distinctions between the GMD and its nemesis. He acknowledged, for example, that detractors had accused Sun of promoting a strong central state, an objective also attributed to the CCP, in contrast with federalists like the southern warlord Chen Jiongming and constitutionalists within the GMD's early incarnations.⁴⁹ Citing the *Outline for Nation-building (Jianguo dagang)*, Li argued however that Sun and his followers, in particular Dai Jitao, actually called for a form of local government far superior to federalism. In this system, individual self-governing counties would cooperate to form a polity based on mutual aid (*fenzhi hezuo*).⁵⁰ To reclaim the elusive anarchist credentials of the GMD, Li even offered to concede that Sun might have preferred a centralized authoritarian state, "just as a family might rely on the parents to maintain unity." He was quick to add, however, that now that the irreplaceable "father" had died, the "siblings" who constituted the nation had no choice but to take charge of their own affairs and work together in a spontaneous fashion. "Even if Sun did not support federalism before," Li continued convolutedly, "it is wrong to construe that he would

⁴⁹ For an impassioned account of the struggle between the Sunist camp and the federalist agenda embodied by Chen Jiongming, see Leslie H. Chen, *Chen Jiongming and the Federalist Movement: Regional Leadership and Nation Building in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2000).

⁵⁰ Li, "Fenzhi hezuo wenti" [The problem of cooperative self-governance], in *Geming yu fan geming*, 20. The *Outline for Nation-building of the Nationalist Government (Guomin zhengfu jianguo dagang)*, which Sun penned in April 1924 shortly after the founding of the GMD-CCP united front, laid the theoretical foundation for an extended period of political tutelage (*xunzheng shiqi*), during which the GMD maintained absolute power over government. Among other things, the document provides for centrally-appointed heads of local governments at the provincial and county levels until citizens in individual counties are deemed sufficiently coached in exercising their political rights and ready to elect their own representatives.

oppose cooperative self-governance in his death.”⁵¹ The same benefit of the doubt was not extended to the other side of the political divide, despite the continual anarchist inflections in Chinese Communist discourses and practices. The lone figure within and without the GMD resolutely opposed to local self-governance was one Chen Duxiu, the secretary-general of the authoritarian Marxist-Leninist CCP.⁵²

By shedding communist impurities, the GMD could set China back to its destined transformation into a participatory polity. But Li’s labored projection of anarchist desires onto party purification was not shared by his colleagues. Dai and Hu wanted to reclaim, not renounce, Leninist vanguardism for their own purposes. Dai, in particular, disdained the political dilettantism of anarchists and, like Marxists, associated anarchism with utopian socialism. For Dai, anarchism was an instance of hollow Enlightenment idealism, a Kantian rendering of universal peace based on human reason and sentiments that took no account of historical dynamics. Dai charged, “Although their sentiments are most beautiful, their ideals lofty and their actions free from bounds, anarchists are always prone to compromises when confronted with the present conjuncture.”⁵³ In the past, he added, those who adopted China’s traditional disdain for social discipline and religious negation of reality might have become Daoists and led a secluded life away from humanity. Nowadays, one should not be surprised to find such withdrawal syndrome among anarchists in cosmopolitan Shanghai – “connoisseurs of leisure literature (*xiaoxian wenxue*) and enthusiasts of religious ideas among aristocratic playboys.”⁵⁴ A

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵³ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

combination of decadent aestheticism, anti-social religiosity and infantile utopianism was naturally no recipe for a sustainable revolutionary regime.

The problem with the national revolution so far, therefore, was that the GMD allowed for too much anarchism, not too little. If it was not for the party's failure to rein in its cadres, the Communists would long have been absorbed into one political bloc as Sun envisioned and not become such a headache. For Dai, only a disciplined, ideologically committed vanguard would lead China towards economic modernization, independence from imperialist domination and cultural renaissance. To mobilize the intellectually wanting laboring masses, and more crucially, to ensure they did not insist on their own interests at others' expense, the elite would have to first submit to one doctrine and one central leadership.⁵⁵ Having witnessed Sun's many failures before the reorganization of the GMD on the Leninist model, Dai no longer had the appetite for ideological diversity or a multi-vocal party elite. What he demanded was exclusive loyalty to the Three People's Principles:

There is no basis of unity in a political party other than ideology (*zhuyi*). Ideology is the nerve system of a party. Ideology also constitutes the blood veins of a party. Without a nerve system and blood veins, an animal could no longer be an animal. Without ideology, a party could no longer be a party.⁵⁶

The party was an organic entity, a life form that could be brought to an abrupt end should its core element – ideological discipline – be taken away. Dai, who was under such immense pressure working for Sun's embattled Guangzhou-based regime in the early 1920s that he once descended into mental disorder and threw himself into the river while

⁵⁵ Mast, "Intellectual biography of Tai Chi-t'ao," 142.

⁵⁶ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 25.

traveling to Sichuan for negotiations with regional strongmen, saw intraparty ideological non-conformity as nothing less than a disease. Both rightwing and leftwing deviations were virulent diseases (*bing*) attacking the body of the party.⁵⁷ Stating upfront in unequivocal terms that the GMD was a party that upheld the orthodoxy of the Three People's Principles and operated on a democratic centralist structure (*minzhu de jiquan zhi*), Dai's main complaint with the CCP was not that it was despotic but that it resembled too much the disciplined, ideologically committed political body that remained elusive for the GMD.⁵⁸

Extending his body metaphor, Dai argued that any organization was exclusive in nature. The existence of a tightly-knit Communist caucus, which paid no more than lip service to the Three People's Principles, was a parasite on the GMD's carcass (*quke*). The admission of Communists into the GMD was like "a large body (*quanti*) enveloping a smaller one." Yet,

as the small body worked to organize itself and manifest its exclusivity, the old cells [in the larger body] lose their vitality. Meanwhile, the small body feeds vociferously on the fresh nutrients, making the deformed [larger] body unable to maintain and rejuvenate itself.⁵⁹

Straying from the overall tenor of his treatise, Dai added that he was mainly concerned not with ideological incompatibilities but with a political parasite sucking on the organizational potency of its senior partner from within. He urged Communists working under the GMD banner to show unqualified loyalty towards the party, just as members of the clandestine anti-Qing Revolutionary Alliance had worked under a single organization

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

in spite of their varying ideological persuasions.⁶⁰ There is no doubt, however, that in Dai's eyes, the eclecticism and slack organization of an underground anti-Manchu body no longer had a future with the professional revolutionaries of a Leninist vanguard party.

The Body/Machine of the Party: Purge as Cleansing

Dai laid out a politics of faithful dynamism and redemptive action, not quiet deliberation and careful balance. Divided loyalties must be purged, not accommodated. The party-state he envisioned would not be a conversation of discrete political agents in the Enlightenment liberal democratic tradition. Instead, it would create a super-humanly agency by collectivizing the dynamism of individuals. While most famously known for his devotion to Confucianism, Dai's admiration for an ethics of benevolence and righteousness was actually anchored in an understanding of social beings that was far removed from the composed and rational humanism attributed to the great intellectual tradition.⁶¹ He began *Nationalist Revolution* with a vivid, metaphysical account of life that evokes vitalist philosopher Henri Bergson's celebration of creative irrational instincts. "Survival," he mused in a cryptic passage,

is simultaneously the original and ultimate goal of human life. Whenever the act of survival is frustrated, the impulse of life (*sheng de chongdong*) brings out in human a strong lust for survival (*shengcun de yuwang*). Thanks to the differing abilities within humankind and changing milieu of historical time, the lust for survival expresses itself in varying intensity and modes. ... These different manifestations of the same lust are self-aggrandizing (*duzhan*) and exclusionary (*paita*) in nature, while possessing at the same time the tendency to unify and dominate. ... The actual contents of the lust for survival constitute the enabler and

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶¹ Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 20-21.

origins of life, the necessary basis on which maintenance of life depends.⁶²

Dai located this potent will to life not in individual subjects but in the collective (*tuanti*) that embodied and synthesized the impulses and instincts of human existence. That collective was the party, the reigning ideological orthodoxy of which unified human urges. Inasmuch as ideology was the realization of raw instincts, it required not reason and logic but simple faith (*xinyang*) and devotion (*xinfeng*).⁶³ Dai's vision of a GMD commandeering irrational human dynamism was, not unlike those of contemporary fascist movements abroad, a powerful metaphorical rendering of the mobilized masses as a living body whose vitality had to be both unleashed and reined in. In the fascist celebration of political violence in interwar France, to take one particularly vivid example, mass energy was visualized in the "bodies" of grand muscular sculptures that evoked the larger-than-life icons from ancient Greece.⁶⁴

The party, with its sublimated primordial human senses and desires, was not only endowed with organic corporeality but also imagined as a ruthlessly efficient modern machine that rationalized and smoothed out the idiosyncrasies of its functionaries. While Li Shizeng believed that human progress would eventually make all forms of centralization obsolete, Dai argued that modernity required an even more tightly-knitted, standardized structure of top-down administration. "In today's industrial civilization where science is the norm," he observed, "all social organizations operate under the principle by which labor works with a unified purpose but is assigned separately to

⁶² Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, i.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

⁶⁴ Mark Antliff, "Classical Violence: Thierry Maulnier, French Fascist Aesthetics and the 1937 Paris World's Fair," *Modernism/modernity* 15 (2008): 55-58.

individual tasks. A party is also a society and it, of course, cannot afford to deviate from this principle.”⁶⁵ Dai’s promise to bring the latest management technologies of the mundane modern factory floor to bear on the organic revolutionary body might sound paradoxical. Yet, the Taylorist doctrine of instrumental rationality was not necessarily antithetical to the political sublimation of the primordial life impulses. Modern political culture, as Zygmunt Bauman observes, is a garden culture. The health, vitality and continuous growth of a society-as-garden require meticulous management, whereby elements deemed incompatible with the utopia of beauty were brutally and unsentimentally “weeded.”⁶⁶ A similar notion of society as an organic, corporatist entity underwrote the fascist promise to re-inject life into a national body plagued by the illnesses of “mechanistic” communism and liberalism.⁶⁷

It was this condensation of rationalization, surgical weeding and neutralization of diseases that conditioned the April 12 *coup* and distinguished it from being merely the intensification of rivalries between two power-hungry camps which were no longer willing to make space for each other. Historian Huang Jinlin astutely observes that party purification targeted not only Communists but also liberals and rightwing figures within and without the GMD who questioned Chiang’s supremacy.⁶⁸ He argues that the *coup* was a violent denouement of the GMD’s endeavor to maintain hegemony over the mantra

⁶⁵ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 43-44.

⁶⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 92.

⁶⁷ Mark Neocleous, *Imagining the State* (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press, 2003), 29.

⁶⁸ Huang [Hwang] Jinlin, “Geming yu fan geming – ‘Qingdang’ zai sikao” [Revolution, Counterrevolution, and the Purge of the Communists in the [sic] Nationalist China, 1927-1928], *Xin shixue* 11, no. 1 (2000): 133-135. Among the suppressed were GMD statistes opposed to Chiang’s earlier flirtations with the Comintern, the staunchly anti-communist Youth Party, and the social democratic National Socialist Party led by renowned constitutionalist Zhang Junmai.

of revolutionary truth from which its legitimacy and power ultimately derived.⁶⁹

However, one should not exaggerate the arbitrariness of the purge as Huang seems to have done, and the fact that rightists and liberals were targeted did not render spurious its anti-communism.⁷⁰ At stake in the bloody campaign was not only monopolization of coercive state power or hegemony over the now sanctified symbol of revolution but the building of a sleek, powerful and ruthless party-state machine that could re-inject vitality into the Chinese nation and deliver it from “corruption and debauchery.” The revolution, Dai told students at the party-run Sun Yat-sen University in 1927, was a matter of life and death, the only worthy key to “national survival and development.”⁷¹

While taking aim at Communist ideological fantasy and neglect of nationhood, Dai was anxious to prevent the purge from becoming a license for the spread of the “rightist disease” (*youqing bing*) that was also threatening the vitality of the regrouped revolutionary organ. For the GMD elder, the Communists’ formidable strength within his party contributed considerably to the inertia of Nationalist cadres, which contrasted sharply with the CCP’s dynamism. Developments that pervaded the GMD rank-and-files resembled those confronting revolutionary movements that had become too accustomed to holding the reins of state power and lost interest in attacking the status quo. Addressing elite university students who could soon join the party-state apparatus, Dai chided bureaucrats who monopolized day-to-day functioning of government for not attending to political theories and lacking a proper understanding of the GMD platform. All they knew

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷¹ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu* [The path for youth] (Shanghai: Minzhi shuju, 1928), 57. The collection, which appeared after the April 12 *coup*, derived from a series of speeches he gave as president of the Guangzhou-based institution.

were narrow managerial chores and a smattering of communist slogans that they perfunctorily brandished at mass rallies. Worse still, there were those for whom anti-communism meant a rejection of revolutionary activism itself. These people, who “failed to oppose imperialism, warlordism and bureaucratization, and who refused to join the masses,” were pandering to the anti-communism of such hideous counterrevolutionary figures as the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin (1875-1928). The distinctions and, indeed, commonalities between communism and the Three People’s Principles were naturally beyond the grasp of these foot-soldiers of warlords and bureaucrats.⁷² For Dai, rightist deviation – the degeneration of the GMD *nomenklatura* – was as virulent a cancer as the malicious Communist caucus on the already fragile body of the mass party.

Compared to the more easily identified target, communism, Dai’s complaint of faltering revolutionary enthusiasm among party-state functionaries was admittedly more nebulous. Yet, like Hu Hanmin, Dai’s fear that the GMD would become a zombie movement by being reduced to a nexus of bureaucratic procedures was inseparable from his distrust of liberalism and parliamentary democracy. With the benefit of hindsight and the ideological acumen of Sun Yat-sen’s *minsheng* principle, Dai attacked those who saw changes in the constitutional order of the state as the ultimate goal of political activism. While nationalists obsessed with taking revenge on the Manchus failed to understand the political and cultural innovations necessary for nation-building, those who fetishized representative democracy were also incapable of effecting wider changes in social organization. Dai acknowledged the critical role played by constitutional monarchists and the late Qing bureaucratic elite in the Sichuan railway dispute that eventually culminated

⁷² *Ibid.*, 61-62.

in the 1911 Revolution. However, their “formalism” (*xingshi zhuyi*) – the wishful idea that “changing the political structure into a constitutional polity and turning the state into a republic alone would lead to prosperity” – disabled them from making further contributions to the revolution once the Qing court was toppled and a Republican parliament was founded.⁷³ Worse still, parliamentary politics, which cohabitated with the warlord-dominated executive in Beijing, became a playground for corrupt politicians. These politicians, many of whom former anti-Qing revolutionaries who had long lost sense of ideological purpose, were merrily making compromises with militarists, bureaucrats and social notables from the old order, even as they retained a pathetic sense of superiority as parliamentarians of the republic.⁷⁴ Dai saw a timid GMD party bureaucracy, planted within the civil service and the military, reinforced by political careerists (*zhengke*) too comfortably ensconced in the parliamentary chamber. He had little sympathy for the anti-communists of this new Republican establishment. He noted sarcastically of cadres whose grasp of revolutionary theory was shaky, observing that “if it were not for the admission of Communists into the GMD, I am afraid these gentlemen would not even remember to feel confused or befuddled.”⁷⁵

More than a nihilistic power struggle, party purification was a campaign to remake the lethargic GMD into the dynamic machine and robust body that true revolutionary politics required. It aimed to cleanse elements within the revolutionary bloc that mistook acquisition of state power for nation-building. It was simultaneously a full-

⁷³ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 13-14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

frontal attack on communist ideologies and an internal insurgency against the GMD *nomenklatura* of which Dai was a part. Such animosity towards bureaucratism anticipated a recurring theme in twentieth-century China, expressed most rigorously by Mao Zedong in the 1960s, which saw a newly entrenched state apparatus locking horns with the revolutionary zeal that was supposed to unite the ruling party. Dai saw within the Communist Party the strength of ideological faith that remained elusive to the GMD.⁷⁶ The CCP might be numerically weak, but it compelled its cadres to subscribe firmly to a common platform. If the Communists were just a “ruble party” (*lubu dang*) thirsty for Russian money, Dai quipped, the brute force of dictatorship would be quite enough to eradicate it. But dictatorial violence, which could presumably be more effectively applied to self-serving state bureaucrats who constituted the GMD mainstay than to Communists, could not guarantee a conversion in ideological piety.⁷⁷

To ensure mass devotion to the GMD-led national revolution, the imminent task for Nationalists was to create new social norms and values that permeated everyday culture. In a move that again reminds one of Gramsci’s insight on the state’s entanglement with civil society, Dai advanced the argument that more than monopolizing the coercive apparatus of state power, winning hegemony in such ideological arenas as religion and aesthetics required specific attention to commanding faith and artistic production.⁷⁸ “If we consign party purification only to political power,” he warned, “I

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁷ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu*, 64.

⁷⁸ Gramsci described the transition, although never complete under bourgeois capitalist rule, of a modern state identified purely with the coercive dimension of governmental power to one that organized and embodied the collective consciousness of civil society. He noted further that the centrality of cultural planning in sustaining the hegemony of the reigning socio-economic order distinguished modern secular nation-states from premodern ecclesiastical regimes. (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 259, 262-264.)

can say for certain that it would be impossible to achieve a clean sweep (*chedi chengqing*)” against communism.⁷⁹ Dai was regretful that Sun Yat-sen’s revolutionary coalition failed to play a leadership role in creating a new national popular culture. He complained that most revolutionaries – “stubborn and inadequate” in thinking – refused to support Chinese language reform in 1914, leaving the important task five years later to such non-party intellectuals as liberal Hu Shi (1891-1962) and communist Chen Duxiu.⁸⁰ Without securing hegemony in the cultural sphere, the goal of fashioning a national revolution free from communist inflections would forever be elusive. For communism, a more malicious and stubborn tumor infecting the GMD’s nerve system than corruption, was an ideological malaise that wrecked havoc on those lacking piety towards the Three People’s Principle. Dai complained that radicalized youths, yet to be fully formed in their sap and vigor (*xueqi weiding*), were dancing to the tune of the CCP as if possessed by evil spirits (*zhong le fengmo*).⁸¹ The strong communist cultural influence on young minds and bodies was particularly worrisome as the future vitality of the national revolution depended ever more on a new generation of committed GMD cadres who are not fixated on securing stable government positions.

Reclaiming the Youthful Masses

Compared with disciplined and enthusiastic Communists, devotees of parliamentary democracy among Sun Yat-sen’s followers appeared inept and

⁷⁹ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu*, 64-65.

⁸⁰ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 46-47.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

anachronistic to the radically-inclined young generation. Parliamentarians, along with self-serving party-state functionaries and militarists running the Beiyang regime, were tainted with warlordism and failure of the early Republican experiment. As was the case in interwar Europe, liberal politics in China were associated with a weak and irrelevant establishment. In Mussolini's Italy, Fascists promised to rejuvenate the nation by replacing an older generation of liberal custodians of the corrupt capitalist regime with a youthful, forward-looking party elite. The Fascist elite could then build a new economic and moral order that was simultaneously anti-leftist and anti-liberal, putting in place a corporatism that would resist the spread of bourgeois capitalist social atomization.⁸² In China, where the liberal tradition was even weaker than Italy's, constitutional democracy was thoroughly implicated in the social chaos, weak foreign policy and reactionary behaviors attributed to the Beiyang warlord regime. Conservative revolutionaries like Dai had no doubt that the liberal experiment instituted by Sun had already run its course. Decadent parliamentarians, all "childish old citizens" (*youzhi de lao guomin*), were incapable of providing the rigorous discipline needed of a mass revolutionary party.⁸³ Constitutionalism was at once puerile and senile, and could hardly compete with communism in energizing idealistic youth.

It was imperative that the "old" inertia of parliamentarianism be cleansed so that the GMD would be ready to thwart off the pernicious influence of "youthful" leftist nihilism. Here again, one sees early echoes of the easily disturbed balance between inaction and adventurism that gave rise to subsequent debates in China's revolutionary

⁸² Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 93-98.

⁸³ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 45.

history. In an almost poignant note, Dai recalled that when he was young, he and his fellow revolutionaries were as romantically-minded as today's radical youths. Coupling bodily degeneration with declining national strength, he lamented how adolescent excesses had resulted in the poor health and weak spirit of experienced revolutionaries, thus undermining the entire enterprise of China's regeneration itself. Dai found a model of youthful stamina and mature discipline in Japan's Meiji oligarchs, crediting the spectacular success of the Meiji state-building program to the elders' own personal discipline and the inherent virility of the Japanese race. He warned of the detriments of frivolous (*erxi*) revolutionary activism and, reneging on his earlier enthusiasm for new ethics and culture, claimed that the chaos resulting from the destruction of China's existing social order could be worse than that of the late Ming period, which concluded with the founding of the "alien" Manchu empire. The crux of GMD anti-communism was to punish debauched (*zongyu*) youths who threatened the moral fabric of society, the licentious cosmopolitan playboys who doubled as perpetrators of leftwing adventurism.⁸⁴ Dai's ideal revolutionary youth was someone like the mining engineer Chen Lifu (1900-2001), who joined the party in 1925 prompted not by any dilettantish fantasy but his fervent commitment to industrial modernity – the railways, highways, coastal ports and industrial enterprises promised in Sun's nation-building blueprint.⁸⁵ Only when both bureaucratic inertia and juvenile indiscipline were fully purged could the GMD get on with the strenuous work of modernizing China.

China's future lay with the politically awakened masses who exuded youthful *élan*

⁸⁴ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu*, vi-x.

⁸⁵ Chen Lifu, *The Storm Clouds Clear over China: The Memoir of Ch'en Li-fu, 1900-1993* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute Press, 1994), 18.

and submitted themselves to the rigor of modern production. The working people were set to become the new subject of the revolutionary party, replacing Nationalist parliamentarians, entrepreneurs and industrialists who had presided over the state and state-owned enterprises since the fall of the imperial system. For Dai, the Republican political and technocratic establishment was no better than a crop of warlords, bureaucrats, corrupt magistrates and exploitative factory managers who cared little about the revolution. They were middle-aged men who failed to attend party branch meetings and alienated young intellectuals and activists.⁸⁶ The failure of the GMD machine to inspire and mobilize youths gave those with ulterior motives an opportunity to pursue their own selfish agenda. Alluding to the Communist penchant for class struggle, Dai chided those who reaped political benefits by engaging youths and the masses in destructive political campaigns.⁸⁷ Indeed, the youth often stood in for the entire masses (*minzhong*), whose lack of education and proper training presented the greatest challenge for the self-anointed custodians of the young nation-state. Adopting strong populist language, Dai accused the right of failing to recognize that workers and peasants' well-being was the core of the quest for national liberation. He declared that like all modern revolutions, the Chinese revolution was one in which the peasants and proletariat, aroused from their collective stupor, strived to reclaim their own fate.⁸⁸ The "young" masses, yet to realize their own potential, was to be the key to a new order that transcended both the defunct scholar-gentry polity of late imperial China and the liberal

⁸⁶ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 39-43.

⁸⁷ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu*, ii.

⁸⁸ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 36.

parliamentarianism that was ridden with crises even in the imperialist West.

Yet, as we have seen earlier in the chapter, even as workers were endowed with political subjectivity, it was subsumed under a nebulous community of life (*gongtong shenghuo*) presided over by the nation-state. The idealization of the nation as an organically bound, hierarchically organized *volk* free from social and economic conflicts pervaded Dai's re-articulation of *minsheng*. The state, Dai argued, had the important task of overseeing the renewal of the nation's culture (*wenhua*), an expansive nexus that incorporated the entirety of "the people's way of living, society's existence, citizens' economic well-being, and the life of the masses."⁸⁹ By perfecting the material and spiritual well-being of the masses and structuring collective life through generational, gender and other social hierarchies, the revolutionary state would return China to its rightful place among the most vibrant and creative nations. This fetishization of cultural rebirth, the quest to revitalize traditional spiritual virtues and the fear of social degeneration coalesced in Dai's accusation of young Chinese Communists for being both hard-headed materialists in denial of Confucian moral norms and licentious urban decadents who indulged in sex.⁹⁰ Invested in the priority of maintaining social order and the hypothesized livelihood of a unified nation, the political subjectivity of workers and peasants could only be realized under the GMD state's watchful eyes.

While Dai acknowledged that modern revolution was unthinkable without the proletariat, he refused to address the specific historical conjuncture that conditioned labor in semicolonial, late-industrializing China, confining the capitalist exploitation of labor

⁸⁹ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhixue de jichu*, 40.

⁹⁰ Dai, *Dai Jitao zuijin yanlun*, 14.

safely within the colonial metropolises.⁹¹ In China, labor (*gongzuo*) was no more than the inherent human ability to improvise on the gifts of nature, the transhistorical imperative of satisfying the material and spiritual needs of human existence.⁹² Dai's understanding of production, at least as far as China was concerned, belonged to what Louis Althusser aptly calls an anthropological ideology of labor – an idealist, depoliticized concept of production as the basis of social existence.⁹³ In his compartmentalization of the global political economy, the appropriation of use value by the wage system applied only to the West, while labor in China could only be understood through the highly hypothesized notion of culture.⁹⁴ Conceding that Chinese-owned modern industries had thrived with the boycott of foreign goods amidst the nationalist fervor of the May Fourth Movement, during which class identities of both the fledging bourgeoisie and the urban proletariat were sharpened, Dai insisted nonetheless that industrial development and capitalism in China were still in their nascent stage. He argued further that there were no inherent contradictions between the interests of China's small bourgeoisie and the goals of national revolution, thus rejecting any program that aimed at liquidating the capitalist class. Indeed, he attributed the hostility of a small section of the national bourgeoisie towards the revolution to imperialist treachery and "unrealistic" Communist demands.⁹⁵

With class struggle delegitimized as an option and industrial development held as the key to revolutionary success, the Communist mobilization of the masses was deemed

⁹¹ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 8.

⁹² Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhixue de jichu*, 39.

⁹³ Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979), 172.

⁹⁴ Dai, *Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang*, 9; *idem*, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhixue de jichu*, 39.

⁹⁵ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhixue de jichu*, 19-20.

counterproductive and self-serving. Dai criticized the CCP for its instrumentalist relationship with the masses, in which the people were cavalierly sacrificed in political struggles for the sole benefit of the Bolshevik organization. A truly symbiotic relationship with the masses, he proposed, would see the party vanguard pursue the “real interests” of the masses and re-channel their ignorant impulses. For example, if workers wanted to call a strike, visionary union leaders would discern the heavy price that such action could entail and persuade their less knowledgeable compatriots to hold such destructive campaign off. Rather than riding on the tide of spontaneous workers action, top union officials must resist “dangerous mob psychology” (*weixian de qunzhong xinli*) and exert authority over the masses. All revolutionary organization and propaganda were to tie the party-led mass movement (*qunzhong yundong*) tightly under sole aim of safeguarding the national collective.⁹⁶ Class interests and workers’ political agency must take back seat.

Mass politics under the GMD was conceived to prohibit workers, peasants and sympathetic intellectuals from taking matters into their own hands. Despite his occasional nods to Marxist language, Dai’s ultimate concern was not to give organized expression to the inchoate instincts of the proletariat and peasantry as independent political subjects in their own right. Instead, like how Sun Yat-sen viewed labor in the early 1920s, Dai subsumed working class activism under the vision of a national society unified in a common struggle against foreign domination. The GMD’s politics of class did not allow for class conflicts.⁹⁷ Quoting from Sun’s 1919 treatise on psychological reconstruction,

⁹⁶ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu*, 139.

⁹⁷ Michael Tsing, *Nation, Governance and Modernity in China: Canton, 1900-1927* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999), 81-82.

Dai credited the late revolutionary's privileging of direct action over deep knowledge as the key to harnessing the power of the ignorant and heteronomous populace. Like architecture in which division of labor dictated that construction workers dutifully take heed from the technical intelligentsia, future political campaigns would not see a meeting of minds between activists – a strategy proved to be inconsequential in the 1913 Second Revolution as most GMD parliamentarians refused to rally behind Sun in his military insurrection against Yuan Shikai. Instead, humble masses would faithfully execute directives from the messianic party leadership.⁹⁸ For a populace stuck in their intellectual stupor, it was far easier to blindly perform the revolution than to make full sense of its theoretical basis. Even if Sun's intellectual breakthroughs remained forever elusive for the clueless rank and file of the party, they could just play cogs in the wheels of the revolutionary machine. Those who possessed intellect (*zhi*) should of course lead the task of implementing the GMD program. Those who did not have the intellect must still join the action (*xing*).⁹⁹

Such celebration of the working class while denying the need for class struggle differentiated Dai from "Third World" Marxist revolutionaries. For Lenin, the up-and-coming Chinese Communist organizer Mao Zedong and Italian contemporary Gramsci, the party's pedagogical and agitational capabilities were wielded to interpellate a coherent, organized political subject out of the agricultural and urban masses. The goal of national liberation movements was to make the subalterns aware of the totality of social structure and their critical role in the creation of a new political and economic order. The

⁹⁸ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhixue de jichu*, 4-5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

fragmented and uninitiated masses presented a transitory condition to be overcome in the process of building a viable national revolutionary movement.¹⁰⁰ For the GMD, on the other hand, inadequate political consciousness among the populace was accepted ontologically as a symptom of national weakness. To liberate the masses from the nation's plight, the subalterns had to submit themselves to the dictates of an enlightened elite, the gifted minority who possessed the intellect to set themselves apart from the rest. Whereas communism promised to place workers and peasants in the revolutionary vanguard, the radical right envisioned them as humble underlings of the party leadership.

The Victory of Radical Conservatism

The ideological eclecticism of Hu Hanmin, Li Shizeng and Dai Jitao did not mean that the April 12 *coup* and the larger campaign against communism were just cynical moves to consolidate the GMD's monopoly on an expanding state apparatus. Instead, the *coup* was a necessary step for radical conservative Nationalists to invigorate a national revolution challenged by the party elite's deepening entrenchment in the still fragile bureaucratic apparatus on one hand, and on the other, the CCP's ideological and institutional claim on the revolutionary high ground. Reacting against the revolutionary fatigue of the apparatchiks and committed to suppressing proletarian political subjectivity, the desire for an anti-communist, nationalist activism constituted the ideological identity of the radical conservatives. This core group of intellectually-inclined party elders was anxious that Sun Yat-sen's enterprise could soon be corrupted beyond repair by established interests in the party-state or hijacked by alien leftwing nihilism. While there

¹⁰⁰ E. San Juan Jr., "Learning from Antonio Gramsci," in *From Globalization to National Liberation: Essays of Three Decades* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008), 5-6, 16-17.

was no unified radical conservative ideology, one cannot dismiss the unmistakable impulse to craft a third way to industrial modernity for a nation-state struggling to reclaim its sovereignty from capitalist imperialism while resisting fundamental changes to nascent capitalist social relations. This contradictory attitude towards handling China's predicament was itself a defining element of this revolutionary identity.

Nationalists vowed to bring the revolution forward, albeit in a conservative direction. Whether in the form of Dai's state capitalism or Li's anarcho-syndicalism, radical conservatives shared with their leftwing nemeses an impatience with institutional procedures and preference for direct political action. The GMD encouraged mass participation but, unlike Communists, allowed no challenges to the structure of socio-economic power. Nationalists celebrated the virile energy of the masses, but were alarmed that the latter could join the radical left. They acknowledged workers' political potential, but were quick to marginalize class as the basis of political action by placing it under a strictly cross-class national framework. While uncomfortable with social anomie and the ideological lethargy of government officials, the national revolution was committed to consolidating the modern capitalist economy that underpinned cultural commodification and the creation of a bureaucratic elite in an urbanizing society. The ideal result of the GMD's third way approach to global capitalism and its communist alternative would see the burgeoning bourgeoisie in China continue to thrive and the workers and peasants' movement reduced to welfarist activism under the party-state's stewardship.

Out of party purification emerged a political ethics that claimed to transcend the liberal capitalist pursuit of self-interest and the economism of Marxist materialism. The

minsheng principle laid claim to superiority as an all-round philosophy that enjoined the people to pursue both economic welfare and spiritual fullness as members of the Chinese national community. In practice, the Nationalist government undertook aesthetic tinkering of quotidian phenomena while leaving structural production relations untouched. It strived to depoliticize the demands of the laboring masses and reduced them to cultural problems. Social alienation, urban worker militancy, political inertia were attributed to the lack of a refined, dynamic and civic-minded communal lifestyle among the masses. The youth, whom GMD leaders most wanted to reclaim for the national revolution, was particularly targeted by state-sponsored mobilization campaigns. These initiatives, as we shall see in the next section, offered opportunities for the populace to take part in social movements while containing their political ambitions within the state's confines. The minutiae of everyday experience – what individuals consumed, how they spent their time, their behaviors in public and at home – took the place of social structures as prized objects of revolutionary realigning. School children joined scouting and learned to perfect their bodies and minds, pledging obedience to authority and readying themselves for a life of docile production. The war of resistance against Japan presented an opportunity for the entire populace to be molded into one laboring body bound by pious devotion to the nation-state. Yet, even as the GMD defined the ultimate goal of the national revolution in the language of spiritual rejuvenation, the very concrete political imperative of suppressing Communism always featured prominently on the radical conservative agenda.

PART II

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

CHAPTER 2

Reining in the Masses The Scouts of China as a Guomindang Youth Movement

In the immediate aftermath of the party purification movement in 1927, radical conservatives not only had to wrest control over the GMD machinery from Communists and compete for legitimacy with Wang Jingwei's relatively left-leaning faction. They were also confronted with the task of winning over the masses who played an increasingly critical political role under the united front. The alliance with Communists bequeathed to the GMD a double-edged sword. On one hand, cadres had already acquired experience organizing peasants, workers and students. Yet on the other, as Dai Jitao painfully came to realize, demands from the grassroots could equally cause a headache for the revolutionary elite. Communist influence over these emerging constituents must be displaced if radical conservatives in the GMD were to secure monopoly over the political process. The masses represented a politically potent but unpredictable totality that occupied an ambiguous position in the conservative revolutionary project. In urban centers like Shanghai and Guangzhou, both core sites of social activism, the ascendant radical conservatives faced the apparently paradoxical task of taming student and labor militancy on one hand and tapping their nationalist sentiments and support for a state that brought down the maligned warlord regime in the north on the other. As the confusion over an internal split within the GMD ended in Chiang Kai-shek's favor, the new Nanjing-based regime had to sustain and discipline the *élan* of the urban youth while directing it to activities that bolstered, not threatened, the social order.

Shifting youth engagement from one mode of social activism to another took multiple forms. In the days leading up to the April 12 *coup*, Chiang's functionaries acted

to develop alternatives to the then Communist-dominated, GMD-affiliated student movement and its equivalents for peasants and workers. Radical right figures determined to exterminate their political enemies took a leaf out of what Chen Lifu, then Chiang's secretary, recalled as a "favorite trick of the Communists" – forming clandestine party cells within student and labor unions to influence and eventually take over larger organizations.¹ The aggressive mobilization of young citizens seemed to have petered out as soon as the Nanjing regime consolidated power over its rivals to the left. Historian Huang Jianli suggests that the consensus within the GMD mainstream by the end of 1927 was to confine young people to the classroom. The party-state demobilized inter-school student unions, substituting them with self-governing associations (*zizhi hui*) based at individual campuses and barred from participating in school administration.² Unleashing the all-powerful but fickle energy of young urbanites was a formidable task for the Nationalist state that did not have much faith in students' judgment. Young people, as I discussed in the previous chapter, were considered by radical conservative ideologues as politically unreliable, intellectually naïve, emotionally unstable, and waiting to be exploited and sacrificed by unscrupulous politicians, even as he celebrated youthful spirit as a regenerative mechanism for the Nationalist movement.

The GMD's hesitant embrace of youth as a political and ideological construct was put to relief by the scouting movement. Introduced during the earliest days of Republican China as a new means to engage youngsters, scout troops quickly spread across missionary and secular schools in treaty ports such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, Ningbo,

¹ Chen Lifu, *Storm Clouds Clear over China*, 58.

² Huang Jianli, *The Politics of Depoliticization in Republican China: Guomindang Policy towards Student Political Activism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), 182.

Wuhan and Nanjing. Despite the association of scouting with the British Empire and the Western presence in China, the GMD set up its own scout troops in 1926 and unified all scouting organizations in the country under one national body in 1927. While intensifying control over the leadership and curriculum of the scouting movement, the GMD absorbed rather than replaced the personnel and international network of the former civic organizations. Until it was subsumed under the Three People's Youth Corps in 1940, the GMD resisted turning the Scouts of China into a full-fledged youth wing of the party. In its training methods, ideological contents and aesthetic manifestations, scouting exhibited two modes of molding mass society. First, it served to build individual character and instill apolitical civic consciousness in the young citizenry. The movement was part of an everyday culture that promoted submission to authority over political dissent, technical knowhow over bookish contemplation, and obligatory happiness over discontent. Second, scouting also made room for a more militant approach to forming the national revolution's future vanguard. There were tensions built into youth mobilization under the GMD, but, at the fundamental level, the two occasional conflicting approaches to mass engagement complemented one another as the new state attempted to win consent among upwardly mobile urban dwellers while preserving its propensity for action as a disciplined movement.

Mass Organizations and Chiang Kai-shek's GMD

Traditionally, the GMD has been considered to be adverse to mass politics. Historians point to an in-built ambiguity that underscored the party's relationship with the masses since the May Fourth Movement. Party leaders since Sun Yat-sen had wanted to

capitalize on popular fervor but could never bring themselves to fully endorse it, particularly when the loyalty of student and other mass organizations was far from guaranteed.³ Indeed, party leaders demonstrated a clear disinclination towards students' participation in national politics after 1927. Nation-wide student networks were dissolved by Dai Jitao and University Council (*Daxue yuan*) president Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), and students' role in mass movements was severely limited and defined by individual school authorities. Like any other ruling party, the GMD right was less eager to engage the people directly in the political process after it secured state power. Arif Dirlik suggests, however, that the GMD's failure to embrace the masses was indicative not just of political inertia but of a deeper paradox that plagued the party's revolutionary ideology. He argues that some party leaders, particularly Wang Jingwei, had as late as 1930 hoped that the GMD could maintain an active social base to distinguish the party from the burgeoning bureaucratic infrastructure. Yet, even activists who appreciated the need to sustain grassroots enthusiasm feared that popular demands, once given an organization form, would have social revolutionary implications that engendered class conflicts and threatened interclass unity that underwrote the national revolution.⁴ In sharp contrast to communist and other fascist parties, which identified strongly with politicized youths, the impulse of the conservative GMD leadership was to depoliticize and tame mass enthusiasm, including that of party loyalists.⁵

³ Huang, *Politics of Depoliticization*, 188-192; Lü Fang-shang, *Cong xuesheng yundong dao yundong xuesheng: Minguo ba nian zhi shiba nian* [From student movements to mobilizing students in China, 1919-1929] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1994), 395-417.

⁴ Arif Dirlik, "Mass Movements and the Left Kuomintang," *Modern China* 1 (1975): 64-72.

⁵ Chiang quickly grew disillusioned with the Lixingshe, a secret organization inaugurated by the Leader himself in February 1932. Chiang's former pupils at the Whampoa Military Academy who staffed the clique and its front groups were faulted for their naiveté, sectarian zeal and high ego. (Wakeman,

The portrayal of the post-1927 GMD as a cautious bureaucratic establishment estranged from the populace obscures the ways in which the regime continued to engage the masses, harnessing, cultivating, and disciplining youth activism after the end of party purification. After all, a core priority of radical conservatives like Dai Jitao was precisely to cleanse bureaucratic inertia and assert the party as a popular political force.

Admittedly, the GMD did not have the equivalent of the paramilitary, ideologically-driven Hitler Youth that prepared future National Socialist cadres. But tapping mass energy in overtly political campaigns was not necessarily the norm among radical rightwing regimes in the interwar period. Worker and youth organizations in Fascist Italy, even as they became integral parts of Mussolini's party-state, were primarily engaged in managing recreational programs like sports, mass outings, and widening access to such commercial entertainments as theater and radio. Grouped according to sex, age and activity, Fascist associations were, as historian Victoria De Grazia aptly suggests, truly *mass* organizations set up to counter class-based political consciousness. Instead of developing campaigns that prized strong partisan commitments, Italian Fascists' outreach to the people emphasized the subtle neutralization of antagonistic popular demands by embedding an elaborate network of social services and leisure-time management initiatives in the everyday life of the masses. By channeling citizens' expectations to focus on individual consumption, the Fascist establishment worked to avoid class tensions from coalescing into proletarian agitations for changes in social relations. The

Spymaster, 79; Lincoln Li, *Student Nationalism in China, 1924-1949* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994], 73-74.)

Italian fascist state co-opted local networks, the Catholic Church and, most significantly, an emerging consumer market to organize consent for a corporatist economic order.⁶

The concept of consent facilitates a re-examination of GMD youth mobilization strategy for it focuses attention beyond institutions like student unions, paramilitary organization, and party-affiliated secret societies. Consent, as De Grazia borrows from Gramsci, emphasizes the subtle and often unarticulated dispositions in popular consciousness that lend legitimacy to the ruling bloc. It evokes Dai's insight that a revolution in people's livelihood must deliver a new national popular culture that infused public and private life, from a modernized common language to affordable drama performances. Cultural and ideological maneuvers that apparently had no significant political bearing were in fact critical in sustaining state hegemony and diverting popular quest for participation in the polity to non-threatening modes of activism. By realizing how quotidian experience was integral to the efficacy of social orders, we begin to unveil the ideological mechanism that allowed a new fascist regime to transition from a revolutionary movement that mobilized cadres for the seizure of state power to a dynamic order that organized active consent from a much broader constituency.⁷ The state's interface with society necessarily had to expand beyond the limited number of political activists to encompass a vast array of communities and networks.

The quest for consent did not mean GMD gave up using violence to suppress political dissent. As Dai realized, however, dictatorial power alone could not produce

⁶ Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Culture in Fascist Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 14-16, 33-44.

⁷ Mabel Bezerin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 13-14.

ideological loyalty among the governed. The ruling bloc had to align popular sensibilities with the new socio-economic hierarchy. It laid claims on the New Culture ideal of nuclear family, tapping the juridical, symbolic and widespread sentimental investment in an emerging institution associated with the modern urban petit-bourgeoisie.⁸ During the New Life Movement, the state seized on film, literature, and sensational media events to craft a new paradigm in moral activism.⁹ Scouting was enlisted by the GMD to cultivate mass consent from before the April 12 *coup*, through the New Life Movement, and right up to the Second Sino-Japanese War and beyond. Instead of simply withdrawing itself from the masses, the party-state was more sophisticated in motivating popular sentiments to bolster support for its campaigns against the Communist challenge or more protean threats like modern consumerism, unhygienic customs and tardiness.

Scouting before 1927

The GMD's co-optation of scouting represented another layer to the regime's scheme to secure popular consent, using a set of institutions, rituals and pedagogical practices inspired by a liberal concept of social participation. Founded by British general Robert Baden-Powell in 1907, scouting was very much a product of British metropolitan entanglement with its overseas empire. A celebrated career soldier with stints in India, Malta and Africa, Baden-Powell got his inspiration for the organizing and training of

⁸ Susan Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915-1953* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 78-79, 86, 132.

⁹ Lean, *Public Passions*, 155-158. Liu Jihui [Joyce C. H. Liu], "Sanshi niandai Zhongguo wenhua lunshu zhong de faxisi wangxiang yiji yayi: cong jige wenben zhengzhuang tanqi" [The fascist drive and the symptoms of paranoia in the filmic and other cultural texts in China in the 1930s], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan*, no. 16 (2000): 6-36. Liu observes that GMD cadres and even leftwing intellectuals in the 1930s shared with German national socialists an idealist investment in the irrational collective will.

boys from his experience fighting the indigenous Matabele population in Rhodesia in 1896 and setting up the South African Constabulary from 1900 to 1902.¹⁰ The new youth program, invested with a romantic attachment to the outdoor as an allegory to imperial adventurism, fused such mid-Victorian bourgeois value as individual responsibility with more immediate anxieties over foreign threats, socialist politics, and the pernicious effects of modern life in Britain. The idea was “to produce efficient recruits for the empire” through a mass movement that revitalize the martial quality of an urbanized, effete and debauch young citizenry in the metropole. Scouting spread across British colonies in North America, Africa and South Asia in the early twentieth century, adopting a “dual guise” as both an expression of imperial commonwealth and a vehicle for promoting socio-political cohesion through personal service and brotherhood.¹¹ While undoubtedly steeped in imperial ideology as *Pax Britannica* began to unravel, scouting caught on in colonial societies as industrialization outside the metropole produced a small but powerful urban middle class.

The two faces of scouting co-existed in tension as the practice was first introduced to semi-colonial China in 1912 around the time when the republic was founded. China’s first scout groups, whether attributed to the Wuchang-based missionary school teacher Yan Jialin or institutions operated by the municipal administration of Shanghai’s British-dominated International Settlement, were strongly tied to the cultural and military might of the West. Scout leaders and scouts who wrote about their

¹⁰ Tammy M. Proctor, “‘A Separate Path’: Scouting and Guiding in Interwar South Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000): 607-608.

¹¹ Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 3-6; Allen Warren, “Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Ideal,” in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 238-241.

experiences at Shanghai Municipal Council schools recalled the alien and exotic allure of the activity, from the English verbal commands to the distinct navy blue jacket and khaki shorts that participants wore.¹² The association of scouting with Western imperialist presence was reinforced by suggestions that Shanghai's International Settlement community led a nascent nation-wide scouting movement. G. S. F. Kemp, principal of the Public School for Chinese, declared in a 1917 issue of *New Youth* that his Boy Scouts Association of China, founded in April 1913, was to "spread the Scout Movement over China," leading a unified organ comprising not only troops in Shanghai, but also local associations in Hankou, Guangzhou, Suzhou, Tianjin, Beijing and Nanjing. Appealing to "the gentry of China" for financial support, Kemp emphasized the apolitical dimension of the movement he putatively led. "Scouting is not intended to make soldiers of boys," Kemp assured his potential Chinese sponsors, "nor is it intended to lead youths to interfere in the government of the country." He highlighted how scouting was a potent tool to structure the quotidian routine of pampered, ill-disciplined youths. Instead of "dawdling about the streets and alleys" and being waited on by servants, boys filled "every moment" of their leisure time with open air, healthy habits, lively music and physical labor.¹³ One of Kemp's Chinese collaborators, Li Qifan of the Shanghai-based Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), was quoted by *Education Review (Jiaoyu zazhi)* as saying that the practice was being localized for the interior, devising sets of

¹² Wang Youqian, "Wo suo zhidao de tongzijun" [The Scouts of China according to my knowledge], in *Zhenjiang wenshi ziliao*, ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Jiangsu sheng Zhenjiang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, no. 25 (Zhenjiang: Jiangsu sheng Zhenjiang shi zhengxie, 1993), 169; Shen Lumin, "Wo suo zhidao de Shanghai tongzijun" [Scouting in Shanghai according to my knowledge], in *Shanghai wenshi ziliao cunao huibian*, ed. Shanghai shi zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 11:154.

¹³ G. S. K. Kemp, "Boy Scouts Association of China," *Xin Qingnian* 2, no. 5 (1917): 1-2.

Chinese verbal commands and replacing the expensive woolen uniform with cotton.¹⁴

Adapting to local sensibilities, scouting was presented as a timely innovation designed to rescue urban China from the malaises that were already plaguing industrialized society in the West – wastefulness, juvenile restlessness, and declining moral standards.

Aside from its foreignness, early Chinese observers writing during the Great War saw scouting as a form of military preparation. In the same issue of *Education Journal* that published Li Qifan’s plan for the popularization of the youth program in the hinterland, an article that investigated scouting in the United States compared the Anglo-American initiatives in their “militarism” (*junguo zhuyi*) to the systematic training and drilling of German youths since the end of the Franco-Prussian War. Identifying the origins of boy scouts in Baden-Powell’s experience as a general in South Africa, the article emphasized the mobilization of youths as members of the wider settler community against indigenous Zulu insurgents. Scouting, rendered by the author as “young volunteer corps” (*shaonian yiyong tuan*) in Chinese, was a means to train a reserve force.¹⁵

Scouting’s inherent ambiguity as an avowedly non-military venture with military origins and army-like uniforms, hierarchies and drills reflected the blurring of demarcations between the trenches and civilian populations in modern European warfare. It also held resonance among Republican educators towards the end of the First World War as they moved China’s physical culture away from an emphasis on military citizenship through rigid calisthenics popular during the late Qing to competitive sports that contributed more

¹⁴ Xisan, “Tongzijun zhi taolun” [A dialogue on scouting], *Jiaoyu zazhi* 8, no. 5 (1916): 12.

¹⁵ Tianmin, “Meiguo shaonian yiyong tuan” [Scouting in the United States], *Jiaoyu zazhi* [Education review] 8, no. 5 (1916): 40-41.

directly to individual cultivation.¹⁶ The 1917 curriculum adopted in the city of Wuxi for scouts, who ranged from twelve to more than twenty years of age, placed knowledge of the military ranks, ceremonies and hierarchies and such quasi-military skills as weaponry and cartography among a wide list of optional subjects ranging from swimming, hiking and survival in the wild to translation, music and horticulture. Indeed, one recent amendment to the curriculum was to relegate military training from a core to an optional subject so as to avoid the impression that scouting was a cadet program for the armed forces.¹⁷ Scouting became a means to subsume military training under a broader program that cultivated a range of capabilities and knowledge that future citizens should possess.

From the end of the First World War until the April 12 *coup* in 1927, scouting spread across institutions in the coastal provinces. Prominent high schools adopted the organization as part of their overall curricula. For reformist proponents, scouting embodied latest American pragmatist education theories that privileged action in learning and the molding of children as social beings.¹⁸ They also saw the movement as a device for nation-building, particularly in the face of attempts spearheaded by figures like Kemp to run scouting from Shanghai's International Settlement. The Nanjing-based Chinese Scouts Research Association (*Zhonghua tongzijun yanjiuhui*), initiated by organizers from Jiangsu province in 1921, offered itself as the first contact point for scout troops across the fragmented country. Educators in Jiangsu also petitioned the provincial

¹⁶ Andrew D. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 38-39.

¹⁷ Tang Changyan, "Zhonghua Jiangsu Wuxi tongzijun zuzhifa dakewen" [Q&A on the organization of scouts in Wuxi, Jiangsu], *Jiaoyu yuekan*, no. 5 (1917): 42-53.

¹⁸ Robert Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 179-180.

government, controlled by a Zhili Clique warlord, to provide financial support for the 257 scout troops and their 7,237 participants through extra budget provisions for schools. In piquing the state's interest in scouting, the movement was portrayed as an international fraternity for fully-fledged nations. Compared to the United States, where the Congress passed a resolution identifying scouting as a national undertaking (*guojia shiye*), China did not even have a unified network for scouts organizations at the provincial level.¹⁹ The state's failure to provide funding and an overall institutional structure for scouts from Tianjin in the north to Taishan in the south was a reminder of China's status as a semi-colonized and internally fragmented country unqualified to stand among the family of twentieth-century nations.

The alignment of scouting with the nationalist project in China echoed similar developments in colonial societies under the British. While Baden-Powell valued conformity to social order and invested in the civilizing and proselytizing missions inherent to the British Empire, the youth movement he pioneered became a vehicle for nationalist agitations in Ireland, Palestine and India. In the 1910s, the British Raj refused to extend recognition to scouting for fear that Indian nationalists would turn it into a militant anti-colonial movement. The lack of official sponsorship, however, did not prohibit nationalist activists and foreign missionaries from imitating the boy scouts in the metropole and launching similar undertakings for Indians.²⁰ In early twentieth-century China, the linking of scouting with nationalist mobilization was strongest in the GMD's

¹⁹ Tang Changyan, "Minguo shinian zhi tongzijun jiaoyu" [Scouting in 1921], *Xin jiaoyu*, no. 2 (1922): 236-240.

²⁰ Timothy H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 64-65.

base in Guangdong where the movement was coordinated by provincial authorities. Historian Robert Culp argues that the centralization of scouting was a new development during the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937) that the GMD imposed on heretofore loosely federated troops in Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang.²¹ While this might have been the case in the lower Yangzi region, on which Culp's research focuses, the situation was rather different in the southern province. The state in Guangdong required all troops to register with a province-wide body run by the American-educated Wang Xianzhao, a YMCA organizer who pioneered scouting in Guangzhou in 1915, and Cheng Zuyi, of the Guangdong Higher Normal College. All scouts in the province wore the same set of uniform, operated under one organizational structure and students from different schools were sent to receive training as scout leaders.²² In the provincial capital, mayor Sun Ke (1891-1973) placed scouting under the direction of the municipal education department in 1924 and began to formulate a unified curriculum. The practice was extended to girls and introduced to the school curriculum at the upper primary level and beyond.²³

The hybridity inherent to scouting with hints of militarism, imperialism, reformism and nationalism allowed the newly reorganized GMD regime to build a disciplined mass organization on the foundation of an existing movement. A Leninist party was able to reach out to a Westernized, missionary school-educated urban elite

²¹ Culp, *Articulating Citizenship*, 180; *idem*, “Zhongguo tongzijun – Nanjing shinian tongzijun shouce zhong de gongmin xunlian yu shehui yishi” [Scouting for Chinese boys: civic training and social consciousness in Nanjing Decade boy scout handbooks], *Xin shixue* 11, no. 4 (2000): 25.

²² Chen Juequan, “Guangzhou tongzijun shilue” [Brief history of scouting in Guangzhou], in *Guangdong wenshi ziliao*, ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengxie huiyi Guangdong sheng weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, no. 73 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1993), 149-150. Li Pusheng, “Tongzijun zhi lueshi” [Brief history of scouting], special edition on the scout carnival, *Guangzhou Mingguo ribao*, 23 May 1925, 4.

²³ Chen Juequan, “Guangzhou tongzijun shilue,” 150.

committed not necessarily to Sun Yat-sen's political agenda but to training physically virile youngsters versed in practical skills and devoted to general social service. Furthermore, scouting's internationalist pretensions allowed the GMD to maintain a moderate image when dealing with foreign educators, who, as in the case of Shanghai, introduced the practice to Guangzhou and remained powerful organizers. The GMD and its affiliated institutions enjoyed a close working relationship with the American-funded Lingnan University. Lingnan scouts participated in province-wide activities while their American leaders were invited to train future scoutmasters at the party-run Guangdong University (the predecessor of Sun Yat-sen University that incorporated the Higher Normal College).²⁴ When an entourage of 125 scouts, scout leaders and photographers from Lingnan went camping outside Guangzhou in 1926, these "prominent Chinese citizens and students" enjoyed the protection of a 75-strong contingent from the National Revolutionary Army.²⁵ Despite its increasingly fervent nationalism, the GMD's stance towards foreign scout organizers at this early stage was one of gentle co-optation rather than outright incorporation into party-controlled bodies.

The GMD's accommodating attitude did not mean that the party concurred with the values foreign scout organizers believed the movement should imbue in young boys and girls. While scouting as envisioned by Kemp belonged to an Anglo-American liberal tradition that valued the cultivation of individualistic citizenship and social activism that did not serve specific political causes, scout educators working under the GMD thought

²⁴ "Canjia ben dahui tongzijun tuanshu renshu ji biaoyan zhonglei yilan" [Number of troops and scouts, and the nature of their performance at the event], special edition on scouting exhibition, 4; Li Pusheng to Guangdong University administrative meeting, 17 October 1925, Sun Yat-sen University Collection, 31-2-24, Guangdong Provincial Archives.

²⁵ *Newsletter for Americans* no. 452, May 1926, reel 40, Lingnan University Collection, Guangdong Provincial Archives.

otherwise. Nationalism and anti-imperialism were the main motivations behind their efforts to promote the practice in institutions run by the party-state. Li Pusheng, an Aceh-born teacher who was among the first batch of scout leaders trained by Wang Xianzhao in 1917, cited Baden-Powell's military victories in South Africa and Japan's investment in building a young generation with strong physical prowess as his inspirations for scouting education in China. As the chief scout (*tongjun zhuren*) at the affiliated secondary and primary schools of Guangzhou's Higher Normal College, Li led boys in a city-wide rally against brutal treatment of Shanghai textile workers on strike by the British in May 1925. After the Guangzhou demonstration itself ended in bloodshed on June 23, at which a scout was killed by British troops along with some sixty protestors, Li decided that the GMD was the only force capable of freeing China from imperialist influence. Upon joining the GMD as a cadre at the Youth Department, the radicalized activist suggested that the party needed its own scouting apparatus.²⁶ In 1926, the Youth Department submitted a plan to the party headquarters for the reorganization of scouting as the Nationalist youth wing. Directly challenging the apolitical claims Kemp and others made for scouting, the proposal accused the organization of being a product of Anglo-American influence and a tool of imperialist encroachment into China.²⁷ The GMD inaugurated the Party Scouts (*dang tongzijun*) on May 5, 1926, shortly before it embarked on a military expedition against the warlord regime in Beijing.

²⁶ Li Pusheng, *Wo bushizi de muqin* [My illiterate mother] (Hong Kong: Dongnan yinwu chubanshe, 1956), 25-27.

²⁷ "Zhongyang qingnian bu tiyi chuangan Zhongguo Guomindang tongzijun an" [Youth department's plan for the establishment of the Nationalist Party Scouts], 1926, *wubu*, 10738, Kuomintang Archives.

The Party Scouts constituted not as much an entirely new organization as reconfiguration of the existing scouting movement formed under provincial and municipal aegis. Scout activists from Guangdong University, including Li Pusheng, were charged with the formulation of the new body's regulations and their implementation, while the university president was to serve as the director-general (*zong ganshi*).²⁸ Aligning the ideological import and operational infrastructure of scouting and the party-state apparatus in Guangdong anticipated the GMD's approach to the youth organization network after radical conservatives gained the reins of power after April 1927. Scouting methods were valorized due to their purported compatibility with Sun Yat-sen's mass mobilization theory. The Youth Department's proposal called on scout leaders to "penetrate deep down" (*shenqian*) into the people's mind, just like how their British, American and Japanese counterparts instilled support for the monarchy, bourgeois rule and "Great Japanism" (*da Riben zhuyi*) in their respective young citizenries.²⁹ They received training in military organization, learned to master new media like cartoon and public speaking, and were taught GMD key policies through the angles of class analysis and mass psychology.³⁰ While the GMD claimed scouting for itself only in 1926, the party made its imprint on scouting as part of its revolutionary praxis even before the founding of the Party Scouts. The Guangdong-wide scout carnival in 1925, held to raise funds for a memorial hall dedicated to the recently deceased Sun Yat-sen, demonstrated the party's ideological investment in a movement with controversial origins. Zou Lu

²⁸ Li, *Wo bushizi de muqin*, 27; GMD Youth Department to Guangdong University President, 5 April 1926, Sun Yat-sen University Collection, 31-2-24, Guangdong Provincial Archives.

²⁹ "Zhongyang qingnian bu tiyi chuangan Zhongguo Guomindang tongzijun an," 1926.

³⁰ Guangxi Party Branch Youth Department, "Report on scout organization," 14 January 1927, *wubu*, 11122, Kuomintang Archives.

(1885-1954), the Guangdong University president who participated in early agitations against the GMD-CCP united front, censured Western imperialists for their militaristic (*jun guomin*) scouting education but exculpated Baden-Powell. The British lieutenant-general's military-inspired training methods were lauded for promoting order and beauty in schools while subjects like hiking, first aid, and fire fighting were praised for imparting eminently practical skills on adolescents.³¹ The imperialist pretensions that informed scouting were set aside in Li Pusheng's admiration for how Baden-Powell managed to deploy urban youths among the South African English-speaking colonialist community in arduous military tasks like transmitting messages, transporting supplies, and gathering intelligence as if they were nothing more than enjoyable pastimes.³²

Having separated scouting from its problematic history, GMD affiliates claimed the movement as their own. Anticipating developments in the Nanjing Decade, scout training in Guangdong was rebranded as a tool for putting into practice Sun's proclivity for guided action over political consciousness in working with the populace, a theory central to Dai Jitao's formulation of GMD vanguardism. The emphasis on hands-on learning was touted as a natural extension of Sun's exhortation to his less intellectually-inclined comrades to execute (*xing*) the revolution, even if they could not understand (*zhi*) it. Similarly, young children learnt surveying techniques without understanding geometry; they knew how to identify directions by using a compass and observing stars, even if they were too young to make tails and heads of physics and astronomy. Most

³¹ Zou Li, "Yanshuo ci" [Speech], *Guangzhou Minguo ribao*, 23 May 1925, 1.

³² Li Pusheng, "Tongzijun zhi lueshi." Li was referring to Baden-Powell's Mafeking Cadet Corps, a paramilitary group led by a thirteen-year-old during the Second Boer War (1899-1900). Considered highly effective in helping the numerically-challenged British force in its defense against Dutch settlers, the corps was one precursor to the scouting movement.

significantly, scouts were constantly cheerful, putting on smiles as they received orders from superiors. The ability to appear joyful without appreciating the “philosophy of smiles” (*xiao zhi zhexue*) was touted as another instance of how actual practice took the pride of place in scouting.³³ Displaying happiness without being happy was thus the quotidian counterpart to mass enthusiasm for revolutionary action in the absence of conscious conviction in concrete revolutionary aims. Experiential learning, a core tenet of John Dewey’s progressive education tradition to which scouting belonged, contributed to shaping a skilled, target-oriented citizenry whose social activism was matched by their underdeveloped political consciousness.

Transition to a New Order: Politicization and Depoliticization

The ostensible paradox built into this depoliticization of political participation in the GMD’s early experimentations with scouting shaped the movement’s direction after the 1927 *coup*. Much changed as the center of GMD was shifted from Guangzhou to Nanjing. Activists like Li Pusheng remained in Guangzhou and were marginalized from the new order in the making.³⁴ With just over 8,000 party scouts divided into forty troops, the relocated Nationalist state did not believe its short-lived centralization attempt in the south would serve as the foundation for a nationwide scouting network. Dai Jitao did not mince his words explaining to his comrades in Guangdong why their earlier efforts had become irrelevant.³⁵ “In the past,” the now Nanjing-based official observed in 1931,

³³ Chen Bingquan, “Sun Zhongshan yu tongzijun” [Sun Yat-sen and scouting], *Guangzhou Mingguo ribao*, 23 May 1925, 2-3. In spite of its title, there is no evidence that Sun took an interest in scouting, much less involved in its organization.

³⁴ Li, *Wo bushizi de muqin*, 27.

³⁵ Chen Yuequan, “Guangzhou tongzijun shilue,” 151.

scouting was not initiated and run by the GMD but was a system imported from abroad, therefore activists then were not deeply tied to the party. If they were to work for us before scout training in various locales was given a unified form, they would not only fail to benefit the development of the movement but even jeopardize (*youwu yu*) party supervision of the scout enterprise. ... The Central Executive's position on scouting organization in Guangdong is that our party must first control and unify things there. Only when this is achieved can we consider recruitment of personnel.³⁶

Dai overstated the degree to which scouting was free from state influence before 1927, but he articulated eloquently Nanjing's determination to take firm control over organizations that dealt with the masses and ensured their absolute loyalty to the post-*coup* regime. That the southern province was quickly slipping into the hands of warlord Chen Jitang (1890-1954), who held the true reins of power in the former Nationalist base from 1929 to 1936, did not inspire confidence. In 1933, Dai accused scout leaders in Guangdong of a more serious crime: "Bolshevizing" (*chihua*) the movement.³⁷ A Nationalist-led scouting movement, loyal to the Republic and the Three People's Principles, was to be launched anew from the nation's new capital.

Dai's remark that activists long involved in imperialist institutions were disqualified from playing a central role in key party initiatives was, however, more a statement of preference than a strictly enforced policy. One core scout functionary who worked to bring scouts across the country under Nanjing's fold was Zhang Zhongren (1898-1971), a graduate of the missionary-run Tianjin Anglo-Chinese School (*Xinxue xueyuan*). Zhang, who spearheaded his alma mater's scout troop in 1915 while working at the American consulate, was appointed a commander (*siling*) at the Scouts of the

³⁶ Dai Jitao, "Tongyi tongzijun zuzhi jiangci" [Speech on unifying scouting organization], *DJTXSWC*, 808-809.

³⁷ Dai, "Wei xiugai tongzijun guilü gao tongzijun gongzuo renyuan shu" [Letter to scout organizers on the revision of scout laws], *DJTXSWC*, 808-809.

Chinese Nationalist Party (*Zhongguo Guomindang tongzijun*) in 1928 and played an active role fine-tuning the Nationalist regime's centralizing imperative in disciplining youth activism. Commander Zhang and his unrelated fellow scout activist Zhang Xiaoliang (1905-1982) served respectively on the planning and preparatory committees of the Scouts of China General Association (*Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui*). In fact, Zhang Zhongren was credited with proposing the general association to provide Chinese scouting with a national locus. The association was envisaged as a “sound, independent and standing central organization” modeled on Boy Scouts of America.³⁸ Reforms to scouting organization began in 1929, when Zhang Zhongren's central command (*siling bu*) was placed directly under the GMD Central Executive Committee instead of the Training Department. Another symbolic but no less significant change was to rebrand the Scouts of the Chinese Nationalist Party into the less partisan-sounding Scouts of China (*Zhongguo tongzijun*).

These results of these initiatives, which cumulated in the founding of the Scouts of China General Association in 1934, were ambiguous enough to allow for different interpretations. Zhang Zhongren saw the partial distancing of scouting from the GMD apparatus and his American-style organizational framework as right steps towards liberal democracy. He heaped praise in a 1935 speech to future scout leaders on scouting bodies in Britain and particularly the United States for embodying the democratic principles that governed public life in the two countries, even as he was also enthusiastic about scouting in authoritarian Japan. In contrast to the GMD's hegemonic claims over politics and

³⁸ Zhang Xiaoliang, “Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui yundong xiaoshi” [A brief history of the campaign for a Scouts of China general association], MS, April 1932, Zhang Xiaoliang Collection, National Pingtung University of Education Institutional Repository (hereafter cited as NPUE), <http://140.127.82.166/handle/987654321/1677> (accessed 10 August 2012).

society, Zhang touted the United States Congress, which granted a charter to Boy Scouts of America in 1916, as a mechanism for citizens to push for change and progress without a revolution. While many GMD cadres saw scouts as future successors of the national revolution and envisioned thorough infusion of the Three People's Principles in the scout curriculum, Zhang argued that character (*pin'ge*) cultivation should hold pride of place.³⁹ The admirer of parliamentarianism was more vigilant of fascist challenges to Anglo-American liberalism emanating from Mussolini's Italy than his spiritual mentor. Unlike Baden-Powell, who endorsed *Opera Nazionale Balilla* as a program that built character and body, Zhang accused the Fascist youth organization in a 1935 article of exhibiting a narrow nationalist vision. With its overt "political agenda and program," the Balilla was "a scouting-like concoction that was decidedly not scouting."⁴⁰ Governed by its own organizational apparatus instead of belonging to a department of the GMD was for Zhang an indication that China's premier youth movement was at least moving in America's direction instead of Italy's.

Reality was, however, more complicated. Dai, who would become the vice-president of the General Association, headed a Training Department that opposed changes in nomenclature. As late as 1928, the department complained that the name "Scouts of China" failed to reflect the GMD's authority over the organization.⁴¹ Even as

³⁹ Zhang Zhongren, "Ying-Mei he Riben tongzijun gaishuo" [A brief introduction to scouting in Britain, America and Japan], in *Tongzijun wenxian* [Documents on scouting] (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 247-255.

⁴⁰ Zhang Zhongren, "Yidali de Balila" [Italy's Balilla], in *Tongzijun wenxian*, 264-266. For Baden-Powell's flirtations with the Balilla and the Nazi Youth, see Rosenthal, *Character Factory*, 273-278.

⁴¹ Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang zhixing wei-yuanhui xunlian bu, "Zhongguo tongzijun mingcheng ji zuzhi yuanze an" [Proposal on principles governing the naming and organization of the Scouts of China], 31 July 1928, *huiyi*, 3.3/47.10, Kuomintang Archives.

central command was transferred out from the Training Department, Dai vowed that the party would continue to provide direction and ideological justification for scouting.⁴² Unlike student unions, which were dismantled in favor of individual self-governing associations that were isolated from one another, the GMD took a more nuanced, corporatist strategy in managing scouting by co-opting reformist functionaries within the movement even if their political sensibilities were in some variance with the rightwing majority's. The penetration of overtly partisan groupings like Lixingshe into the civil society organization was partial and took place in a low-profile manner.⁴³ The GMD's overall approach to scouting, and to education as general, was to project itself as beyond politics. The regime's claim to political disinterestedness not only appealed to figures and organizations initially uneasy with the GMD but rendered opponents of the party-state politically self-serving and even morally dubious. Among the first within the party to think seriously about the shape of mass politics under a consolidated Nationalist regime, Dai pledged in the lead up to the *coup* that future youth movement would concentrate on improving academic attainments and cultivation of hearts and minds. Instead of treating teenagers as politicians' private soldiers, the conservative revolution would bring young protesters back to study and work. Future struggle for national survival was to take place in "libraries, laboratories and workshops."⁴⁴ For educated youth, contributing to the new social order, not political factionalism, was the way forward.

⁴² Dai, "Tongyi tongzijun zuzhi jiangci," 808; idem, "Tongzijun duiyu shehui guojia minzu shijie renlei yingfu de zeren jiangci" [Speech on scouting's responsibility to society, the nation, the state and human race], *DJTXSWC*, 814.

⁴³ Wakeman, *Spymaster*, 76-77.

⁴⁴ Dai, *Qingnian zhi lu*, 141-155.

Dai's dictum that the national revolution would no longer be launched from the street appealed to the habits of the Westernized bourgeoisie, to which Zhang Zhongren belonged, and to the aspirations of modestly educated white-collar "petit urbanites" who would by the 1930s make up 40 percent of Shanghai's population.⁴⁵ His revised *minsheng* program, with the two new additional categories of cultivation (*yu*) and leisure (*le*), had found a home in the middle-class civility that scouting promoted. Scout curriculum placed considerable emphasis on what Culp identifies as treaty port ideals of hygiene and etiquette. Cub scouts (*you tongjun*), recruited from primary schools, were assessed in their ability to exemplify a modern healthy urban lifestyle that included practices such as keeping nails neat and short, taking regular baths, breathing with one's nose, and avoiding used towels.⁴⁶ Older participants were introduced to sophisticated but expensive hobbies like photography. Scouts for whom a camera was out of reach could spend leisure time gathering mementos from everyday life. They could collect shells and plant specimens while camping or, more in tune with their urban commercial surroundings, keep track of photographs, trademarks, or advertisements for movies, spoken drama and exhibitions.⁴⁷ Girl scouts learned "feminine" labor like needlework. The association of scouting with medieval Europe's "chivalric heroism" (*qishi de*

⁴⁵ Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 63.

⁴⁶ Culp, *Articulating Citizenship*, 186; *Zhongguo tongzijun choubeichu gongzuo baogao* [Report of the Preparatory Committee of the Scouts of China General Association] (Nanjing: n.p., 1934), 93. *Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang zhixing weiyuanhui xunlian bu, Tongzijun chuji kecheng* [Elementary scouting curriculum] (Nanjing: n.p., 1930), 245-252.

⁴⁷ Cao Yongfang, "Tongzijun sheying zhuanke jiangzuo" [Special lecture on photography for scouts], *Zhongguo tongzijun* 2, no. 2 (1936): 14-16; Zhang Xiaoliang, "Ji'nian wu de baocun he souji" [Preserving and identifying mementos], *Zhongguo tongzijun* 2, no. 2 (1936): 4-6.

yingxiong qigai) and survival in the wilderness was far from forgotten.⁴⁸ But Zhang Xiaoliang also acknowledged that a program that promised only rustic adventures could not be popular among parents. Urbanites were hardly excited by the prospect of sending their children out in the forest to brave the elements. While appealing to active and outdoor-loving children with a curriculum of camping, hiking, swimming, knot-tying and flag-signaling, scout leaders needed to persuade skeptical parents that a training regime that traced its origins to the bushes in southern Africa would produce “successful modern youths” in urban China.⁴⁹ Sensitivity to the tastes and social ideals of the upwardly mobile middle class defined the tenor of Chinese scouting and GMD youth politics for the rest of its rule in Mainland China.



Figure 1. Girl scouts at a Nanjing high school performing needlework. (*Zhongguo tongzijun* 2, no. 2 [1936], 10.)

⁴⁸ Xu Guanyu, “Jigei yiwei xiao pengyou de xin (yi)” [Letter to a child, I], *Zhongguo tongzijun* 2, no. 2 (1936): 12.

⁴⁹ Zhang Xiaoliang, “Zenyang zhengqiu ertong laizuo tongzijun” [How to recruit children into scouting], MS, October 1931, Zhang Xiaoliang Collection, NPUE, <http://140.127.82.166/handle/987654321/1680> (accessed 10 August 2012).

The GMD's displacement of mass movements from political struggle to economic production found an ideal outlet in scouting, which engaged urban students in innocuous social activities and personal cultivation. Shared dispositions in varied matters from bathroom habits to fashionable pastimes positioned the ruling party as the guardian of petit-bourgeois values and lifestyle. Yet, it is important not to confuse the wide range of artistic and athletic endeavors promoted by scouting as a sign of Nationalist China's pluralism and distinction with other radical conservative regimes.⁵⁰ The promise to divert young people's attention from divisive political strife to bodily training and spiritual cultivation was inseparable from the GMD critique of communism as materialistic and unpatriotic, and of leftwing students as effete cosmopolitans overwhelmed by puerile angst and hedonistic desires. Scouting was the ideal mass movement for the GMD, for it combined voluntarism, action, discipline and political ideals that lent support to reigning power relations. Despite its jealously guarded apolitical image, Baden-Powell's scouting was a response to elite fears over decline in Britain's moral, physical and military qualities among the working masses of early twentieth-century industrial society. Not unlike Republican China, Edwardian Britain was beset by a deep sense of crisis: urbanization produced crime and weak bodies, labor unions threatened "natural" social hierarchy, and the heretofore almighty empire was challenged by an ascendant Germany. To reinstall discipline and order, Baden-Powell proposed a "total ideology" that fully conditioned youths' values and emotional responses through carefully crafted games,

⁵⁰ Culp, for example, contrasts the GMD's pluralism with the militaristic and totalitarian tendencies of Showa Japan, Fascist Germany and Nazi Germany. (*Articulating Citizenship*, 206-207.) Berezin argues, however, that reliance on violence petered out as Mussolini usurped state power and that Italian fascist socio-cultural practices were not necessarily more repressive than non-fascist states in Europe and North America. (*Making the Fascist Self*, 13-14.)

rules and rituals. The totalizing ambitions of British scouting, as well as the imperative to train individuals into virile and patriotic citizens who shunned away from disruptive leftwing politics, explained Baden-Powell's initial flirtations with the *Ballila* and the Hitler Jugend.⁵¹

In China, the radical nature of the scouting experiment was put to even higher relief by its association with the New Life Movement. Launched in 1934, the same year in which the Scouts of China General Association was founded, the New Life Movement traced its root to campaigns that targeted erstwhile Communist sympathizers after Nationalist forces wiped out the CCP-led Jiangxi Soviet in the rural hinterland. The movement was a revolutionary experiment that sought to eliminate wastes, change habits, strengthen bodies, tame leftwing radicalism and prepare a nimble citizenry who took on production orders with relish and military-like determination. It intervened in the most mundane of everyday chores: the clothes one wore, the food prepared in family kitchens, the side of the street pedestrians walked on, spitting and urinating in public.⁵² While Chiang Kai-shek and other Nationalist leader took pain to portray the New Life Movement as a restoration of China's Confucian values, the prominence of scouting highlighted how the GMD partook in a wider global current that cut across radical rightwing and conservative liberal social activism. As vice-president of the Scouts of China, Dai Jitao brought together conservative elitist disdain for the incivility of his underclass brethren and ambitions for radical transformations in the body politic. Echoing the patrician tone of Baden-Powell's 1908 Scout Law, Dai derided his compatriots for

⁵¹ Warren, "Citizens of the Empire," 238; Rosenthal, *Character Factory*, 10, 273-278.

⁵² Clinton, "Fascism, Cultural Revolution, and National Sovereignty," 201-208.

being self-obsessed and resentful of those who achieved fame and success. The “new life” (*xin shengming*) he envisioned for youngsters would aim for civic harmony in which loyal and contented citizens went out of their way to help one another, despite the class distinctions that had set them apart in the first place.⁵³ Scouting contributed to the New Life agenda by projecting a unified social body that valued service and “usefulness” of its members. The pragmatic dictum of “learning by doing” – acquiring practical skills that were applicable in factory floors and laboratories instead of knowledge – ensured that children not become vermin (*ducong*) who sucked out national resources and threatened social order.⁵⁴

In its exhortations for the populace to minimize consumption, uphold public civility, engage in household production and avoid foreign fashion items, the New Life Movement was a total mass movement that subsumed the more specific mandate of scouting. Chiang Kai-shek’s 1934 *Outline of the New Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong gangyao)*, a long list of proper behaviors that constituted a revolution in everyday culture, was duly reproduced in the commemorative publication marking the launch of the Scouts of China general association.⁵⁵ Scouts became foot soldiers of the New Life ideal, patrolling streets to make sure public spaces were hygienic and

⁵³ Dai, “Tongyi gonggong mudi yu fangzhen shi tongzijun chenggong de yuejue jiangci” [Unifying social goals and targets is key to the success of scouting], *DJTXSWC*, 828-829. The fourth law stated that “a scout must never be a SNOB. A snob is someone who looks down upon another because he is poorer, or who is poor and resents another because he is rich.” For a full text of the 1908 Scout Law, see Rosenthal, *Character Factory*, 109-111.

⁵⁴ Dai, “Tongzijun xunlian zhi mude de jiangci” [The purposes of scout training], *DJTXSWC*, 834-836.

⁵⁵ *Zhongguo tongzijun choubeichu gongzuo baogao*, 113-123.

pedestrians wore clean, decent clothes.⁵⁶ The injection of propriety, whether expressed as Confucian-inspired rites (*li*) or modern-sounding courtesy (*lijie*), into a productivist ethos characterized both the indigenous New Life Movement and the treaty-port-originated youth organization as the two initiatives set about promoting individual cultivation and nurturing reliable and healthy workers.

The investment in middle-class ideals of civility was, moreover, intimately tied to the GMD's core political agenda that was geared to diffuse leftwing influence in mass politics. Like the New Life Movement, the ongoing military campaigns against Communists motivated the state's interest in scouting. As Dai explained to scouts in Hankou, a city close to a major Communist base on the border of Hubei province, "red bandits" (*chifei*) were degenerates who grew up without the cultivation that scouting afforded. He said,

President Chiang of the Scouts of China, who is also the chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, visited Hankou recently. He had won a number of battles and purged many red bandits. We must press on to destroy red banditry from its root. We should realize that these bandits are also Chinese; they are our compatriots and brothers. Why is it that they fail to seek self-improvement and instead make trouble? It is because they did not receive an education and never learned how to become an upright person (*zuoren de daoli*). This is one sure indication of China's decay and gloom.⁵⁷

The link between brutal suppression of dissent and patriarchal concern for people's moral well-being could not be clearer. Along with Chiang Kai-shek's military prowess, Dai enlisted the scouting doctrine of doing a good turn to somebody every day, translated pithily into Chinese as "a good deed a day" (*rixing yishan*), as a weapon for uprooting

⁵⁶ Ji Diankai, "Wo suo zhidao de tongzijun" [Scouting as I know it], *Xinxiang shi jiaoku wenshi ziliao*, ed. Zhengxie Xinyang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, no. 3 (Xinyang, Henan: Zhengxie Xinyang shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, 1994), 20.

⁵⁷ Dai, "Tongzijun duiyu shehui guojia minzu shijie renlei yingfu de zeren jiangci," 813.

Communist savagery. Thus, a well-organized ideological and military challenge to the GMD was reduced to pockets of apolitical, if no less subversive, social deviance.

Edification, by introducing an indigenized version of English public school sophistication, was the apolitical side of a total political strategy devised to safeguard the conservative revolution.

Productive Ambiguity and Its Limits

Scouting's origins in cosmopolitan treaty-port culture, petit-bourgeois outlook, and focus on consumption habits and hands-on skills appealed to the urban elite who identified solution to China's problems in the refinement of people's private life, particularly among the lower classes. At the same time, a productive ambiguity over the nature of scouting since the uniformed movement was introduced by missionary schools left room for GMD cadres to project their own militaristic desires. This co-habilitation of civic and militaristic ideals is vividly illustrated by events like the second national jamboree, the only nation-wide camping assembly the Scouts of China General Association managed to stage in the Nationalist capital of Nanjing.⁵⁸ The 1936 jamboree, a five-day event held in October, brought more than 13,000 boys and girls from across the nation to its ceremonial center, forging a sense of cosmopolitan fraternity and common citizenship that transcended the cultural variations and political tensions that divided provinces. Zhang Xiaoliang, relishing his memory of the previous national jamboree, enthused on the brotherhood and mutual cooperation of the transient young

⁵⁸ The first China-wide jamboree, also held in Nanjing, took place in 1930 and predated the establishment of the General Association. By the time the third national jamboree was held in 1956, the Scouts of China had retreated to Taiwan along with the Nationalist government.

community despite differences in dialects, religions, customs. His guide for participants at the 1936 jamboree reiterated scout organizers' commitment to grooming self-reliant and resourceful citizens with distinct habits and tastes. These dispositions distinguished scouts from the uncouth lower classes, while serving as commonalities among privileged youths from across the vast and tenuously unified country.

Participants learned to behave as privileged citizens who nonetheless strived for economic self-sufficiency and avoided conspicuous consumption. While realizing that the expensive trip would likely be paid for by middle-class parents or through pocket money, Zhang encouraged scouts to raise funds with their own labor. Urbanites could deliver newspapers or earn money by contributing to mass-circulating publications themselves; rural children could grow vegetables, farm fish, or sell their own handicraft products. Those who eventually made their way to Nanjing were advised not to flaunt their wealth when bringing gifts for exchange with their peers. Instead of splurging on expensive souvenirs from confectionary stores and flashy department stores in the capital, campers should either prepare handmade mementos or purchase specialties from their hometowns with their own savings. They were warned not to express their juvenile individuality by tampering with their scout uniforms. At the campsite, located in the stunning Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, young people deftly deployed modern amenities to prepare food, communicate with their hometowns and make themselves warm and comfortable. They would have soap, threads and needles, stamps and letter pads, knives, basic medicine, a watch, and a camera with extra film ready in their backpacks. They would tour and admire Nanjing's modernizing urban landscape in groups, making the most out of their hard-earned trip by doing prior research on tourist attractions and shopping venues in the

capital.⁵⁹ Apart from dance or theatrical performances that drew on motifs from the provinces, the jamboree promoted a new nation-wide class identity that traversed regional specificities and shunned the sort of overt ideological allegiances that characterized many youth and mass movements in the Republican period.

The jamboree, like scouting in general, aimed to create a future elite whose modern knowledge and sophisticated consumption patterns were more in league with the urban middle-class in industrialized societies than the toiling masses of semicolonial China. At the same time, the jamboree took seriously the New Life ideal of militarization. Contemporary observers, as in earlier years, praised scouting for instilling a “militaristic and patriotic (*shangwu aiguo*) spirit” in young people. What was new in 1936, with Japan’s takeover of Manchuria in 1931 and ongoing designs on China proper, was a sense of deep crisis over an impending second world war. In a combat situation, scouts would be ready to serve as vanguards of mass militias or even patrol the trenches.⁶⁰ Unwavering subservience to strictly delineated chains of demand thus emerged as a scout tradition eminently useful as the Nationalist state demanded unconditional loyalty from its subjects. The national jamboree accentuated the military-style discipline demanded in scouting through highly choreographed spectacles. The campsite’s location tapped on the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, to which a cemetery for the National Revolutionary Army was

⁵⁹ Zhang Xiaoliang, “Canjia quanguo tongzijun da luying yingyou zhi zhunbei” [Preparations for participants at the national jamboree], MS, 1936, Zhang Xiaoliang Collection, NPUE, <http://140.127.82.166/handle/987654321/1688> (accessed 10 August 2012).

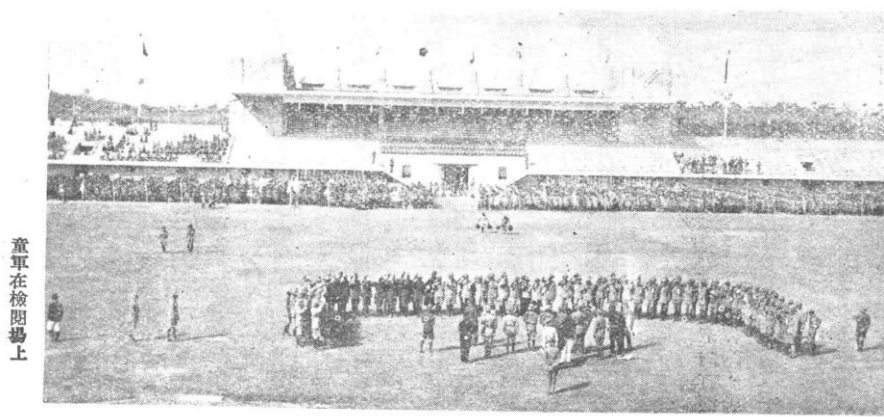
⁶⁰ Cao Yongfang, “Xin shenghuo yundong yu tongzijun xunlian” [New Life Movement and scout training], *Jiaoyuxue yuekan* 3:4 (1936): 154; Li Shutang, “Tongzijun xunlian de yiyi jiqi shiming” [The meaning and mission of scout training], *Changcheng jikan* 1, no. 1 (1935): 47.

added only a year ago, as the locus of nationalistic devotion and revolutionary ritual.⁶¹ While the mausoleum evoked the past of the national revolution, the rallying song sung by scouts alluded to its future. “We are young soldiers (*shaonian bing*) of the Three People’s Principles!” the lyrics declared; “the blue sky is high and the white sun is bright,” participants chanted in homage to the GMD colors beneath the monumental cream structure topped with dark blue tiles.⁶² Carnavalesque scenes where cheerful boys and girls waved colorful flags, danced around campfire, and reminisced freely with fellow provincials living in the capital often gave way to decidedly more solemn occasions. Dressed in the same khaki outfit, woolen cap, and black leather shoes, scouts found themselves in a National Day military review held at the Central Stadium. They woke up in the morning of October 10 to tanks and sentries that dotted the Purple Mountain. At nine o’clock, Chiang Kai-shek, in his full regalia as head of the Military Affairs Commission (*Junshi weiyuanhui*), appeared with his deputy He Yingqin (1890-1987) and other officials to phalanxes of scouts in “Attention” (*lezheng*) position. The review was followed by an aerobatic performance in which smoke trails formed linked characters *shi*, a symbol of the “Double Ten” National Day. Added to the political ritual was a nationalistic statement of China’s sovereignty over Manchuria. To thunderous applause from the audience, which included foreign diplomats posted in Nanjing, entered a twenty-strong delegation from the four provinces which succeeded after the Mukden

⁶¹ Rudolf G. Wagner, “Ritual, Architecture, Politics, and Publicity during the Republic: Enshrining Sun Yat-sen,” in *Chinese Architecture and the Beaux-Arts*, eds. Jeffrey W. Cody, Nancy S. Steinhardt and Tony Atkin (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), 263.

⁶² Du Tingxiu, “Zhongguo tongzijun ge” [Scouts of China rally], in *Zhongguo tongzijun choubieichu gongzuo baogao*, 176-177.

Incident in 1931 to form the puppet-state of Manchukuo.⁶³ While scouts admired the modernity and monumentality of the capital, they themselves were enlisted in a spectacle that highlighted the military preparedness and seamless unity between the Nationalist state and the citizenry.



童軍在檢閱場上

Figure 2. Scouts at the Central Stadium review ground. (Zou Jian, “Quanguo tongzijun di’er ci da jianyue,” *Xiandai qingnian* 5, no. 1 [1936]: 6.)

The success of GMD mass organizing was demonstrated by public association of the party’s flagship youth movement not with partisan interests and ideologies but patriotism and a path to personal refinement. Subsuming politics under the broader aims of cultivation resonated with participants long after the scouting movement was abolished in Communist China. A former scout, recalling a stint in the movement as a primary school pupil from 1933 to 1935, noted the increasing adulation for Chiang Kai-shek and the Three People’s Principles. But he wondered, reminiscing on his training more than half a century later in Mainland China, if there was something to be said about the

⁶³ Zou Jian, “Quanguo tongzijun di’er ci da jianyue” [The second national scout review], *Xiandai qingnian* 5, no. 1 (1936): 8; Wei Ming, “Jiefang qian ‘quanguo tongzijun di’er ci da jianyue da luying’ qinli ji” [First-hand account of the second national scout review-cum-jamboree before liberation], in *Luohe wenshi ziliao*, ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Luohe shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, no. 1 (Luohe, Henan: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Luohe shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1987): 146-147.

effectiveness of scouting in imparting skills and moral refinement on children.⁶⁴ Others were less circumspect in praising how scouts broadened their horizons and afforded them experiences that the average youngster could only dream about, such as traveling beyond their hometown. Wei Ming, who joined the 240-strong Henan delegation to the 1936 jamboree as a twelve-year-old, reckoned that the experience increased his knowledge, opened his eyes to the wider world and reinforced his patriotism.⁶⁵ Another former scout, from the Wuchang-based school which allegedly founded the Chinese movement, remembered being introduced to the “amazing world” of industrial modernity on a tour of the United States in 1935, and another, a hiking trip to Italy in 1937. Song Bailian, along with a delegation led by Yan Jiaqi, marveled at American factories and schools, slaughterhouses in Chicago, and steel bridges in Los Angeles. He vividly recalled an incredible moment of internationalism when a pedestrian accosted him in New York upon seeing his Scouts of China badge, saying: “Hollo boy! This is a wonderful world, eh, you can do anything, if you want to, nobody will bother you.”⁶⁶ Finally, the public identity of scouts – their distinct uniform and high spirits – was a novelty in itself.⁶⁷ In all its excitement generated by scouting as spectacles and travel opportunities, it was easy to forget that the mass movement was cultivated and jealously guarded by the GMD to

⁶⁴ Zhai Huaishi, “Zhongguo tongzijun 730 tuan jianjie” [Brief introduction of Scouts of China Troop 730], in *Xinyang wenshi ziliao*, ed. Zhengxie Xinyang shi wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, no. 6 (Xinyang, Henan: Zhengxie Xinyang shi wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, 1992): 165.

⁶⁵ Wei, “Jiefang qian ‘quanguo tongzijun di’er ci da jianyue da luying’ qinli ji,” 149.

⁶⁶ Song Bailian, “Zhongguo tongzijun diandi” [Tidbits of the Scouts of China], in *Wenshi ziliao cunqao xuanbian*, ed. Dang Dexin et al. (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2002), 24: 648.

⁶⁷ Yang Jingsan and Chen Fu’an, “Tongzijun zuzhi zai Xixiang huodong de shishi jilue” [Brief history of scouting in Xixiang], in *Xixiang xian wenshi ziliao*, ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Shaanxi sheng Xixiang xian weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, no. 6 (Xixiang: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Shaanxi sheng Xixiang xian weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 1995): 116-117.

serve specific political purposes, most noticeably to draw youths away from Communism. De Grazia observes that Mussolini's mass organizations appealed to younger workers not by overt political indoctrination, let alone militarization, but by alluding to a better way of life distinct from that of either radical labor unionism or parochial local communities.⁶⁸ The fond memories many former participants shared on their experience testified to the extent to which scouting under the GMD served the function of building consent among a young populace by co-opting them in a glamorous and skill-focused mode of social activism that reaffirmed, rather than disturbed, class hierarchy and state power.

Despite its partial success, scouting's career as a state-led mass movement faced incredible challenges. Part of the difficulty lay less in the youth movement itself than in the limitations of Nationalist political power. In organizational terms, scouting never made much inroad into the peasantry. Like the GMD itself, scouting was a mostly urban phenomenon. Creative plans for expansion into the impoverished rural hinterland, including such radical ideas as doing away with expensive uniform and lowering the minimum number of members required to form a patrol from six to two, might have helped the movement spread inland.⁶⁹ But increases in enrollment and extended geographical reach presented new problems. Like British colonial regimes in Africa, the Chinese state found it difficult to monopolize the iconic attire and rallies of scouting.⁷⁰ During the war of resistance against Japan, when the Nationalist state was struggling to

⁶⁸ De Grazia, *Culture of Consent*, 242-243.

⁶⁹ Cao, "Xin shenghuo yundong yu tongzijun xunlian," 8; Zhang Zhongren, "Xiangcun tongzijun" [Village scouts], in *Tongzijun xueshu jiangzuo* [Academic seminars on scouting] (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 309.

⁷⁰ Parons, *Race, Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement*, 13.

exert power over its new southwestern base, scout leaders reported seeing individuals not registered with the GMD-led general association dressed in scout uniform.⁷¹ In far-flung regions, even scout leaders overseen by the provincial education bureau could be unreliable. A scout organizer in northwestern Xinjiang province apparently managed to smuggle Communist propaganda into nothing less than the county-run primary school. Jiang Lianchun remembered singing as a ten-year-old in 1937 a song called “Anti-Imperialist Scouts Rally,” humming lyrics like “we are soldiers of the New Democracy,” alluding to the Communist plea for an inter-party, interclass united front against Japan. He and his fellow-students pledged to fight for the nation’s liberation. It took another eight years before Jiang realized his scout leader’s not-too-subtle subversion of GMD ideological indoctrination by changing the lyrics of the “Scouts of China Rally.”⁷² Scouting turned on its head confirmed Dai Jitao’s worst fear – infiltration in a state-sponsored mass organization by political forces hostile to Nationalist rule.

In areas where scouting was more established, organizers struggled to inspire and sustain enthusiasm among a movement growing in numbers. Despite the very positive memory shared by some former scouts, responses from others were less effusive. After all, not many young people secured the opportunity to travel to Nanjing, let alone New York or Rome. For most, scouting was a mundane part of school life. Making scouting mandatory ensured an exponential growth in membership; enrollment increased almost

⁷¹ Scouts of China General Association to Executive Yuan, 5 April 1942, Executive Yuan Collection, 2/3500, Second Historical Archives.

⁷² Wang Renping, *Manasi wenshi ziliao yinyue zhuanji xubian* [Second installment of the special collection on music of Manas county literary and historical materials] (Manas, Xinjiang: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Manasi xian weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1995), 50-51.

six folds in seven years from 86,536 in 1934 to a staggering 507,839 in late 1941.⁷³ But an increase in numbers did not guarantee involvement of enhanced quality. Primary and junior high school pupils who did not take the scout promise seriously indulged in unworthy behaviors once they took their uniforms off and used every opportunity to excuse themselves from training activities or leave their troops altogether. Parents, meanwhile, were distrustful of scout leaders and the activities they designed.⁷⁴ In addition, that the movement was ensconced firmly within individual schools meant that it was difficult for scouts, even if they so wished, to continue affiliation with a troop once they graduated. Zhang Xiaoliang claimed that otherwise committed youngsters who entered senior secondary schools, where scouting was no longer compulsory, or joined the workforce often had to involuntarily end their involvement in the organization. He urged his colleagues to broaden Scouts of China's presence from schools to factories and retail shops. Just as teachers appreciated diligent and obedient students, employers would embrace the movement for molding "conscientious, improvement-seeking, hardship-bearing shopkeepers and workers."⁷⁵ Rapid growth in the number of scouts across the nation was not matched by the movement's increased and lasting influence in its constituents' way of life.

Aside from organizational weaknesses, ambiguity in goals and missions had both favorable and unfavorable consequences for scouting. Ideological vagueness lent room for diversity, but it also inspired intra-party contestation. Its missionary origins, military-

⁷³ *Zhongguo tongzijun choubeichu gongzuo baogao*, 113-123; *Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui, Sanshi nian de Zhongguo tongzijun* [Thirty years of the Scouts of China] (Chongqing: n.p., 1941), 13-14.

⁷⁴ Zhang, "Zenyang zhengqiu ertong laizuo tongzijun."

⁷⁵ Zhang Xiaoliang, "Tongzijun de shengming" [The life of scouting], MS, December 1932, Zhang Xiaoliang Collection, NPUE, <http://140.127.82.166/handle/987654321/1683> (accessed 10 August 2012).

like hierarchy and aesthetics continued to haunt scouting as activists like Zhang Xiaoliang edged the movement closer to the conservative revolutionary agenda of cultivating a voluntaristic, technically adept, and politically reliable labor force without fully jettisoning its apolitical, civilian self-image. Dai Jitao acknowledged Zhang's concern in 1932 when he argued that *tongzijun* should not be taken literally to mean adolescents training to join military (*jun*) service. Rather than only preparing future party-state functionaries, scouting had a broader mandate to groom young people into decent, capable and "squeaky clean individuals" (*gangan jingjing de ren*) so that they would become honest officials, valorous soldiers, contented (*anfen*) peasants or commit to any other role in society.⁷⁶ But observations by senior Nationalists did not silence those who believed that the goal of producing a nimble and obedient workforce was not aligned closely enough with the party-state's. For some, the missionary background of scouting was an original sin that posed an unbridgeable gulf between scouting and the national revolution. Accusations flew that Yan Jialin was exploiting a compulsory part of the schooling process to proselytize for Christianity.⁷⁷ The bourgeois internationalism of scouting, likewise, inspired suspicion. Its image as a "Westernized" (*xiyang hua*) and "patrician" (*guizu hua*) club lingered, as did doubts that the program worked to further foreign or even Anglo-Saxon interests. Amidst new initiatives from rival party factions to cultivate pro-GMD activists among students after the Mukden Incident of 1931, scouting was admonished to first, firmly serve China's quest for "freedom and independence," and

⁷⁶ Dai, "Duoshao ren kancuo le tongzijun" [Countless people had misunderstood scouting], MS., 1932, Zhang Xiaoliang Collection, NPUE, <http://140.127.82.166/handle/987654321/1683> (accessed 10 August 2012).

⁷⁷ Dai, "Dui konggao Yan Jialin zhuren zhi pishi" [Comment on accusations against Yan Jialin], in *DJTXSWC*, 833-834.

second, embrace military values in anticipation of war against Japan.⁷⁸ He Yingqin, Chiang's deputy in both the military and scout hierarchies, stressed in 1936 that moral and physical training of individuals helped enhance the entire nation's organization, productivity and self-defense in the face of a foreign enemy. Drawing from German philosopher Johann Fichte's prescriptions for nationalist resistance against French occupation, the general likened scouting to the nationalist philosopher's privileging of military training in schools for gearing up popular resolve against an invading force.⁷⁹ General He's association of Baden-Powell's brainchild with German romantic nationalism defied the liberal cosmopolitan image scout activities like Zhang Zhongren and Zhang Xiaoliang had painted for their program, and spoke to latent disagreements within the party on how to incorporate scouting into the GMD's conservative revolutionary project.

Scouting and Total War

With the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the momentum swung decisively to the side of those who saw scouting as a means to prepare young activists for a vanguard role in a war that relied on total mobilization of civilians. Wartime service corps (*zhanshi fuwu tuan*), commissioned by the Scouts of China but mobilized outside the regular hierarchy of patrols and troops, sprung up in GMD-controlled provinces like Sichuan, Yunnan and Shaanxi. Similar initiatives emerged in

⁷⁸ Li, "Tongzijun xunlian de yiyi jiqi shiming," 47; Cao, "Xin shenghuo yundong yu tongzijun xunlian," 154-155; Huang, *Politics of Depoliticization*, 90.

⁷⁹ He Yingqin, "Tongzijun yingshen yu minzu fuxing" [The spirit of scouting and national revival], *Gongjiao xuexiao* 2, no. 25 (1936): 5.

more precarious locations like Zhejiang province and Shanghai. After the Battle of Shanghai of 1937, which resulted in the GMD's and the Scouts of China's retreat from the metropolis, the First Wartime Service Corps continued to operate out of the International Settlement. Its 2,027 members, aged between sixteen and thirty, accommodated refugees, serviced frontline troops, performed firefighting and first aid duties, and wielded a sophisticated propaganda campaign that targeted not only a domestic audience but also expatriate communities and observers abroad. Young men and a smaller number of young women took on functions commonly ascribed to militias. They delivered warm clothes and food to soldiers, maintained public order, and even gathered intelligence on the enemy. They deployed movie and radio to mobilize the populace in support of the nation's resistance and broadcast tips on surviving air raids and containing infectious diseases.⁸⁰ Appealing to the international clout of scouting, the Shanghai corps invited their foreign counterparts to join them in a "Junior League of Nations" and fight against "insensible militarists" and an "enemy of world culture."⁸¹ They were public diplomats in a time when international support of the Chongqing-based GMD state was still lukewarm. They projected the increasingly militant organization as a cosmopolitan endeavor on a quest for peace and friendship with foreigners, not a nationalistic campaign against particular peoples. After all, as a commissioner (*weiyuan*) of the Shanghai wartime corps observed, scouts in both Britain and Germany were

⁸⁰ Zhao Bangheng et al., ed., *Kangzhan yu tongjun* [The war of resistance and scouting] (n.p., 1938), 103, 133, 153-155, 178; Hong Zhixin, "Huiyi canjia Zhongguo tongzijun zhanshi fuwu tuan de pianduan" [Memories of my participation in the wartime service corps of the Scouts of China], in *Jing'an wenshi*, ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Shanghai shi Jing'an qu weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, no. 7 (Shanghai: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Shanghai shi Jing'an qu weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, 1992): 30-33.

⁸¹ "An open letter to the scouts of the world," in *Kangzhan yu tongjun*, 30. The appeal, in English, also appeared in Chinese and French.

enlisted to play a part in “wartime work” (*zhanshi gongzuo*) during the Great War. This benign image received endorsements from scouts in Britain and India, not to mention the expatriate community in Shanghai.⁸²

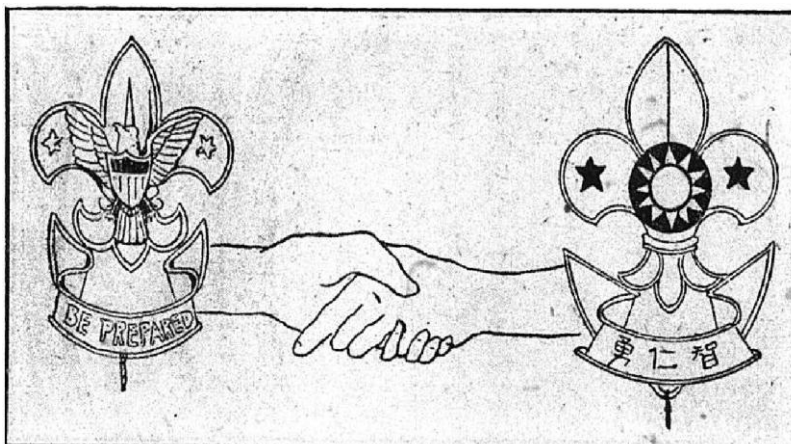


Figure 3. Scouts of China expressing camaraderie with its American counterpart. (Zhao Bangheng et al., ed., *Kangzhan yu tongjun*, 276.)

The Great War reference alluded unintentionally to the degree to which the GMD state counted upon civilians to run the war machine in China’s first total war. In terms of membership, the various wartime services corps were pale shadows of the scouting movement now headquartered in Chongqing. But corps members were committed volunteers who more resembled militia members than school children, putting to high relief the militant streak inherent to scouting. I will discuss the reconsolidation of the conservative revolution during the Second Sino-Japanese War in chapter four. For now, it suffices to stress that wartime work performed by scouts involved tasks that fell well under the purview of the state apparatus. Wartime service corps in Yunnan swept up popular outrage against the invading army by recalling “atrocities committed by Japanese

⁸² Zheng Haozhang, “Tongzijun zhanshi fuwu tuan de yiyi he renwu” [The meaning and mission of the scouts wartime service corps], in *Kangzhan yu tongjun*, 40; “Tongzijun xiaoxi” [Scouting news], *Zhanshi tongzijun*, no. 28 (1938): 12.

devils” in speeches, songs, and drama. They urged the masses to join military service, subscribe to war bonds and help finance the cash-strapped National Revolutionary Army. More significantly, deliberate efforts were made to deploy scouts in intelligence gathering operations. To identify Japanese infiltration into GMD-controlled areas, a select group of Yunnan service corps members listened to conversations in public areas, observed pedestrians’ demeanor and belongings, surveilled travelers, refugees and “local ruffians and itinerant hooligans” (*dipi liumang*).⁸³ The call for young men and women to spy on their neighbors alarmed the Shanghai Municipal Council, which governed the embattled International Settlement until 1941. Scouts were arrested for interfering with the authority of the foreigner-run police force as the Shanghai wartime service corps, in turn, pleaded the enclave to afford its members greater room for maneuver.⁸⁴

The *coup de grâce* that put to rest any illusions in the Scouts of China’s professed political neutrality came in 1940, when the Three People’s Principles Youth Corps overtook the movement. Founded in the spring of 1938, the Three People’s Principle Youth Corps was envisioned by Chiang Kai-shek as a mass organization that appealed to politically-minded young people disaffected by the intractable factional struggles within the GMD.⁸⁵ It emerged amidst calls within the scouting community for a well-coordinated hierarchy of bodies modeled on the Komsomol and Young Pioneers in the Soviet Union to rally young citizens around the Three People’s Principles.⁸⁶ At a meeting

⁸³ “Tongzijun xiaoxi” [Scouting news], *Zhanshi tongzijun*, no. 28 (1938): 13.

⁸⁴ Ni Jiayi, “Cong jianku zhong fendou” [Struggle amidst hardship], in *Kangzhan yu tongjun*, 86.

⁸⁵ Wang Qisheng, *Dangyuan, dangquan yu dangzheng*, 279.

⁸⁶ Xiong Feng, “Shaonian men zai Sulian” [Youth in the Soviet Union], *Zhanshi tongzijun*, no. 39-41 (1939): 24-25.

of the Standing Committee of the GMD Central Executive Committee on November 25, 1940, the Youth Corps was given the mandate to work with all individuals under twenty five. In other words, despite objections from functionaries like Zhang Xiaoliang, scouting and the larger youth movement were relegated under a parent organization on which future generations of committed revolutionaries was counted.⁸⁷ Three years later, the entire Scouts of China General Association was subsumed under the Youth Corps.⁸⁸ Until the Youth Corps was disbanded in September 1947, scouts, like other youth activists, engaged in espionage and propaganda operations against the GMD's nemeses during the war of resistance against Japan and subsequently the civil war against Communism.

From Dai's musings on a non-materialist *minsheng* principle in the 1920s to the emergence of a total war society in the late 1930s, scouting was symptomatic of a distinct GMD approach to mass politics that aimed at weaving state-sanctioned practices into mass life. In its quest to secure popular consent, the state capitalized on the methods and image of scouting as a progressive training process that served not only the ruling party's narrow ideological agenda but also the desire of the wider, albeit urban middle-class, public for self-improvement. The youth movement mediated GMD anti-communism, the conservative revolutionary agenda of beautifying and rationalizing everyday life, and individual needs. It was an eloquent expression of what Dai defined as the ultimate

⁸⁷ *Queding dang yu tuan zhi guanxi banfa* [Guidelines on distinguishing between the party and the youth corps], 25 November 1940, Executive Yuan 2/10986, Second Archives; Zhang Xiaoliang, "Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui ying lishu zhongyang zhi zuozheng ji liyou" [Facts and reasons supporting the Scouts of China General Association's subordination under the GMD Central Committee], MS, 10 September 1941, Zhang Xiaoliang Collection, NPUE, <http://140.127.82.166/handle/987654321/1705> (accessed 10 August 2012).

⁸⁸ *Zhongguo tongzijun zonghui xingzheng shiyi gaili Sanmin zhuyi qingnian tuan zhuchi banli* [Transfer of the administrative matters of the Scouts of China General Association to the Three People's Principles Youth Corps], 22 November 1943, *huiyi* 5.3/219.5, Kuomintang Archives.

meaning of the *minsheng* principle and of the national revolution: providing “beautiful and elegant enjoyment.”⁸⁹ Even as its mission changed to comply with wartime priorities, the emphasis on making training an enjoyable experience remained. Activities for preparing scouts to conduct intelligence gathering, for example, saw children tracing beans “enemy spies” left as markers, making their own markers with tree branches, bricks and wire to guide comrades to specific destinations, and participating in remarkably realistic war games in which one group acted as the enemy army and the other played guerilla force.⁹⁰ Such exercises were packaged as games that both answered to the needs of a nation at war and the innate values of scout education – learning by doing, teamwork, obeying orders, acquiring new skills, and having fun. This fusion of leisure management, moral cultivation, and growing militancy in scouting enjoyed ever greater currency as the GMD’s model of mass activism was leveraged to enlist the entire society, and not just youths from comfortable middle-class families, to fight a foreign enemy.

⁸⁹ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhexue de jichu*, 11.

⁹⁰ Wu Yaolin, “Zhanshi huodong zhidao – (san) zhuisuo dizong” [Wartime activities guide – (3) tracking the enemy], *Zhanshi tongzijun*, no. 28 (1938): 4-6.

CHAPTER 3

**Mobilizing Hearts and Minds
The Everyday in Revolution During the Resistance War**

China's eight-year resistance against Japanese invasion was the first time that all Chinese citizens, instead of just the military, were called upon by the state to defend the country against foreign invasion. The total war paradigm had posed tremendous challenges for the GMD regime, but had also opened opportunities for its conservative revolution. The advancing Japanese forces effectively robbed Chiang's government of its base in the lower Yangzi region, forcing it to abandon Nationalist China's economic and political centers like Shanghai and Nanjing for the interior. Yet, a common external enemy lent currency to the GMD's vision of inter-class cooperation and singular devotion to the nation. In Chongqing, the GMD presided over a community of refugees who hailed from various regions that had fallen to the Japanese. Displaced from their traditional social networks and sympathetic to the nationalist cause, a society at war provided much potential for a mobilization program that demanded exclusive political loyalty and active participation of the populace. A politics and culture of total war expected citizens, at work and at play, to contribute consistently to the resistance. Each individual was expected to display the fidelity to authority and promptness to action required of scouts. In its further de-legitimization of class politics and micro-management of citizens' lives, the GMD-led resistance program represented a radicalization of the conservative revolution. The wartime slogan "nation-building through the war of resistance" (*kangzhan jianguo*) indicated that the GMD was not only struggling for basic survival but

also harboring grand ambitions to perpetuate its ideological priorities beyond the immediate conflict against Japanese imperialism.

Barely had the Nationalist state established tenuous control over centrifugal provinces outside its coastal stronghold did the Japanese begin a series of military offensives against the loosely-knit republic. The Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and invasion of Shanghai of 1932 provided occasions for a re-articulation of China's diplomatic conundrum and justification of the GMD's exceptional claim to ideological and political power over the rest of society. Writing for the GMD-run *Shanghai Morning Post (Chenbao)*, Zhang Junmo (1893-1965), a Columbia-trained education official who had joined Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance before the fall of the Qing, pleaded that the ever more threatening specter of subjugation to a foreign power rendered it imperative that the nation's indigenous philosophical tradition be brought to bear in order to put an end to centuries of social decay. A Confucianized culture, as revived by Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, would not only deliver China from the current crisis with Japan. A traditional yet forward-looking political ethics would also cure deep-seated symptoms that had been hollowing out the people's vitality for a long time: from easily observable problems like bureaucratic corruption and agrarian crisis to more amorphous trends like the collapse of campus discipline and the emergence of various heretical ideas (*xieshuo*). Echoing Dai's formulation on the dialectic between knowledge (*zhi*) and action (*xing*) and extending his party-as-machine metaphor, Zhang observed that the masses were like engineers on whom the smooth functioning of the state apparatus depended upon. The key to perfecting the "engineers' practice," and hence social totality, was not theoretical knowledge but realization of

moral precepts such as benevolence and a sense of shame. Strengthening Confucianized social mores would deflect criticisms of political authority and direct popular energy against foreign threats.¹

Deep crises, be they socio-economic or military, were regular boosts for radical nationalist politics in twentieth-century China and beyond. At moments of great upheaval, the nation became the immanent locus of social meaning that must be defended at all costs. In several continents during the interwar period, ascendant regimes rode on the tide of populist sentiments to create new political elites who secured unprecedented social power. Historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch, in his bold work in comparative history, argued that there were many points of convergence between Hitler's Nazism, Mussolini's Fascism, and Roosevelt's New Deal. Repressed by war against the Axis powers, and the subsequent Cold War tradition of associating fascism with Stalinism, the commonalities in motives and operation between the three interwar political projects have not been properly accounted for. Reeling from the pain of the Great Depression of 1929, many among Western societies – including those in the liberal center and social democratic left – placed hope in a post-liberal political order to provide economic stability and social coherence to the community. In place of *laissez faire* capitalism, a non-class specific socialism gained traction. The new regimes in Germany, Italy and the United States lent an aura of suppleness to nationalism with their monumental public work projects and

¹ Zhang Mojun, "Guonan zhong zhi jingshen jianshe" [Spiritual construction during national crisis], *Chenbao*, 1 October 1933, 7.

populist rhetoric that emphasized their nations' unique identities, providing an illusion of equality free of class divisions and economic insecurities.²

Even though China was only at the periphery of the capitalist world system, it equally suffered in the economic crisis, which resulted in hostility towards the “free market” on the part of the GMD state and urban entrepreneurs that was no less pronounced than that in Western Europe and North America.³ Moreover, in China, as in Germany and Italy, anguish over frustrated nationalist ambitions fed into a more expansive reflection on the political and economic system in dominant world powers such as Britain and the United States. In his 1933 book *Vitalism* (*Weisheng lun*), mineralogist-turned-party theorist Chen Lifu attacked representative democracy as an outmoded and enervating form of political organization. He dismissed the congressional bickering between Democrats and Republicans in the United States as a gentrified form of tribalist warfare, chiding its inefficiency and corrosive effects on social life. He noted that the world had come to the realization that liberal economics and politics was outdated, and advocated that a conflict-free, cooperative society could only come with the enlightened autocracy of single-party state.⁴ Published by the GMD's Central School of Politics, *Vitalism*, along with Dai Jitao's *The Philosophical Foundation of Sun Yat-senism*, was a core text deployed in training programs catered for cadres and re-education

² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933-1939*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 13-15, 108-109.

³ Tomoko Shirayama, *China During the Great Depression: Market, State and the World Economy, 1929-1937* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 2, 235.

⁴ Chen Lifu, *Weisheng lun (shang jun)* [Vitalism, Volume I] (Nanjing: Zhongyang zhengzhi xuexiao, 1933), 69-71.

institutions for political prisoners.⁵ China's economic challenges served only to confirm the revolutionary elite's exclusive grip onto state power as a matter of teleological providence.

In the Republican period, however, the crisis that put to its highest relief the urgency of a new collectivity was not economic but military. The Second Sino-Japanese War constituted China's first total war in which modern industrial warfare entailed mass participation in a new form of social and cultural or aesthetic experience. Unlike previous conflicts in which combat was confined to frontline military forces, the entire society – its population, economy and culture – was mobilized to fight a common enemy. More than ever, national unity was sacralized and ideological discourses, particularly class warfare, that qualified the nation's immanent integrity delegitimized. The GMD, operating under the doctrine of *kangzhan jianguo*, or “building the nation through the war of resistance,” was fully aware that the contingency of warfare had injected it with fresh moral and political capital to construct an efficient, fully sovereign polity in which economic production was carried out smoothly by a cohesive, class-free and spiritually immaculate population. By focusing on the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement, this chapter examines how a destructive war that forced the relocation of the Nationalist state and much of its political and intellectual classes to the interior paradoxically lent urgency and credence to the conservative revolution's social vision. I demonstrate that the wartime state attempted to materialize in the quotidian the heretofore abstract, state-

⁵ Terry Bodenhorn, “Chen Lifu's Vitalism: A Guomintang Vision of Modernity Circa 1934,” in *Defining Modernity: Guomintang Rhetoric of a New China, 1920-1970*, ed. *Idem* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 91-122; Kikuchi Kazutaka, “Toshi-gata tokumu ‘CC’ kei no ‘hankyô kô-Nichi’ rosen ni tsuite – sono seisei kara kô-Nichi sensô niokeru igi to genkai” [On the “anti-communist and resist Japan” line of the urban-based espionage organization, the CC clique – its significance and limitations from inception to the Second Sino-Japanese War], part 1, *Chikaki ni arite*, no. 35 (1999): 18.

directed national culture, thereby rendering the GMD's social engineering undertaking eminently comparable to the one imposed by the Shōwa fascist regime in Japan and its empire.

Total War and Political Modernity

Long before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937, which officially marked the beginning of the eight-year formal conflict between China and Japan, GMD intellectuals had been anticipating a war the scale and scope of which the nation had never seen before. As early as 1927, Dai Jitao cited the need for “national mobilization” (*guomin zong dongyuan*) as one prime reason why political dissent must not be tolerated. While industrial and scientific prowess would be critical in China's next international conflict, Confucius had ostensibly taught that the state should always prepare the common people for war.⁶ A *Shanghai Morning Post* editorial titled “The Meaning of National Mobilization,” published a few days after Zhang Mojun's 1933 article, predicted boldly that the coming showdown against Japan would be a conflict fought mainly not by frontline soldiers but by entire populations. The editorial stated that since the Franco-Prussian War, in which some 400,000 civilians were called upon to fight alongside the French army as members of the *Garde Mobile*, had rendered the concept of battle line and protocols of traditional warfare obsolete in a full-scale clash of rival citizenries. “Strategically it would be permissible,” the piece continued ominously, “to scorch the earth with fire and blast the enemies' bodies into pieces.” A total war would immediately

⁶ Dai, *Qingnian zhilu*, 260. The quotation attributed to Confucius, which Dai cited with slight modifications, is from Book XIII of *Lunyu*. The English translation reads: “To send the common people to war untrained is to throw them away.” (D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: the Analects*, 2^d ed. [Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992], 131.)

blanket the entire society under the suffocating air of military maneuverings, relegate private economic production and consumption under state *dirigisme*, and put further limits on civil liberties.⁷ The editors' projection of engagement with the nation's human resources as the subject of combat added a new dimension to Zhang's plea for spiritual construction (*jingshen jianshe*) under the leadership of a proto-wartime state.⁸

Shanghai Morning Post's identification of the ever closer ties between mass politics and modern warfare shows that contributors were well abreast with the latest developments in interwar world politics, which saw the rise of dictatorial regimes around Europe. For the editorial collective, Hitler's ascendancy vindicated the success of a polity dictated by the middle class over representational democracy and proletarian internationalism. The Nazi's rise to power was testament to Germany's principled refusal to remain an "economic colony" of Britain and France, referring to the heavy indemnities imposed by the Versailles Treaty. The militancy of German and Italian fascism was a welcome expression of the resurgent ethnic spirit in nations emerging anew from the ashes of defeat.⁹ This fascination with the productive function of violence was a recurring fixture of twentieth-century politics of both the extreme rightwing and revolutionary leftwing varieties. The previous century, according to philosopher Alain Badiou, "unfolded under the paradigm of war." Not only was there the belief, cutting across ideological divide, that a total or final war was needed to put an end on all other wars and

⁷ "Suowei guomin zong dongyuan," editorial, *Chenbao*, 16 October 1933, 2.

⁸ Zhang, "Guonan zhong zhi jingshen jianshe," 7.

⁹ "Zailun Xitela zhi zhizheng" [More on Hitler's hold on power], editorial, *Chenbao*, 3 February 1933, 2. See also "Xingdengbao lianren De zongtong" [Hindenburg re-elected as German president], editorial, *Chenbao*, 12 April 1932, 2 and "Xitela zhizheng yihou" [Since Hitler's assumption of government power], editorial, *Chenbao*, 2 February, 1933, 2.

bring about perpetual peace; there was also the sense that epic violence would entail a political subject capable of overcoming the old order and creating a brave new world.¹⁰ This cult of violence was no less a part of GMD political culture. Commentators and writers pondered on the place of homicide, an unmistakable crime according to the modern legal apparatus, in the nation's spiritual essence while cadres toyed with using political assassination as a technology to discipline and energize the body politic.¹¹ In a time of intense social turmoil, economic depression, and nationalistic fear over foreign colonization, an authoritarian state offering protection and stability by wielding its coercive power seemed to exude more promise than a tired and timid bureaucratic establishment detached from mass sentiments.

The counter-intuitive union between mass violence and society-building brought realms of life that were previously considered insignificant personal habits under the purview of intellectuals, party cadres and government officials. Taking his cue from Talcott Parsons, sociologist Yasushi Yamamouchi argues that the mobilization system adopted by various Second World War belligerents created societies in which individuals were bound organically in the national community regardless of traditional class, ethnic and even family affiliations. Through wartime social policy, individual needs were provided for and their consumption practices regulated in an intricate network of power relations that Herbert Marcuse identified as totalitarianism. For Yamamouchi, The model of Parsons's society-as-system was not so much Japan as New Deal America.¹² In China,

¹⁰ Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 32-37.

¹¹ Lean, *Public Passions*, 155-156.

¹² Yasushi Yamamouchi, "Total-war and Systemic Integration: A Methodological Introduction," in *Total War and 'Modernization'*, eds. Yasushi Yamamouchi, J. Victor Koschmann and Ryûichi Narita (Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998), 22-23.

the rationalization of routine activities began in 1934 with the New Life Movement, one core aim, as historian Margaret Clinton has revealed, was to militarize society in anticipation of an inevitable second world war.¹³ While the broad aims of the New Life Movement were subsumed under the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement (*Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan yundong*) in 1939, the latter held distinct features incidental to the GMD's lose of its relatively industrialized coastal base and half-hearted reconciliation with the CCP as a nationalist ally. In light of Yamanouchi's observation that the ideal of a hierarchal order in which exploitative social relations were disguised by an institutionalized illusion of equal citizenry survived the Second World War, the GMD's conviction that the war of resistance was also a time to reinforce its nation-building agenda opened the possibility that spiritual mobilization could be made permanent even when China did not face an external enemy.¹⁴ Given the extended period of hostility between the Communists and Nationalists after the Second World War, the imprint of total war on the Chinese political experience can hardly be underestimated.

Conceptualizing War Mobilization

Shanghai Morning Post editors' interest in total war and spiritual mobilization in the early 1930s must not be dismissed as topical speculations of random journalists. The daily, led by Pan Gongzhan (1894-1975) and Tao Baichuan (1903-2002), was one of the nineteen 1930s publications affiliated with the CC clique, the nomenclature of which was

¹³ Clinton, "Fascism, Cultural Revolution, and National Sovereignty in 1930s China," 211-212.

¹⁴ Yamanouchi, "Total-war and Systemic Integration: A Methodological Introduction," 25-26.

derived from leaders Chen Lifu and his elder brother Guofu (1892-1951).¹⁵ The powerful pro-Chiang faction presided over an elaborate network of clandestine and open organizations that exhibited the hue of European-style fascism, mirroring the organizational mode and ideological tenor of its more well-known intra-party rival Lixingshe/Blue Shirt Society.¹⁶ According to historian Kikuchi Kazukata, the CC clique traced its roots to the GMD radical right and held appeal to the urban petit-bourgeoisie based in education institutions, the party bureaucracy, and GMD-controlled labor unions, particularly among those who had experienced first-hand the deepening social crises in the West as students at European and American universities. The faction, which brought together 80% of lower-level state bureaucrats and 50 members of the 180-strong GMD central executive committee members in 1936, promoted faith in “one doctrine, one party” and promised to realize the substance of Three People’s Principles with fascist tools. During the war of resistance, clique members conducted espionage activities in Japanese occupied territories, organized pro-China activists in Japan and its colonies, and even cooperated with the British intelligence service in Singapore, Burma and India.¹⁷ The CC clique was a full-fledged network that enjoyed representation in the security apparatus, the civil service and civil society.

The faction made an equally important contribution to the ideological praxis of the wartime state. Chen Lifu served as education minister from 1938 to 1944, ensuring

¹⁵ Wang Qisheng, *Dangyuan, dangquan yu dangzheng*, 242.

¹⁶ Wakeman, *Spymaster*, 63, 106-108.

¹⁷ Kikuchi, “Toshi-gata tokumu ‘CC’ kei no ‘hankyô kô-Nichi’ rosen ni tsuite,” parts 1 and 2, *Chikaki ni arite*, no. 35 (1999): 10-12, 19; no. 36 (1999): 32-45.

that the CC clique exert a significant role in spiritual mobilization.¹⁸ *Shanghai Morning Post*'s Tao took charge of the two major party organs, the *Central Weekly* (*Zhongyang zhoukan*) in 1941 and the *Central Daily* (*Zhongyang ribao*) in 1942. As editor, he recruited literary celebrities like Zhu Guangqian, on whom the next chapter will focus, to write for the party-run press. Tao's colleague Pan headed the state's censorship board targeting print materials from 1943 to 1945. The ideological predilections articulated in *Shanghai Morning Post* and the organized political force it represented were inseparable from the politically exclusivist and stridently anti-communist tenor of the national spiritual mobilization campaign.

Inaugurated two years after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, China's spiritual mobilization campaign was the culmination of initiatives aimed at suppressing social strife and removing threats to political disunity. On March 12, 1939, the National Military Council announced the *Guiding Principles and Implementation Measures for National Spiritual Mobilization*. The document was first announced, without bothering with a proper motion, by Chiang Kai-shek at the Fifth Plenum of the Fifth GMD Central Executive Committee in January 1939.¹⁹ It listed the "common purposes" of the conflict-ridden nation and the items which made up its "common morality and common conviction." Under the "supremacy of the state and the nation" (*guojia zhishang minzu zhishang*) principle, citizens were exhorted to "revolutionize" and "thoroughly improve" their collective consciousness, and maintain steadfast loyalty to the government and the Three People's Principles. The accompanying "Citizen Convention and Pledge" (*Guomin*

¹⁸ Kikuchi, "Toshi-gata tokumu 'CC' kei no 'hankyô kô-Nichi' rosen ni tsuite," part 1, 5.

¹⁹ Chiang Kai-shek to Zhu Jiahua, January 16, 1939, *yiban*, 130/90.2, Kuomintang Archives.

gongyue shici), which was to be read out loud at monthly meetings held at individual neighborhoods and workplaces, offered allegiance to Chiang Kai-shek himself. Exclusive loyalty to the nation, as *Shanghai Morning Post* had warned, entailed curtailment of political freedom. In a thinly veiled reference to communism, the document complained that public opinions were still like the messy branches of an otherwise strongly rooted tree. There was no place in a healthy “plant” for “political fantasizing” (*kongxiang lun*) that advocated allegiance to anything other than the nation. China’s popular will would have to obey the Nationalist state’s diktat. Production and consumption routines had to be re-jigged to meet the strenuous demands of the wartime economy. In the longer terms, renewed state activism would re-balance private and public ownership, keeping China more in tune with the distrust of unregulated capitalism inherent to Sun’s principle of people’s livelihood.²⁰ Outlining an expansive program that involved the entire cross-section of society from soldiers at the top to rural *baojia* communities at the grassroots, the document envisioned aims that ranged from getting people to get up early and eliminating wasteful consumption to unifying cultural production, to uprooting corruption. In this sense, *Guiding Principles* was one definitive testament to the immense hope, prevalent in China and beyond, placed on the state that promised to rally behind a new, co-operative nation in which hierarchical but harmonious relations replaced incessant political and economic strife.

The concept of spiritual mobilization, like the New Life Movement, drew references from supposedly primordial Chinese values that predated even Confucius. But

²⁰ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa” [Guiding Principles and Implementation Measures for National Spiritual Mobilization], in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian – dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi*, vol. 4, *zhanshi jianshe*, ed. Qin Xiaoyi (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, 1988), 4: 580-601.

the crafters of the GMD's latest social engineering initiative did not shy away from the fact that their project was an exercise in shoring up China's modern nationalism against rival nationalist aspirations. *Guiding Principles* laid claim to loyalty (*zhong*) and filial piety (*xiao*), values integral to the reproduction of China's peasant society. Whereas the ancestral cult had long been part of imperial state ideology and local culture, Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary doctrine required that the modern nation-state, rather than one's clan, be the recipient of patrimonial sentiments expressed by citizen-subjects.²¹ The embattled nation was elevated to the apogee of one's ancestral lineage, a sacralized object of devotion equipped with hierarchical social positions, decrees and strict discipline. Evoking the history of Han resistance against alien threats – including such “pre-emptive” expeditions as the subjection of Uyghurs, Tibetans, ethnic groups in the southwestern frontier under imperial Chinese suzerainty during the Han and Tang periods – Pan Gongzhan observed that a spirit of sacrifice had been the nation's best guarantor against foreign conquest.

Yet, the party propagandist was convinced that the exemplary character of such heroic figures as the Southern Song general Yue Fei (1103-1142) and Ming loyalist Koxinga (1624-1662) was not good enough for a modern nation-state. For ancient heroes' indomitable courage in the face of invading enemies was derived from loyalty and fidelity to the ruling house only. A centrally-directed campaign of mass mobilization was thus needed to transform this individual chivalric sentiment into popular militaristic devotion to the larger nation.²² Chiang might have attributed absolute power to himself,

²¹ *Ibid.*, 586-587.

²² Pan Gongzhan, “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan yu zhongxiao de minzu daode” [National Spiritual Mobilization and the national morality of loyalty and fidelity], *Zhongyang zhoukan* 1, no. 34 (1939): 4.

but he aspired to be a plebiscitary autocrat and not a dynastic ruler. The *l'état, c'est moi* principle of Louis XIV, Chen Lifu quipped in 1940, no longer held in a twentieth-century republic.²³ The Generalissimo was, to read Chen's analogy against its grain, a Louis Bonaparte, the "patriarchal benefactor of all classes."²⁴ The state was not an imposed power from which the masses was alienated but the highest embodiment of popular sovereignty. Rather than a machine to maintain social order, the state was an idea, the "realization of our loyalty to the nation."²⁵

In a rhetorical move that spanned across millennia, Chen warned that if China was to avoid the fate of the vanquished Ming court in the seventeenth century or occupied Czechoslovakia today, it needed to transform the spiritual certitude of such mythical figures as Yu the Great and Tang of Shang (circa 1675-1646 BCE) into a sentiment compelling the entire national collective into action. To drive home his plea for action, Chen the scientist added a new spin to Newton's second law of motion, which states that force is a function of mass and acceleration. A mass organization's prowess thus depended directly on the correlation between its size and its propensity to pursue unified purposes.²⁶ Inasmuch as the GMD's spiritual mobilization initiative was premised on a curious mishmash of mythology, history and science, it belied the regime's investment in the nation-building project as a hedge against being overwhelmed by a conflict that

²³ Chen Lifu, "Jingshen zong dongyuan de yiyi" [The significance of spiritual mobilization], in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian – dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi*, vol. 4, *zhanshi jianshe*, 4: 650.

²⁴ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 133.

²⁵ Chen Lifu, "Jingshen zong dongyuan de yiyi," 650.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 647-654.

placed as much emphasis on cutting-edge military hardware as on the technology of propaganda and mass organization.

The melding of military priorities and the state's enhanced role in social life with the nationalist investment in a homogenous people explained why the supposedly destructive war against Japan was paradoxically construed as a step towards national reconstruction. In fact, with the New Life Movement incorporated into a fresh campaign, party ideologues suggested that spiritual mobilization was more than an unfortunate short-term measure introduced under extraordinary circumstances. Speaking as director-general of the women's organization, Wartime Child Welfare Protection Association, in 1941, Chiang's wife Song Meiling compared the involvement of Chinese women in the War of Resistance to the extensive mobilization of American women during the First World War. China's ongoing total war, which Madame Chiang glossed as *quanneng zhanzheng*, offered an opportunity for female citizens to hone their "spiritual prowess" (*jingshen lilang*) and join the resistance effort shoulders to shoulders with their male compatriots as laborers, producers, and fighters. The emergence of a home front, shattering the sequestered domestic life of women into pieces, had advanced the feminist cause and China's modernization process.

While Song thought that wartime mobilization was a timely boost to China's evolving modernity, others were already looking forward to a future postwar order in which control and militarization of citizen's everyday life would continue unabated. Ru Chunpu, a Lixingshe member, argued that the common purposes as stated in the *Guiding Principles* – supremacy of the state and the nation, prioritization of the military and military victory (*junshi diyi shengli diyi*), and concentration of popular will and strength

(*yizhi jizhong liliang jizhong*) – formed the basis of national sovereignty that ought to be retained after the war. Commitment to national unity was not a matter of transient alliance between disparate forces and agendas but a principle immanent to collective life. As international relations was based on the presumed equality between states acting as the agents of their respective peoples or nations, any political ideology that challenged this arrangement or posited transition to a world without nation-states would remain illegitimate after the war. In a world where even the Soviet Union was embracing nationalism and national defense, blind faith in internationalism could only result in capitulation to foreign invaders. Conflating communist internationalism with rightwing Pan-Asianism, Ru illustrated the danger of inadequate nationalist commitment by citing the currency Japan’s Pan-Asianist ideology enjoyed among Chinese collaborationists, most notably the recently disgraced former premier Wang Jingwei. A formidable military force and a mobilized population must be constantly prepared to counter ideological heresies threatening the polity’s coherence.²⁷ A permanent military-first policy might not have appealed to Chen Lifu and the CC clique, whose influence was felt primarily within the civilian bureaucracy. But he definitely did not object to drilling a militarist sense of discipline and honor to the wider populace. In fact, while military mobilization was expected to serve only the needs of war, spiritual mobilization should be pursued with determination beyond victory over Japan.²⁸ The suspension of normal life, thanks to the

²⁷ Ru Chunpu, “Chedi jiuzheng guanyu jingshen zong dongyuan gongtong mubiao de wujie” [Fully rectify misconceptions concerning the common purposes of spiritual general mobilization], *Zhongyang zhoukan* 1, nos. 39-40 (n.d.): 15-16.

²⁸ Chen, “Jingshen zong dongyuan de yiyi,” 652.

Second Sino-Japanese War, was a blessing in disguise since it lent credence to the radical conservative claim to the nation's future.

Another way in which the resistance war worked to Chongqing's favor was the universal, if grudging, acceptance within China of GMD rule. One critical difference between the Nationalist state at total war and its rightwing counterparts in other countries was that the former had to reconcile with the CCP's stubborn presence. As a result of the Xi'an Incident in late 1936, Chiang was forced into a common front with his internal nemesis against further intrusion by advancing Japanese militarists. The Second United Front, which technically lasted until 1946, was extremely volatile and filled with political intrigues and clashes between Nationalist forces and the Yan'an-based Communist movement. Yet, the half-hearted alliance accorded Chiang for the first time unquestioned legitimacy as the rightful successor of the national revolution. Even as frictions between the two parties began as early as 1938, the CCP had prized patriotism and national unity under Mao Zedong's New Democracy doctrine. Instead of calling for class warfare and an end to GMD rule, the Communists carried out electoral reforms along liberal democratic lines, rationalized the bureaucracy by adopting meritocratic principles, and actively courted the local landed elite. Rather than Marxism, the CCP traced the ideological roots of their program to the Three People's Principles, implicitly challenging Chiang's claim as the true successor of Sun Yat-sen's national revolution.²⁹ The CCP's political flexibility and willingness to privilege the nationalist agenda defined its qualified support for general spiritual mobilization. An October 1940 list revealed that Communists Zhou Enlai (1898-1976) and Guo Moruo (1892-1978), as officials at the

²⁹ Mark Selden, *China in Revolution: The Yanan Way Revisited* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 104-105, 125-131.

political training board of the all-powerful Military Affairs Commission, served as members of the spiritual mobilization campaign association planning committee. Their colleagues included such GMD stalwarts as Pan Gongzhan and activists from minor political parties like Zhang Junmai (1886-1969). They list also included non-partisan figures who were nonetheless sympathetic to the Nationalist cause such as Buddhist monk Taixu and India-based academic Tan Yunshan, whose careers I will discuss in chapter 5.³⁰

The Communists, reflecting their overall relationship with their senior partner, maintained a delicate distance from the GMD's monopoly on mass mobilization. They had to thread a thin line between challenging the Nationalist plea for exclusive devotion to the Leader and playing into the claim that Communists valued partisan over national interests. One result of the CCP's precarious position within the body politic was a decisive shift away from class politics. Chen Boda (1904-1989), Mao Zedong's secretary, wrote in 1939 that the laboring masses made up over 90% of the Chinese nation, a government that claimed to uphold the supremacy of the state and the nation must not act against the interests of their agent, the Communist Party. Citing Chiang's speech at the launching ceremony of the spiritual mobilization campaign, Chen adeptly fused the Generalissimo's call for the creation of a new *zeitgeist* cleansed of old selfish habits and Lenin's faith in Third World nationalism, observing that China was set to emerge from the current crisis as an advanced civilization.³¹ Yet, while asserting the politically

³⁰ "Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan hui sheji weiyuan yilan" [List of planning committee members at the National Spiritual Mobilization Association], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 3 (1940): 183.

³¹ Chiang's speech, delivered in Chongqing on the May Day of 1939, was "Chujiu buxin gemian xixin" [Abolish the old, establish the new and reform], in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian*, 4:610-615.

advanced nature of the Chinese proletariat, the Communist theorist was adamant that class struggle had no place in a time when national survival was at stake. Echoing the GMD's definition of military resistance as a total war and policy of prioritizing the military, Chen implored his compatriots to sacrifice their own political and economic interests and contribute to the nation's defense. Any action that intensified tensions among the people, including class warfare, was undesirable under the paramount goal of military victory. Instead of pushing for traditional communist policies, Yan'an undertook a social democratic reform program to ensure that workers were employed and peasants had land to till without jeopardizing the institution of private property. The Communists advocated national independence and promised greater civil and political liberties. At one point, Chen endorsed the coordinating role of a corporatist state, stating, as did many GMD cadres, that the vision of universal harmony (*datong*) sought an end to the anarchy of capitalist economics by rationalizing production under central planning.³² The proletariat was denied its vanguard position in the defeat of bourgeois rule and capitalist social relations. Instead, the working class was subsumed under a homogenous "people," its political subjectivity bound to the sometimes incompatible agenda of nationalism. The scaling back of the Communists' core ideological appeals lent legitimacy to the Nationalist demand for absolute loyalty to the nation-state, even as neither party was willing to cede too much ground to its competitor. Indeed, just as the spiritual mobilization campaign entered its final stage of planning in early 1939, the GMD's Central Executive Committee had once again defined the CCP as an alien or heretical

³² Chen Boda, *Xin rensheng guan de chuangzao* [The making of a new philosophy of life] (Shanghai: Chen'guang shudian, 1939), 7-9, 21-22, 40-42.

party (*yidang*) and adopted measures that restricted the latter's activities in areas controlled by Chongqing.³³

Spiritual Mobilization in Action

Deeply ingrained anti-communism and an assumed mandate to lead the entire nation toward victory over foreign invasion conditioned the GMD's centralized, commandeering approach to spiritual mobilization. Not unlike the New Life Movement, the wartime state sought to assert full command over the nation's human and material resources by restricting political expression, limiting conspicuous consumption, and rationalizing citizens' daily routines. Given the similarities between the spiritual mobilization campaign and the movement it incorporated, party officials had to rebuke views that the two campaigns were essentially the same. GMD propaganda chief Ye Chucang (1887-1946) explained at a seminar for intellectuals a few days after the *Guiding Principles* was proclaimed in March 1939 that wartime mobilization implied a different dynamic between state and society than the New Life Movement. National spiritual mobilization, he argued,

will be executed from the top down and, simultaneously, initiated by the people from the ground up. The movement is *launched* by the Nationalist government for the purpose of nation-building through the resistance war and is inherently interventionist. The New Life Movement, on the other hand, was launched by a civil organization (*jituan*), namely the New Life Movement Promotion Association headed by Generalissimo Chiang. The New Life Movement is more exhortative than coercive, while spiritual mobilization will rely as much on exhortation as on coercion.³⁴

³³ Selden, *China in Revolution*, 133.

³⁴ “Zhongyang xuanchuan bu zhaodai weihua jie taolun jingshen zong dongyuan jishi” [Record of cultural sector discussion on spiritual mobilization as convened by the Central Executive Committee Propaganda Department], *Zhongyang zhoukan* 1, no. 34 (1939): 22.

The suggestion that the state played an auxiliary role in the New Life Movement was at best an understatement. The New Life Movement, which began in 1934 as a means to win over the rural population in the formerly Communist-controlled Jiangxi province, proliferated across the country thanks to aggressive promotion by provincial officials and the coordinated efforts of military police, police and the Scouts of China.³⁵ Ye's remark was illuminating nonetheless for it indicated what the GMD had long identified as its core weakness in managing social movements, i.e. the failure to exert top-down control. Indeed, the tendency to favor party-state coordination over limited autonomy was obvious in how scouting was gradually incorporated into the Three People's Principles Youth Corps in 1940.

Wartime contingency presented the GMD the opportunity to reassert total command over the masses, even as measures introduced in the mid-1930s were carried forward to the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement. The preference for state coercion was well displayed in Chiang's speech on the new year's day of 1940. "National spiritual mobilization," the Generalissimo observed, "should as a matter of course be a spontaneous movement." But had the nation, Chiang demanded of his audience, genuinely uphold the Three People's Principles as a faith that unified the people? Was everyone in society committed to national salvation? Had the common purposes as listed in the *Guiding Principles* pervaded the entire populace?³⁶ As long as the ideological allegiances and everyday commitments of the people had yet to converge exclusively on

³⁵ Dirlik, "Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement," 950-951.

³⁶ Chiang, "Celi guoren nuli shixing guomin jingshen zong dongyuan – ershijiu nian yuandan guangbo jiangci" [Encouraging compatriots to steadfastly carry out National Spiritual Mobilization – speech broadcast on the New Year's Day of 1940], in *Sanda yundong*, ed. Sanmin zhuyi qingnian tuan zhongyang tuanbu (n.p., 1942), 418-419.

the GMD's military campaign, a mass movement of unprecedented scope and scale could not be led by anyone other than the state. Spiritual mobilization, commensurate with its ambiguous nomenclature, was envisioned as an umbrella movement branching out to include drives to ban frivolous entertainment, restrict import of luxury products, enhance productive capacity, strengthen internal propaganda, fight corruption, encourage donations of possessions to the country, eradicate media opinions hostile to the state, and promote hygienic practices and physical training.³⁷

In organizational terms, spiritual mobilization was coordinated by a body that derived its authority from the GMD's Supreme National Defense Council (*Guofang zuigao weiyuanhui*), a top party organ that operated from 1939 to 1947 with a view to concentrating military and government power in the party's hands. The appendix to the *Guiding Principles* provided for a National Spiritual Mobilization Association headed by Chiang. The new national body gathered together the Executive Yuan president, the GMD general secretary, the general secretary of the Supreme National Defense Council, the director general of the New Life Movement Association, the ministers of education and economic affairs, the chairman of the Military Affairs Commission political training board, and heads of the ruling party's organization, social affairs, propaganda, economics and education departments. At the sub-national level, spiritual mobilization was to be conducted through a multitude of GMD-supervised organizations. Provinces were instructed to set up regional associations led by local notables and current New Life Movement officials within one month, with the party secretary, magistrate, and high

³⁷ "Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa," 595-597; "Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gongzuo fenpei jihua" [Plan for the distribution of duties relating to National Spiritual Mobilization], 26 April 1939, Nationalist Government Collection, 001000001614A, Academia Historica.

school principals of each county in attendance at their inaugural meetings.³⁸ Both state and party apparatuses were assigned specific tasks in the larger scheme of spiritual mobilization. The interior ministry and the police were responsible for clamping down improper entertainment; the economic affairs ministry took charge of resource saving, enhancement of production efficiency, and promotion of national goods; the education ministry, working with the recently founded Three People's Principle Youth Corps, was to make sure that teachers and students form the vanguard of mobilization.³⁹

Party cadres, as custodians of the national revolution, were to take as much of a leading role in the movement as government and military officials.⁴⁰ The GMD social affairs department, for example, was tasked with rallying leaders from the various sectors and initiating “concrete campaigns” (*shiji yundong*). Even the overseas affairs department was enlisted to engage diasporic Chinese communities in supporting their Nationalist homeland.⁴¹ The Chinese consulate in New York, along with the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (*Zhonghua gongsuo*), held mass rallies in June 1939 where participants bowed in front of Sun Yat-sen's portrait and pledged support for the Nationalists' resistance war. Overseas GMD branches, like their domestic counterparts, held regular assemblies in Penang and Singapore.⁴² As far as Brazil, where the rightwing regime under Getúlio Vargas professed neutrality vis-à-vis the Axis powers, spiritual

³⁸ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa,” 599-601.

³⁹ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gongzuo fenpei jihua.”

⁴⁰ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa,” 595-597.

⁴¹ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gongzuo fenpei jihua.”

⁴² “Dongyuan tongxun” [Mobilization news], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 4 (1941): 180.

mobilization activities were reported in October 1939 to be taking place underground.⁴³

Both domestically and abroad, through a combination of persuasion and raw coercion, the party-state would work to foster seamless synergy among communities and classes in creating a lifestyle which befitted the total war ideals of political homogeneity and an altruistic, dynamic people.

Towards a New Wartime Culture

The heavy-handed execution of spiritual mobilization coupled with the fear that national cohesion would be perverted by ideological strife and debauch popular habits defined the movement's emphasis on tackling everyday aesthetic experiences such as physical culture, hygiene practices, consumption behaviors and vernacular artistic expressions. The determination to command not only institutions and enterprises but also the mundane but mercurial habits of a war-stressed, diverse population put China in league with other societies working to rally their entire peoples behind grand military strategies. Apparently insignificant everyday matters from food and fashion to shopping and sports were, as historian Maureen Healy put it, "refracted" under the lens of total war and parachuted within the purview of public authority.⁴⁴ The *Guiding Principles* made the connection between national strength and everyday life succinctly thus: "Life is the root (*genben*) of spirit; if life lacks rationality, spirit lacks vitality and wholesomeness."⁴⁵

Meticulous attention on the quotidian was reminiscent of the importance Dai Jitao and Li

⁴³ "Meiguo guomin jingshen zong dongyuan" [National Spiritual Mobilization in the United States], 1939-1940, Foreign Affairs Ministry Collection, 020000002996A, Academia Historica.

⁴⁴ Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

⁴⁵ "Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa," 588.

Shizeng attached to the transformation of popular social life, rather than the simple usurpation of state power, as the ultimate revolutionary goal back in the late 1920s. But there is no doubt that Japanese invasion had provided a new layer of meaning and urgency to the GMD's attempt at regulating the minutiae details of personal routines. If more extreme elements in the GMD conceived the New Life Movement as preparation for a yet-to-happen second world war, wartime spiritual mobilization codified the ideal of militarized citizenry as the unassailable means for China to overcome Japan.⁴⁶

Despite the conflicting military interests and putative ideological differences between Western-supported China and the Axis powers, there were striking parallels between these societies in the ways they carried out wartime mobilization. Rather than looking to the United States for models on how to engage the masses, Nationalist officials and intellectuals were more likely to turn to enemies like Germany and particularly Japan. Nationalist intellectuals cited Erich Ludendorff, a decorated Second Reich general who helped engineer Adolf Hitler's abortive 1923 *coup* against the Weimer Republic, as an important inspiration for the spiritual mobilization movement. Aside from Ludendorff's pronouncements on the supremacy of military in the body politic and the use of posters and radio broadcast to encourage energetic participation in mass warfare, bureaucrat Hu Menghua (1903-1983), who led an earlier career as a conservative literary critic, was fascinated by the esoteric, anti-Christian strategist's musings on deity and the German national psyche. Germans, as per Hu's reading of Ludendorff, were graced with a material sense of God which lent the nation a concrete basis for spiritual

⁴⁶ Hu Haoruo, "Xinshenghuo yundong piping zhi piping" [A critique of critiques of the New Life Movement], *Qiantu* 2:6 (1934): 1-2, cited in Clinton, "Fascism, Cultural Revolution, and National Sovereignty in 1930s China," 211-212. *The Future* was a journal affiliated with Lixingshe.

cohesion.⁴⁷ Hu observed that like China through much of its history, religious and moral values in Germany did not constitute an abstract sphere of occult spirituality, but in fact pervaded the secular life of the Nordic people. They inspired healthy animosity against foreign enemies, bolstered popular concern for the nation's fragile existence, and sustained a willed vigor and the emphasis of bodily strength among the population. The Nationalist state must reclaim the "materiality" of traditional virtues by undertaking "spiritual transformation" (*jingshen de gaizao*) and intervening in the quotidian morals, habits, thoughts and aspirations of its subjects.⁴⁸

The identification of indomitable mass will as the only weapon that China could hope to wield in order to compensate for its backward military hardware also explained why Nationalist leaders continued to hold their arch-enemy Japan in such high regard. To the party elite, many of whom had experienced the country first-hand as students, the Japanese people encapsulated the ideals of order, hierarchy and chivalry that seemed to forever elude poverty-stricken China. In mid-March 1940, impoverished urbanites, dissatisfied with the rocketing price of the grain, looted rice merchants and banks in the southwestern city of Chengdu.⁴⁹ Rather than attributing the incident to natural disasters or

⁴⁷ Ludendorff, ever scornful of politicians, eventually fell out with the Nazi movement in 1928 after Hitler rejected his doctrine of subjecting political processes to the control of the armed forces. In contrast, Nationalist China, run by the Generalissimo supported by his former cadets from the Whampoa Academy, was perhaps closer to the German general's ideal of militarist society.

⁴⁸ Hu Menghua, "Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan de shiji yu shijian" [National Spiritual Mobilization – its concreteness and practice], *Zhongyang zhoukan* 1, no. 34 (1939): 10-11. For another example on Chinese intellectuals' interest in Ludendorff, see You Rulong, "Dangqian Zhongguo guomin jingshen zong dongyuan zhi lilun yu shijian" [The theory and practice of National Spiritual Mobilization in today's China], *Dongfang zazhi* 37, no. 8 (1940): 37-44.

⁴⁹ The Chengdu rice riot quickly became another point of contention between the Nationalist and Communist parties, with each accusing the other of manipulating popular disaffection with inflation for political gains. See Chang Wenbin, "1940 nian Chengdu 'qiangmi' you minbian zhuanhua wei zhengzhi shijian de kaocha" [An analysis of the politicization of the popular uprising 1940 Chengdu "rice riot"] *Xi'nan minzu daxue xuebao – renwen sheke ban* 26, no. 10 (2005): 254-258.

economic mismanagement, Chiang pointed his finger at China's weak nationalistic education in comparison with Japan's. In a banquet the Generalissimo hosted for educators in March 1940, Chiang opined that Japan had taken to heart ancient holistic ideals that put equal emphasis on moral rectitude, bodily strength and aesthetic creativity, thus producing citizens that were more virile than the Chinese. He called for an education experience that resonated with students' everyday life (*richang shenghuo*) and cultivated a "benevolent concern for all things" (*ren'ai xiwu*), including animals and plants.⁵⁰ What Chiang characterized as Japan's creative adaptation of "Six Arts" (*liuyi*) education was in fact of much more recent vintage than the Confucianism from which it supposedly originated. Japan's focus on proper manners, calisthenics and martial arts in the schooling process was inseparable from the tenet that citizens, constituting the human resources of the state, had the responsibility to maintain good physical and mental health. Introduced in Japan and its colonies in earnest after the Mukden (1931) and Marco Polo Bridge (1937) incidents, these more subtle strategies of home front management was often the overlooked side of the *dirigist*, politically repressive turn of the Shôwa state.⁵¹

While Chiang was merely making an observation on Japan's strength and couched it in terms of an indigenous social engineering tradition waiting to be resurrected, his party colleagues were more particular in their admiration for Japan's

⁵⁰ *Jiang Zhongzheng zongtong dang'an: shilüe gaoben* [Chiang Kai-shek collections: the chronological events] (Taipei: Academia Historica, 2010), 43:293.

⁵¹ Fujino Yutaka, *Kyôsei sareta kenkô – Nihon fashizumu shita no seimei to shintai* [Forced health – Life and body under Japanese fascism] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 2000), 4-5; Jung Keun-sik, "Shokuminchi shihai, shintai kiritsu, kenkô" [Colonial rule, body discipline, health], in *Seikatsu no naka no shokuminchi shugi*, ed. Mizuno Naoki (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 2004), 70-74. Jung observes that while the Japanese colonial state began to take an interest in the Korean subjects as early as the 1920s, medical check-up was confined to female textile factory workers to ensure productivity. Korean males were not subjected to examination until 1938 when they became potential volunteers for the Japanese military.

mobilization of its people's physical and spiritual capacities since the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Ju Zheng (1876-1951), who headed the Nationalist government's judicial branch, suggested plainly that China should adopt Japan's extensive system of fitness tests and medical examinations to disqualify effete citizens from government employment, secondary and higher education and even marriages. Making the eugenicist connection between individual citizens' health and the nation's, Ju argued those who were deemed physically unfit or, worse, contracted venereal diseases, should be eliminated (*taotai*). The Judicial Yuan president felt that wartime mobilization "would become no more than a scrap of paper" (*chengwei juwen*) if unfit party cadres, government officials, university and high school students were allowed to remain in their positions.⁵² The Japanese-educated jurist was no doubt following with interest Tokyo's effort at stepping up its hygienic regime that, beginning from May 1938, brought together prefectural and municipal governments, the police, and the newly established, army-initiated Ministry of Welfare. Through annual week-long campaigns of sports carnivals, public talks, film screenings, and award programs, the state drove home the importance of regular exercises, nutrition, public morality, and preventing tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. Personal health came to be touted as a patriotic duty, and those who suffered from illnesses and disabilities could be stripped of their citizenship rights. These public health campaigns constituted part of Japan's own National Spiritual Mobilization Movement (*kokumin seishin sôdôin undô*), which, launched in August 1937, shared the

⁵² Ju Zheng to GMD Central Secretariat, 20 January 1939, *huiyi*, 5.2/23.7, Kuomintang Archives.

same set of Chinese characters in its nomenclature as the endeavor the GMD introduced two years later.⁵³

Across East Asia, aesthetic sensibilities, political organization, and social mores were remolded under the total war paradigm. Chinese spiritual mobilization thus shared more than nomenclature with its Japanese counterpart. The Second Sino-Japanese War spurred both China and Japan, including the latter's colonies and puppet states, to step up transforming industries, marshaling social resources, and mobilizing national identities.⁵⁴ More than control over enterprises and social organizations, a new regime of affective and visual experiences took shape. Military uniformity and clockwork efficiency now pervaded state management of human bodies and what used to be regarded as citizens' free time, particularly that of young people who formed the backbone of the two warring nation-states. In Japanese colonies like Korea and Taiwan, spiritual mobilization entailed promoting mass calisthenics, hiking, youth corps and a strict work-and-rest regiment in schools and workplaces. Imperial subjects were expected to participate in anthem-singing and Emperor-worshipping, speak only Japanese, accumulate savings and restrain from indulging in cosmetics, alcohol and even white rice.⁵⁵ Ju's proposal for a certification system to ensure that newly-weds and high school students were healthy was not adopted. Yet, his conviction that the state needed to micro-manage citizens' routines struck a

⁵³ Fujino, *Kyôsei sareta kenkô*, 25-26.

⁵⁴ Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 246-247.

⁵⁵ Jung, "Shokuminchi shihai,shintai kiritsu, kenkô," 75-89. For spiritual mobilization in Taiwan, see, for example, *Kokumin seishin sôdôin shin taisei* [The new order of national spiritual mobilization movement] (Taichû: Taichûshû kyôka rengôkai, 1940), 22-33.

chord with cadres whose cult of productivity forged an indissoluble link between physical prowess, ideological conformity and singular devotion to the war cause.

These combined imperatives were well articulated at the National Spiritual Mobilization movement's launching ceremony, which took place in Chongqing on May Day evening. Party cadres, government officials, military officers, workers, peasants, merchants, youths, and women participated in what the popular pictorial *Young Companion* (*Liangyou huabao*) described as an unprecedented torch parade (*kongqian zhi huoju da youxing*). Reported numbers of participants ranged from 3,000 to several hundred thousand.⁵⁶ Before the mass performance, President Lin Sen (1868-1943) urged workers to avoid labor disputes and understand the “true meaning” of May Day – cooperation between capitalists and workers in the common cause of furthering productivity. Chiang, set against the monumental spectacle of light, music and precise procession, lambasted the decadent, unruly aesthetics of dancing bodies. Referring specifically to the foreign concessions of Shanghai, Tianjin and Hankou, he urged young people to stop loitering around in cabaret halls and devote their energy to labor, a depoliticized category under which Lin relegated both workers and their employers.⁵⁷ Speech after speech delivered at mandated citizens' monthly assemblies (*guomin yuehui*) held across “free” China extolled the virtues of an austere, disciplined factory-floor lifestyle stripped of Western, consumerist indulgences.

⁵⁶ “Jingshen zong dongyuan” [National spiritual mobilization], *Liangyou huabao*, no. 143 (1939): 4-5; “Jingshen zong dongyuan zuo shishi Jiang weiyuanzhang xiang quanguo guangbo” [Spiritual mobilization launched yesterday, Generalissimo Chiang delivered radio address to nation], *Dagong bao* (Hong Kong), 2 May 1939, 3.

⁵⁷ “Jingshen zong dongyuan,” *Dagong bao*, 3; Yin Ling, “Wo suo zhi de ‘Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan’ yundong” [The “National Spiritual Mobilization” campaign that I know], *Hongyan chunqiu*, no. 99 (2006): 63. As a student attendee, Yin recalled that the scale and grandeur of the ceremony was rare for the then isolated and dull Chongqing.



Figure 4. Pictures of the National Spiritual Mobilization Campaign launching ceremony on May 1, 1939 and pledge-taking ceremonies where participants affirmed their loyalty towards Chiang Kai-shek. Ceremonies took place in Chongqing, Xi'an, Guangdong province and Hong Kong. (*Liangyou huabao*, no. 143 [1939]: 4.)

At the June 1939 assembly for cadres from the GMD social affairs department, associate director Ma Chaojun (1886-1977) observed that China's average life expectancy had fallen from 34 to 32 years of age. He attributed this alarming development to how the people's vitality was being drained by unproductive entertainment like card games and mahjong. If instead every citizen was to rise up at six in the morning and spend two extra hours on productive labor, the benefit to the nation would be immeasurable. The flamboyant Ma then performed a few of his morning drills

after offering his own spiritually rejuvenating routine for emulation: get up at 5:30 in the morning, drink a cup of plain water or water with salt to cleanse the digestive system, and then empty one's bowel in the washroom.⁵⁸ Frivolous use of one's free time, especially when combined with habits associated with treaty-port cosmopolitanism, was now seen as a disease that literally threatened the nation's health and hence the resistance effort.

With the dislocation and the inland migration of refugees from the Japanese-occupied northern and eastern regions, state officials found to their dismay that maligned urban indulgences were spreading to Chongqing. A woman who spent her high school years in the wartime capital was fascinated by how the city was transformed from a remote backwater in the early 1930s to a "cultured" place of ballroom dancing, revealing cheongsam and stylish pantyhose thanks to better transport connections, relocated universities, and refugees who fled from the coast.⁵⁹ For cadres involved in spiritual mobilization, the arrival of consumer modernity was not a salutary development. Zhang Qun (1889-1990), the Military Affairs Commission general secretary, complained in the official organ of the spiritual mobilization movement that "even though Chongqing had yet to sport amenities typical of modern urban life, it had already been infested with subpar urban habits like opium-smoking, gambling, non-observance of punctuality and hygienic prescriptions." He warned that if peasants in the vicinities were to adopt a similarly lax attitude towards time, they could fail to heed nature's rhythm and miss

⁵⁸ "Zhongyang shehui bu tuixing guomin jingshen zong dongyuan shishi baogao" [Report by the Social Affairs Department on its implementation of national spiritual mobilization], 10 June 1939, *tezhong*, 6/39.51, Kuomintang Archives.

⁵⁹ Danke Li, *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 51-53.

farming seasons, putting into jeopardy the already strained food supply.⁶⁰ As a testament to the premium the state put in punctuality, a clock tower named the Spiritual Fortress (*Jingshen baolei*) was erected in March 1940 overlooking Chongqing's rapidly evolving urban space.⁶¹ Citizens were told that "saving" meant calibrating the use of not only material sources but also time, as labor time was simultaneously a source of value as realized in production and an immanent feature of the nation's collective strength.

The *Guiding Principles* committed the state to redressing China's debauch life of intoxicated reveries (*zuisheng mengsi*).⁶² In the southern province of Guangdong, month-long "get up early" and punctuality movements were planned in 1940 alongside campaigns devoted to anti-corruption, improving literacy, promoting hygienic habits, conserving scarce resources and planting trees.⁶³ Extravagant and bohemian indulgences like gambling, dancing, smoking, drinking, and outlandish fashion (*qizhuang yifu*) became anathema and citizens were encouraged to take part, and then only in moderation, in salubrious entertainment. Conspicuous consumption, including sleeping and getting up late, put into waste precious labor time and sapped the people's vigor and vitality (*zhaoqi*). Young people, in particular, were warned not to spend too much time on social engagement, less that they became lethargic and forgot about work and study.⁶⁴ In Xichang, a city in the frontier province of Xikang, officials went as far as to deploy a

⁶⁰ Zhang Qun, "Jingshen zong dongyuan shishi de shige zhuyi dian" [Ten important items of spiritual mobilization], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 1 (1940): 7.

⁶¹ Yin, "Wo suo zhi de 'Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan' yundong," 63.

⁶² Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa," 588.

⁶³ "Zhandi tongxun" [News from the battlefield], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 1 (1940): 32.

⁶⁴ *Guomin shenghuo zhi di* [Enemies of citizens' livelihood] (n.p.: Neizheng bu and Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan hui, n.d.), 39; *Zhanshi jiejue* [Wartime conservation] (n.p.: Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan hui, 1939), 16-18.

morning-call brigade in late June 1939 to make sure that residents maintain the optimal work-rest pattern.⁶⁵ Other places like Guangxi province in the south, put up placards outside eateries and theaters to inspire guilt among consumers and warn them away from hedonist pleasures. Printed on these placards were eye-catching slogans like “Those who arrive to dinners on limousines make an enslaved people!” and “Those who arrive to movies on limousines make an enslaved people!”⁶⁶ The efficacy of these harrowing messages in delivering the public from “intoxicated reveries” cannot be assessed, but they eloquently expressed how the entangled web between rationalization of everyday routines, the quest for economic productivity and a nationalist reaction against cosmopolitan urban life was put to ever sharper relief by total war mobilization.

Aside from threatening people into action, spiritual mobilization included more positive measures with a view to encouraging citizens to participate in reforms on the quotidian. In September 1939, the social affairs ministry launched a series of contests that, if extensively held, would at least create the appearance of an enthusiastic and healthy citizenry. The contests, some of which were first held under the New Life Movement, would involve citizens of varying education attainments across the country. Urbanites worked to improve the general appearance of their cities; peasants participated in the creation of a new rural lifestyle. While students and the educated could submit their entries for essay competitions on eradicating unsavory habits and promoting “proper” entertainment, the illiterate could join sports competitions, maintain cleanliness at home, and follow instructions on ridding off superstitious customs in family weddings and

⁶⁵ “Biansheng tongxun” [News from frontier provinces], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 1 (1940): 50-84.

⁶⁶ “Dongyuan tongxun” [Mobilization news], *Jingshen dongyuan* 2, no. 1 (1941): 189-196.

funerals. Activities were also designed specifically for public services workers, merchants, students, and educators.⁶⁷ By the beginning of 1941, Guangdong, the eastern province of Zhejiang, Chongqing and its neighboring provinces Hunan and Shaanxi had all reported holding competitions in the social sectors and counties under their jurisdiction with the support of the police and the New Life Movement Association.⁶⁸

Curiously, while senior GMD cadres often lambasted the consumerist pleasures of petit-bourgeois youth epitomized by treaty-port cabaret halls, their idea of wholesome leisure betrayed their own urban bourgeois background. Cadres at the GMD social affairs department were entreated to hiking trips, traditional martial arts or *wushu* sessions, and basketball games.⁶⁹ Instead of indulging in sex, opium and dancing, citizens should play sports, take up photography, or join choirs and operatic groups.⁷⁰ Just how a peasant in the impoverished rural hinterland could get regular hold of an expensive camera did not appear as an issue for spiritual mobilization advocates. The obsession with the distinction between hygienic and unhygienic practices, especially in domestic spaces, was likewise an unmistakable class marker, traceable to the bourgeois fascination with colonial modernity in treaty ports like Tianjin in the early twentieth century.⁷¹ Despite the movement's aspiration to being inclusive in geographical and social reach, spiritual

⁶⁷ “Guomin shenghuo gaijin jingsai kemu” [Competition items for the improvement of citizens’ life], Nationalist Government Collection, 001000004804A, Academia Historica.

⁶⁸ “Dongyuan tongxun” [Mobilization news], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 2 (1940): 141-151; “Dongyuan tongxun” [Mobilization news], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 3 (1940): 161-162; “Dongyuan tongxun” [Mobilization news], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 4 (1941): 175.

⁶⁹ “Zhongyang shehui bu tuixing guomin jingshen zong dongyuan shishi baogao.”

⁷⁰ *Guomin shenghuo zhi di*, unpaginated.

⁷¹ Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 223.

mobilization remained an undertaking centered on urban areas and the social elite. As a case in point, while civil servants, as well as teachers and students, were reminded that all monthly assemblies were compulsory, rural households could send just one representative to attend these meetings. In the impoverished Gansu province, officials conceded that assemblies were not regularly held in rural areas due to illiteracy, busy farming routine, and a lack of qualified personnel.⁷² China's chronic fragmentation, thanks to the country's disparate socioeconomic landscape and the GMD's limited sovereignty, meant that war mobilization was never going to be as "total" and "general" as it was intended.

The GMD attempted to attenuate the movement's regional and class biases by deploying both modern and traditional media forms, creating a diverse repertoire of wartime aesthetics that appealed to various cultural communities and social groups. Sitting in the interstices between popular pastime, modern propaganda, and national culture, aesthetics formed a layer of everyday life that was eminently susceptible to unified production. Having been displaced from its traditional stronghold on the relatively prosperous east coast, the party-state was tasked with rallying behind a diverse population which included many poor peasants with little or no education and could only speak their local dialects. Visual and oral media thus played a particularly crucial role in energizing a culturally disparate people for whom written words were much less familiar than vocal and operatic modes of expression. GMD cadres were remarkably flexible to choose from multiple artistic traditions in which they couched the spiritual mobilization message. A participant at the movement's Chongqing launch ceremony remembered

⁷² Judicial Yuan instruction no. 863, 27 September 1939, Ministry of Judicial Administration collection 02200001263A, Academia Historica; "Dongyuan tongxun," *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 4: 177-179.

singing the “Citizen Pledge Song,” the score of which was adapted from a Christmas hymn.⁷³ While Chongqing-based officials were inspired by Western music, cadres in Fujian province were busy rewriting a section of the *Guiding Principles* into the local vernaculars and incorporating it into songs so that opera troupes of both traditional and modern varieties could perform them to different audiences in the province.⁷⁴ Zhejiang province reported a similar undertaking.⁷⁵ The national government had likewise taken an interest in transforming local cultural forms into vehicles for spiritual mobilization. An education ministry directive mandated that all state-run schools and universities establish singing and opera troupes with the purpose of educating the masses. Aided by four traveling drama education teams dispatched across the country, students were to devote their time out of classes to learning the art. The goal, the directive declared, was to create a drama education network that linked together campuses from different provinces.⁷⁶

By 1941, the prestigious National Central University had registered five singing and drama troupes with at least twenty-eight members. The largest among them, Boxi Theatrical Troupe, claimed a membership of seventy-seven, not including instructors who otherwise taught music at the Chongqing-based university. It performed modern spoken drama (*huaju*) to raise funds for the commission of the military glider Qingnian (Youth)

⁷³ Yin, “Wo suo zhi de ‘Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan’ yundong,” 63. Yin erroneously cited the song as the “National Spiritual Mobilization Pledge Song” (*Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan xuanshi ge*). The title was, however, published in 1940 as “Citizen Pledge Song” (*Guomin gongyue xuanshi ge*), referring to the document on which everyone was supposed to sign and read aloud at each monthly assembly. (*Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan yaoyi* [Principles of national spiritual general mobilization] [n.p.: Zhongyang zhixing weiyuanhui xunlian weiyuanhui, 1940], app.)

⁷⁴ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan shishi gaikuang” [An overview of the implementation of national spiritual mobilization], *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 1 (1940): 13.

⁷⁵ “Dongyuan tongxun,” *Jingshen dongyuan* 2, no. 1 (1941): 189-196.

⁷⁶ Education ministry order, 22 December 1940, Central University Collection 648/6094, Second Historical Archives.

and had plans to stage regular propaganda drama (*xuanchuan huaju*) sessions for the masses, traveling to counties outside Chongqing during the summer recess.⁷⁷ These troupes performed plays approved by the Central Commission for the Censorship of Books and Periodicals. Headed by Pan Gongzhan, editor of the now defunct *Shanghai Morning Post*, the body kept a tight grip on even innocuous nationalistic propaganda plays produced by politically suspicious figures. For example, the faintly left-leaning playwright Cao Yu's *Metamorphosis* (*Tuibian*), published in 1940, was purged of lurid colloquialisms and its protagonist Commissioner Liang was hailed as "an official refreshingly true to the Three People's Principles" instead of the less partisan "refreshingly true to China."⁷⁸ The result of these efforts was on display at the festivities associated Chongqing's elevation to official alternate capital (*peidu*) status on October 1, 1940. Urbanites were entreated to Sichuan, Beijing, Hubei, and modern-style spoken dramas alongside Beijing-style crosstalk (*xiansheng*), various forms of storytelling, and magic shows. These performances were set against a spectacular light display and lantern parade crafted by the state-run production house, film studio and broadcaster, betraying the state's co-option of the urban fascination with electric lights and the industrialized nature of aesthetic experiences under a formidable propaganda machine.⁷⁹ The education ministry's drama initiative reflected the state's identification of students and teachers as the vanguard of the total war society. Teachers and students were expected to go beyond the classroom on Sundays and semester recesses and play a supervisory role in the

⁷⁷ Central University survey forms for affiliated singing and drama troupes, 1941, Central University Collection 684/6092, Second Historical Archives.

⁷⁸ Education ministry order, 9 October 1943, Central University Collection, 648/6094, Second Historical Archives.

⁷⁹ "Dongyuan tongxun," *Jingshen dongyuan*, no. 4: 181.

implementation of spiritual mobilization. Students who joined the Three People's Principles Youth Corps were to serve as speakers at monthly assemblies.⁸⁰ In rural areas, where educated cadres and officials were in short supply, students spending holiday in their hometowns were even asked to assist *baojia* heads in clamping down on "improper entertainment," "irrational habits," and "indulgences like gambling and smoking."⁸¹ It was incumbent upon students, as the nation's future elite, to participate not only as consumers but also as producers of a centrally-coordinated wartime culture that pervaded the people's working and leisure hours.

Mandating students to dedicate their school breaks to social mobilization was just one way of embedding the total war in citizens' leisure routine. While GMD's spiritual mobilization was intent on wrenching the populace from monotonous urban entertainment found in places like cabaret halls, it served to perpetuate rather than redress the vacuity and banality of citizens' everyday life under capitalism. The party operated its own culture industry and was adept in promoting what Theodor Adorno called "pseudo-activities" by affording an illusionary sense of leisure and satisfaction for nimble and subservient workers who needed to re-create their expended labor after many hours at work.⁸² Children games, like camping and sports, were no longer idle play or even rebellious acts against the monotony of capitalist society but were tools that molded

⁸⁰ "Quanguo qingnian shishi guomin jingshen zong dongyuan juti banfa" [Implementation measures of national spiritual mobilization concerning youths], July 1939, Central University Collection, 684/2238, Second Historical Archives.

⁸¹ "Gegi xuexiao ji shejiao jiguan tuijin guomin jingshen zong dongyuan ji xin shenghuo yundong gongzuo shishi gangyao" [Principles on schools and education institutions' tasks in the implementation of national spiritual mobilization and the New Life Movement], 17 April 1942, Central University Collection, 684/2238, Second Historical Archives.

⁸² Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, 2^d ed., ed. J. M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 2001), 194-195.

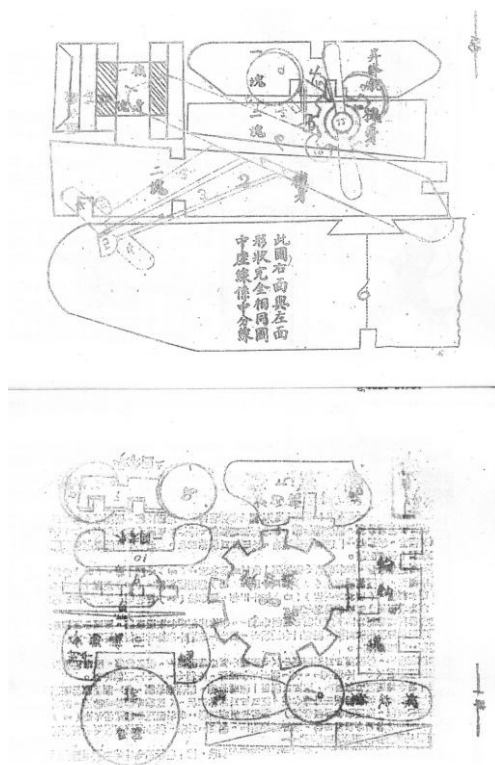
future workers and soldiers. The magazine *Young Soldiers* (*Shaonian bing*) was one fine example of how the nation's youngest citizens were not spared from total war mobilization. Launched in 1943, the Jiangxi-based publication was affiliated with the China Cultural Services Association (*Zhongguo wenhua fuwu she*), a CC clique publishing house. It provided readers, mostly older primary school students in non-Japanese occupied areas of the southern province, materials for leisure reading while socializing young citizens in the current state-led resistance objectives. The first three issues, distributed for free, offered illustrations, contributions by primary school students, and introductions to historical and current events like Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary career and the recent signing of "friendship treaties" with Britain and the United States. Like any other party-run publications, it published speeches by major officials and followed closely the GMD's social initiatives. The editor duly admonished his young readers to maintain a disciplined and healthy work-and-rest schedule, adding that good health was the foundation of resilient spirit and the basic requirement for making future contributions to the nation.⁸³

Distinct from publications that catered mainly to adults, however, *Young Soldiers* placed emphasis on contents that proffered amusement to its readers. It enjoined children to sing songs with perversely tongue-in-cheek lyrics like "Little precious ones (*xiao baobao*), stay healthy. Hop on your rocking horses, pick up your bamboo spears, charge ahead and heroically kill the devil Japanese!"⁸⁴ Readers were urged to spend their time

⁸³ Zeng Yizhi, "Jiankang diyi" [Health first], *Shaonian bing*, no. 3 (1943): 18.

⁸⁴ Wu Liping, "Erge xuanji" [Some children songs], *Shaonian bing*, no. 1 (1943): 12.

outside classes making “aerial bombers” with glass, nails, spindle and bamboo.⁸⁵ Children playing in group got a taste of military camaraderie in a game called “Recovering Lost Territories,” whereby players divided themselves into teams, lined up, and raced to “reclaim” flags marked with names of Japanese-occupied areas on the opposite side.⁸⁶ Such conflation of amusement and military training reached its climax in an article which encouraged children in battle zone to trick Japanese soldiers by igniting matches in enclosed bottles through a convex lens, thereby producing a thunderous sound that resembled gunshots. After detailing the scientific principles behind the stunt, the article ended with an enticing invitation: “Little friends, this small trick (*wanyir*) is really fun. Give it a try!”⁸⁷



⁸⁵ Deng Chongdi, “Hongzha ji” [Aerial bombers], *Shaonian bing*, no. 1 (1943): 13-16.

⁸⁶ Xing Shuntian, “Shoufu shidi” [Reclaiming lost territories], *Shaonian bing*, no. 3 (1943): 47-48.

⁸⁷ Deng Chongdi, “Buyao huoyao de pao” [A gunpowder-free bomb], *Shaonian bing*, no. 3 (1943): 50.

Previous page: Figure 5. Children taught to make “aerial bombers.” (Deng Chongdi, “Hongzha ji,” *Shaonian bing*, no. 1 [1943]: 14-15.)

The chillingly nonchalant tone in which children were enticed to risk their lives playing “small tricks” indicated how total war pervaded the people’s psyche, including the young generation’s. The militarization of leisure in *Young Soldiers* underscored how, much more than just a series of army combats, total war was a highly mediated experience orchestrated under the GMD’s monopoly. A sense that the entire Chinese people – from the very old to the very young, from urban workers to peasants – was bound by a common fate enveloped workplaces and domestic spaces alike as much through political propaganda, assembly speeches, alarming slogans as through laws and decrees. Wartime nationalism was moreover a mass aesthetics, a concrete way of life experienced through dramas, magazines, games, rallies, a hygienic lifestyle, and the occasional bright lights that garnished embattled Chongqing. Spiritual mobilization aspired to a creating a people unified under the political and cultural authority of nationalist rather than class struggle, devotion to the conservative rather than socialist revolution. As we have seen, under the imperative of survival, the CCP had no choice but to at least pledge symbolic loyalty to the now sacralized nationalist cause, downplaying its own ideological commitment to overthrowing capitalist social relations until after the establishment of the People’s Republic.⁸⁸

Limits and Persistence of Spiritual Mobilization

⁸⁸ Until 1955, the People’s Republic implemented economic reforms akin to the Soviet New Economic Policy, putting the abolition of private ownership on hold in favor of modernizing production forces. Another inspiration for early Communist China, as economic historian Chris Bramall highlights, was the GMD’s German-informed state capitalist strategy of devising five-year objectives and nationalizing major industries and infrastructure. (*Chinese Economic Development* [New York: Routledge, 2009], 84-87.)

It is difficult to gauge how enthusiastic popular response to the grand political and social experiment of “building the nation through the war of resistance” was. If we, however, were to take Chiang Kai-shek’s own assessment as a cue, the state’s call to overhaul everyday habits had been falling on deaf ears. Reflecting on the upcoming fifth anniversary of the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement, the Generalissimo observed in March 1944 that society was still lacking self-discipline, that overall morale was flagging day by day, and that the nation as a whole, including party-state cadres and military officers, was ill-prepared for the most demanding stage of the war against Japan.⁸⁹ Chiang’s complaint, particularly insofar as it concerned government officials, was not without precedent. As early as September 1939, there were signs that civil servants were abusing their power by exempting their families and themselves from attending mandatory monthly assemblies.⁹⁰ Local officials, in response to a nation-wide review ordered by Chiang before the spiritual movement’s fifth anniversary, blamed the stagnating rural economy and uneducated and uncouth (*wenhua shuizhun taidi*) citizens for the campaign’s limitations.⁹¹ The fact that three different divisions of the party-state had successively held rein of the National Spiritual General Mobilization Association – the Supreme National Defense Council in 1939, the GMD social affairs department in

⁸⁹ Executive Yuan order, 18 March 1944, Ministry of Judicial Administration Collection, 02200000270A, Academia Historica.

⁹⁰ Judicial Yuan instruction no. 863, 27 September 1939, Ministry of Judicial Administration Collection, 02200001263A, Academia Historica.

⁹¹ Shandong Provincial Government to Chiang Kai-shek, 6 May 1944, Nationalist Government Collection, 001000004769A, Academia Historica.

1940, and the National Mobilization Conference in 1942 – in less than four years testified to the confusion the movement generated at the top.⁹²

Indeed, even as the *Guiding Principles* and monthly assembly speakers promised draconian measures against wasteful consumption habits that could deplete the nation's material and human resources, officials were somewhat less resolute in bringing the state's coercive tendency to bear. In 1940, Xie Tianmin, the magistrate of Hechuan county in Sichuan province, petitioned the Executive Yuan to ban the import of cigarettes and transform all domestic cigarette factories into enterprises that “benefitted the people's livelihood” and “supported the war of resistance.”⁹³ The local chief stated that his county squandered more than 120,000 *yuan*-worth of cigarettes each month. The central authorities, while acknowledging that banning cigarettes conformed to the wartime objective of resource saving, were surprisingly unimpressed by Xie's determination to stamp out unhealthy indulgences. The brief written reply by a Chongqing bureaucrat, as attached to the petition, argued that the New Life Movement and the imperative to conserve resources had to be implemented patiently through persuasion and that Xie's heavy-handed measures could only result in confusion (*fenrao*).⁹⁴ More telling was the joint response drafted by four ministries in dismissal of the Henan provincial government's 1941 call to put a total ban on alcohol and tobacco

⁹² Supreme National Defense Council Secretariat to GMD Central Secretariat, 11 March 1940, *huiyi*, 5.3/143.7, Kuomintang Archives; “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan hui yewu guibing Guojia zong dongyuan huiyi jieban an” [Plan to subsume tasks of the National Spiritual Mobilization Association under the National Mobilization Conference], 21 October 1942, Ministry of Judicial Administration Collection 02200001263A, Academia Historica.

⁹³ Chongqing Garrison Command to Executive Yuan, January 1940, Executive Yuan Collection, 2(3)/3435, Second Historical Archives.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

consumption. Observing that drinking and smoking had long become common social customs, the finance, economic affairs, interior, and agriculture and forestry ministries reckoned that heavier taxes on these baleful products, particularly those imported from abroad, was more effective than an outright ban. “The people,” the reply continued, “should be persuaded to practice thrift out of volition and not forced into doing so.”⁹⁵ The ministries’ relatively relaxed approach hinted that some GMD cadres did not share the urgency displayed in the *Guiding Principles*, which prioritized “complete redresses” (*chedi de gaizheng*) to an intoxicated, senseless lifestyle of dancing, sex, material consumption, and private gains (*shengse huoli zhi zuisheng mengsi de shenghuo*).⁹⁶ At times, as the next chapter discusses, the strong moralizing bent of wartime mobilization operated more coherently at the discursive level, assimilating liberal intellectual scorn for mass culture.

Despite these inconsistencies, and Chiang’s own admission of the movement’s inadequacies, China’s eventual victory had allowed spiritual general mobilization to be remembered as a successful undertaking rather than being condemned as a fascist relic as in postwar Japan. Less than a decade after the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan-based GMD officials were calling for a new spiritual mobilization campaign against Soviet Russia and its Chinese ally instead of Japan. Commentators lauded spiritual mobilization as a viable military strategy, as well as an effective way to create an anti-communist, modern national culture. The total war social experiment became canonized as a climax of an unfinished quest to rediscover China’s cultural essence first

⁹⁵ Ministries of Finance, Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry, and the Interior to the Executive Yuan, Received on 3 March 1941, Executive Yuan Collection, 2(3)/3435, Second Historical Archives.

⁹⁶ “Guomin jingshen zong dongyuan gangling jiqi shishi banfa,” 588.

buried by the invading Mongolian army in the thirteenth century. Just as how Sun fought against warlords in the 1920s by rallying ignorant masses behind the call for action, a doctrine well elaborated by Dai Jitao during “party purification” in 1927, Chiang had thwarted off Japanese invaders in the 1940s by elevating the spiritual coherence of the nation. It now rested upon the people in Taiwan to continue this anti-communist enterprise by harnessing the Chinese people’s innate proclivity for loyalty, fidelity, clearly demarcated social hierarchy and mutual assistance.⁹⁷ The legacy of spiritual mobilization, and the conservative revolution which the April 12 *coup* inaugurated, in postwar “free” China will be the subject of the conclusion.

⁹⁷ Wang Guanqing, “Xinli jianshe, jingshen dongyuan yu Zhongguo geming” [Psychological reconstruction, spiritual mobilization and the Chinese revolution], *Guohun*, no. 130 (1956): 12-14.

PART III

ALLIANCES

CHAPTER 4

Liberal Support for the Conservative Revolution The Case of Zhu Guangqian

Not unlike how the GMD strived to secure hegemony over the masses and urban youths, the party-state was keen on appealing to the intellectual elite, a core section of the civil society with which it had a fraught relationship. By the time Chiang Kai-shek launched his vicious attacks on Communists and labor unionists in April 1927, the intellectual class that rose to center-stage in national life during the anti-traditionalist New Culture Movement had already been divided along fault lines that paralleled those in the political sphere. While many on the left professed sympathy for the embattled CCP, if not joining the party altogether, broad segments of China's modern intelligentsia struggled to find political cognates for their literary or critical agendas. Some intellectuals decided to side with the new government; others resorted to quiet university campuses, particularly those operating from the deposed imperial capital Beijing. Liberal writers and thinkers wavered between conscious distancing and equivocal cooperation in their interaction with the political center. On one hand, subscribers to European Enlightenment ideals like reason and liberty were naturally uncomfortable with the GMD state's authoritarian tendencies and intolerance towards intellectual dissent. On the other hand, prominent liberal writers and thinkers' non-alignment often gave way to reluctant endorsement of the conservative revolution at crucial moments during the Nationalist reign.

In this part of the dissertation, we turn our attention from the mass movements that furthered Nationalist social engineering priorities onto the curious ties conservative

revolutionaries forged with intellectual elites at home and in Asia. The current chapter highlights features of the Nationalist program that resonated with an exemplary Chinese liberal writer whose natural sympathies did not lay with a rightwing vanguard party that demanded from the people unthinking and unconditional loyalty. Chapter 5 then examines how Nationalist China earned the sympathies of fellow Asians, particularly Indians who were fighting against British colonialism and imagining a united Asia freed from Western domination. In both instances, figures who might have otherwise objected to the GMD's violent tendency and political intolerance ended up seeing the regime as the guarantor of China's – and even Asia's – cultural and ethical rebirth that transcended sectarian political interests.

Insofar as Chinese liberal intellectuals were concerned, expanding state power was often a threat to creative freedom. At the same time, however, the state was also relied upon to create a bulwark separating a hostile mass culture from autonomous elite culture. The GMD's reluctance to share power with the general populace was compatible with elitist wariness over a political and cultural scene where the common people played an increasingly visible and vocal role, influenced as they were by the forces of the market and radical ideologies. The conviction that most Chinese people had to be guided in their everyday deportment instead of treated as citizens with legitimate political demands was shared by both the party-state and intellectuals who did not harbor leftwing sympathies. Especially in times when national unity was paramount, measures that claimed to transform destructive mob wrath into a productive force serving common purposes found receptive eyes among an otherwise skeptical New Culture intelligentsia.

A case in point is Zhu Guangqian (1897-1986), a liberal aesthetician who championed the broad aims of the conservative revolution in GMD-run publications during the latter half of the eight-year resistance war. The British and French-educated academic, known as much for his scholarship on aesthetic theory as for his writings for the mass media, has been celebrated in Chinese-speaking societies as a public intellectual of impeccable idealism and wisdom. His widely read columns in newspapers and popular magazines reinforced Zhu's reputation as a purveyor of artistic refinement and moral accomplishment. Compilations like *Twelve Letters to Youths* (*Gei qingnian de shi'er fengxin*) and *On Cultivation* (*Tan xiuyang*) were sought after by generations of students for advices on how to negotiate the transition to adulthood in a society beset by unstable politics, external threats, and widespread corruption. Yet, the links between Zhu's cultural criticism and his political involvements have rarely been examined. His indictments against student involvement in oppositional politics are typically downplayed as being peripheral to his illustrious academic career. In the People's Republic, where the aesthetician remained after the Communist Revolution in 1949, Zhu's transformation from a liberal-leaning idealist philosopher into a celebrated advocate of Marxian aesthetics overshadowed, if not completely offset, his involvement in Nationalist propaganda projects during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

In this chapter, I reread Zhu's prolific output on aesthetics and cultivation during the Nationalist period in light of his short stint as a contributor to the party organ *Central Weekly* (*Zhongyang zhoukan*). I argue that the manner in which a famed liberal New Culture intellectual was co-opted into the conservative revolution deserves closer scrutiny, despite claims that Zhu's role in the GMD was no more than an aside to his social and

cultural criticism. The purpose of this discussion goes beyond filling unsavory lacunae in the biography of a canonical intellectual figure. It is to interrogate the liberal ideals of non-partisanship and artistic freedom against the choices intellectuals made as the political space between revolutionary socialism and radical conservatism furthered narrowed during the course of the Republican era. I propose that while the conservative revolution might have inspired much less intellectual enthusiasm than the Communist movement, the GMD managed to tap into China's version of the Enlightenment for legitimacy. Despite their self-fashioning as the voice of reason and transcendence amidst the bitterly polarized political milieu in the 1930s and 1940s, intellectuals' disdain for mass society in both its capitalist consumerist and politically radicalized forms often threw the otherwise non-aligned New Culture elite into the fold of the Nationalist state. Particularly in periods of emergency like the resistance war against Japan, liberals often found themselves throwing their weight behind the political force most capable of maintaining social order even if they remained disturbed by the state's undemocratic and illiberal excesses.

Wielding little political influence on their own, intellectuals like Zhu Guangqian hedged the cultural visions they developed during the heady days of the 1920s on the regime that promised to put an end to the nihilistic infighting between political camps and hedonistic habits among the populace. As a liberal, Zhu's endorsement of GMD rule in the 1940s echoed an earlier generation of anarchists who counter-intuitively sided with Chiang Kai-shek in the late 1920s against the Communists in a bid to secure a stable political environment for non-violent social change.¹ In both cases, an intellectual's

¹ Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, 197, 207.

decision to support the Nationalists involved substantial compromises in both intellectual and pragmatic terms. Not only ideological convictions were at stake but also one's teaching or government position. Lacking concrete investment in the conservative revolution, liberal support for the GMD was as opportunistic as it was ephemeral, as evinced by Zhu's decision to remain in Mainland China after the Communist Revolution in 1949.²

Zhu Guangqian as a Liberal

The following pages are as much about Zhu as the intellectual cohort to which he belonged. They focus equally on the individual's little examined travails in the 1940s and the aporias that plagued his creeds. Zhu Guangqian was born in 1897 in Tongcheng, Anhui province. Like many who grew up at the turn of the twentieth century, Zhu was initially educated in the Confucian classics before joining Western-style institutions. Failing to make the trip to the capital for the Peking University (Beida) admission examination, he went to Hong Kong in 1918 to study education on Beiyang government sponsorship after finishing high school and spending two years at a normal college. Zhu might have missed out on the intellectual excitement following the Beijing-centered student movement in May 1919, but his career in the Republican period would become interwoven with the institutions and figures that contributed to the city's distinct intellectual milieu. Shortly after earning his bachelor's degree in 1922, Zhu quitted his

² Another prominent liberal writer who stayed in Communist China was novelist Shen Congwen (1902-1988). According to a list compiled by Huang Kewu, Zhu Guangqian and Shen Congwen were among the sixty-two Beiping-based intellectuals whom Chiang Kai-shek considered politically trustworthy and invited to Taiwan in 1948. However, only seven eventually accepted Chiang's invitation. ("Jiang Jieshi yu He Lin" [Chiang Kai-shek and He Lin], *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiu suo jikan*, no. 67 [2010]: 48-54.)

teaching job and set up a high school and a publisher with up-and-coming writers like Feng Zikai (1898-1975), Xia Mianzun (1886-1946), Xia Yan (1900-1995), Ye Shengtao (1894-1988) and Hu Yuzhi (1896-1986) in Shanghai. The Kaiming, or literally Enlightened, Publishing House gave Zhu the first taste of celebrity status in Shanghai's increasingly commodified print market. During his eight-year sojourn from 1925 to 1933 as a student in Britain and France where he completed graduate work in English literature, philosophy and psychology, Zhu gained popularity among young readers for his columns in Kaiming-owned magazines *In General (Yiban)* and *High School Students (Zhongxue sheng)*. In 1929, a compilation of his magazine writings were published under *Twelve Letters for Youths (Gei qingnian de shi'er fengxin)*, which sold over 50,000 copies by 1936.³ The same publisher also brought to the market Zhu's academic treatises on psychoanalysis, Kantian philosophy and literary criticism, including a translation of Benedetto Croce's *Breviario di esticata (Essence of Aesthetic)*. After earning a master's and a doctoral degree at Edinburgh and Strasbourg universities respectively, the admirer of Italy's most celebrated liberal philosopher in the twentieth century was recruited by another respected liberal intellectual Hu Shi to teach Western literature at Beida.

As a public intellectual, Zhu's long life was ridden with contradictions. Zhu earned popular acclaim and financed his graduate studies by being a savvy operator in Shanghai's exuberant print capitalism. But his critical and creative habitus was centered not in the bustling commercial city but Beiping (renamed from Beijing in 1928 by the victorious GMD state). Scrapped of its political preeminence and well-off bureaucratic

³ Wen-hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 270.

community, the deposed capital played host to a distinct coterie of liberal-leaning intellectuals known paradoxically as *Jingpai* or the “Capital School.” For what it was worth, the Capital School was not a school of thought defined by clearly articulated creeds; it existed in opposition to *Haipei* or the “Shanghai School,” which thrived on leftwing politics and the crass commercialism for which the vibrant treaty-port was famous. The closely-knit group of prominent writers that operated around literary journals and shared aesthetic dispositions did not have a common program. If anything, Zhu Guangqian, Xia Mianzun and such New Culture intellectuals as Shen Congwen (1902-1988), Zhu Ziqing (1898-1948) and Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) detested ideological uniformity. The southern shift of political power after the Beiyang regime’s demise rendered Beijing an ideal sanctuary for those who saw themselves as constitutive of a third force independent from both the GMD and the CCP. Tucked away from the center of authoritarian Nationalist power in Nanjing, Zhu and his friends from the southern provinces found in the deposed capital a way to sustain an everyday milieu – classrooms, studios, aligned publishers, salons, teahouses, etc. – that underwrote the cultural, if not political, integrity of the modern bourgeois individual.⁴

The liberalism espoused by Chinese intellectuals in the 1930s was a reaction to the ideological straitjacket demanded by revolutionary politics of both the right and left varieties. In this sense, Zhu was a consistent liberal. On the eve of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, as GMD ideologues were demanding ever more vehemently complete devotion

⁴ Xudong Zhang, “The Politics of Aestheticization: Zhou Zuoren and the Crisis of the Chinese New Culture (1927-1937)” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1995), 94-97; Kuang Xinnian, *1928: Geming wenxue* [1928: Revolutionary literature] (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 243-44.

to the party-state and its revolutionary doctrine, Zhu urged young people to avoid “following blindly a faction or a so-called ‘leader’.” He called for more active “thinking habit” and less concrete “thought,” arguing that there are always multiple sides to each issue. Both left-wingers and right-wingers, however, tended to internalize propaganda “without having diligently worked through the facts and their logical connections.”⁵ Zhu’s independent thinking and non-partisanship led him to express views that were apparently at odds with one-party rule even in his writings for party-run publications during the resistance war. In 1942, he called for a greater participatory role for citizens in political decision-making at the local level. Democratic governance in villages or districts would lay the basis for a vibrant representative democracy at the national level.⁶ He challenged the state not to impede freedom of speech. While curbs on free expression might be understandable during war mobilization, Zhu argued in a 1944 op-ed piece, alluding to a slogan of the National Spiritual Mobilization Campaign, that only when the “people had the opportunity to think collectively and discuss matters even-handedly” that the public could spontaneously rally behind one common purpose (*yizhi jizhong*).⁷ Unlike mainstream GMD theoreticians, Zhu did not see ideological diversity as a threat. Nor did he believe, as Dai Jitao did, that the masses should submit themselves to the political elite without thinking through the implication.

⁵ Zhu, “Zhongguo sixiang de weiji” [The crisis of Chinese thought], in *Zhu Guangqian quanji* (hereafter cited as *ZGQQJ*), vol. 8 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 517-518.

⁶ Zhu, “Tan chuqun (xia) – chuqun de xunlian” [On civic-mindedness III – the cultivation of civic-mindedness], in *ZGQQJ*, vol. 4 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988), 58.

⁷ Zhu, “Xianzheng cujin yu yanlun ziyou” [Promotion of constitutional rule and freedom of speech], in *ZGQQJ*, vol. 9 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 172-173.

Yet, Zhu's liberalism was not free of elitist biases. His advocacy of representative democracy was accompanied by the caveat that "the common people, until they had received proper education in politics" should have less sway over the election system than the "well-educated and trustworthy."⁸ More critically, Chinese liberalism in the 1930s was fundamentally a philosophical position than assumed, without much basis in social reality, the universality of the urban bourgeois subject. It stemmed from the European Enlightenment vision whereby individuals, liberated from the shackles of ecclesiastical and plutocratic power, would develop their full potential as human beings. Such celebration of the "free human" (*ziyou ren*) sidestepped the vexing class tensions China's semicolonial modernity engendered.⁹ Zhu's autonomous citizenry was more an aesthetic than a political ideal. He likened the Chinese people collectively to an artist and found them woefully inadequate. Aesthetic gratification, Zhu posited in 1936, derived from "an order and a form" that an artist endowed on an essay, a painting or sculpture. He criticized the common people (*xiao baixing*), particularly the youth, for shirking their duty as "artists" by blaming the government for social chaos. If China were to become a democratic (*minzhi*) country like Britain, France or the United States, the people must first stop making demands on the state and worked actively to create social order. Unfortunately, the masses were too cowardly (*nuoruo*) to rein in their own excesses.¹⁰

⁸ Zhu, "Tan chuqun (xia) – chuqun de xunlian," 4:60.

⁹ Indeed, liberal intellectuals tended to describe their ideological belief as one that espoused "freedom" or "liberty" (*ziyou*) rather than the more partisan-sounding and controversial "liberalism" (*ziyou zhuyi*). (Zhang Qing, "Duli pinglun yu Zhongguo ziyou zhuyi de 'mingming'" [*Independent Review and the "naming" of Chinese liberalism*], *Wenren lunzheng: zhishi fenzi yu baokan*, ed. Li Jinqun [Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008], 95-125.)

¹⁰ Zhu, "Gei Shenbao zhoukan de qingnian duzhe (er) – zai hunluan zhong chuang zhixu" [To young readers of the *Shenbao Weekly* (2) – the search for order amidst chaos], in *ZGQJ*, 8:440-441.

The liberal proposition that an individual should take charge of their own development inspired Zhu to indict his lower class compatriots rather than to push for egalitarian social arrangements that would help “free” men and women realize their potential.

The allegedly ill-disciplined, morally suspicious attributes of the masses were themes to which Zhu regularly returned. As late as February 1948, Zhu remarked that “madness, impetuous hatred and cowardice” motivated anti-government protests in urban centers.¹¹ Impeding the self-realization of the modern cosmopolitan individual was thus not only state tyranny but also the unruly beast that was mass society. The New Culture enlightenment project, as Lydia Liu demonstrates, stemmed from intellectual zeal that set the cosmopolitan educated class in a didactic relationship with the debased masses.¹² Inasmuch as Zhu inherited the New Culture commitment to reforming the moral constitution of the Chinese mind, he shared with conservative revolutionaries the belief that changing social habits and customs were more fundamental than tackling socio-political structures in nation-and-society building. Wedged between an oppressive state and a hostile mass culture, Zhu placed his hope of collective rejuvenation on individual resolve and self-discipline, qualities that his social and intellectual inferiors so sorely lacked.¹³

Zhu’s liberalism was further complicated by his reluctant collaboration with the GMD as a regular contributor to the *Central Weekly* since 1942. His writings for the

¹¹ Zhu, “Tan qunzhong peiyang qienuo yu xiongcan” [On the spread of cowardice and cruelty among the masses], in *ZGQQJ*, 9:357.

¹² Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995), 76.

¹³ Yeh, *Alienated Academy*, 273.

premier party mouthpiece formed the core of *On Cultivation* (*Tan xiuyang*) and parts of *On Literature* (*Tan wenxue*), published respectively by the Central Weekly Press and Kaiming in 1943 and 1946. Zhu's own 1980 reminiscences attributed his involvement in GMD propaganda work during the Second Sino-Japanese War to a humble desire to keep his academic position amidst the on-going struggle between rival political parties for support among liberal intellectuals. Zhu recalled how the GMD, knowing that he was courted by the Marxist philosopher Zhou Yang (1908-1989) to join the CCP in Yan'an,

marshaled old acquaintances like [Wuhan University president] Wang Xinggong and [dean of liberal arts] Chen Yuan of the [Capital School-affiliated literary magazine] *Modern Review* to take me to Wuhan and appoint me a professor at the foreign literatures department. . . . Established GMD practice dictated that faculty members who held senior administrative positions join the party. [As the registrar of Wuhan University,] I turned from being an opponent of the GMD to a close associate of the regime.

He further admitted that the two wartime essay collections *On Cultivation* and *On Literature* were works of him serving as Chiang Kai-shek's "hired scribbler" (*yuyong wenren*).¹⁴ One might be inclined to take the confession of an intellectual who renounced his liberalism for communism after 1949 with a grain of salt. Curiously, however, Zhu cited almost the same material concerns forty-two years ago to defend his friend and Capital School ally Zhou Zuoren's apparent collaboration with the Japanese. In 1938, Zhou, who shared Zhu's fear that state overreach and mass politics could put intellectual freedom into jeopardy, appeared at the "Renewal of Chinese Culture" conference in Japanese-occupied Beiping. Zhu, having followed the Nationalists to Sichuan, dismissed accusations that his former Beida colleague was a traitor (*Hanjian*). Aside from

¹⁴ Zhu, "Zuozhe zizhuan" [Author's autobiography], in *ZGQQJ*, vol. 1 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987), vi.

regurgitating the liberal mantle that writers were above politics, he offered “the desire for comfort and dread of relocation” as explanations for Zhou’s scandal.¹⁵ Personal safety, not ideological motivations, was the primary pursuit for a writer under precarious circumstances, whether it meant turning one’s back against the nation or joining hands with an unsavory regime.

Zhu’s compromised non-partisan position bespoke the tensions inherent to liberal cultural politics. There is no doubt some truth to his claim that intellectuals acted against their will out of desperation. It was not rare for erstwhile critics of the regime to join the GMD to secure a slightly more comfortable existence as the entire Nationalist political, social and cultural edifice was forced out by the Japanese from cities like Beiping. At the Southwestern Associated University, a wartime merger of North China’s three premier institutions including Beida, as many as forty percent of faculty members had joined the party. Most of them were recent recruits who joined the party for reasons other than political beliefs. Some wished to advance their careers, more than a few succumbed to peer pressure, and others decided to acquire party membership out of pure nationalism.¹⁶ But what was particularly intriguing about Zhu’s conversion to the GMD was how little he needed to rethink his views on culture, society and politics. The only instance where Zhu discernibly toed the party line on Communism was in an internal essay he wrote in November 1943 during a training seminar at the GMD party school, seven months after

¹⁵ Zhu, “Zai lun Zhou Zuoren shijian” [More on the Zhou Zuoren incident], in *ZGQQJ*, vol. 9 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 11.

¹⁶ Wang Qisheng, *Geming yu fan geming: shehui wenhua shiye xia de Minguo zhengzhi* [Revolution and counterrevolution: Republican politics in socio-cultural perspective] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 237-247.

the university registrar was admitted as a Nationalist and member of the Three People's Principles Youth Corps. Zhu confessed he joined the party because he realized the need for focusing the nation's will and strength and that it was imperative on teachers to set an example for the younger generation. When the nation's survival was at stake, ideological diversity was not an option. "Those loyal to the nation," the professor exhorted, "should rally behind the Nationalist banner in the struggle for its defense." Zhu added that "unorthodox parties and factions (*yidang yipai*) had no reason to exist in society."¹⁷ While Zhu did not specify what these unorthodox organizations were, cadres at the Central Training Corps (*Zhongyang xunlian tuan*) would understand that he meant the CCP. The derogatory term *yidang* was evoked, for one among multiple examples, in a classified April 1939 instruction circulated among local GMD branches. The instruction called on local party branches and government authorities to treat the "unorthodox party," formally an ally in Nationalist China's struggle against foreign Japan, as a grave threat to an unwieldy GMD establishment. It further urged local branches to organize students, workers, peasants and women under GMD-controlled mass organizations, with a view to undermining Communist dominance in civil society.¹⁸ The unpublished essay was the closest among Zhu's expansive corpus to displaying the feigned passion in party orthodoxy one might expect from a recent convert seeking to overcompensate for his erstwhile defiance.

¹⁷ The essay, filed on 25 November 1943, was written as a participant's submission to twenty-eighth session of the Central Training Corps party affairs training program. ("Zhu Guangqian," Military Affairs Commission Aides Office Collection, 129000029409A, Academia Historica.)

¹⁸ "Zhongguo Guomindang zhongzhijihui mishuchu miding 'Fangzhi yidang huodong banfa' dian" [The secretariat of the Guomindang Central Executive Committee drafts classified telegram "Strategies to counter the dissenting party's activities"], in *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an ziliao huibian*, vol. 5, pt. 2, no. 1, pt. 2, ed. Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), 21-24.

Zhu's collaboration with the GMD was therefore far more complicated than a case of simple opportunism, for the "hired scribbler" was less a radical break with than a logical outgrowth of the cultural critic's earlier career as a non-conformist independent writer. In both guises, the aesthete explored the interstices between culture, morality and the individual, with a particular focus on how the experience of growing up amidst China's tortuous modern transformation. Zhu was himself keen to emphasize continuity in his critical enterprise. The prologue of *On Cultivation* suggested that the 1943 publication was a sequel to *Twelve Letters to Youth*. Both combined a disarming aura of informality, flowing vernacular prose, and self-help solutions to everyday concerns that were the formulae of the latter's popularity among urban young readers. Zhu recalled with deep ambivalence the mass market success his essays enjoyed. On one hand, he remembered with relish how pirated copies of *Twelve Letters* appeared in Shanghai and Guangzhou while unscrupulous plagiarizers attempted to rip gullible readers off by writing *Thirteen Letters to Youth* under dubious *non de plumes* like Zhu Guangshan.¹⁹ On the other hand, the new GMD recruit dismissed his graduate student writings as maudlin chats between imaginary friends proffered by a profit-seeking publisher.²⁰ In this sense, *Twelve Letters* immortalized the symptoms – over-sentimentality and shallow consumerism – that pervaded among Chinese youths and which Zhu had long wanted to redress. No longer the lonely and emotionally immature young man that he was in the

¹⁹ In another indication of Zhu Guangqian's facility with the competitive publishing market, the celebrity writer turned those who appropriated his fame on their heads, making them objects of ridicule in his own columns. A tongue-in-cheek "letter" to Zhu Guangshan published in the Shanghai newspaper *Shenbao* in 1936 chided the plagiarizer for being as complicit in profiteering from commodified literary writings as the renowned writer himself. ["Zhu Guangqian gei Zhu Guangshan – wei *Gei qingnian de shisan feng xin*" (Zhu Guangqian to Zhu Guangshan – on *Thirteen Letters to Youths*), in *ZGQQJ*, 8: 418-422].

²⁰ Zhu, "Zixu" [Prologue], in *ZQGGJ*, vol. 4 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988), 3-4.

late 1920s, the literature professor found himself even better positioned to further the moral transformation that aesthetic experiences could deliver to ill-disciplined youths who indulged in frivolous pleasures, deviant sexual behaviors, and mass politics.

Aestheticization of Life

Insofar as his musings on aesthetics bore on the everyday social life of excitable youngsters, Zhu's claim to rise above partisan frays was a highly political stance, tying in with the GMD's dilemma from the late 1920s until the resistance war to sustain social activism while detaching it from political ideologies. The professor exhibited the paradox, displayed among liberal intellectuals since the early days of student activism before the 1919 May Fourth Movement, that simultaneously hailed and feared mass political awakening. Cai Yuanpei, a liberal with anarchist sympathies, struggled to reconcile his celebration of civic consciousness on one hand and active containment of the student movement as Beida president on the other. After the 1927 *coup*, Cai worked actively with Dai Jitao in de-radicalizing students who might pose a threat to the Nationalist order.²¹ The idea that youths were impulsive and immature, along with anxiety over the engulfment of university campuses by damaging political struggles, swayed liberals against student activists. Chinese Enlightenment intellectuals like Cai and Zhu were in full agreement with the GMD state that young people, and the Chinese populace in general, were citizens-in-training ill-equipped for autonomous political action. For Zhu, student protesters were signs of a larger social pathology, not harbingers of political

²¹ Lanza, *Behind the Gate*, 126-129; Huang, *Politics of Depoliticization*, 48-62; Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, 204-206.

awakening. Zhu's critical career, which began during his student days and continued into his stint at *Central Weekly*, was therefore an extended exercise in moral uplift for a politically restive population who lacked the self-discipline and emotional stability best exemplified by those engaged in artistic creation. Edifying the masses through aesthetic experience defined Zhu's intervention in politics and the supposedly non-existent ideological motivations for his collaboration with the Nationalist regime.

At one level, aesthetic pleasure was proffered to the masses by Zhu's own witty, elegant prose. Since the mid-1920s, Zhu's writings had taken on the elitist mission to bring reason and good taste to his uncouth and overly excitable brethren. Skillfully navigating Shanghai's competitive print capitalism, the highly learned academic knew how to connect with the urban reading public. His most well-received popular writings were lucid pieces written in simple modern Chinese. Shunning pedantic language, *Twelve Letters to Youths* presented the European-trained aesthete as a personable companion who concluded every entry with the endearment "your friend Mengshi." He asked his imaginary reader if his prose was too long-winded, promising not to burden "you" (*ni*) with anything too onerous.²² Yet, affecting amicability did not mean that Zhu ever considered his readers, particularly students, as equals. Nor did he think they were capable of independent political decisions. One entry, "On Middle School Students and Social Movements" (*Tan zhongxue sheng yu shehui yundong*), accused student activists of corruption, arrogance and hypocrisy, symptoms typically attributed to politicians in the republic. "How many ordinary students," Zhu angrily demanded,

²² Zhu, "Tan dushu," [On reading] in *ZGQQJ*, vol. 2 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987), 10.

are worthy of any revolutionary chatter? How many representatives to national student conferences squandered donations, gambled, or fiddled with prostitutes? Were there people who championed the sanctity of education only to band up with patrician politicians and disrupt the functioning of schools? How about those who penned vows of gratitude to the Japanese government or received Boxer Indemnity scholarships only to then call for the downfall of imperialism?²³

The affable friend became a high priest of ethics, urging students to clean up their own moral mess before practicing revolution. While Zhu also criticized Nanjing's total ban on students' involvement in protests, the popular essayist shared the impatience of such GMD-friendly liberals as Cai Yuanpei and Hu Shi with radical youths who took their concern for society out from the classroom onto the street. The problem with social activists for Zhu was that they harbored grandiose designs but were short on solutions for the common people. For him, concrete community work was always more important than theatrical politics. It was better, for example, to just humbly teach rather than to get organized and push for universal education. Opening a factory on the countryside, for example, was preferable to pushing for national goods. One could make small contributions but would do better to avoid all talks of revolution. His advice to readers? "Go to the people!"²⁴ Study hard, do good to society, and don't disturb the peace.

Notwithstanding the half-hearted populism, Zhu's unease with radicalized students shared the same tenets as Dai Jitao's critique of student and labor politics discussed in chapter 2. Immature students and workers were irrational, too gullible to distinguish between deceptive rhetorical flourishes and politicians' self-serving behaviors, and the demands they put forth were impractical and did not address the people's well-

²³ Zhu, "Tan zhongxue sheng yu shehui yundong," in *ZGQQJ*, 1:21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:18-21.

being in any case. Zhu's anxiety was rooted in a moment when urban China witnessed the rise of masses not only in political life but as a subject of a new consumer culture of which print capitalism was a part. As a beneficiary of this novel phenomenon, Zhu was deeply ambivalent about the challenges with which advanced industrial societies had long struggled. Having barely admonished his readers to "go to the people," Zhu bemoaned that philosophy and literature, once chased out from the ivory tower, could only lead to vulgarization (which he glossed for *suhua*). Curiously, he associated the marketization of culture with democracy, which was glossed in the Chinese phonetic transliteration *demokelaxi*.²⁵ Given the commodification of intellectual production, Zhu sided with artists and officials who claimed a privileged social sphere for the intelligentsia secluded from the hustle and bustle of the metaphorical crossroad where most Chinese dwelled.²⁶ The perception that China was home to an ever expanding gang of demagogic scholars and social activists reinforced Zhu's suspicion. He dismissed British artist William Morris and Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's call for the popularization of art as a recipe for turning intellectuals into profane objects of "market idols" (*shichang ouxiang*). Yet, it was not only consumerism that threatened Zhu's Christian-inspired heroism. Fashions from New Culture literary experimentations to Shanghai's high-street chic fueled a form of modern tyranny which he likened to papal persecution of Galileo Galilei in the seventeenth century or popular scorn for pacifists during the Great War. With his typical

²⁵ Zhu, "Tan shizi jietou" [On the crossroad], in *ZGQQJ*, 1:22-23. When Zhu spoke of democracy as a political system in more positive terms he rendered it in the character compound *minzhu* or *minzhi*.

²⁶ The opposition between proverbial crossroads and ivory tower was frequently evoked in debates on the degree to which artists and art should contribute to the construction of a modern nation. (Xiaobing Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-garde: The Modern Woodcut Movement* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008], 35.)

poetic flourishes, Zhu vowed to overturn the tide of plebeian philistinism by being China's Percy Byssche Shelley or Rabindranath Tagore, both Romantic poets with whom he identified. It was not clear what role the standard-bearer of Chinese high culture assigned for his readers in his heroic quest. On one hand, Zhu rallied his "friends" to mobilize their young valor and "smash the idols." On the other hand, as eager consumers fueling China's culture industry, readers were precisely the ones who denied Zhu the intellectual freedom to resist tasteless fads.²⁷ Literary historian Bonnie McDougall characterizes Zhu's contradiction between desire for social change and elitist disdain for the generation most inclined to it as indecisive and defeatist, undercutting the influence his popular works might have otherwise exerted among the educated youth.²⁸

Defeatist or not, reason and freedom for Zhu were the preserve of the cloistered intellectual community that must be protected from the *hoi polloi*. While Zhu often reserved the harshest comments for his compatriots in China, his fear of mob rule was shaped by first-hand experience of the dystopia that was Europe's consumer society. The Edinburgh-based graduate student, as he recounted in 1926, was horrified by the tawdry, commercialized entertainment of the British urban underclass – men and women indulging in alcohol in public, welfare beneficiaries skipping meals to pay for horrid thrillers and romances on cinema, young factory workers squandering Saturday

²⁷ Zhu, "Tan shizi jietou" [On the crossroad], in *ZGQQJ*, 1:22-25. This article represented Zhu's most direct contribution to an ongoing debate among artists, art educators, and GMD state officials in the 1920s on the role of art and artists in society.

²⁸ Bonnie S. McDougall, "The View from the Leaning Tower: Zhu Guangqian on Aesthetics and Society in the Nineteen-twenties and Thirties," in *Modern Chinese Literature and its Social Context*, ed. Göran Malmqvist (Stockholm: Department of Oriental Studies, Stockholm University, 1975), 111.

afternoons filling dancehalls with the foul combination of sweat and cosmetics.²⁹ The inclusion of unproductive, uneducated men and women who survived on handouts from the nascent welfare state in a country's political processes was a terrifying prospect. He quoted in 1927 with approval Matthew Arnold's attack on the growing philistinism in modern Anglo-American societies, highlighting how the conservative cultural critic provided key insights for understanding the shallow plebeian tendencies in his own country.³⁰ Indeed, the author of *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) became an inspiration for a conservative humanist reaction in the 1920s against the iconoclasm, mass protests and increasingly radicalism unleashed by the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Zhu's embrace of culture – taken narrowly to mean humane values untainted by wealth and material obsessions – against such “anarchic” evils as tabloids, street protesters, and unscrupulous politicians certainly evoked Arnold.³¹ As a self-appointed guardian of culture, Zhu hedged his hope for an alternative social order on its proselytization and ability to transform rowdy protesters and philistine consumers into self-regulating and well-bred citizens. Both Arnold and Zhu, as we shall see later, would count upon the state to realize their vision of ideal citizenry.

For now, it suffices to state that China's project of modern citizenry, traceable to the late Qing reformer Liang Qichao, was as much about remaking (elite male) individuals as searching for a viable polity. The tensions between its populist pretensions

²⁹ Zhu, “Lü Ying zatan” [Fragments of my sojourn in Britain], in *ZGQQJ*, 8:184-185.

³⁰ Zhu, “Ouzhou jindai san da piping xuezhe (er) – Anuode (Matthew Arnold)” [Three major modern European critical scholars (II) – Matthew Arnold], *ZGQQJ*, 8:216-224.

³¹ Kuang Xinnian, *Xiandai wenxue yu xiandai xing* [Modern literature and modernity] (Shanghai: Yuandong chubanshe, 1998), 193; Raymond Williams, “A Hundred Years of Culture and Anarchy,” in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980), 5.

and despair in dehumanizing massification were reconciled by singling out aesthetic experience in which the autonomous, self-regulating subject of the European bourgeois mode would reside.³² Yet, the hope that aesthetics would carve out an independent existence from the politically and intellectually suffocating milieu of Nationalist China was a misplaced one. Setting aside the problematic premise that aesthetics constituted a distinct sphere of social life, Zhu shared with GMD ideologues the Arnoldian dichotomy that pitched humane values and good taste against unscrupulous protesters preoccupied by base material desires. Western conservative cultural criticism reinforced lingering Confucian ideals that opposed masculine enterprise and virtues to feminine sensuality and excesses. Like good Confucians, modern Chinese intellectuals prized gratification from art, poetry and music but feared that unseemly emotions and bodily pleasures would pollute the gentlemen's moral character.³³

As pursuits charged with ethical significance, aesthetic experiences covered the entire cross-section of public and private life. They included not just habits like reading Zhu's essays, but also any endeavor that added pleasure to human life. Aesthetic edification was therefore a check on disruptive political activism or unseemly indulgences like sex and alcohol. Zhu called in his 1932 volume *On Beauty (Tan mei)* for the aestheticization of life (*rensheng de yishuhua*) as a strategy for taming the crass rebellion of the crowd. Recognizing that "life in the broad sense is art" would equip one

³² Liu Kang, *Aesthetics and Marxism: Chinese Aesthetic Marxists and Their Western Contemporaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 15-18. Lydia Liu cautions against taking the apparent opposition between individuality and the state at its face value. The two recently coined categories were tightly intertwined, so much so that the New Culture discourse of individualism "invent[ed] *geren* for the goals of liberation and national revolution." (*Translingual Practice*, 91.)

³³ Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997), 106-107.

with a productive means to alleviating everyday angst living in an unequal and oppressive society. Moreover, modernist European philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer convinced Zhu that in a secularizing world, life-as-art stood uniquely at the forefront of boundless experimentation. Alluding again to the Bible, Zhu observed that instead of pious devotion to the commandments, the Creator had empowered modern humankind to chart their own lives unencumbered by slavish fidelity to rules and scruples. Yet, claiming untrammelled creative freedom entailed relinquishing attachment to one's material existence. "Disinterested contemplation" (rendered by Zhu as *wusuowei erwei de wansuo*) allowed the severance of personal realization from the frustrations brought about by modern society. It ennobled life as an art form through which individuals could, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, express themselves without targeting the political and social system.³⁴

Yet, Zhu's argument that aesthetics transcended worldly motive or interest differed from the dictum of pure, amoral art as espoused by his spiritual mentor Benedetto Croce. The Italian doyen of idealist philosophy and liberal political theorist conceived art as distinct from the search for virtues or true knowledge. Beauty (*mei*), as Zhu pithily summarized Croce, was not related to truth (*zhen*) and benevolence (*shan*).³⁵ While Zhu credited Croce for relieving literature of the traditional Confucian mandate to convey the truth (*wenyi zaidao*), he departed from the idealist aesthetician by endowing

³⁴ Zhu, "'Manman zou, xinshang a!' – rensheng de yishuhua" ["Slow down and enjoy!" – the aestheticization of life], *ZGQQJ*, 2:94-96; Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 241.

³⁵ Zhu, "Ouzhou jindai san da piping xuezhe (san) – Keluoqi (Benedetto Croce)" [Three major modern European critical scholars (III) – Benedetto Croce] (1927), in *ZGQQJ*, 8:235.

art with an ennobling quality in regard to life.³⁶ Moreover, whereas Croce consigned beauty neatly to its own independent realm the communication of which depended on elite artists, Zhu injected into art a pseudo-egalitarian and fuzzy totalistic dimension: “A person’s life history is his or her work. ... A person who masters living (*zhidao shenghuo*) is an artist and his or her life a piece of art.”³⁷ He further compared one’s lifetime venture to writing or painting, where an “artist’s” everyday demeanors and major moral decisions were weaved together with technical adeptness to form one organic body (*youjiti*). Inasmuch as aesthetics infused even the most routine behaviors of every individual, Zhu saw artistic creation as a sublimely religious experience available to anyone who willed a leisurely, playful twist to their otherwise mundane, difficult existence. His revelation for the poverty-stricken, war-ridden people of China was derived from a signpost Zhu encountered while touring the Alps – slow down and enjoy (*manman zou, xinshang a!*)!³⁸ It is as if China’s many problems would be solved if the country’s denizens would imagine the brutalities of “actual life” (*shiji rensheng*) away to embrace a richer and beautified being.

If the dialectics between aesthetics and social morality in Zhu departed from Crocean idealism, it edged ever closer to the latest GMD theoretical innovations on the meaning of beauty in historical evolution. Zhu saw the edifying function of aesthetic pursuits free from political and economic concerns as having great social potential beyond individual character-building. Disinterested contemplation was the path to the

³⁶ McDougall, “View from the Leaning Tower,” 107.

³⁷ Zhu, “‘Manman zou, xinshang a!’,” 2:91.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:97.

Highest Good (*zhigao de shan*), a Christian and Kantian concept that attributed intrinsic worth to a righteous life. In a society filled with calculations and mercenary hypocrites, art purified (*zhenghua*) the populace and relieved them from vulgar animal urges. China's quagmire was not "entirely a result of system or structure, but of putrefied hearts (*renxin taihuai*)."³⁹ Zhu's statement on the intertwining of aesthetic and ethical cultivation coincided with the publication of Chen Lifu's philosophical treatise *Vitalism*, the Central Political School textbook we encountered in the previous chapter. The CC clique leader, whose colleagues championed unifying the nation's spirit as a priority in national defense, identified beauty as the apotheosis of human achievement where conflicts over material interests would be sublated.

Vitalism presented a three-stage theory – veracity, benevolence and beauty – prognosticating the supersession of human rivalries over political and economic power by a utopia of "beauty" (*mei*). Betraying the inflection of French philosopher Henri Bergson, Chen saw life as constituted by anarchic elements (*shengyuan*) pulled against different directions by both good and evil forces. Through sincere devotion (*chengyi*) and purification of hearts and minds (*zhengxin*), humans learned to harness their desires and productive capacities for a glorious and beautiful existence.⁴⁰ In practical terms, the path to beauty dictated a period of "benevolence" (*shan*) when the less privileged in society put their material self-interest aside and submitted themselves willingly to the enlightened leadership of the well-endowed. Instead of being manipulated by crafty politicians, weaker citizens turned their backs on debilitating rivalries between political

³⁹ Zhu, "Kaichang bai" [Opening remarks (for *On Beauty*)], in *ZGGQJ*, 2:6.

⁴⁰ Chen Lifu, *Weisheng lun (shangjuan)*, 132-133.

parties of both the liberal and revolutionary variants to contribute to one-party, interclass dictatorships like the GMD. A new form of social organization, i.e. national capitalism, ensured peace, efficiency and improved livelihood for the ignorant masses in lieu of political entitlement. This new order would usher in a realm of beauty whereby the well-being of all social elements was harmonized and valorized.⁴¹ That beauty meant overcoming the fixation on material interests in modern politics informed Zhu's as well as Chen's (mis)recognition of the messiness and excesses in mass politics as moral depravation.

China was hardly the exception insofar as moral edification provided the missing link between idealist theories of aesthetics and political formation. Far from perverse appropriation of an innocent quest for refinement, aesthetics had been intertwined with state power since the European Enlightenment. During Victorian Britain, the literature of which provided much intellectual stimulation for Zhu, the liberal state saw itself as the ethical, as well as political, embodiment of the disparate and fragmented interests represented in the body politic. Culture provided the state the supposedly common and neutral bond of humanity as it confronted antagonistic social demands. In the second half of the nineteenth century, as the ascendant liberal hegemony in Britain was challenged by an emerging working class, figures as diverse as Matthew Arnold, Romantic poet Samuel Coleridge and liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill believed that the educational state apparatus needed to induct raucous and politicized citizens into the "common sense" and ethical judgments of a liberal capitalist society. The apparently universal and neutral

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 70-73.

experiences of aesthetics were counted upon to mold popular will so that it served the bourgeoisie and dissuaded class-oriented analyses.⁴²

In Nationalist China, the convergence of state and liberal humanism was at the core of the new regime's cultural policy. Since the earliest days of Chiang Kai-shek's regime, longtime aesthetic education advocate Cai Yuanpei and distinguished painter Lin Fengmian (1900-1991) headed state agencies, led new art academies, and promoted their agendas in government newspapers and state-sponsored exhibitions. For liberal humanists in government, a new paradigm in art education and expression that emphasized social amelioration was to replace radical tendencies within the larger New Culture Movement that threatened to derail the fragile Nationalist order. However, before social edification could run its course, a reformist aesthetic vision had to wield the repressive state apparatus to suppress student dissenters, bring protesters off the streets and expel Communist sympathizers.⁴³ Zhu's participation in the wartime state in the 1940s followed on the heels of illustrious liberals who came to see the Nationalist state as the only hope, if an incredibly flawed one, for a social and cultural peace safeguarded from class struggle and mob rule.

Autonomy, Discipline and Sublimation

From the GMD's perspective, securing the cooperation of a high-profile non-partisan writer like Zhu was a way to show that the wartime state, even as it demanded unconditional loyalty from citizens, was an inclusive body that nurtured creative and

⁴² David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (London: Routledge, 1998), 115-127, 145-147.

⁴³ Tang, *Origins of the Chinese Avant-garde*, 30-40.

academic freedom. Practicing censorship against leftwing writers and appealing to liberals were for the Chongqing-based regime complementary agendas.⁴⁴ Here again, China was not alone. The Fascist state in Italy adopted a dual strategy of discipline and patronage through the 1930s. Instead of asking authors to produce overtly propagandist works, the state took pains to support a variety of creative forms and incorporate latest debates on the relationship between art and social life. It worked to co-opt rather than suppress authors and critics who were not card-carrying supports of the regime. The Fascist investment in art of a transformative function on popular behaviors was put in sync with intellectuals' collective desire to give voice to a new cultural order that replaced reactionary tendencies like individualism, middle-class banality, and excessive foreign influences. A more subtle system of co-option, particularly compared to Stalinist Russia's heavy-handed approach, allowed Italian artists and critics who worked under Fascist patronage to claim fidelity to Croce's still influential dictum of artistic autonomy.⁴⁵

A similar dynamic existed between Zhu and the Nationalist state. Aside from the offer of senior academic appointments, Nationalist leaders lured the aesthete to continue his writing career with state-funded publications. Zhu was recruited, along with five other scholars including historian Qian Mu (1895-1990) and philosopher He Lin (1902-1992), in June 1941 to launch with funding from Chiang Kai-shek an academic journal exploring topics related to the Three People's Principles. *Thoughts and Epochs*

⁴⁴ “Zhongyang tushu zazhi shencha weiyuan hui sanshisan nian di er ji gongzuo jindu jiantao baogao biao” [Central Commission for the Censorship of Books and Periodicals progress report for the second quarter of 1944], Executive Yuan Collection, 2/6059, Second Archives.

⁴⁵ Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 49-50.

(*Sixiang yu shidai*) inspired mixed feelings among non-partisan intellectuals who admired its high quality but dreaded the state's involvement in intellectual production.⁴⁶ A few months later, the Wuhan University professor began writing for *Central Weekly* as a politically independent academic. Zhu's first article "On Making Resolutions" (*Tan lizhi*), which appeared on New Year's Day in 1942, mimicked the form and substance of the "letters" that propelled the young writer to celebrity status in the late 1920s.

The new *Central Weekly* contributor stressed the continuity between the latest evolution of his literary career and his time with Kaiming. Like his entries thirteen years ago, Zhu's newest pieces were of bite-size length and bore titles that began with the character for "to talk" (*tan*), retaining the illusion of direct communication with readers. His installments in the party-state publication revisited the themes that *Twelve Letters of Youth* first broached. They discussed issues that occupied the everyday life of educated youths through generations, i.e. romantic love, sports, learning and reading, job hunting, searching for self-worth in society. The intertextual ties Zhu forged between his two personae lent credence to the critic's political impartiality, even as he was heaping praise on the "sagacious leader" Chiang Kai-shek and hailed the GMD's "nation-building through the resistance war" program.⁴⁷ Zhu was aware that he was walking on tightrope between convincing state officials of his ideological reliability and sacrificing his reputation as a non-partisan public intellectual. The preface to *On Cultivation* denied that the author's collaboration with *Central Weekly* had any political implications. The

⁴⁶ Sang Bing, "Kangzhan shiqi Guomindang cehua de xueren banbao" [Scholar-edited periodicals as initiated by the Guomindang during the resistance war], in *Wenren lunzheng*, 223-230.

⁴⁷ Zhu, "Yifan yuzhong xinchang de hua – gei xiandai Zhongguo qingnian" [A sincere message for contemporary Chinese youths], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:11.

columns were “causal and idle talk” (*suibian xiantan*) that contained no systematic thought or agenda. They contained not dry and hackneyed slogans of a doctrinaire, but the authentic and more mature admonishments from one of China’s most endearing writer. They were the works of the same man who remained steadfast to such treasured sentiments as cool-headedness, sobriety, determination and approaching social affairs with a spirit of detachment.⁴⁸ In other words, Zhu’s partnership with the GMD was not a matter of ideological conversion but natural evolution of a stellar literary career.

To drive home his pretension to creative autonomy, Zhu was not afraid to occasionally criticize the wartime state in his *Central Weekly* articles. Here again, he treaded a fine line between being acquiescent and testing Chiang’s limits. Potentially subversive views on the shape of the embattled republic were sheepishly ensconced in Zhu’s continual intervention in the spiritual malaise that afflicted China’s public culture. Civil servants, he asserted, behaved like local tyrants and evil gentry (*tuhao lieshen*) from a bygone autocratic era (*zhuanzhi shidai*). They denied the public a role in local governance, impeding the evolution of Chinese people into mature contributors to communal life (*qunchu*). While accusing state bureaucrats of stifling popular deliberations, Zhu touted *baojia* as an ideal form of local government, despite the rural institution’s notorious role in monitoring political expression and policing against dissent. He went as far as to compare the democratic potential of *baojia* to local councils in Britain.⁴⁹ The writer also made sure to embed his otherwise blunt critique of GMD

⁴⁸ Zhu, “Zixu” [Prologue], in *ZQGGJ*, 4:4-5.

⁴⁹ Zhu, “Tan chuqun (xia) – chuqun de xunlian,” in *ZGQQJ*, 4:58-61. For the *baojia* network as an anti-Communist measure, see “Zhongguo Guomindang zhongzhahui mishuchu miding ‘Fangzhi yidang huodong banfa’ dian,” 23.

authoritarianism in a wider discussion on the lack of civic-mindedness among the populace. A bad government, he suggested, was part of a social pathology that testified to China's difficult transition to modernity.⁵⁰ Thus, the object of Zhu's critique switched abruptly from repressive political arrangements to the spiritual crisis that tormented his compatriots. Specifically, Zhu identified at the crux of China's non-functioning polity a psychological perversion (*xinli biantai*) – a malaise attributed to students grappling with both the dislocation of war and conflicts, on one hand, and deformed capitalist ethos and lingering feudal social structures, on the other. Fathers seeing their children's university education as no more than an investment for handsome returns, chronic bureaucratic corruption, and a dysfunctional schooling process compounded the inhospitable material circumstances under which refugees from the richer, more urbanized coastal regions found themselves in the hinterland. The results were such deleterious responses as apathy, despair, *ennui*, and seeking comfort in careerist and materialist pursuits.⁵¹ A cynical young generation indifferent to the world beyond its own narrow interests hardly boded well for a nation that counted on a voluntaristic citizenry for resistance and rebuilding efforts.

Low popular morale was a particularly worrying trend as Zhu saw the war against Japan as a showdown of will power. Betraying his fascination with heroic grandeur and self-affirming action, Zhu lent a muscular, sublime quality to the resistance war.⁵² The Chinese people's long quest to defeat Japan was compared to Jesus' valiant rejection of

⁵⁰ Zhu, "Tan qingnian de xinli biantai" [On the psychological perversion of youths], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4:29-32.

⁵² Wang, *Sublime Figure of History*, 117.

the devil's temptations in the Judean Desert to renege on God and embrace worldly power. Like Jesus, the Chinese nation was confronted with the stark choice between God and the devil.⁵³ Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's iron-willed determination to resist foreign encroachment was the only true path of God. Yet, the likes of Wang Jingwei and others who surrendered to the satanic Japan demonstrated that China was still weak in its fighting spirit. The existence of traitors suggested that the Chinese were still lacking in the moral fiber to resist evil temptations.

As far as Zhu was concerned, the key to successfully overcome a powerful enemy was not military strategy, prudent economic management or effective diplomacy but the spiritual strength of citizens. The resistance war, like China's many historical struggles with foreigners since the founding of the unified Qin state two millennia ago, was just the latest instance in which the nation's inherent vital force (*minzu de shenghuoli*) was brought to trial. The critical importance Zhu attached to the human will allowed him to generalize the Second Sino-Japanese War into an exercise in overcoming life's hurdles. Defeating an invading army was like poets perfecting the craft of writing, both tremendous challenges that commanded "superhumanly will" (*chaoren de yizhi*). Zhu wanted young Chinese to brave "the force of greatest resistance" and emulate the great Roman Empire in its toughness, severe discipline, and adventurism.⁵⁴ That the fate of the nation now rested solely on the people's collective will focused attention on the everyday life of individuals – their psychological and physical makeup – as the preeminent site of

⁵³ Zhu, "Chao dikangli zuida de lujing zou" [Follow the path of greatest resistance], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:22.

⁵⁴ Zhu, "Chao dikangli zuida de lujing zou," 4:19-26.

reform. The Nationalist power hierarchy, even if somewhat autocratic, was the only agent capable of unifying the national will.

Thus, even as Zhu saw the toll China's social crisis was taking on his students, going as far as blaming state repression of free speech and creative freedom as a factor contributing to a sense of hopelessness prevalent on university campuses, he laid the responsibility for redressing this predicament squarely on youths themselves.⁵⁵ Zhu called on young people to provide their own cure and salvation by changing the ways they thought, instead of being obsessed with the difficulties social hierarchies presented them. Solving psychological perversion, after all, required re-tuning the mind. Courage, a sense of responsibility and acceptance of difficult circumstances were to substitute despair, lack of purpose and passion-driven desires. Echoing his suspicion of political activism in his earlier writings, Zhu deemed it more important for individual citizens to examine their own selves than to challenge socio-political arrangements. To rein in volatile and nihilistic thoughts, Zhu recommended the autosuggestion method popularized by the French psychotherapist Emile Coué whereby young people would constantly occupy their mind with the idea that the situation was improving until they genuinely believed circumstances were getting better.⁵⁶ Nationalist China's structural problems that weighed down the ambitions of young people were therefore the greatest resistance that Zhu's readers had to overcome in their willed imagination before they could assume full subjectivity as modern social subjects.

⁵⁵ Zhu, "Tan qingnian de xinli biantai," 4:32-33.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:33.

Zhu's concern for the nation's *élan vital* encompassed body and mind. The French psychotherapeutic techniques he identified as keys to relieving the pathology of despair and apathy were equally effective in transforming unhealthy bodies. As physical and spiritual health were interrelated, sports complemented aesthetic pleasures in managing a discontented population. Zhu dovetailed with the GMD state's efforts in rationalizing daily routines – hygiene, leisure, entrenched customs, interpersonal interactions – as parts of the wartime National Spiritual Mobilization Movement. His diagnosis began with the uncontroversial observation that inadequate food and disregard for sports rendered adolescents into a pallid and emaciated lot, stunting growth and contributing to psychological agonies.⁵⁷ Remarkably, the social anomalies plaguing Chinese youths were the same as those that Zhu recognized as pervading the working class in Edinburgh seventeen years ago: consumerist indulgences and sexual licentiousness. Young men and women avidly consumed erotic romances and racy movies, took part in debauch pleasures like prostitution, and succumbed to sexual urges by indulging in masturbation and homosexuality.⁵⁸ Even desire for romantic love among university students was condemned as hedonism unworthy of a nation at war. The unleashing of libidinal desires through deleterious channels dealt a further blow to the collective social body, filling the space vacated by productive employment and healthy recreational activities like art and sports that should have fully preoccupied (*longduan*)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:29.

⁵⁸ Zhu, “Gei *Shenbao* *zhoukan* de qingnian duzhe (si) – youxi yu yule” [For young readers of the *Shenbao Weekly* IV – on games and leisure], in *ZGQQJ*, 8:452; Zhu, “Tan qingnian yu lian’ ai jiehun” [On youths, romance and marriage], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:115.

young people's creative energy.⁵⁹ Physical education not only helped maintain strong bodies, but also instilled such values as “fair play” and “sportsmanship,” as Zhu glossed in English, to counter dysfunctional social relationships among China's educated youth.⁶⁰ These British liberal ideals, which also influenced GMD initiatives like scouting, were hailed as mitigating forces on anti-social behaviors.

Aside from sports, the literature professor prescribed aesthetic enjoyment as a way to turn a war-weary, overworked masses into a stoic, fit and devoted force loyal to the nation. Citing Sigmund Freud, Zhu asserted that modernity repressed human impulses and created complexes waiting to implode. Rather than interrogating the social relations that created psychoses, however, individuals would have to learn to catharsize or liberate (*jiefang*) frustrated desires through aesthetics, an idealist realm free of violence, injustices, and gaudy entertainments.⁶¹ Enjoying the outdoor on a Sunday or playing proper music after work, common in Euro-American societies, helped one recuperate after a suffocating work routine. Without a healthy leisure culture, the Chinese endured prolonged backbreaking labor at the expense of the nation's long-term vitality.⁶² More importantly, aesthetic pursuits that added variety to a monotony of factory production soothed workers' discontents. Writing something like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's loosely autobiographical *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*), a popular novel among young readers since the New Culture Movement, would make

⁵⁹ Zhu, “Tan qingnian yu lian'ai jiehun” [On youths, romance and marriage], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:115-16.

⁶⁰ Zhu, “Tan tiyu” [On sports], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:134

⁶¹ Zhu, “Tan meigan jiaoyu,” [On aesthetic education], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:147-148.

⁶² Zhu, “Gei *Shenbao zhoukan* de qingnian duzhe (si),” 8:450.

great therapeutic placebo against one's emotional agonies created by wartime China's dystopian political modernity.⁶³ Ironically, the arts in Zhu's psychoanalytic take on Republican China served a function strangely similar to that allocated to permissive sexuality and consumerism in postwar capitalist societies, i.e. providing immediate and short-term pleasure to diffuse discontents over the hegemonic order in real society.⁶⁴ The *right* "liberation" of human impulses, far from softening the edges of an oppressive political order, served to further subsume individuals under Chiang's spiritual mobilization project.

But for our liberal cultural critic, self-implemented psychotherapy alone was not enough to tame individual complexes that supposedly gave rise to all forms of social and political deviance. The state must lead the reproduction of a wholesome social order, cultivating strong bodies and good moral taste. Zhu endorsed the GMD state's fascination with eugenics as a strategy to revamp the strength of a population fighting a total war. Ideally, citizens would avoid marrying when they were too young, choose sturdy men or women over pretty faces when they were ready to get married, and refrain from having too many children. But the state should not hesitate to exert its authority if the people failed to oblige.⁶⁵ Shanghai urban culture was, again, blamed for promoting the idea that marriage was a matter between individuals, not an institution that concerned society and state. Writers fetishized romantic love as something to be worshiped in its own right,

⁶³ Zhu, "Tan meigan jiaoyu," 4:148.

⁶⁴ Slavoj Žižek, "'You May!': the post-modern superego," *London Review of Books* 21, no. 6 (1999): 3-6. Indeed, the most iconic feature of Germany's Strength Through Joy movement, which captured the imagination of many contemporary observers, was none other than the compulsory enjoyment of open-air.

⁶⁵ Zhu, "Tan tiyu," 133.

leftists wanted to impose Soviet Communism that allegedly forfeited the state's mentorship role in the formation of new families.⁶⁶ The maintenance of society as a wholesome organism required the state to be much more than a proverbial nightwatchman. The state might be faulted for suppressing the voice of deserving intellectuals, but it was definitely correct to discipline delinquent citizens who did not have their own and society's interests in mind.

Dictator as Embodiment of Moral Perfection

Disturbingly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, Zhu hedged his hope for a solid moral-cultural foundation in society not only on the GMD's bureaucratic structure but also its political myth-making enterprise. He argued that a cult of personality might provide just the right ingredients for national cohesion. Despite its association with the formidable political dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin, personality cult should occupy a prominent place in democratic China. "The essence of politics," the new GMD recruit claimed in October 1942,

lies in fine organization, the building and maintenance of which necessarily rest on a leader. A political organization of which the leader can call the shots and convince others must be an enlightened one. There is no doubt that totalitarian countries need dictators (*ducai zhe*). Democratic countries, too, need dictators, no matter what name or title you want to call them.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Zhu, "Tan xing'ai wenti" [On sex and love], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:111-12. The idea that the state should play an activist role in modern family planning gained popularity among New Culture intellectuals in the 1920s and became a core agenda of the Nationalist state with the enactment of the 1931 New Family Law. It is hard not to think that Zhu's criticism of romanticists and communists was intended simply to highlight the virtues of the regime for which he was working. (Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State*, 78-133.)

⁶⁷ Zhu, "Tan yingxiong cong bai" [On hero worship], in *ZGQQJ*, 4:98-99.

If the Hebrews needed their Old Testament heroes and modern educators worshiped Confucius and Plato, there is no reason why a political community should not pay homage to a dictator on whom order could rely. After all, religion, education and politics were all integral to culture (*wenhua*). Revisiting his earlier formulation on the entwinement of beauty and moral perfection, Zhu argued that pious devotion to a heroic leader was a quintessentially aesthetic gesture that lent “a sense of the sublime experience” (which he glossed for *chonggao xiongwei zhi gan*) to social life. Despite the inherent danger of superstition and emotionality, hero-worship was commendable for it inspired awe, put individuals in communion with the social whole, and lifted humans above their mundane existence. It helped overcome cynicism, selfishness and materialism in an individual.⁶⁸ Here, Zhu’s apolitical impulse came full circle, but with one important twist. If the writer’s aim before the war was to keep dirty politics out of art, the wartime *Central Weekly* contributor treated politics like sanctified art. The hero, in all his religious and superhumanly elements, was set apart in a near-divine position from the political party and class interests he represented. Inasmuch as human life is a work of art, the dictator evoked the imagery (*yixiang*) of aesthetic perfection, affirming in flesh and blood highest moral accomplishments.⁶⁹ He tamed the spiritually inadequate masses, beautified them, and gave them a coherent form. Zhu’s lyrical paeon to hero worship as sublimation of mass will sounded particularly ominous considering that the GMD was

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 99. The charismatic leader’s ability to dominate and re-create the people like how an artist approached his work was a core theme in Italian Fascist theorization of state power. (Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: the Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997], 21-26.)

intensifying efforts to build a cult around Chiang the Leader (*lingxiu*) as part of wartime spiritual mobilization.

On Zhu's intellectual hero Matthew Arnold, literary critic Raymond Williams had the following to say about his liberalism: "Excellence and human values on the one hand; discipline and where necessary repression on the other."⁷⁰ Just as Arnold maligned protestors congregating in London's Hyde Park as enemies of culture in 1866, Zhu remained hostile towards street politics through the late 1940s. At the conclusion of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Zhu returned to Beiping and resumed his teaching position at Beida. One of his students remembered the connoisseur of Romantic poetry as a secluded scholar devoted to teaching, uninterested in political gatherings organized by U.S. ambassador John Leighton Stuart (1876-1962) for liberal intellectuals. Yet, the professor and his progressive, anti-Nationalist students remained on opposite sides of the widening political divide.⁷¹ Zhu railed against university students, workers and even cabaret dancers who took "direct action" (*zhijie xingdong*) against rocketing inflation, official corruption, and the civil war between the GMD and CCP in major cities. A frenzied mob, he wrote in a 1948 article tellingly titled "On the Spread of Cowardice and Cruelty Among the Masses," was stirred up by a few delinquents who harbored ulterior motives under lofty principles like liberty, democracy and human rights. Unruly and excitable protesters in Beiping and Shanghai were compared to the bloodthirsty crowd who condemned great men like Socrates and Jesus to death or the Hindu fundamentalist who

⁷⁰ Williams, "Hundred Years of Culture and Anarchy," 8.

⁷¹ Luo Yijun, "Yi Zhu Guangqian xiansheng" [Reminisces of Zhu Guangqian], in *Qingchun de Beida: "Jingshen de meili" xubian*, ed. Zhao Weimin (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 197-198.

killed Mahatma Gandhi in India just a few months ago.⁷² Liberty and freedom were desirable as long as they remained in the hands of the cultured and that the rowdy masses were kept at bay.

For reasons that remain obscure, Zhu chose not to accept the GMD's invitation to leave Beijing when the Communists captured the city in early 1949. Taking into account his vicissitudes dealing with the troubled Nationalists, it might well be that Zhu, like many liberal politicians by the end of 1948, had lost faith in Chiang's ability to restore peace and bring forth a stable, inclusive polity.⁷³ In the 1950s and through the 1960s, the idealist thinker came under attack by Communist intellectuals for his aesthetic theory and was made to repudiate Croce. Adopting a Marxian framework, Zhu modified but continued his search for an autonomous aesthetic subjectivity against the mechanical concept of beauty as an objective given. The persistent fixation on valor, muscular severity and the sublime in Zhu's aesthetic formulation arguably informed the excesses of Communist cultural politics.⁷⁴

Whatever influence he exerted on Maoist China and beyond, it was obvious that Zhu represented the converging cultural logic of New Culture liberalism and radical conservatism in the Republican period. The liberal wing of the New Culture elite took the cultural transformation of the Chinese people to heart, seeing it as the only way to bring fundamental changes to the nation. They hailed the creative will of individuals and

⁷² Zhu, "Tan qunzhong peiyang qienuo yu xiongcan," in *ZGQQJ*, 9:354.

⁷³ Thomas D. Lutze, *China's Inevitable Revolution: Rethinking America's Loss to the Communists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8-12.

⁷⁴ Zhu, "Zuoze zizhuan," 1:7; Liu Kang, *Aesthetics and Marxism*, 122-133; Ban Wang, *Sublime Figure of History*, 118, 157-159.

shunned political orthodoxy, Nationalist or otherwise. Yet, their fear of being overwhelmed by the masses trumped the desire to remain aloof of China's poisoned political scene. That liberal humanism never found expression in an independent political bloc rendered it parasitic on the Nationalist state. Confronted with vulgar consumerism, permissive sexuality and destabilizing street protests, Zhu desired a solid ethical order to sustain the autonomy and creative freedom of the elite aesthetic subject. The only buffer between individual sanctity and mob tyranny was the GMD establishment, whose own relationship with the masses was equally strained. Conservative revolutionaries and liberal intellectuals further agreed that the political and intellectual elite occupied a unique didactic role in reversing the hedonism of the urban-based young generation, arresting the terminal decline in society's moral standards, and boosting the physical virility of the national body.

Aesthetic creation in Zhu was simultaneously an affirmation of individual prowess against material, social constraints and a tool for constraining mass revolt. It proffered liberation not by heeding popular demands, but by asking the wronged to diffuse their own discontent. In this sense, Zhu's was nothing less than a depoliticized solution to the political and economic dilemmas of uneven capitalist development in China. Yet, in such national crises as the resistance war against Japan, aesthetic uplift became a matter as much for individuals as for the political establishment. The charismatic political leader ennobled and gave coherence to the people's feelings and sentiments, elevating them to a higher form of life whereby the banalities of consumerism, craftiness of political organizers, and the general baseness of the Chinese masses would be purged. As the custodian of this utopian order, the state was thus rendered as a purely

ethical entity that embodied the union between aesthetic sublimation and moral perfection. The liberal claim on an individual's full creative autonomy over his or her own life was also laid for the state's stewardship of national well-being. The apolitical, transcendental image attributed to the GMD, in contradistinction to its manipulative, unscrupulous enemies, benefitted the party not only in its effort to garner domestic support. It was also a core component of the party-state's outreach to political forces in other Asian societies, including the liberal-leaning nationalist movement in India.

CHAPTER 5

**The Revolution and the World
Pan-Asianism, India and the Guomindang**

In December 1940, as China concluded another difficult year confronting Japanese military advances, Chiang Kai-shek received an encouraging letter from the frail Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). In the letter, the renowned Bengali poet reflected enthusiastically on Dai Jitao's recent visit to India. "I believe," Tagore declared, "that China has a special mission to fulfill in our Age." Long disillusioned with modern civilization as exemplified by Euro-America, Tagore touted Nationalist China for providing a potentially better alternative. The distinguished aesthete, both celebrated and pilloried for his skepticism of industrialization, told Chiang that

Your country can show us in different fields of national planning in industrial development, in agricultural progress and in the new building-up of civic existence in your great land how we can escape the danger of fatal cleavage between science and humanity that has proved the doom of the Western as well as the Eastern nations of our day.¹

Tagore's laudatory assessment of the wartime Nationalist regime was most striking given how the author of *The Home and the World* (1916) was known for his humanist disdain for political mobilization, even one that involved such discipline and concessionary tendencies as Mahatma Gandhi's *swadeshi* movement that advocated the boycott of British goods. Tagore, and key figures in the Indian National Congress (of whom the literary giant was sympathetic but not uncritically supportive), seemed oblivious to how state violence was an integral part of GMD's ongoing mobilization of society, or that the party-state had always committed itself to building a modern industrial economy, even as

¹ Rabindranath Tagore to Chiang Kai-shek, 10 December 1940, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002000001294A, Academia Historica.

factions differed vigorously on its composition.² On appearance, there was little in common between the Nationalist regime's anti-liberal conservative revolution and a political movement which, according to an authoritative account, was resolutely committed to non-violence, parliamentary democracy, and egalitarian social reforms.³

Affection for the GMD among followers of Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was as counter-intuitive as Chinese liberal writers rallying behind the fiercely rightwing party. Yet, the two nationalist parties were indeed allies, if half-hearted ones, during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and interactions between the organized nationalisms stretched back to as late as the 1920s. Senior GMD cadres, notably Dai Jitao and educator-cum-government minister Zhu Jiahua (1893-1963), actively promoted collaboration between the Nationalist state and the Indian nationalist movement throughout the 1930s and 40s. By actively contributing to institutional and cultural ties between the two societies, particularly those forged by the India-based Buddhist scholar Tan Yunshan (1898-1983), the GMD promoted Sino-Indian collaboration under a discourse of civilizational affinity, idealist commitment to world peace, and romantic pleas for Pan-Asianist solidarity. What seemed to have struck a particular chord with Tagore, and hammered home most vigorously by GMD associates, was a promise of how Asian peoples' traditional virtues and ways of relating to one another could overcome the human mistrust, social reification, and violent exploitation inherent to industrial modernity.

² See Zanasi, *Saving the Nation* for different priorities in economic development between the rival Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei camps.

³ Bipan Chandra, "The Indian National Movement: The Ideological Dimension," in Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989), 518-528.

Tying Chinese and foreign humanists like Zhu Guangqian and Rabindranath Tagore together in support of Chiang was the way they projected on the Nationalist state an idealized, non-existent community unblemished by political conflicts and machinations. While Zhu saw Chiang as a larger-than-life figure that exemplified moral perfection, Tagore understood China as the idealized space where Eastern philosophical wisdom and cultural essence were preserved and reinvented. Alliance between China and an India struggling to free itself from the British would not only be a challenge to entrenched colonial interests in the two societies but also a cultural reaction against the “West,” a signifier for both capitalist globalization and its communist alternative.

Paradoxically, the sentiments that inspired Chinese and Indian activists’ commitment to a union against European colonialism had roots in Japan’s transformation into an imperialist power in the late nineteenth century. No account of the ideological justifications for solidarity between China and India or the trajectories by which the GMD found in Congress a valuable partner would be complete without considering Japan’s contradictory role as both an inspiration for and impediment of nationalist aspirations across the continent. Before becoming disillusioned by Japan’s expansionist behaviors leading up to the Mukden and particularly the Marco Polo Bridge incidents, many activists in China and India saw Japan as a more worthy ally in a common continent-wide anti-colonial enterprise.⁴ GMD functionaries, Tan and Tagore partook in a discourse that saw the revival of an authentic, spiritual Asia as a revolt against the homogeneity of mass culture, instrumental reason, bourgeois modernity, and even the

⁴ Lu Yan, *Re-understanding Japan: Chinese Perspectives, 1895-1945* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004), 250-254; Carolien Stolte, “‘Enough of the Great Napoleons!’: Raja Mahendra Pratap’s Pan-Asian projects (1929-1939),” *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (2012): 419-421.

tyranny of state bureaucracy. This desire for a revived Asia, usually expressed in romantic and avowedly apolitical terms, echoed Japanese philosophers' justification for their country's "war against all wars." Prominent Japanese intellectuals believed confrontation with Anglo-American power would once and for all put an end to Western hegemony and allow East Asia to reclaim its spiritual essence.⁵ Yet, as Japan and China became locked in military conflicts, the dream of common Eastern resistance against imperialism gave rise to two rival Pan-Asianist projects, each wrestling for India's loyalty. Sharing many of its nemesis's ideological assumptions, the GMD's claim to leadership a Pan-Asianist alliance against Japan added an international dimension to its conservative revolution. That such radical conservative desires seemed to have captivated Tagore and gained traction within the Congress put to relief the dilemmas faced by nationalist movements in the Third World as they went about fighting for political independence and fashioning an economic and cultural subjectivity independent from imperialism-driven capitalist globalization.

The Dynamics of Pan-Asianism: Ideology and Shifting Alliances

Exchanges between nationalist activists from India and China began at the dawn of the twentieth century, when exiled anti-Qing revolutionaries collaborated with Indian anti-colonialists and Japanese socialists in 1907 to form the Asiatic Humanitarian Brotherhood (*Yazhou heqin hui* or, in Japanese, *Ashû washinkai*).⁶ For activists informed

⁵ Tetsuo Najita and H. D. Harootunian, "Japan's Revolt against the West," in *Modern Japanese Thought*, ed. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 213. See also H. D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-65.

⁶ Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 169.

by new radical ideas such as feminism, anarchism and socialism, Asia, then free of the strictly demarcated and heavily guarded boundaries of modern nation-states, was a platform for revolutionary experimentations and regional alliances based not on the commonality of culture and religion but the urgency of modern imperialism. Yet, at that stage, there was considerable ambiguity and indeterminacy in the ideological import of Pan-Asianism. Chinese revolutionaries and activities drew from Japanese Pan-Asianists, while disavowing their assumption that the imperial Japanese state, fresh from military triumph over Russia in 1905, would lead the continent against the West and towards revival.⁷ Indeed, according to intellectual historian Wang Hui, the twentieth century saw the rise of two conflicting Pan-Asianisms. There was a radical tradition, to which revolutionaries like Vladimir I. Lenin and Sun Yat-sen belonged, which treated “Asia” as a set of dynamic political forces and an internationalist category centered on social revolutions and national liberation projects that were based in the region. Competing with this tendency were constructions of Asia based on culturalism, statism, and theories of essentialized, monolithic civilizations. Of particular interest to Wang were Japanese Pan-Asianists like Miyazaki Toten and Kita Ikki who, as one-time participants of China’s national revolution, eventually came to believe that the resurgence of Asia rested ultimately on the military supremacy of the Japanese state over the continent. What defined their transformation from supporters of China’s independence into cheerleaders of Japanese expansionism, Wang argues, was their substitution of uncritical belief in

⁷ *Ibid.*, 157-159, 174.

notions such as “state” and “race” for concrete socio-political analysis.⁸ Once political reason was banished, by utopian investment in either the state or projection of cultural essence, Pan-Asianism ceased to have emancipatory potential and quickly degenerated into a guise for Japanese imperialism.

Wang’s formulation provides us with a powerful cognitive tool to map out the circulation of Pan-Asianist thoughts from Imperial Japan to Republican China and through British India. The abstraction of transnational relations from geopolitical competition and social processes in Pan-Asianist discourses was central to how GMD presented Chinese nationalism to sympathetic Indian nationalists after the April 12 *coup*, after the party cut ties with the Comintern. Indian activists and intellectuals, including Tagore, were encouraged to see China’s nationalist project as aligned with their own spiritual quest to overcome social contradictions, colonial cultural hegemony and the anomie of modern life. It was the idealist language of negating spiritual malaise under Western-dominated industrial civilization that facilitated the convergence of the Chinese and Indian nation-building projects and concealed their clashing priorities. Yet, harsh geopolitical realities in the years leading up to the Cold War, embodying contending visions of society and economics, eventually drew the two nationalist parties away from one another. Lacking an analytical edge on social power and relations, a Pan-Asianism and, for that matter, nationalism based on culturalism and civilizational attributes ultimately became a mere appendage to the shifting constellation between competing ideologies, nation-states and social forces that shaped the world in the aftermath of the Second World War.

⁸ Wang Hui, “The Politics of Imagining Asia: A Genealogical Analysis,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8:1 (2007): 11-17.

As far as China's national context is concerned, the internationalist impulses that informed earlier strands of Pan-Asianism, articulated by such revolutionaries as Zhang Taiyan and Sun Yat-sen, waxed and waned with the ideological composition of the country's nationalist movement itself. The permutation of Pan-Asianist thoughts mirrored other intellectual and political developments in the country since the May Fourth Movement. Under the united front with the fledging Chinese Communist Party, the GMD participated actively in Comintern-sponsored anti-colonial activities. With the Soviet Union hailed as a patron of the Chinese national revolution, the GMD formulated its international engagement around the Third International's agenda of supporting national liberation movements in Asia and the rest of the colonized world.⁹ Even future radical conservatives who had always been suspicious of the Soviet Union's ambitions were in broad agreement with leftwing internationalist principles. Hu Hanmin and Dai Jitao, for example, submitted two separate proposals to Sun Yat-sen in early 1924 for a People's International (*Minzu guoji*). Although it was conceived to undercut Moscow's influence over the Chinese revolution, a hypothetical Guangzhou-led international would still join Soviet Russia and oppressed peoples including Indians together in a truly multinational fight against the colonizer-dominated League of Nations.¹⁰ In February 1927, the GMD funded and sent the largest delegation to Brussels to attend the inaugural congress of the League Against Imperialism, an international anti-colonialist body influenced but by no

⁹ Consider, for example, Chiang's telegram to Stalin and Lenin on the ninth anniversary of the October Revolution, which wished for the furtherance of the common "revolutionary spirit" of China and Russia and the success of the "world revolution" (*shijie geming*). October 1926, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 00200000002A, Academia Historica.

¹⁰ Mast, "Intellectual Biography of Tai Ch-t'ao," 228-237.

means monopolized by the Soviet Union.¹¹ In return, the association of communist, socialist and radical nationalist organizations from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe celebrated the GMD's recent triumph over foreign-supported warlords in the Northern expedition. Asian nationalists, in particular, touted Nationalist China as an inspiration for their own struggles. Among these enthusiastic delegations from Asia was the Indian National Congress, headed by Nehru.¹²

Yet, barely two months after the conference, power struggle between the GMD's radical conservative and left-leaning wings culminated in Chiang's bloody purge of Shanghai-based Communists and trade unionists. The Nationalist movement under Chiang repudiated the world revolution it used to endorse. Instead of siding with all colonized and semi-colonized nations, it pledged solidarity exclusively with Asian peoples who were fighting against Western domination in global affairs. Nationalist China's putative allies included Japan, a country that had adopted imperialist tendencies typical of Euro-American powers. Among the prominent advocates of this policy shift was Dai and the New Asia Society. The party theoretician declared in the journal *New Asia* (*Xin Yaxiya*) that "the world's fundamental trend" was that only "Eastern nations" (*Dongfang minzu*) would ever have amicable relationships with China. Attributing Qing China's immunity from full European colonization to the rise of Meiji Japan, Dai urged his compatriots to win back the respect of Japan and other Asian nations by building a

¹¹ J. D. Hargreaves, "The Comintern and Anti-colonialism: New Research Opportunities," *African Affairs* 92 (1993): 256.

¹² Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2007), 19-22; Hans Piazza, "The Anti-Imperialist League and the Chinese Revolution," in *Chinese Revolution in the 1920s*, 169.

prosperous and culturally refined republic. “Once China became strong again, Japan would be our friend.” To the contrary, “Russia would forever be China’s foe.”¹³

Founded by Dai Jitao and his associate Zhang Zhenzhi (1906-1931) in March 1931 on the premises of the Examination Yuan in Nanjing, the New Asia Society was, for all aims and purposes, the ruling party’s front organization tasked with devising strategies in cultivating China’s ties with “Eastern nations” and claiming control over frontier regions like Tibet, Manchuria and Mongolia where Chinese sovereignty was being challenged.¹⁴ While European imperialism was still identified as a condition for intra-Asian collaboration, Dai’s invitation to the Japanese empire to join his enterprise, along with his obscurantist language of national awakening (*juewu*) and confidence (*zixin*), suggests that the GMD’s Pan-Asianism was no longer a call to arms for nations to unite against all forms of colonial control. It was instead a nostalgic allusion to Asia’s historical centrality and vague promise of the continent’s revolt against “Western” dominance – both Anglo-American capitalist imperialism and Soviet influence among Asian radical nationalists. Japan, supposed to be sharing a similar cultural heritage with China, re-emerged as a potential champion of Asia’s revival and independence. Many in the GMD considered the Japanese political establishment to be bifurcated, and that Nanjing could somehow form an alliance with Japanese activists sympathetic to China.

Thus, even as military conflicts between China and Japan escalated through the late 1920s and 1930s, the GMD continued to hope that China and Japan would form the

¹³ Dai Jitao, “Zhong Ri E san minzu zhi guanxi” [The relationship between China, Japan, and Russia], *Xin Yaxiya* 1, no. 2 (1930): 9-10; For Dai’s portrayal of Japan as the GMD’s ideal anti-Soviet and anti-Communist ally, see Lu, *Re-understanding Japan*, 117, 161.

¹⁴ The society was never part of the GMD but senior cadres staffed the executive committee and funded its activities. See Kubo Juntarô, “Zasshi *Shin Ajia* ronsetsu kiji mokuroku” [Catalogue of commentaries and articles in the journal *New Asia*], *Kôbe daigaku shigaku nenpô*, no. 17 (2002): 82.

core of an anti-Western, anti-Soviet alliance. Nothing was more symptomatic of the delusionary nature of the GMD's investment in Japan than the regime's decade-long dealings with rightwing Pan-Asianists like Miyazaki Ryūsuke (1892-1971), whose animosity towards both communism and some variants of capitalism led him to eventually make peace with Japanese continental adventurism. Evoking Sun Yat-sen's "Great Asianism" and Confucian-sounding ideal of universal harmony (*shijie datong*), slogans repeated over and over again in GMD diplomatic discourses, Chiang Kai-shek, Dai Jitao and Hu Hanmin welcomed Miyazaki to Nanjing in May 1927. The son of Miyazaki Tôten, a celebrated sponsor of Sun Yat-sen's anti-Qing revolution, visited China as a representative of the fledging Social Democratic Party (*Shakai minshû tô*, or Social People's Party), one of the many anti-communist "proletarian parties" permitted to operate in pre-war Japan.¹⁵ In his speech delivered in Nanjing, he castigated "capitalist imperialists" in Japan for supporting warlords against whom the GMD was still fighting. Miyazaki expressed his party's admiration for the Three People's Principle, and enthused that the Social Democratic and Nationalist parties would mobilize the masses of Japan and China and liberate the weaker nations of the world. He added that while world revolution was commendable, a communist-inspired one was to be avoided at all costs.¹⁶

¹⁵ Founded in December 1926, the Social Democratic Party, aligned with a rightwing labor union, was one of the major working-class political parties along with the centrist Labor-Farmer Party that participated in national elections during the Taishô period. More leftwing parties, including the Japanese Communist Party, were suppressed. The two sanctioned parties merged to form the Social Masses Party in 1932, lending "proletarian" support to the military campaign against China in 1937. In 1940, the Social Masses Party joined the mass organization Imperial Rule Assistance Association as part of Konoe Fumimaro's fascist new order. (Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], 200, 328-329.)

¹⁶ Miyazaki Ryūsuke, "Gongqi Longjie zai Nanjing zhi yanjiang" [Miyazaki Ryūsuke's speech in Nanjing], in *Ya Dong zhi dong*, ed. Chen Yiyi (n.p., 1927), 52-57.

In the 1930s, Miyazaki moved further to the right and well wishes for Sino-Japanese solidarity were quickly subsumed under the belief that Japan was the guardian of Asian revival. Yet, the GMD continued to see him as a potential ally sympathetic to China's agenda. The Nationalist leadership was seemingly unnerved when Miyazaki urged in 1933 that Chiang relieve the American-educated finance minister T. V. Soong (Song Ziwen, 1891-1971) of his post, in case Japan came to the view that China was drawing its economy too close to those of the dreaded Great Britain and the United States.¹⁷ In a 1935 letter addressed to Chiang, Miyazaki even suggested that Japan's continental adventurism was only to thwart off Anglo-American imperialism and Soviet expansion, and urged China to cooperate with the Japanese military.¹⁸ As late as the summer of 1937, after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Chiang was still ready to receive Miyazaki to China as the personal envoy of Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro. Konoe "wanted cooperation, not [Chinese] territories," the military attaché at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo advised.¹⁹ Discussions between the two former comrades-in-arm never took place, as Miyazaki was arrested by Japanese military police under suspicious circumstances as he was about to leave for China. It would be impossible to tell if the course of history would have changed if Miyazaki managed to return to Nanjing ten years after he first visited the Chinese capital. What is obvious is the extent to which the GMD's aversion to communism and investment in the culturalist construct of Asia put

¹⁷ General materials for 1933, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002000001492A, Academia Historica.

¹⁸ Miyazaki Ryūsuke to Chiang Kai-shek, 17 July 1935, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002000001884A, Academia Historica.

¹⁹ Zhang Hongchun to Chiang Kai-shek, 25 July 1937, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002000001669A, Academia Historica.

the party in line with ultranationalist thinking that fused Japan's own imperialist ambitions.

The Politics of a Depoliticized Asia

Nationalist China's dealings with India, similarly infused with ideals of cultural commonality and nostalgia for a time when the presence of Europe in Asia was less domineering, was more successful and no less historically significant. The purported civilizational and particularly religious unity between the two societies was most vocally articulated by critics unnerved by the radicalization of the Chinese political and intellectual scene, including the GMD, in the 1920s during the New Cultural Movement. In the wake of the orgy of mechanized violence during the First World War, otherwise known in China as the more suggestive "European War" (*Ou zhan*, 1914-1918), many Chinese intellectuals became disillusioned with the liberal ideology of linear progress, the superiority of scientific rationality, and the social alienation that resulted from industrial capitalism. Some of these disillusioned activists, both New Culture intellectuals and GMD cadres, pursued alternative models of social organization through the globalizing language of socialisms.²⁰ Others, like social reformer Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and constitutionalist Zhang Junmai (1886-1969), partook of an equally global dialogue and joined such conservative critics of the European Enlightenment as Oswald Spengler and Irving Babbitt in the aesthetic construction of a "humanistic" future free from the strictures of industrial society, violence of political mobilization and rivalries, and the challenge to elite high culture by an ascendant mass society. A renewed interest in

²⁰ Dirlik, *Origins of Chinese Communism*, 60-73.

Eastern spirituality drew Liang and his associates not only to influential anti-rationalist thinkers in Europe and North America but also to Rabindranath Tagore, who as an unrelenting critic of modern technologies and politics was himself an admirer of Spengler's condemnation of modernity. Citing Spengler and pithily labeling Europeans' fervent pursuit for material wealth as a "modern form of barbarism," Tagore dismissed the argument that there was any advantage to be gained in combining Asia's "spirit of generous co-operation" with "American methods" of managing an industrializing economy.²¹

The convergence of Chinese and Indian advocacy for Asian spirituality to overcome the excesses of capitalist globalization reached its first climax in 1923, when Liang invited Tagore to give a series of lectures in China. In his speech welcoming Tagore to Beijing in 1924, Liang asserted that the literary giant personified India. While Europeans and Americans' adoration for the Nobel laureate was superficial hero-worshipping, most Chinese held deep affection for Tagore as a representative of a country that was China's brother. "Before most of the civilised races became active," Liang spoke on behalf of China in its entirety, "we two brothers had already begun to study the great problems which concern the whole of mankind. We had already accomplished much in the interests of humanity."²² The rekindled exchange of people and ideas between China and India reaffirmed the two nations' role as beacons of civilization surrounded by shallow Euro-Americans, like how China in the past had to

²¹ Rabindranath Tagore, "Unity of Asia: A Symposium," *India and the World: Monthly Organ of Internationalism and Cultural Federation* 1, no. 7 (1932): 146-50.

²² Liang Qichao, "The Kinship between Chinese & Indian Culture," in *Talks in China*, Rabindranath Tagore (Calcutta: Arunoday Art Press, n.d.), 2-3.

hold on to its noble philosophical traditions despite being surrounded by uncivilized frontier peoples.

The world-historical significance Liang attached to Tagore's China tour was shared by some Chinese young intellectuals. One of them was the twenty-six-year-old Tan Yunshan, who would become the GMD's most important contact in the Indian nationalist community in the 1930s. A lay Buddhist who spent his earlier career as a teacher and journalist with the Malayan Chinese community, Tan was not in China during Tagore's lecture tour but retrospectively hailed it for having "awakened the dormant conscience of the Chinese nation" in his 1942 eulogy of the poet.²³ The "awakening" to which Tan referred was diametrically opposed to the political mobilization by disciplined mass parties that formed the core of the "awakening" enterprise in the 1920s.²⁴ What constituted awakening for Tan was not a new determination to achieve national liberation and fundamental transformation of society but deliverance from being "intoxicated and doped by the modern splendours and glories of materialistic west."²⁵ The result of the awakening process was thus not a political position or agenda but moralistic repulsion and disdain for consumerist hedonism, a sign of modern European decadence and decline. Asia-wide awakening, Tagore argued repeatedly in Hangzhou and Beijing, meant refashioning the ways in which societies interacted with each other, basing relationships not on geopolitical calculations or

²³ Tan Yunshan, "Rabindranath, the Gurudeva," in *Professor Tan Yun-shan and Cultural Relations between India and China*, ed. V. G. Nair (Madras: Indo-Asian Publication, 1958), 15.

²⁴ Fitzgerald, *Awakening China*, 330-332.

²⁵ Tan, "Rabindranath, the Gurudeva," 15.

economic interests but “the fruit of love and peace and friendship.”²⁶ Addressing his young Chinese audience as a self-appointed representative of the vast continent, the celebrated poet announced that Asians would not follow the West, which was “becoming demoralized through being the exploiter, through tasting the fruits of exploitation.” Once Asians rediscovered their “own birthright” and “undying worth” from their own traditions, Tagore prophesized in apocalyptic tone, the entire humanity would be saved.²⁷

Tagore’s association with Liang Qichao and admiration for conservative critics of Enlightenment modernity in Europe did not pass unnoticed by leftwing critics in China and elsewhere. Detractors complained that Tagore’s aversion to mass mobilization, including that of such disciplined nationalist campaign as Gandhi’s *swadeshi* movement, combined with his romantic idealization of entrenched cultural norms meant a prescription of aesthetic withdrawal from confronting modern power relations, be it imperialism or the exploitation of labor.²⁸ The fear that Tagore’s elitist cosmopolitanism could result in dubious political judgments was not ungrounded. Tagore’s espousal of Asian civilization and fascination with an aestheticized Japan untainted by industrial modernity meant that he was not always forthcoming in condemning the militaristic tendencies of the Japanese state. Indeed, while Tagore loathed the violence of modern political mobilization and military conflicts, he seemed to be concerned more with the

²⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, *Talks in China* (Calcutta: Arunoday Art Press, n.d.), 42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁸ Qu Qiubai, “Taige’er de guojia guan yu Dongfang” [Tagore’s views on the nation-state and the East], in *Qu Qiubai wenji: zhengzhi lilun bian* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1988), 2:511-519; Georg Lukács, “Tagore’s Gandhi Novel,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/1922/tagore.htm> (accessed 23 September 2012).

means by which violence was perpetuated than with violence itself. In the midst of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), he congratulated Japanese soldiers for refusing to be “mere cogs in the wheel” and repudiating Western mechanized warfare through their willingness to sacrifice for their emperor.²⁹ Even in his renowned 1938 debate with the Japanese modernist poet Yone Noguchi on Japan’s full-scale invasion of China, Tagore’s categorical denunciation of Japanese aggression was juxtaposed with the striking lament that “the land of Bushido, of great Art and traditions of noble heroism” was being conquered by the “scientific savagery” of modern mechanical warfare.³⁰

The violence that appalled Tagore so deeply was inseparable from what he saw as the fundamental flaw of capitalist modernity: the reduction of valiant humanity into the standardized average masses deployed in not only mechanical warfare but also political mobilization of both the left and the right. As far as the Bengali writer was concerned, it was as much Japan’s submission to Western modernity as the devastation it brought upon the rest of Asia that rendered Noguchi’s vision of a Pan-Asianist alliance against Western imperialism disingenuous. Refusing to interrogate how anti-modernist celebration of Asian spiritual purity and vitality might have been an integral part of Japanese militarism, Tagore simply shifted his Pan-Asianist longing from “the land of Bushido” to Chiang Kai-shek’s “unconquerable” China.³¹ Tagore was, of course, no closet ultranationalist. What seemed obvious, however, was that Tagore’s poetic imagination of a heroic Asian

²⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Swadeshi Samaj*, cited in Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 58.

³⁰ Rabindranath Tagore to Yone Noguchi, 1 September 1938, *In the Footsteps of Xuanzang: Tan Yun-shan and India*, ed. Tan Chung (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1999), 209-210.

³¹ *Ibid.*

spirituality had blinded him to immediate, historically-specific forces that led to clashes between competing imperialist powers, nation-states and classes. His sublime idea of Asia was blissfully oblivious to geopolitics. If anything, an opaque and intensely internalized set of attributes rendered Tagore's "Asia" radically detached from any form of social praxis and open to cooption by the hegemonic political agendas of the day.

It was the very mysticism of Tagore's Pan-Asianism that appealed to the custodians of the GMD's diplomatic enterprise, which prized the revival of an ideal ethical order over transformative political action in its approach to imperialist capitalism. If Tagore's depoliticized construction of national culture, as historian Andrew Sartori argues, represented a liberal politics disillusioned with its own praxis under imperialism, the GMD's partaking of this utopian Asia was inseparable from the party's exorcism of the ghost of its recent history under Comintern influence.³² Dai argued as early as 1925 that Chinese nationalism was the basis of universal harmony (*datong zhuyi*) and that both goals had to be pursued by appealing to China's traditional moral values. Treating capitalism, imperialism and class struggle as distinctly European malaises that were spreading across the world, a united front of oppressed peoples in Asia and ultimately the true liberation of humanity would be delivered not by social revolution but the quality of benevolence (*ren'ai*) and Sun Yat-sen's compassion (*ai*) for the sufferings of the world's colonized nations.³³ After the Nanjing regime consolidated its grip on power, institutional steps were taken to realize this utopian vision of Asia's moral renaissance. While the New Asia Society mostly served as a think-tank on all aspects of life in Asia and China's

³² Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 68.

³³ Dai, *Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhexue de jichu*, 26-29.

frontier, the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, founded in 1933, had a more specific mandate of fostering relationship between the GMD and the Congress in a time when “civil society” was the only arena in which interactions between the two nationalist movements could be carried on without further provoking the ire of the British Raj.³⁴

A Modern Xuanzang

One key figure in the Sino-Indian Cultural Society and the GMD’s dealings with India at large was Tan Yunshan, the Tagore enthusiast. A Hunan native, Tan graduated from the First Provincial Normal College, in which he made friends with Mao Zedong and a number of prominent Communist revolutionaries. During his sojourn in British Malaya from 1924 to 1927, Tan was active among reformist Chinese Malayan intellectuals. *Star Light (Xingguang)*, a literary supplement of the Singaporean Chinese-language daily *Lat Pau (Lebao)* Tan launched in October 1925, exhibited features typical of New Culture periodicals in China. Contributors promoted new ideas, attacked old customs, and pushed for a modern written vernacular. They berated the traditional attachment to native-place associations among the diaspora, calling instead for a unified Chinese identity and an end to schools and hospitals that served descendents who hailed from particular counties or provinces.³⁵ Yet, Tan was equally scathing of Chinese people

³⁴ According to British intelligence sources available to Tan Yunshan’s son Chung, himself a historian of China, the colonial state kept a close eye on Tan’s activities, seeing them as a core component of China’s political, propaganda and even espionage activities in India. (Tan Chung, “Fuqin Tan Yunshan pingfan weida de yisheng” [My father Tan Yunshan’s common yet great life], in *Tan Yunshan yu Zhong Yin wenhua jiaoliu*, ed. *idem* [Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998], 91.) Tan Chung’s observations are confirmed by archival materials recently unearthed from the West Bengal State Archives. I thank Tansen Sen for showing me these documents.

³⁵ Fang Xiu, *Notes on the History of Malaysian Chinese New Literature, 1920-1942*, trans. Angus W. MacDonald (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1977), 29-31, 72-73.

who blindly followed new trends, particularly consumerist fads from Europe.³⁶ Like Liang Qichao, Tan did not see the West as providing the solutions to the cultural and social debauchery that plagued Chinese societies.

Although his sojourn in Southeast Asia prevented Tan from seeing Tagore in China in 1924, the young teacher's admiration for Tagore was reciprocated by the latter when the two men met three years later in Singapore, during which the Indian poet persuaded Tan to join Visva-Bharati as a Chinese studies professor. Located in the Bengali town of Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati was no ordinary academic institution. The college was run by Tagore and exemplified his quest for a pedagogy distinct from the elitist and highly rationalized education experience the British introduced to its colony. In the two decades since his relocation to Santiniketan in 1928, Tan worked successfully to bridge the Pan-Asianisms of Tagore and the GMD, mediating between the Chinese nationalist movement with its Indian counterpart. In spite of his prominent role in Chinese diplomacy, the devout Buddhist actively fashioned himself as a modern-day pilgrim contributing to Sino-Indian "cultural intercourse" who had "nothing to do with any kind of politics," even as he was urging Indian nationalists in 1942 to wholeheartedly join the Allies' war effort against Japan.³⁷

Being physically absent from China for most of his life and detached from the day-to-day operation of Republican society, Tan retained an impressionistic and aloof view of his native country and the political and ideological battles that attested to China's polarized political and cultural scene. Lack of functional command did not mean the

³⁶ Tan Yunshan, "Bianyu zahua – qianzu yu gaogen xie" [Miscellaneous talk – foot-binding and high-heeled shoes], *Lebao*, 13 November 1925, 20.

³⁷ Tan Yunshan, "An Appeal to Conscience," in *In the Footstep of Xuanzang*, 172.

Visva-Bharati academic had no clear views on developments back in his native country. Tan suggested to students and academics at Andhra University in 1938, for example, that captured Communist insurgents from Jiangxi were “very generously treated by the national government” and that GMD authority was “well established all over the country” and commanded “the allegiance of the entire Chinese nation.” Seemingly unaware of widespread popular discontent with Nanjing and the challenge posed by regional military strongmen to the central government, Tan singled out as threats to China’s unity “communist trouble and Japanese invasion.”³⁸ At times, his portrait of contemporary China verged on the exotic. Having criticized foreigners’ excessive interest in Chinese culinary culture at the expense of his country’s high culture and religious traditions, Tan went on nonetheless to document, since they were “so relished by foreigners,” the sixteen rules on hygienic food preparation as part of the New Life Movement.³⁹ His non-partisan affiliation and apolitical persona regardless, there was no question which side of the political divide Tan was on.

Tan’s involvement in the GMD’s Pan-Asianist project began not long after his initial appointment at Visva-Bharati in 1927. In 1930, he joined a delegation of Nationalist state representatives on a mission to Lhasa. Fresh from the victory of the Northern Expedition, Nanjing were anxious to assert claim over the financially-impooverished but independently-governed Tibet.⁴⁰ The dramatic trip saw Tan played for the first time the role of unofficial diplomat as Nanjing’s envoy, Xie Guoliang,

³⁸ Tan Yunshan, *Modern Chinese History: Political, Economic and Social* (Madras: n.p., 1938), 32.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁰ Hsiao-ting Lin, *Tibet and Nationalist China’s Frontier: Intrigues and Ethnopolitics, 1928-49* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 51-71.

unexpectedly died from illness before setting foot on Tibetan territory. Aside from delivering Chiang Kai-shek's messages to the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Tan helped deliver a letter from the Tibetan leader to Gandhi on his return journey. After returning to Nanjing through British India, Tan wrote a letter to the Dalai Lama urging his government to rally behind the Nationalist government and support a union between Tibet and China. Demonstrating a shrewd understanding of the geopolitics of imperialism, Tan argued further in an open letter to the head of the theocratic regime, published in *New Asia*, that offers of independence and autonomy by imperialist powers were just precursors to outright colonization, citing as examples Korea, Vietnam, Bhutan and Sikkim. He urged Lhasa to accept autonomy as a part of Nationalist China, adding that the spirit of human salvation (*jiushi jingshen*) in Buddhist thought was in sync with the Three People's Principles.⁴¹ Tan might have been a diplomat by accident, but it was obvious he took the interests of the Nanjing-based regime seriously.

Yet, the fact that Tan had never been a member of the Nationalist government until 1948, when he was appointed Nanjing's cultural representative in India, allowed the idealistic academic to project his travels between India and China through the heavily contested geopolitical space of Tibet as instances of pure civilizational dialogue.⁴² Tan offered the same mix of religious solemnity and ethnographic curiosities in an account of his remarkable trip, focusing on his extended journey conveying the Dalai Lama's message to Gandhi. Published by the New Asia Society, and adorned with calligraphies

⁴¹ Tan Yunshan, "Zhi Dalai Lama shu" [Letter to the Dalai Lama], *Xin Yaxiya* 3, no. 5 (1932): 136-139.

⁴² The position cultural representative (*wenjiao zhuan yuan*) was placed under the Ministry of Education rather than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, probably out of the consideration that a formal diplomatic appointment would have compromised Tan's apolitical identity. See Zhu Jiahua to Maulana Azad, 27 January 1948, Zhu Jiahua Collection, 301-01-18-020, IMH Archives.

of key GMD officials including Dai Jitao, Yu Youren (1879-1964) and Zhang Ji (1882-1947), *India Travelogue* (*Yindu zhouyou ji*) portrayed the author's increasingly active role in India as a pilgrimage and pure-minded quest for spiritual truth and revival of historical ties, reminding readers repeatedly of the fabled Tang Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (circa 602-664).⁴³ Tan's highly symbolic tour, which took place from March to May 1931, retraced the religious interaction between India and China by visiting Buddhist structures along the Ganges, including a structure reputedly commissioned by the eleventh-century Song emperor Renzong.⁴⁴ He quenched his thirst with simple brown sugar syrup served by a local monk in the rustic pilgrimage site of Kushinagar, declaring its superiority to the fancy tea and coffee consumed by well-heeled urbanites.⁴⁵

In spite of claims to the contrary, Tan did not completely disguise the intricate ties between religious or cultural exchanges and the politics of Asian nationalisms. Instead, he actively sought to seek commonalities between the nationalist movements of China and India. In Calcutta, Tan toured testaments to British imperial might like the Imperial Library, the Indian Museum, and the Victoria Memorial. He ruminated how Queen Victoria's ascension to the Indian throne in 1876 was a humiliating episode in the history of a glorious civilization that no self-respecting Indian would forget and lamented how China suffered a similar fate under Western imperialism with the cession of Hong Kong.⁴⁶ Tan's visit to Gandhi, undoubtedly the climax of the trip, entailed discussion over the Congress's tortuous negotiation with London over India's political status and a

⁴³ Tan Yunshan, *Yindu zhouyou ji* [Travelogue to India] (Nanjing: Xin Yaxiya xuehui, 1933), 1, 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

common pledge to revive the spiritual bonds between the two nations.⁴⁷ Like many of those captivated by Gandhi's formidable charisma, Tan saw the Indian nationalist as a philosopher king leading a struggle for not only Indian or Asian, but also universal salvation. He called on the Mahatma in an outfit consisting of Gandhi cap and *khadi* or Indian homespun cloth, a telling symbol of devotion to an independent Indian nation.⁴⁸ Tan characterized the non-cooperation movement, the non-violence doctrine and the civil disobedience movement as embodiments of sincerity (*cheng*), compassion (*ai*) and harmony (*he*) respectively.⁴⁹ Drawing on Sun Yat-sen's eight traditional virtues (*ba de*), a key ideological component of GMD radical conservatives and their vision for a rejuvenated citizenry, in conceptualizing Gandhi's anti-colonial program, Tan ensured that cultural ties between India and China assumed critical contemporary relevance.⁵⁰



Figure 6. Tan Yunshan in Gandhian cap and *khadi*, 1931. (*Yindu zhouyou ji*, fig. 34.)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁸ For the cultural politics of homespun cloth, see Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation: Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 72-80.

⁴⁹ Tan, *Yindu zhouyou ji*, 145-146.

⁵⁰ The "eight virtues" were in fact eight Chinese characters that conveyed four core concepts: filial piety (*zhongxiao*), benevolence (*ren'ai*), honor (*xinyi*) and peace (*heping*).

The immediate effect of the convergence of Chinese and Indian nationalisms as the alternative core of Pan-Asianism at Japan's expense was a boost to Tan's academic activities in India. Tasked by Tagore to raise fund for a Chinese studies institute that was eventually named Cheena Bhavana (Chinese Hall, *Zhongguo xueyuan*), Tan expressed in *India Travelogue* his disappointment that promised donations from Singaporean Chinese entrepreneur Aw Boon Haw (1882-1954) were not to materialize.⁵¹ Disappointment with the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora, however, soon gave way to success in the homeland. After returning to China from Tibet and India in September 1931, Tan overcame his initial reluctance deriving from "the self-respecting character of a Chinese scholar," took advantage of his connections with the political, religious and academic establishments of Nationalist society, and transformed himself into an effective fundraiser. Responses from such luminaries as Academia Sinica president Cai Yuanpei, Buddhist leader and philosopher Taixu (1890-1947), and Dai Jitao were "unexpectedly favourable."⁵² A result of Tan's efforts was the initiation of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society, with one chapter in Nanjing in 1933 and another at Visva-Bharati in 1934. With honorary presidents that included nationalist leaders of no less stature than Gandhi, Nehru, Chiang and his wife, the India chapter immediately worked towards the inauguration of Cheena Bhavana.⁵³

Both Sino-Indian Cultural Society and Cheena Bhavana were infused with the idealist politics of Asian cosmopolitanism as conceived by Tagore and Tan, even as the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² Tan Yunshan, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena Bhavana 1937-1957* (Santiniketan: The Sino-Indian Cultural Society of India, 1957), 18-19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 19; *idem*, *The Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana and the Sino-Indian Cultural Society* (Chongqing and Santiniketan: The Sino-Indian Cultural Society, 1944), 18.

two institutions were, from their conception, deeply embedded in the political machineries of organized nationalisms in both countries.⁵⁴ Tagore's 1937 speech marking the opening of Cheena Bhavana amounted to nothing less than a proposal for an alternative world order to the capitalist system of competing nation-states. The poet told the assembled audience – of which the young Indira Nehru (1917-1984), then a student at Visva-Bharati, was a member representing her ailing father – that Sino-Indian relations would not be beset by conflicting interests because the Indians, as a colonized people, did not have a state. India's lack, however, would prove to be an advantage since “not know[ing] how to help you or injure you materially,” Tagore and his compatriots could be nothing other than “your guests, your hosts, your brothers and your friends.” He categorically condemned capitalist globalization and its attendant system of nation-states, decrying that “in a world so closely knit by railways, steamships and air lines,” a “wrong kind of nearness” brought about a “terrorised world” of blunder, oppression and invasion at the expense of “peaceful races.”⁵⁵ He hailed what he saw as the first step towards revitalizing India and China's “exchange of gifts” as “noble friends” as an antidote to the alienation and violence of industrial modernity. “The moral force which has given quality to our civilization” – cooperation and love, mutual trust and mutual aid – would empower humans to “assimilate” twentieth-century scientific advances. Otherwise, Tagore warned in apocalyptic terms, science would “dominate and enslave them.”⁵⁶ As a manifestation

⁵⁴ At the basic financial level, the day-to-day operation of Cheena Bhavana was funded primarily by donations from the GMD and its senior cadres, either through the Sino-Indian Cultural Society or the Nationalist regime itself, until Visva-Bharati became a “central university” under the Republic of India. Donations from private individuals were not significant. (Tan, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena Bhavana*, 49-50.)

⁵⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, “China and India,” in *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena Bhavana*, 42.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 41-43.

of the increasingly close relationship between India and China, energized not least by Japan's full-scale continental invasion, Cheena Bhavana was for Tagore a realization of his vision of a cosmopolitan utopia that would overcome the violent divisions in modern mass politics engendered by rival nation-states and political movements. The sinological institute was the first step towards a politics of idealist transcendence that consciously detached itself from the everyday social processes of a conflict-ridden world.

Apolitical Utopia and Wartime Diplomacy

Barely three months had passed since the inauguration of Cheena Bhavana, which now hosted the Sino-Cultural Society in India, when the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out. Tagore compared Japan's "murderous attack" on China to Fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, recognizing – if rather belatedly – that the "land of Bushido" had capitulated to the temptations of imperialist grandeur.⁵⁷ Braving the volatile situation in coastal China, Tan traveled to Nanjing, working to bridge ties between not only cultures but political parties. Yet, as director of Cheena Bhavana, Tan made sure his wish for cultural and religious synergy untainted by political considerations was reflected in the institute's research and training programs on Sino-Indian interactions. The high cultures of China and India, including languages, literatures, history, religions and philosophical innovations all fell under the purview of the institute. In particular, Buddhism formed "the nucleus of all such studies."⁵⁸ One highlight of

⁵⁷ Tagore to Noguchi, 1 September 1938, in *In the Footsteps of Xuanzang*, 209-10.

⁵⁸ The General Rules of Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana, article 2 (1937), cited in Tan Yunshan, *Twenty Years of The Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana*, 20.

Cheena Bhavana's publication program was the "restoration" into Indian languages of lost Sanskrit works that were translated into Chinese or Tibetan since the seventh century.⁵⁹ Aside from scholars of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhism, faculty members had expertise in the languages, philosophy and art of the three cultures. Compared to classical studies and religion, modern topics received much less attention. Except for one specialist who worked on modern Chinese literature, nobody at Cheena Bhavana wrote anything substantial on modern topics. The only scholar who wrote regularly on modern China and its relations with India was Tan Yunshan himself.⁶⁰ The day-to-day functioning of Cheena Bhavana conformed to Tan's romantic determination to retrace the trail blazed by Xuanzang.

Historical religious exchanges underscored desires for solidarity between China and India in a time when a rival Pan-Asianism backed by the Japanese army was rampaging the continent. Unlike the violence and self-interested nature of Japan's offer to liberate Asia from colonialism, cooperation between the Chinese and Indian nationalist parties was supposed to be altruistic, peaceful and morally superior. Tan played an instrumental role in forging interactions between Nationalist leaders and their Congress counterparts. The Sino-Indian Cultural Society arranged Nehru's visit to China in August 1939. Just months later, senior Buddhist monk Taixu led a delegation to India. The religious leader, who baptized Tan in the early 1920s and enjoyed close ties with the GMD, shared views on strengthening wartime Sino-Indian cooperation with Congress president Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) and Nehru. Nehru, a moderate socialist and

⁵⁹ The Rules Regarding Studies in Cheena-Bhavana (1937), cited in Tan Yunshan, *Twenty Years of The Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana*, 20.

⁶⁰ Tan Yunshan, *Twenty Years of The Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana*, 56-69.

admirer of the Soviet Union, reportedly endorsed Taixu's critique of Western civilization, the gist of which strongly echoed Dai Jitao's diatribe against Marxism in the 1920s. The deepening military crisis, Taixu argued, was a result of the unfettered valorization of the material dimension of human existence. A union of China and India (*Zhong Yin liangguo lianhe*), with their strengths in furthering harmonious human relationships and cultivating pure minds, would steer the world away from the fundamental flaw of Western civilization.⁶¹

In late 1940, it was Dai's turn to visit India, becoming the first and only senior Nationalist official to have met with the regime's unlikely admirer Tagore. Accompanied throughout his trip by Tan, Chiang Kai-shek's trusted theoretician was advertised by the Congress as a "distinguished Buddhist scholar" on "a cultural goodwill mission."⁶² Not unlike Tan's tour of India almost a decade ago, Dai travelled "to see the historical places of the Buddhist faith."⁶³ Behind the scene, however, it was obvious to those in positions of authority that Dai represented the embattled GMD state. Chiang wrote to Gandhi and told him in no uncertain terms that Dai was a "representative of the Nationalist Party" on a mission to persuade Indian nationalists to join China in "frustrating the chief aggressor [Japan] and protecting Asian civilization." Leo Amery, the British Secretary of State for India and Burma, advised Dai to meet with representatives of the Muslim community and

⁶¹ Yin Shun, *Taixu fashi nianpu* [Chronological biography of Master Taixu] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 1995), 251-252.

⁶² Belkrishna Keskar to Amaranatha Jha, Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University, 18 November 1940, A.I.C.C. Collection, G-40/312, NMML.

⁶³ Jivatram Kripalani to Congress provincial committees, 28 October 1940, A.I.C.C. Collection, G-40/2075, NMML.

the princely states, reminding Guo Taiqi (1888-1952), the Chinese ambassador to Britain, that “Indian sympathy for China was not confined to the Congress.”⁶⁴

The subtle diplomatic tensions between Chongqing and London looked petty when set against the grandiose musings of the Congress on China-India interactions as Dai was welcomed to Swaraj Bhavan, the residence of the Nehrus in Allahabad: “We are familiar with the exploitation that results from the contact of our country with another. But our ancient relations [with China] have always been of a peaceful and brotherly nature.” Alluding to Dai’s Buddhist pilgrim persona, the Congress’s speech hailed India as the historic birthplace of the faith. It assured the Chinese guest that while most Indians were Hindus not Buddhists, their Hinduism incorporated the principles of the pan-Asian religion.⁶⁵ Reciprocating Dai’s professed admiration for the non-violence movement, Congress officials introduced the visitor as “one who preaches the same doctrine of the supremacy of the law of love” as Gandhi.⁶⁶ The fact that the GMD routinely deployed terroristic tactics against political opponents did not seem to have registered among Dai’s Indian hosts. Bringing the doctrine of love to bear in a world suffering from the worst excesses of the capitalist nation-state system, the speech concluded by calling on India and China to “establish in the east a bloc of free nations and thus bring about a new order, based upon equity . . . and human brotherlyness [*sic*].”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Jiang Zhongzheng zongtong dang'an: shilüe gaoben* [Chiang Kai-shek collections: the chronological events] (Taipei: Academia Historica, 2010), 44:451-452, 514.

⁶⁵ I.N.C. speech welcoming Dai Jitao, 3 December 1940, A.I.C.C. Collection, G-40/1940, NMML.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Dai’s speech in Allahabad, 3 December 1940, A.I.C.C. Collection, G-40/1940, NMML.

⁶⁷ I.N.C. speech welcoming Dai Jitao, 3 December 1940, A.I.C.C. Collection G-40/1940, NMML.

India-China amity was presented not just as political maneuvering or a marriage of convenience under precarious global circumstances but also as part of an epic struggle against the debased, materialist “West.” The solution to modern alienation, exploitation and violence was to be found in philosophical outlooks but not in a new set of social and international relations. As a political practice steeped in its own share of mysticism and deference to Hindu religious knowledge, sections of Gandhi’s Congress Party had few qualms endorsing the Nationalist valorization of Asia as a moralistic but politically ambiguous will to overcome modernity.⁶⁸ Alarming, a variant of the drive to transcend “materialism” was couched in terms of Japan’s quest to replace mass consumer society with a new “East Asia cultural sphere.”⁶⁹ Of course, unlike Gandhi’s musings on Eastern spiritual superiority, Japan’s endeavor took the form of direct military confrontation with Anglo-American powers.

Tenuous Alliance

Despite goodwill and a great deal of idealism on leaders’ part, the amity between GMD and Congress was tenuous. Divergent national interests and contesting visions of transnational solidarity greatly complicated the two parties’ shared anti-imperialism and history of religious exchange. In the mid-1920s, reflective of their participation in the

⁶⁸ Domestically, the Congress was just as likely to share the agendas of conservative, restorationist nationalism. Gandhi’s own faith in *Varnashramadharma*, the Hindu inspiration of the caste system, as a congenial force for constructing a society of order, responsibility and peace rendered his program for uplifting the untouchables to be one of reform within the system. Like Hindu militants, the Congress was deeply skeptical of political initiatives, such as strikes, on the part of the *dalits* and reluctant to question the social basis of untouchability itself. See, for example, Vijay Prashad, *Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 5, particularly 117, 120-21.

⁶⁹ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 47-65.

Brussels League Against Imperialism conference, the two movements were bound together by the common aspiration towards national liberation. They signed a joint declaration that would have committed the parties to the exchange of intelligence, personnel, and information offices.⁷⁰ After the April 12 anti-communist purge in 1927, there was a split within the Congress on how to understand the radical conservative *coup* that now defined the newly established Nationalist government in Nanjing. Nehru complained in a 1929 letter to Song Qingling, the left-leaning widow of Sun Yat-sen, that many of his colleagues believed the party-state delivered China from the shackles of imperialism. “A resolution congratulating China was passed by the National Congress,” he added, “although some of us pointed out the true facts and opposed the resolution.”⁷¹ Others expressed fascination with Nationalist social engineering experiments. Vadilal L. Mehta, a prominent industrialist who participated actively in Gandhi’s rural reconstruction program, enthused that the strategy of compulsion deployed in the New Life Movement yielded better results than the decentralized voluntarism that was supposed to fuse India’s rural economy.⁷²

As the prospect of war became imminent, Nehru overcame his initial distrust of the GMD and argued in 1938 that Nationalist China was an ally in the fight against global fascism of which Japan was a part.⁷³ In August 1939, Nehru visited Chongqing and held talks with Chiang Kai-shek, whom the former now saw as the personification of “the

⁷⁰ Piazza, “Anti-Imperialist League and the Chinese Revolution,” 170.

⁷¹ Jawaharlal Nehru to Mme. Sun Yat-sen, 16 January 1929, A.I.C.C. Collection, F.D. 1 (ii)/1929, NMML.

⁷² V. L. Mehta, “Comparative Studies in Rural Economic Conditions,” *Harijan* 4, no. 9 (Apr. 1936): 71.

⁷³ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Why India Supports China,” in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 15 vols. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972-1982), 9:210.

unity of China and her determination to free herself.”⁷⁴ The nationalist leaders of the two societies agreed to enhance cooperation between the GMD and the Congress. Evoking the Brussels resolution, the two organizations promised again to send representatives to each others’ annual meeting, share information, and develop a “common outlook and policy” on foreign affairs.⁷⁵ Given the sensitive nature of a political relationship between China’s governing party and an Indian movement whose ultimate goal was the demise of the British Raj, the Sino-Indian Cultural Society was identified as a front organization by which agendas formulated by the two parties could be relayed through seemingly benign religious, academic and educational exchanges.⁷⁶ There should be no doubt that the “religious” visits of Taixu and Dai to India were highly politicized contacts conceived and actively planned between senior figures of the two nationalist movements.

The renewed alliance between the GMD and Congress was shaky even at its conception. Not all members of the Congress were willing to support Britain’s war efforts against Japan, especially when the colonizers, under Winston Churchill, showed no signs that they were willing to grant India any form of independence. Some Indian nationalists were unsurprisingly receptive to, or at least not actively opposed to, Japan’s version of Pan-Asianism, to which Tagore and Dai were once attracted. Former Congress president Subhas Chandra Bose’s abrupt switch in 1941 to allying with Japan and mobilization of militant Indians attracted to Japan’s call for an anti-imperialist Asian alliance was no doubt the most scandalous case of Indian nationalism’s vicissitudes vis-à-

⁷⁴ Nehru, “Diary of a Journey,” in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 10:85.

⁷⁵ “A Note on the Development of Contact between China and India,” 29 August 1939, *tezhong*, 13/1.14, KMT Archives.

⁷⁶ Chen Lifu and Zhu Jiahua to Chiang Kai-shek, 6 October 1939, *tezhong*, 13/1.2, KMT Archives.

vis Japanese imperialism. But even Gandhi, who was hardly a Pan-Asianist, expressed as late as April 1942 that he was willing to negotiate with the Japanese empire as long as it would bring about immediate independence to India. Gandhi, who rallied behind him the more conservative and anti-socialist wing of his party, was under pressure from industrialists who feared destruction of their properties during fighting between Allied forces and the Japanese.⁷⁷

The conciliatory attitude adopted by segments of the Congress towards Japan alarmed Tan Yunshan, forcing him to steer beyond his jealously guided role of apolitical interlocutor. Disclaiming in September 1942 that he was no more than a “simple Chinese Buddhist scholar,” Tan nonetheless proceeded to caution his “Indian brethren” against Japan’s pretense to anti-imperialism and support for Indian independence. He even found it necessary to refute Gandhi, whose non-violence policy and spiritualism he admired, and the Congress’s argument that shifting from languishing under British imperialism to living within the Japanese sphere of influence amounted to nothing more than a “change of Master.” Faced with the military prowess of a German-backed Japan, Tan adopted an internationalist position in urging India to support the Allies in order to save the world and India’s aspiration for independence from being “trampled under Hitler’s iron heel.”⁷⁸ Tan’s rare deviation from his primary concern in “cultural intercourse and co-operation” was a tacit acknowledgment that Pan-Asianism – with its inherent contradictions, ambiguities and mysticism – was no stable basis for a nationalist movement busy revising

⁷⁷ Johannes H. Voigt, “Co-operation or Confrontation?: War and Congress Politics, 1939-42,” in *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*, ed. D. A. Low, 2^d ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 366-367.

⁷⁸ Tan Yunshan, “An Appeal to Conscience,” 217-220.

their strategies amidst the rapidly changing contours of global military and ideological conflicts.

Gandhi's eventual assurance to Chiang that all Congress' decisions would "lead to the strengthening of India's and China's defence" in June 1942 was, in spite of the well wishes of Tagore, Tan and their associates, a result less of Pan-Asianist conviviality than a marriage of political calculations.⁷⁹ In February 1942, Chiang Kai-shek, now the Supreme Allied Commander in China, spent two days in Santiniketan with his wife while on an official visit to India, reaffirming Cheena Bhavan as a symbol of revived Sino-Indian amity. The Generalissimo told Gandhi that "colored peoples (*youse renzhong*) ought to find their own way towards liberation." Now that Japan had forfeited its responsibility to lead Asia and joined the rank of imperialist oppressors, the liberation of humankind rested with the combined forces of China and India, whose relationship through the past two thousand years was one of cultural and economic fusion and never of conquests and wars.⁸⁰ The Congress' response to active participation in the Allied war efforts as a renewed expression of India's historical camaraderie with China was equivocal at best, insisting instead that India's support was contingent on Britain's promise of independence. "I would not think," Gandhi told Chiang, "that Japanese soldiers were more evil than the British."⁸¹ Nehru explained to Chiang at another occasion that Congress' active participation would be seen as collaboration with the British colonizers and undermine the party's legitimacy in Bengal, Subhas Bose's home

⁷⁹ Mahatma Gandhi to Chiang Kai-shek, 14 June 1942, *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China*, ed. Tan Chung (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1998), 41.

⁸⁰ Transcript of Chiang Kai-shek's discussion with Mahatma Gandhi, New Delhi, 18 February 1942, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002000000375A, Academia Historica.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

province and support base. As for the increasingly impatient Generalissimo's proposal that China and India should fight shoulder-to-shoulder (*bingjian zuozhan*) for national liberation, Nehru offered this less than subtle rebuttal:

Before the war, Japan had sent people to be in touch with me, offering money and weapons in support of India's revolution. ... [Yet, the Congress declined the offer because] whenever foreigners came about to support our independence, we invariably got vanquished in the end.⁸²

Neither Gandhi nor his successor, whose sympathies for Chongqing were obvious, were prepared to fathom an alliance with their fellow-Asians once practical political agendas of the two sides diverged. Tagore's vision for a relationship of pure compassion and spiritual generosity between two societies free from the distractions of nation-state-building and embroilment in "Western" diplomacy proved ephemeral.



Figure 7. Tan Yunshan (second left) welcoming Song Meiling and Chiang Kai-shek to Cheena-Bhavana, 1942. (Tan Yunshan, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana*.)

⁸² Transcript of Chiang Kai-shek's discussion with Jawaharlal Nehru, Calcutta, 20 February 1942, Chiang Kai-shek Collection 002000000375A, Academia Historica.

Ultimately, the Congress's professed solidarity with China was a result of Chongqing's hard-headed calibrations of its own interests in relation to India's nationalist goals. A case in point is China's response to the Congress-initiated Quit India Movement. On August 8, 1942, the Congress passed a resolution calling for non-violent mass struggle against the British. The decision to demand an immediate end to British colonialism was informed in part by Gandhi's assessment that Japan, having already reached the Indo-Burmese border, would soon prevail over the Allies. The colonial regime reacted swiftly and angrily to what they portrayed as a pro-Axis act, imprisoning the entire Congress leadership including Gandhi and Nehru on August 9. Popular protests followed suit across India, prompting Chinese fear over a sudden collapse of colonial rule. Chiang conveyed to the British ambassador to China that the Nationalist regime had no business in telling Britain how to run its empire. But the Chinese leader thought nonetheless that the arrest of Congress leaders was premature. Himself being no paragon of political tolerance, Chiang mused that if China were to adopt the same hardline stance towards India, the latter "might feel beleaguered and throw itself to Japan's embrace."⁸³ The last thing the GMD wanted was an Indian declaration of independence with Japan waiting at the doorstep to fill the power vacuum. Grandiose proclamations of worldwide salvation gave way to unsentimental realism and military strategizing.

From Pan-Asianism to Third Worldism

The limitations of a depoliticized Pan-Asianism, with its attendant discourses of reified cultural commonalities and ethical renewal, were put to sharper relief by the stark

⁸³ Transcript of Chiang Kai-shek's discussion with Horace James Seymour, 12 August 1942, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002000000376A, Academia Historica.

social and ideological choices that nation-states and political movements worldwide had to make after 1945 as the thinly veiled rifts between the wartime allies resurfaced. As I argued earlier in the chapter, the GMD's Pan-Asianism was a product of the party's rejection of communism and search for a framework of international engagement other than the maligned Third International. For Dai, Tan and even Tagore, the struggle for national and Asianist subjectivity was fundamentally an idealist process of overcoming servitude to the cultures of both communism and Western capitalism. Modern imperialism, and the capitalist modernity with which it was entwined, was understood as an expression of nihilism and demoralization confined to the Euro-American culture of excessive material wealth and industrial standardization. While Nehru did not shy away from the rhetoric of culture, his idea of Asian solidarity was clearly conditioned by his analysis of the political and social conjuncture that produced inter-imperialist rivalries and eventually the Second World War. When Nehru wrote in the U.S.-based journal *Fortune* in 1942 that Asia and Africa would play a critical role in determining the outcome of the Second World War, he meant nations that were subjected under the forces of imperialism and fascism.⁸⁴ Nehru's notion of Asia – which he often mentioned alongside Africa, Spain and Soviet Russia – was thus not a cultural or spiritual entity pitched against the West's debased civilization but a coalition of colonized and semi-colonized peoples fighting to free themselves from the politico-economic savagery of imperialism. The imprint of his involvement in Comintern anti-colonialism, an experience that the GMD would rather forget, is obvious. Indeed, the Soviet experiment, like nationalist movements elsewhere, was for Nehru a laudable attempt to put an end to

⁸⁴ Nehru, "India's Day of Reckoning," in *The Oxford India Nehru* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 501.

the hegemony of “finance-imperialism.”⁸⁵ Nehru’s “Asia” was a call for social changes that, for colonized peoples, was inseparable from the quest for national independence.

The clash between Nehru's incipient Third Worldism and culturalist Pan-Asianist diplomacy was brought to bear in the quiet unraveling of the uneasy alliance between China and independent India in the few years leading up to the Cold War. In 1947 Tan played the unofficial diplomat again, as a member of China’s delegation to the Asian Relations Conference. The conference, held in the heady days shortly before the creation of the Indian state in 1947, was envisioned by Nehru as a forum to assert Asia’s independence from European and American interests. Asian countries, he declared, must “have their own policies in world affairs” and an independent “political, social and economic structure.” The prime minister-designate asserted again Asia’s affinity with Africa as fellow-colonized peoples fighting for national independence.⁸⁶ As an independent Asian nation-state, India was to have no part in helping the capitalist West in its suppression of communist and other radical nationalist movements in Southeast Asia, which Nehru saw not as malicious expansion of the Soviet empire but legitimate nationalist struggles.⁸⁷ These strategies were to form the core of the anti-colonial non-aligned movement which Nehru and Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), premier of Communist China, gave rise at the 1955 Bandung Conference.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Nehru, “India in the World,” in *Oxford India Nehru*, 479-485.

⁸⁶ Nehru, “A United Asia,” in *Oxford India Nehru*, 512-513.

⁸⁷ Nehru, “Basic Principles,” in *Oxford India Nehru*, 520.

⁸⁸ Prasad, *Darker Nations*, 31-50. For a much less generous assessment of the accomplishments of Bandung and the Third World project, see Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), 293-314.

The radical tone of Nehru alarmed the GMD, whose Pan-Asianist affinities with India was strained by its involvement in the American-led global campaign against communism and its Chinese variant. Even during the Pacific War, the GMD had concluded already that its interests were best served by being aligned with Washington's. Just months after China managed to persuade the U.S. and Britain to replace the infamous "unequal treaties" with new treaties in 1943, Chiang told one of his negotiators that "not only would we not dread U.S. hegemony (*chengba*) over East Asia in the next thirty years, we only feared that the U.S. would refrain from seeking such hegemony."⁸⁹ Nanjing was also frustrated that Tibet, over whose sovereignty Dai and Tan engaged in claiming, was extended invitation to send a delegation to the Asian Relations Conference. In an article written for the GMD headquarters, Dai argued that while Nationalist China could not afford to simply turn down Nehru's invitation, it should send a delegation of academics and avoid commenting on anything of substance like international relations because "China's position was different" to India as far as Europe and the U.S. were concerned.⁹⁰ These individuals, comprised of Tan and figures associated with Dai through the New Asia Society, the Sino-Indian Cultural Society or the Examination Yuan, were sent as a subtle snub of Nehru's plea for Third World solidarity. When Tan suggested – apparently nothing more than echoing the Sino-Indian Cultural Society – that an All Asia Cultural Association should be set up to promote Asian culture and world peace, he was lampooning "our fashionable socialist friends," to which Nehru probably

⁸⁹Chiang Kai-shek, *Aiji chugao* [Preliminary draft of the record of compassion], 16 April 1943, vol. 3, Chiang Kai-shek Collection, 002060200018006, Academia Historica.

⁹⁰ Dai, "Dui Yindu Nehelu faqi zhaoji fan-Ya huiyi zhi ganxiang" [Thoughts on Nehru's convening of the Asia Relations Conference], in *DJTXSWC*, 386-387.

belonged, and their vision of social change.⁹¹ Tan did suggest in another article written not for the conference but for a magazine that an “Asia Union,” with the multiethnic British outpost Singapore as its capital, be formed. But that Asia Union, as part of the Great World Union (*datong*), would be bound by nothing but amity, mutual help, and self-sacrifice to offset the self-interest that energized imperialism, including that of Soviet Russia.⁹² Tan was quick to assure that his musing on a post-national order was not intended to upset the *status quo* or “existing powers and interests.”⁹³ The apparently ambitious proposal for global and Asian unity, which under another set of circumstances played a pioneering role in mediating between the two nationalist movements of China and India, marked the parting of ways between the GMD’s staunch anti-communism and Nehruvian India’s left nationalism in the emerging Cold War order.

The Limits of Pan-Asianism

As part of *Visva-Bharati*, *Cheena Bhavana*, along with the India chapter of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society survived the financial fallout of the GMD’s demise in Mainland China. The China chapter, however, was liquidated and its assets, including the funds raised in 1943 in support of India’s famine relief efforts, were transferred to *Visva-Bharati*.⁹⁴ By the early 1950s, the once wartime allies descended into full-blown Cold War rhetoric. Zhu Jiahua, a former chair of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society in China

⁹¹ Tan Yunshan, *Inter-Asian Cultural Co-operation and Union of Asia* (Santiniketan: The Sino-Indian Cultural Society in India, 1949), 6-9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 14-19.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁴ Tan, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana*, 50.

who in 1942 pleaded Gandhi for India to work together with China to realize Asia's renaissance (*fixing*), now lambasted Nehru for his compromising attitude towards Mao Zedong and appeasement of Soviet Russia.⁹⁵ At about the same time, the principal of Cheena Bhavana made a remarkable shift of allegiance from the GMD to the People's Republic. In 1956, Tan visited Communist China with his daughter on Zhou Enlai's invitation and was feted in Beijing by Mao Zedong. One year after, Tan welcomed the Communist premier to Cheena Bhavana and received a one-off donation from Beijing.⁹⁶ The symbolic donation, which afforded a veneer of continuity in Sino-Indian relations, could not hide the fact that the school was no longer the front organization for important and clandestine interactions between a China under Japanese imperialist assault and an India still searching for its own nation-state. It also marked the fact that the Pan-Asianist idealism that Tagore and Tan represented was no longer compatible with the internationalist agendas of either independent India or Maoist China.

In a way, it was to be expected that the romantic longing for the unity of Asia as a religious and aesthetic entity was no blueprint for effective political action. Tan emphasized numerous times that he cared about nothing but culture, even when he was obviously making political statements. This seemingly contradictory claim suggested not that Tan – or, for that matter, Zhu Guangqian's apparently apolitical support for Chiang – was disingenuous but that his involvement in state affairs and vision of Asia was not tainted by consideration of self-interest or even the interests of particular nations or social groups. In other words, Tan's Asia entailed an aesthetical unity – in the Kantian sense of

⁹⁵ Zhu Jiahua to Mahatma Gandhi, 31 July 1942; *Zhonghua ribao* (China Daily News, Taipei), 22 November 1951, Zhu Jiahua Collection, 301-01-18-033, IMH Archives.

⁹⁶ Tan, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana*, 50.

a complete disregard of interest – that had little or no bearing on social relations and power structures.⁹⁷ The substitution of cultural imagination for the contest of socio-economic interests through political action explained why Pan-Asianists and liberals in China and abroad could endorse the GMD without agreeing fully with its ideological platform or behaviors in government. In fact, the Nationalists, as soon as they assumed state power in 1927 and more so during the resistance war, were keen to present their program as beyond political fray compared with their domestic and foreign rivals. They claimed to transcend Communist class warfare and any sectarian interests that drove mass protestors and the expansionist greed that characterized Soviet internationalism and Japanese nationalism.



Figure 8. Tan Yunshan welcoming Zhou Enlai to Cheena-Bhavana, 1957. (Tan Yunshan, *Twenty Years of the Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana.*)

The pitfalls of this disinterested aesthetics were succinctly revealed by Karatani Kôjin in his analysis of the ambiguous relationship between many Japanese intellectuals and the Shôwa state's expansionism during the Pacific War. Reading wartime figures like

⁹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 97-98.

Yasuda Yojûrô and Nishida Kitarô, whose intellectual genealogy could be traced to the great Pan-Asianist Okakura Tenshin, Karatani observes how romantic disinterestedness negated the need to tackle social contradictions as they were deemed to have been sublated *a priori* in one's consciousness. This procedure allowed Yasuda, Nishida and others to jettison concrete political programs and simply entrust their desires for a conflict-free human order to the state and its objectives. Japan's Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere was hence idealized and celebrated as having transcended both the capitalist nation-state and Soviet internationalism.⁹⁸

Tan and Tagore, to be sure, had no illusions about Japan's continental ambitions. Yet, their call for Asia's spiritual unity and disdain for any consideration of interest resulted in a politics that dovetailed nicely with the GMD's conservative revolution of consciousness as the party actively oppressed any "materialist" challenge to the social-political hierarchy. Historian Prasenjit Duara observes that regimes of authenticity and idealizations of cultural essences such as Pan-Asianism were expressions of alternative conceptions of time, history and collective identity that coexisted with and challenged the abstract and linear time of capitalist modernity. Yet, it is precisely their posture of transcendent existence vis-à-vis capitalist modernity that prevented them from actively engaging with the aporias and contradictions of capitalist modernity.⁹⁹ Refusing to adopt a politics that confronted the material social relations and exploitation underpinned by capitalism, Pan-Asianist ideologies, whether they originated from India, China or Japan, were volatile and resulted either in religious withdrawal from the concrete injustices of

⁹⁸ Karatani Kôjin, "Overcoming Modernity," in *Contemporary Japanese Thought*, ed. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 106-114.

⁹⁹ Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 26-28.

the world or co-option by the reactionary politics of Nationalist China and Shôwa Japan. Reading Tagore's paeon to Chiang Kai-shek cited in the beginning of the chapter and Tan's pledge that his proposal of Asia Union would accommodate U.S.-dominated geopolitical configurations, one cannot help but feel the hollowness in their denunciation of modern imperialist violence. But while Tan would soon follow Nehru in engaging with Communist China and the Third World, the Nationalist regime submitted itself fully to the American imperium in order to continue its supposedly anti-imperialist conservative revolution.

CONCLUSION

The Radical Conservative Legacy

In the foregoing chapters, we saw the conservative revolution mainly as a social experiment conceived and directed by party-state cadres to diffuse the threat of a class revolution led by radicalized workers and peasants. Arising out of the ideological ambiguity that was Sun Yat-sen's legacy in the late 1920s, radical conservative GMD activists decided that the national revolution would have to re-engage the masses under the banners of patient economic development, interclass cooperation and moral uplift. Party elders like Dai Jitao, Li Shizeng and Hu Hanmin were convinced that materialist or class-based politics was detrimental to China's precarious existence as a nation-state battling against hostile imperialist forces from Europe, Japan and even Soviet Russia. At the same time, GMD cadres themselves were faulted for their bureaucratic inertia and ideological agnosticism, and their behaviors were likened to the cynical, chattering political elite who dominated parliament under the warlord regime. Activists who came to power after the April 12 *coup* in 1927 went about realizing an institutionalized revolutionary nationalism imbued with youth vitality, strict Leninist-style hierarchy, and a commitment to tame but not topple capitalist social relations.

Demands for socio-economic justice were rechanneled into a party-led quest for refined customs and tastes. Everyday lifestyle became a unified realm in which a salubrious, voluntaristic, obedient national subject was to be nurtured. In the 1930s, the GMD appropriated scouting, a quintessential treaty-port institution, as a politically reliable mode of mass activism. From the late 1930s through the 1940s, the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement consolidated the state's claim on daily consumption

and time management as constitutive of popular defense against Japan during what was China's first total war against a foreign enemy. Finally, the GMD's ostensibly apolitical promise of spiritual rebirth from the materialism of modern life and Western technological prowess allowed it to win support from liberal humanist intellectuals like Zhu Guangqian and foreign nationalists like Rabindranath Tagore.

The centrality of everyday practices in the conservative revolutionary enterprise derived from the GMD's distinct strategy on building social consent. Unlike radical leftwing parties, which typically expected all citizens to actively contribute to the political life of a revolutionary society, the GMD strived to sublimate political demands into aesthetic expressions. This approach was developed during the conservative revolution's relatively stable first decade from 1927 to 1937. While Communists and leftwing activists mobilized students to take part in strikes that disrupted school routines, the GMD, through mass movements like scouting, worked to keep young people mentally and physically occupied with spectacular rituals, glamorous uniform, regular training and the occasional trips across the country or abroad. For GMD cadres, scouting not only served to divert young energy from subversive politics but also redeemed citizens' moral callousness, a failing that was blamed for the Communist clout. The aestheticization of politics was pursued with renewed vigor during the resistance war, when national unity under rightwing Nationalists was portrayed as politically transcendent and endorsed, albeit reluctantly, by rival Communists for the first time until 1927. To shore up the nation's amorphous spiritual force, the wartime state delivered its ideological and military defense priorities to the people by deploying monumental ceremonies, popular entertainments in speech and in text, and a healthy work-leisure pattern. By bringing

individuals into an order of disciplined beauty, the GMD aimed to ameliorate mass alienation from Nationalist society and stem popular support for communism.

The GMD's self-representation as an antidote to a disaffected and demoralized populace gained traction among the intellectual elites in China and abroad. Rather than being recognized as a coalition representing specific class interests, the regime was imagined as an unbiased custodian of spiritual and ethical renewal. Whether it was taming excitable philistines or heralding the revival of a non-materialistic Asian culture, the GMD appeared more as what Gramsci called an ethical or cultural state than as an institution that wielded only coercive power.¹ Zhu Guangqian's contribution to wartime propaganda was underlined by his identification of cultural and moral edification, a task which New Culture liberal intellectuals supposedly led, with the Nationalists' emphasis on cultivating consent for their rule. The overlap between moralizing and political strategizing in the conservative revolution was stretched to its extreme in China's flirtations with nationalist figures in other Asian countries. The Pan-Asianist ideals the GMD brandished in its engagement with Japanese and particularly Indian political elites had geopolitical implications, particularly as regards to the Comintern and the CCP. Yet, at the same time, the regional identity espoused by private individuals like Tan Yunshan and Rabindranath Tagore appeared as apolitical. Pan-Asianism was instead presented as a means to overcoming the spiritual crises of Western modernity and the cold calculation of material interests that pervaded government cabinets and factory boardrooms.

The foregoing chapters are primarily concerned with the state and figures close to the state. They show that the GMD led a social movement that, in its embrace of

¹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 258.

nationhood and denial of class politics had successfully tapped on the fears and aspirations of reformist educators, liberal humanists, and Indian nationalists. What remains to be examined is whether the conservative revolutionary tenets might have been internalized by local societies and remained relevant after the short Nationalist reign in Mainland China. How did figures geographical and intellectually removed from centers of political power and knowledge production understand the supposed threat to China's unique moral essence? What connections did local elites and officials at the height of the Nationalist social experiment in the 1930s and the war of resistance make between drastic social changes in urban China, instability in rural areas, and Communist insurgencies? The GMD, along with the Falange in Spain and the *Estado Novo* in Portugal, was one of the few interwar radical right regimes that survived the supposed defeat of fascism in 1945. The party's strident anti-communism, preoccupation with authority and social hierarchy, and retrieval of a primordial Chinese spiritual essence were given a new lease of life in Taiwan as the United States consolidated its Cold War front in Asia with financial largess and military hardware in the early 1950s. These are questions that deserve further investigation. In the epilogue, I propose several directions that future research on China's conservative revolution can take. First, by examining citizens' petitions received from various parts of China by the national government, I will show how local expressions against communism converged with the state's depiction of a pervasive leftwing threat to the nation's moral and political constitution. Second, I will identify the ways that the GMD's ideological priorities remained relevant after the party-state was defeated by the CCP and forced into exile on the island of Taiwan after 1949.

Vernacular Anti-communism

Even when the GMD's revolutionary hegemony was in full swing, one daunting challenge for party-state propagandists was to translate the party's rejection of communism into a vernacular that would connect with local communities beyond people of national stature like writer Zhu Guangqian or scout organizers Zhang Zhongren and Zhang Xiaoliang. While the concept of anti-communist national revolution was buttressed with elaborately articulated understandings of Marxism, domestic and overseas revolutionary politics, and global capitalism as it related to semi-colonial China, it was also increasingly abused as a loosely defined but sacralized moral symbol.² Labeling communism reactionary was as much about argumentation as demonization of a competing claim to the revolutionary mantle. Communism was portrayed as a moral symptom and a highly personalized experience akin to religious apostasy. Marxist-Leninism, like Mussolini's Fascism, was a dangerous novelty that inflamed (*shandong*) the impressionable masses. Exotic, foreign and alluring, these political imports, like sex, drugs and alcohol, hypnotized (*cuimian*) and anesthetize (*mazui*) young people who mindlessly dabbled in glamorous diversions.³ In repentance letters required of ex-Communists, such as the well-publicized piece penned by writer and translator Yao Pengzi (1891-1969), the cultic appeal of Marxism was attributed to the *ennui* (*kumen*) and self-doubt (*panghuang*) a young idealist experienced under personal and social crises. Participation in the Communist movement was a deeply immersive process,

² Wang Qisheng, *Geming yu fan geming*, 95.

³ "Zhongxuanbu wei jinian wusi yundong gao quanguo qiannian shu" [GMD propaganda department's Letter to the nation's youth on the anniversary of the May Fourth Movement], *Zhongyang ban yuekan* 2, no. 21 (1930): 67-68.

comparable to a religious ascetic (*kuxing zeng*) who opted out altogether from society in order to “lend the self a new life” (*xinsheng ziji*). Referring to Communist-inspired workers insurgencies in cities, Yao derided the party for behaving like a secret society (*mimi jieshe*) that “inspired terror among innocent citizens like a tiger.”⁴ The horror of a murky evil force threatening to destroy social hierarchy and private propriety ran deep informing popular views of Communism in Mainland China until 1949 and in Taiwan through the 1950s and beyond.

Fear that a seedy organization was taking every opportunity to wreck havoc on innocent common people inspired a vernacular anti-communism that tainted radical leftwing politics with the stench of banditry and foreign heresy. If Zhu Guangqian was alarmed that the China’s cultural renewal was sabotaged by an excitable mob under political opportunists’ influence, rural residents anchored their anxieties over disintegrating social order, criminal activities, and declining moral standards squarely on evil communism. Lacking the knowledge of Marxist theories commanded by Dai Jitao or Hu Hanmin, educated citizens in rural areas and smaller cities encountered CCP maneuverings as disruptions to their daily life, challenges to local hierarchies, or simply ruthless malefactors. In a 1931 letter, Li Jiazhao, from Lanshan county, decried that land redistribution as carried out in Communist-controlled Jiangxi province was a recipe for fanning harmful lust among village simpletons. The Japanese-educated high school headmaster, who earlier ran the local militia (*tuanlian*) in 1898 and oversaw his county’s transition to Republican rule as its magistrate in 1912, saw CCP guerilla forces as nothing less than a gang of brigands. “Red bandits” (*hongfei*), Li charged, were recruiting idle

⁴ “Yao Pengzi tuoli Gongdang xuanyan” [Yao Pengzi’s manifesto on his disassociation from the CCP], *Zhongyang ribao*, 14 May 1934, sec. 1, p. 3.

hooligans and local thugs in their ranks and threatening social order. They even managed to infiltrate local pro-GMD militias responsible for “pacification.” Of particular danger was the Communist promise to divide the land and properties the party seized. Insurgents not only occupied possessions from their rightful owners but also “inflamed people’s lust to rob” from each other.⁵

Collapsing hooliganism or banditry with Communist practices rendered not only the political movement, but also leftwing cultural production, morally suspect. In his 1931 petition, Zhang Yuan, a director of the Xikang and Tibet Expedition Society (*Kang Zang buxing tuan*) who also studied in Japan, claimed that he had written to warn Sun Yat-sen of the communist threat as early as 1919, when communism was beginning to gain currency among urban intellectuals. For Zhang, it was obvious that the communist seduction worked as effectively on jobless riff-raff as on these self-indulgent intellectuals. He stated, “Communists bring disaster to society not only by inflicting violence. They have an even more reactionary method in what they call proletarian literature.” Leftwing novelists, tabloid journalists and editors were a privileged corps of “well-fed and well-clothed literary hoaxes hiding in foreign concessions under aliases”. Aside from military extermination, extensive censorship was required to stem the attraction of class warfare to “ignorant workers and peasants and youths left without a future.”⁶ More than sheer criminality, Zhang suggested, communism reflected the

⁵ Li Jiazhao to Chiang Kai-shek, 7 January 1931, Presidential Office Collection, 1/5831, Second Historical Archives.

⁶ Zhang Yuan, “Xiaomie Gongchandang jihuashu” [Proposal for exterminating the Communist Party], 4 March 1931, Presidential Office Collection, 1/5831, Second Historical Archives.

nation's "hollowed social mores" (*renxin fudong*) that the GMD was uniquely placed to redress.

For regional notables like Zhang, the GMD's enemy was a composite of mutually exclusive but equally repugnant qualities drawn from China's diverse socio-economic landscape. Chinese Communists acquired multiple and sometimes contradictory attributes, featuring as rural bandits, urban bohemians and manipulating politicians. Wang Chaolong, from the interior province of Anhui, observed in 1931 that Communists posed the gravest challenge to the republic since Yuan Shikai's (1859-1916) notorious monarchical experiment in 1916. Leftwing activists, the petitioner argued, were no different than warlords, local tyrants and evil gentry who terrorized rural society and bewitched the people. He then plunged into a tirade against the nation's lack of moral direction, which ostensibly gave rise to forces that tore into China's natural social order and hierarchy. Instead of learning about ethical scruples from the Confucian classics, people these days fed on Shanghai tabloids that pandered to sensual excitements and bohemian frivolity. "People," Wang lamented, "knew only about the pleasures in life but neglected the moral teachings of the sages." To Wang, political demands for common ownership of property were tantamount to treacherous heterodoxy plotting to reverse an agrarian society's supposedly natural, asymmetrical relationships between fathers and sons, social superiors and inferiors, the old and the young, the rich and the poor.⁷ The specter of total anarchy inspired a vernacular anti-communism that had no interest in ascertaining whether Marxism was relevant to the China's struggle for national liberation. To landlords and the local gentry, the idea that their social and material capital should be

⁷ Wang Chaolong to Chairman of the GMD Central Executive Committee and Nationalist Government Ministers, 28 October 1931, Executive Yuan Collection, 2/1030, Second Historical Archives.

collectivized was a travesty of Chinese communal life. Rather than dignifying radical peasants and urban leftwing intellectuals with the gravitas of a political movement, Wang and others saw them as social outcasts who should simply be eliminated like criminals.

To be sure, the views presented above did not represent all local community leaders'. The three examples, all drawn from 1931, were after all petitions appealing to the state's benevolent attention. The value of letters and self-published treatises rests not necessarily in their wide representativeness but in that they provide a window to the prejudices and biases that lent grassroots legitimacy to the GMD's conservative revolution. These writings often took the form of hyperbole, exuding not sophisticated argumentation but commonsensical biases that prevailed outside China's political and cultural centers. In addition, what was revealing about accusations directed to the GMD's political opponent was not their veracity but the ways in which incrimination was attached. During and after the resistance war, the communist movement was branded as a traitorous, bloodthirsty army that was no different than the Japanese. Local informants in the heavily contested North China region painted the Red Army as a gang of lustful and greedy monsters, behaving in a manner reminiscent of the recently defeated Japanese invaders. Communists were stealing grains, looting homes, conscripting able-bodied men, and harassing women. In a desperate attempt to legitimize their heinous acts, the CCP in the Hebei county of Yutian even issued their own currency to buy grains from the people.⁸ Given North China's rich experience living under successive warlord and collaborationist regimes in the Republican period, it was not too difficult for the region's

⁸ "Beiping di wu lei hanjian zhaiyouzhi ji fuhangao huiji" [A collection of abstracts of "category five" letters and corresponding replies from Beiping], 1945, President Office Collection, 1/6827, Second Historical Archives.

residents to imagine the Communists as just another group of corrupt, self-serving functionaries.

If Communist advances were threats to life and property, thwarting such wicked schemes was fundamental to effective governance. Jiang Fengshan, a merchant from another county in Hebei province, wrote in 1945 that he was disheartened about the replacement of the local magistrate. Xu Chunlin, the Jiaohe (present-day Botou) county chief, reportedly maintained formidable defense against the Communist-led Eight Route Army. Once Xu was replaced, however, the military balance immediately tipped against the Nationalists. The departing magistrate, Jiang asserted, “didn’t ask for anything from the people. He wished only to root out the threat they were facing.” Another unnamed Jiaohe resident even took the matter up with Chiang Kai-shek. “Your Excellency (*daren*),” the resident referred to the Nationalist leader in the archaic tone of an imperial subject addressing his benevolent patriarch (or, indeed, matriarch), “had come to Beijing to listen what the common folks (*lao baixing*) had to say. For us, seeing Your Excellency was as good as seeing our mother.” Continuing in the same colloquial language, the petition testified that “the old gentlemen (*laorenjia*),” i.e. Xu, “had personally fought and shot down many bandits (*tufei*) and was not greedy.”⁹ In another instance of how anti-communism was enmeshed in local or even personal vendettas, a Central Police College graduate by the name of Tan Jie wrote in November 1947 to seek for Chiang’s “sagely attention” (*shengjian*), another salutation formerly reserved for the Emperor or the Empress dowager. Apparently, the commandant Li Shizhen was so jealous of the petitioner’s fervent hatred for the “Communist bandits” that he was locking Tan up in cell

⁹ Petitions in Support of Xu Chunlin, 1945, Presidential Office Collection, 1/7271, Second Historical Archives.

and threatening reprisal.¹⁰ By directly communicating with the Leader, whom Zhu Guangqian described as the locus of popular will, the accusation against Li implored Chiang to punish his own trusted official so as to reassert his – and the nation’s – determination to quell an existential threat to society.

As the CCP grew bolder in its challenge to the state, petitions pointed to a larger postwar malaise in Chinese society for which the GMD was hardly inculpable. The fear-inspiring “Red” cult was symptomatic of the terminal decay over which the Nationalist state presided, analogous of how religiously-inspired rebellions portended dynastic decline. Teachers at Yuzhang High School in Hunan observed that the failure to rebuild the Confucian moral economy tarnished during the war against Japan was to blame for the prevalence of Red Terror (*chise kongbu*). Defying the Confucian admonishment, outlined in *The Great Learning (Daxue)*, that moral virtue was the basis for the possession of wealth and land, citizens were enthralled by communist heresy and set their desire on ill-gotten wealth by holding strikes and refusing to pay land rent.¹¹ While its enemy exploited the ethical vacuum that afflicted Chinese society, the GMD was not doing enough to inject discipline and propriety into the economy. A petitioner from Beiping, who wrote under a pseudonym for fear of CCP reprisal against his family, lambasted the state for failing to rein in the *laissez faire* economy that was hampering postwar recovery. Wang Yiji charged that merchants were free to import luxury and unnecessary goods, thus depleting the nation’s limited resources and foreign reserves. He

¹⁰ Tan Jie to Chiang Kai-shek, 5 November 1947, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6834, Second Historical Archives.

¹¹ Li Weixin et al. to Wu Dingchang, November 1947, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6707, Second Historical Archives.

echoed the state's goal of crafting a "new life" for the country, arguing that the substance of this social vision lay in ending the extravagant lifestyle enjoyed by a small minority and ensuring inflation did not threaten common people's everyday livelihood.

Demonstrating exceptional awareness of international developments, Wang made the prescient suggestion that China's fight against communism was not only a domestic concern. By aligning firmly with the United States, Nanjing could hold Washington hostage and force the superpower to help raise China's industrial productivity and living standards.¹²

Another recommended strategy on preventing economic hardship from further undermining the government's legitimacy would see shares of the China Textile Development Corporation, formed in late 1945 to take over Japanese-run textile factories in China, transferred to frontline workers. Sent from a silk mill run by the state-owned enterprise in downtown Tianjin, Hu Nianzu's petition made the corporatist argument that giving workers a stake in the nation's industries would ensure private capital (*siren ziben*) not take lead over the country's embattled economy, build harmony between antagonistic classes, and foster working-class support for the GMD state. Instead of privatization, the rumors of which were inspiring fear among workers, Hu wanted the government to turn employees into small shareholders so that they would restrain capitalists' control over the enterprise.¹³ Alluding to the Nationalist commitment to interclass cooperation, Hu's

¹² Wang Yiji to the Nationalist Government, 8 October 1947, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6305, Second Historical Archives.

¹³ Submission by Hu Nianzu, 7 November 1947, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6809, Second Historical Archives.

proposal highlighted the state's lack of positive initiatives in luring people away from the Communist movement.

Indeed, vernacular expressions of anti-communism spared no punches blaming the ruling party for contributing to the socio-political conditions that favored the demonized opposition. Of particular concern were corrupt local officials occupying the lower rungs of the bureaucratic ladder. Tang Yun, a thirty-two-year-old primary school teacher in the Hunan city of Xiangtan, submitted in 1946 that the local bureaucratic infrastructure was in total disarray. There was perhaps something self-serving about Tang's letter, which accompanied his curriculum vitae and a plea to the state to "break rules so that people with real talent could be hired." Yet, the recent GMD and Three People's Principles Youth Corps recruit's indictment of state functionaries remained striking. The Communists were unsurprisingly described as a frenzied lot who would not think twice about slaughtering their compatriots and sacrificing the country to benefit party. But while their opponents were at least fanatical (*sangxin bingkuang*) about their convictions, GMD cadres staffing rural governments, Tang decried, "toadied superiors, abused official power, oppressed villagers and applied exorbitant levies on the people." Their disreputable behaviors served only to negate positive social measures enacted by the state to compete with the CCP, such as Chiang's 1945 rent reduction directive issued days after the two warring parties agreed to convene formal meetings to deliberate on a new constitution.¹⁴ What is alarming about Tang's depiction of bureaucratic greed and

¹⁴ Tang Yun to Chiang Kai-shek, 12 May 1946, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6610, Second Historical Archives. For land reform policies adopted by the rival parties during the immediate postwar period, see Zhu Zongzhen, "Zhanhou Guomindang dui Zhonggong tugaizhengce de huiying" [The GMD's response to postwar Communist land reform policy], in *Hua shidai de lishi zhuanzhe – "1949 nian de Zhongguo" guoji xueshu taolunhui luwenji*, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan Jindai shi yanjiu suo (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2002), 208-234.

harassment was how it rendered his GMD comrades almost complicit in the criminality attributed to their Communist nemesis.

The critical tone adopted by some petitioners indicated a growing sense of impatience among the propertied classes and minor conservative intellectuals who represented the firmest of GMD's social base. These figures, active in local institutions, formed the most fervently anti-communist segment of society. During the U.S.-mediated peace negotiations in 1945 to 1946, they faulted Chiang for conceding too much to the Communists and being too accommodating of the latter's existence.¹⁵ It is precisely because of this staunch anti-communism that one must not interpret criticisms of GMD incompetence as subversive statements. In fact, as my analysis of the 1927 party purification initiative has demonstrated, there was a tradition within the GMD that saw misconduct and corruption within its own ranks and ideological heresy as two sides of a general paralysis inflicting the revolutionary project. As Tang Yun put it, "These days, the party-state institution exists in name only. . . . If our organization is not strengthened, thousands of youths will remain outside the party and the Three People's Principles Youth Corps, giving others an opportunity to lure and coerce them."¹⁶ Submissions like Tang's were vernacular expressions of Dai Jitao's longstanding unease with how bureaucratic inertia and the breakdown of ideological cohesion in his party compared unfavorably with the CCP's organizational rigor.

Like party leaders who tied popular alienation from the state with the lack of spiritual heft in everyday life, GMD loyalists in local society blamed modern urban

¹⁵ Chen Qihui to Chiang Kai-shek, 1 December 1945, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6801, Second Historical Archives.

¹⁶ Tang Yun to Chiang Kai-shek.

customs for weakening the nation's moral fiber. Ruptures in the social fabric appeared not so much as concrete beliefs and ideologies as jarring manners and fashions. A Shanghai resident who hailed from the inland city of Hefei lambasted his compatriots' fascination with European material culture. With the nation facing political instability, foreign intrusions and chronic natural disasters, Li Lie could not stand how his fellow-urbanites were squandering money on Western fads. He suggested in 1936 that schools should prohibit students from growing their hair long and that health authorities and the police should ask hairdressers to throw away tools used for coloring and permanent-waving.¹⁷ As in the days immediately after the 1911 Revolution when the queue was a symbol of subservience to alien rule, flamboyant hairstyles were regarded as signs that modern urban women were too hedonistic to identify with the crisis-prone republic. Body culture remained the most visible indicator of political and social doom. If conflicts between workers, peasants, and owners of capital were affronts to the natural order of things, exposed and intimate bodies were tell-tale evidences of break-down in ritualistic and social propriety. Effeminate boys, scantily-clad girls, erotic films, and even men and women sharing the same swimming pool were as anathema as Communist insurgencies.¹⁸

Buffeted by bizarre fashion, frivolous dialogues, and cinematic carnality, conservative moralists sought solace in choreographed rituals that projected hierarchy and a common belief in Confucianism and Sun Yat-sen's national revolution. Li Weixin and his fellow teachers in Hunan called for the reintroduction of liturgical elements in

¹⁷ Li Lie to Chiang Kai-shek, 10 January 1936, Executive Yuan Collection, 2/1030, Second Historical Archives.

¹⁸ Du Jianlong, *Lunli dagang hebian* [Combined outlines on propriety], 2^d ed. (Wuchang: Hongchang yinshuguan, 1937), 11-12, 20-21.

mandatory monthly assemblies in late 1947. Taking a leaf out of wartime citizen assemblies and the recently abolished Sun Yat-sen memorial assemblies, Li and his colleagues recommended rites that included solemn music, bowing to the national flag, Sun Yat-sen's portrait and a figurine of Confucius, and singing the musicalized version of an oft-cited passage from the *Book of Rites*.¹⁹ Internal critics of bureaucratic incompetence were ardent believers in the conservative revolutionary mantle that building a sustainable political community was ultimately a moral and ethno-cultural project of which the party was the sole vanguard.

Desires for moral rejuvenation, bureaucratic efficiency and a return to the familiar dogmas of a China before the onslaught of modernity thus gave shape to a vernacular construction of communism as radical evil. The appeal of this psychological approach resided in how it allowed those who held power in society to explain away conflicts of interest and ideas by invoking the innate derangement of the Other. Systemic challenges like semicolonialism, uneven economic development, and cultural dislocation brought by modernity were blamed on unseemly individuals – unpatriotic Communists, hedonistic urban youths, unscrupulous capitalists, and corrupt officials. It was this perception of failure in social edification that informed the submission by a county official in Guangdong province suggesting that the astronomical rise of grain price after the war was due to the upper class being overly calculating and lacking moral conscience (*liangxin daode*).²⁰ It is also this obsession with moral cultivation that bound the vernacular anti-communism of local elites with the subtler endorsement on the part of

¹⁹ Li Weixin et al. to Wu Dingchang.

²⁰ Li Hanxin to Chiang Kai-shek, 30 August 1947, Presidential Office Collection, 1/6707, Second Historical Archives.

national figures like Zhu Guangqian for the Nationalist state. For both, leftwing activism was symptomatic of China's frustrated search for social stability and cultural meaning through the Republican period. The moral investment in anti-communism remained a salient motif in Taiwan as the former Japanese colony was refashioned as the base from which Nationalist China would undergo great revival.

Conservative Revolution in Nationalist Taiwan

In 1949, Chiang Kai-shek's GMD was forced to retreat onto Taiwan by the very political force that gave radical conservatism its ideological identity more than twenty years ago. The Communist ascendancy in China, Korea and Southeast Asia aligned the battered Nationalist state with U.S. designs for a global fight against the Soviet bloc. What remained of the conservative revolution, with its well-advertised ambivalence for capitalism, received a sorely needed lease of life by the capitalist "free world" under the Cold War order. Re-establishing itself in Taiwan, which Japan receded to China only four years ago, the GMD brought with it the political culture that emerged out of its two-and-a-half-decade struggle with internal and external enemies that threatened its vision of national independence and a spiritually cohesive community free of class conflicts. A centrally organized national campaign, reliance on mass organizations, and attention to everyday habits and sentiments were rekindled as Chiang vowed to continue the national revolution in exile. Even the GMD's traditional disdain for liberalism, downplayed during the 1940s, received a new boost as the party rushed to re-establish hegemony over a society still reeling from the bloody crackdown on Taiwanese and leftwing dissent in February 1947. The total war on which the GMD spent considerable intellectual and

social resources was extended well into the 1950s with the Soviet Union and its Chinese Communist agents taking Japan's place as Free China's nemeses.

The anti-communist vernacular that enjoyed wide currency in Nationalist China quickly took root in 1950s Taiwan thanks to the state-controlled press. A Manichean worldview dividing innocent people loyal to the GMD from wicked operatives loyal to Beijing or Moscow pervaded state propaganda and the cultural industry on the island. Official and semi-official discourses tapped on charges of promiscuity, thuggery, and dehumanization that made up vernacular anti-communism in the 1930s and particularly the 1940s. Newspapers, novels, popular manuals deployed the same sensationalized language we have seen earlier to depict the Communists as absolute evil. Apparatchiks across the Taiwan Strait allegedly relished in gory torture rituals, sadistic domination of women, or garnered their own sexual appeal to curry favor from male cadres. Much like how citizens were encouraged to identify potential Japanese infiltrators living in their midst during the resistance war, Nationalist authorities demanded that Taiwanese society be on guard against an internal enemy that was constantly lurking beneath everyday normalcy. Fear that the clandestine Communist operation in the new GMD bastion had penetrated schools, national and local assemblies, the military and even the security service compelled neighbors and colleagues to spy on one another. Since even the most exemplary Nationalist citizens could be Communist "bandits" in disguise, one's clothes, words, public comportment, and financial situation must come under scrutiny.²¹ The same *mélange* of sexual licentiousness, inhuman cruelty, and organizational sleekness

²¹ Zeng Xunhui [Tseng Hsun-hui], "Shuxie 'yiji': wuling niandai baise kongbu shiqi 'feidie' zhi xiangzheng fenxi" [Writing the "Other": the construction of "bandit spies" under White Terror in the 1950s], *Danjiang renwen shehui xuekan*, no. 5 (2000): 135-147.

formed the omnipresent Communist threat to a state that confronted not only a rising military power in Beijing but also a wary exile community from Mainland China and disaffected local population in Taiwan.

The combination of suspicious locals and restless refugees whom the GMD found itself governing nervously from the grand compounds that Japanese colonizers left behind in Taipei conjured *déjà-vu* of the re-established Nationalist state in Chongqing just a decade ago. Focus was put on shoring up popular enthusiasm for a life-and-death conflict with an external enemy that hinged not only on military might but also cultural consciousness and lifestyle. It was unsurprising, therefore, that the most important campaign that the GMD launched in the 1950s should echo the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement. On February 1, 1952, Chiang Kai-shek inaugurated the Anti-Communism and Resist Russia Mobilization Movement (*Fan 'gong kang E zong dongyuan yundong*). The movement followed on the heels of the GMD's reorganization plan launched in 1950 that streamlined the leadership, eliminated factional struggles, and integrated the party hierarchy with state institutions and mass organizations.²² In a pronouncement that would not have been out of place in 1940s China, Chiang demanded that military, economic and political reforms be broadened into a program that aimed for an overhaul of socio-cultural life. Punning on the character *dong*, cadres were reminded that mobilization (*dongyuan*) must not only be an imposition by state and party institutions but also spontaneous actions (*dong*) individuals took to reshape everyday life. Only by transforming social mores could revolutionary cadres hope to rally the masses

²² Yun-han Chu and Jih-wen Lin, "Political Development in 20th Century Taiwan: State-building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity," *Taiwan in Twentieth Century: A Retrospective View*, eds. Richard Edmonds and Steven Goldstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 113-114.

behind in defeating Communism. If a party “could not even mobilize a few hundreds or a thousand people a day,” Chiang asked, “it is no wonder that others do not see us as a nation-state, let alone a modern one.”²³ The GMD must come to the realization that even with U.S. backing, its tenuous claim to China’s national revolution rested on its ability to shape popular aspirations and tap into Taiwan’s mass society on which it harbored deep distrust.

Just as former Lixingshe affiliate Ru Chunpu had anticipated, total war mobilization became the norm as the Nationalists presided over a permanent state of emergency under the anti-Communist, anti-Soviet banner. Civil liberties enshrined in the 1947 Constitution give way to repressive “temporary articles” (*linshi tiaokuan*) that lasted forty-three years, during which the President enjoyed increasing power.²⁴ Yet, there was more to the extended total war order than the suspension of constitutional rights. Everyday culture and social relationships came to be shaped by actual and imaginary existential threats, by Communist armed forces from across the Taiwan Strait and an even murkier communist threat at home. In this sense, the so-called Cold War in China, and indeed much of Asia, was a continuation of the Second World War in its violence, militarization and the long shadow grand strategic designs cast on quotidian

²³ Chiang Kai-shek, “Dui tuixing fangong kang E zong dongyuan yundong de tishi” [Reminders on the implementation of the Anti-Communism and Resist Russia Mobilization Movement], *Xian zongtong Jiang gong sixiang yanlun zongji*, <http://www.chungcheng.org.tw/thought/class06/0029/0002.htm> (accessed 3 May 2012); *idem*, “Sishi niandu xingzheng gongzuo de jiangping ji sishiyi niandu shizheng zhongxin de zhishi” [Commentary on the work of the government in 1951 and instructions on core policy implementation in 1952], *Xian zongtong Jiang gong sixiang yanlun zongji*, <http://www.chungcheng.org.tw/thought/class06/0028/0034.htm> (accessed 3 May 2012).

²⁴ Chu and Lin, “Political Development in 20th Century Taiwan,” 114.

life.²⁵ The new total mobilization campaign aspired to the same energetic readiness to heed government demands on citizens' part facilitated by the layered fusion of the reinvigorated national revolution and everyday life. Hygienic practices and military training in schools gained renewed currency along with a robustly enforced household registration system to ensure the strength and political reliability of the state's "human resources" (*renli*).²⁶

The corporatist imagination extended to the social landscape. Citizens were pigeonholed into mass organizations based on occupation, age and gender, ensuring that the working class did not develop its autonomous political agency. Peasants, fishermen, salt harvesters and miners – constituents from which the GMD had long been alienated – were singled out particularly for government largess as long as they worked cooperatively with capital. Students joined the China Anti-Communist Youth Corps (*Zhongguo qingnian fan'gong jiuguo tuan*), which subsumed other rightwing organizations as one unified youth movement headed by Chiang Kai-shek's son Ching-kuo. Hailed as the vanguard of their epoch, young people were challenged to relive moments of revolutionary triumph, particularly the Northern Expedition and the war of resistance against Japan, and herald the GMD's glorious return to power in Mainland China. They were to learn revolutionary discipline, submit themselves to productive labor, and anticipate a reign of cooperation and service. As in scouting, a propensity to

²⁵ As anthropologist Heonik Kwon reminds us, the picture of a largely peaceful competition between capitalist and state socialist ways of life presented in many cultural histories of the Cold War pay inadequate attention to how the spread of symbolic regimes such as American-style consumerism in Asia was accompanied by concrete state violence and anti-Communist militancy [*The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 148-149].

²⁶ Chiang Kai-shek, "Sishi niandu xingzheng gongzuo de jiangping ji sishiyi niandu shizheng zhongxin de zhishi."

battle (*zhandou xing*) was not professionalism confined to the military but part and parcel of cultural remaking to detoxify society from the human lust, material desires, and class animosity unleashed by communism.²⁷ The anti-Communist and anti-Soviet movement was genuinely total in two senses: first, it aspired to transformation in society's military, political, economic and cultural constitution; second, under the leadership of GMD revolutionary cadres, the entire populace was to *live* the revolution, whether it meant joining a sanctioned union or women's association, informing against a neighbor, or submitting individual freedom to collective dictates.

The movement's multimedia presence ensured that the resurrected conservative revolution make an impact on national psyche, connecting with consumers of both high culture and more popular varieties. Rituals carried over from Chongqing, such as monthly ceremonies of lectures, meetings and pledges, encouraged a scripted form of grassroots political expression in factories, schools and rural communities. Another state-sponsored mode of cultural production, one that combined propaganda and entertainment, included film, literature and art. Examples of this aesthetic paradigm in popular music provided contrast and variety to the liturgy and catechism at mobilization monthly assemblies (*dongyuan yuehui*). Mass-circulating songs like "Mao the Mongrel Put People in Jeopardy" (*Mao zazhong hairen zhen buqing*) and "The Communist Party Has No Conscience" (*Gongchandang wu tianliang*) tapped on vernacular anti-communist discourse in their graphic and brash language. Mao "treated young people like cannon

²⁷ Chiang Kai-shek, "Sishi niandu xingzheng gongzuo de jiangping ji sishiyi niandu shizheng zhongxin de zhishi"; *idem*, "Zhongguo qingnian fan'gong jiuguo tuan chengli dahui jiangci" [Speech at the inauguration ceremony of the China Anti-Communist Youth Corps], *Xian zongtong Jiang gong sixiang yanlun zongji*, <http://www.chungcheng.org.tw/thought/class06/0029/0017.htm> (accessed 15 May 2012); *Fan'gong Kang E zong dongyuan yundong gangling* [Guiding principles of the Anti-Communist and Resist Russia Mobilization Movement], in *Zhongguo minguo zhengzhi fazhan shi*, ed. Qin Xiaoyi et al. (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo chubanshe, 1985), 4:1640-1642.

fodder” and his military adventurism “left corpses piling up like a mountain.”²⁸ Others capitalized on the emotional distress of Mainland émigrés wrenched from their homeland. Taking the form of a folk ballad, “Selling Dumplings” (*Mai jiaozi*) told the sentimental encounter between a seventeen-year-old girl making ends meet by selling the iconic northern Chinese staple and a customer who also hailed from Manchuria. In stylized northeastern Mandarin dialect, the dumpling seller told her compatriot that she missed her class struggle-ravaged hometown. The poignant sentimentality of two exiles stranded on an unfamiliar subtropical island then gave way abruptly to combative hatred:

FEMALE SINGER. When will Communist bandits in my hometown all die out
so that we can return to Manchuria (*Dongbei*) and spend a peaceful spring
festival?

MALE SINGER. Be patient, young girl!

TOGETHER. Let’s come together, re-conquer the Mainland, and return home in
triumph!²⁹

Appeal to northerners’ homesickness was balanced by the trumpeting of ambivalent enthusiasm for the new, albeit temporary, Nationalist base. “The Great Alishan” (*Weiwei Alishan*) called upon loyal Nationalists to regroup on the Pacific Ocean-facing Taiwanese mountain range and look forward to the day when they would cross over the ranges in southern China, reoccupy the Yangzi in triumph, and camp around the Yellow River.³⁰ Still others allude directly to the historical precedent of anti-Communist total mobilization. Chen Lifu’s lyrics for “Spiritual Mobilization” (*Jingshen dongyuan*) hailed the supremacy of the state and the nation, called for the prioritization of

²⁸ Li Liquan and Cheng Qiheng, *Fan’gong kang E gequ yibai shou* [A hundred anti-Communist and resist Russia songs], 2^d ed. (Taichung: Taiwan sheng xinwen chu, 1953), 24, 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

the military, and pressed for the concentration of will and power.³¹ Finally, there are songs that exhibited the familiar tendency to imbue violence with pleasure. In “Recapture the Mainland Rhapsody” (*Fan’gong dalu kuangwu qu*), excitement flowed from vows like “Charge, good men!”, “Capture Mao Zedong live!” and “Work with the armed forces, defeat Stalin, and target your artillery at Moscow!”³² Like drama performances, movie screenings, and mass gatherings aimed at mobilizing the populace against Japan a decade ago, the diverse tropes and registers employed by anti-Communist songs attested to a total war paradigm catering to a GMD loyalist community with diverse linguistic backgrounds, an ambivalent relationship with its adopted society, and a deep nostalgia for a land where many would never return.

Mobilization of popular culture and political will was but one dimension of the conservative revolution’s re-launch. In *Basic Treatise on Anti-Communism and Resistance against Russia* (*Fan’gong kang E jiben lun*), Chiang’s theoretical recalibration of the national revolution, the Leader rehashed the same themes that characterized an earlier radical conservative movement borne out of fear over internationalist class struggle and disdain for liberal capitalism. He reiterated Chen Lifu’s vitalism in refuting historical materialism, postulating that all matters were constellations of dynamic elements. Since humans were not static material beings, a valid intervention into historical evolution must be a holistic project based on the *minsheng* principle that did not privilege material needs and class-based economic struggles over spiritual rebirth of the entire nation. Despite joining the U.S.-led capitalist camp, Chiang remained

³¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

³² *Ibid.*, 20.

uncomfortable with American economic and political ideals. In the West, democracy empowered the people at the expense of governments. In a country faced with grave foreign threats like China, democracy must empower the people and the state alike. One area in which the state's command manifested itself was in its commitment to guided capitalism. The GMD vowed to resume a modernization program that curbed monopoly capital (*longduan ziben*) in favor of state-owned enterprises, redistributed land ownership to tillers, and developed consumers' cooperatives to eliminate predatory mercantile interests. Finally, the world-historical significance of China's conservative revolution was reaffirmed. The GMD's Pan-Asianist credentials were again brandished even as the party's cooperation with former Euro-American colonizers was presented as contributions to collective security and world peace. Identifying the Soviet Union as the latest installment of the Czarist empire trampling over China's independence and freedom, Chiang presented his subordination under the Western capitalist camp as a strategy to recover China's and Asia's political subjectivity from Communist imperialism.³³ With not a shed of irony, the nationalist goals envisioned as responses to the semi-colonization of China were now underwritten by the country's submission to the American imperium.

The convergence of strident nationalism and the American informal empire was indeed the paradox of the Nationalist project. In many ways, the new Communist regime in China continued the society-building programs began by the GMD. Intolerance for ideological dissent and stress on unity under the state, hallmarks of total war

³³ Chiang Kai-shek, *Fan'gong kang E jiben lun* (Taipei: Zhongyang wenwu gongyingshe, 1955; Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuan hui dangshi wenyuan hui, 1984), 54, 59-70 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

mobilization, became ingrained in political life under the new Communist order. Building a modern economy, capitalist or otherwise, remained a priority.³⁴ Yet, the Chinese Communists were steadfastly insistent on national independence; their ideological and economic reliance on the Soviet Union even in the early years of the People's Republic was fleeting and modest compared to the GMD's fealty to the U.S.³⁵ The brutal irony of the conservative revolution was that its state capitalist development vision was carried out under powerful American advisers stationed at almost every branch of Nationalist government and industry. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower's military Keynesianism conspired with Chiang's state capitalist impulse to create a state-led economy that thwarted the spread of Communism on one hand and departed from the U.S. obsession with free enterprise on the other.³⁶ The price the Nationalists had to pay for economic stability and regime survival was the very *raison d'être* of China's national revolution – the search for China's political and economic subjectivity distinct from the capitalist West. Inasmuch as nationalism was one core appeal of radical conservatism, the revolution was aborted on Taiwan as the Nationalist regime survived and thrived on the fortified island.

³⁴ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3^d ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 30; Recent research on the years immediately after 1949, which focuses mainly on urban society during the New Democracy phrase, reveals continuities between the Republican and Communist periods. See, in particular, Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz, eds., *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

³⁵ Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 112-113, 120.

³⁶ Nick Cullather, "Fuel for the Good Dragon": The United States and Industrial Policy in Taiwan, 1950-1965," in *Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World since 1945*, eds. Peter Hahn and Mary Ann Heiss (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 246-250; Christopher Howe, "Taiwan in the 20th Century: Model or Victim? Development Problems in a Small Asian Economy," in *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century*, 49-50.

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