

Analysis of the Establishment and Closure of the Ta Teh Institute in British Hong Kong during the Chinese Civil War

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Abstract:

The Ta Teh Institute was a prominent and important higher learning institute that existed in Hong Kong during the period of the Chinese Civil War, after the Second World War. The institute was founded in October, 1946 and then forcefully banned by the Hong Kong Government in February, 1949. The institute was actually administered and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. This paper aims to elucidate under what circumstances was the Ta Teh Institute established and closed. From a historical epistemological perspective, it is necessary to understand existing conditions through the lens of relevant past events. Thus, in this context, the reconstruction of epistemological history is applied to describe the actual situation. Although true and causally explained history can never be completely known, it can frequently be reasonably understood. Through performing a historical analysis, the results achieve a deeper understanding of the establishment and closure of the Ta Teh Institute during the Chinese Civil War.

Key Words: Geo-politics, Communism, Education policy

INTRODUCTION

The Ta Teh Institute was a famous higher learning institution that existed for a very brief period during the Chinese Civil War, after the Second World War. During this critical period, unlike the Ta Teh Institute, many other famous schools or universities were merely imperial institutes belonging to British Hong Kong. At the time, its establishment and closure did not attract intense attention; however, these occurrences are critical in that they happened during key stages in the development of Hong Kong. The Ta Teh Institute was established at Tuen Mun and was maintained for slightly more than two years. This paper aims to clarify exactly under what conditions was the institute opened and closed. It is well known from general historical records that the institute was adequately democratic, and that the British Hong Kong government frequently suppressed academic freedom. However, more evidence was required to elaborate on this issue to achieve an in-depth understanding. During its short period of operation, i.e., less than two and a half years, it experienced the close and often difficult-to-understand relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China.

1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL'S FOUNDING

The period of the Ta Teh Institute's existence in Hong Kong generally refers to the first day that the school declared itself to be founded, on 10 October, 1946, and the last day as when it received the Hong Kong government's notice of cancelling registration on 23 February, 1949. The corresponding historical period was the earlier stage of the Chinese Civil War. When the Chinese Communist Party transformed from being an attacked and defeated group into a stable and dominant group at the reversal stage of the Civil War, the Ta Teh Institute had to face being banned. Thus, when the Ta Teh Institute is considered in the context of Hong Kong and the Civil War, it is critical to examine it within the existing geo-political and international situation. To the best of my knowledge, this essential perspective has not yet been elucidated. Thus, this study is necessary to achieve an accurate reinterpretation and understanding of the opening and closing of the Ta Teh Institute within the powerful forces of existing environmental and surrounding circumstances.

When Japan invaded China, it provided the Chinese Community Party with the opportunity to survive and stop being attacked by the Nationalists. During this period, the Communists' Liberation Army grew to 1.2 million troops. After the Second World War, the Liberated Zone contained 19 base areas and included many important towns and cities. In addition, they obtained captured Japanese weapons and a substantial amount of supplies from the Soviet Union. Actually, the Nationalist Party was able to strengthen itself through centralizing its power and leading the war against the Japanese invasion. In fact, the Nationalists obtained its highest-ever level of domination of China at this time. In addition, the internal conflicts within the Nationalists were severe before this time. In this sense, the war also strengthened the Nationalist Party by reducing internal struggles by necessitating cooperation to defeat a single

enemy, i.e., the Japanese. On the other hand, the Chinese Communist Party also benefitted greatly from the Japanese invasion; it enabled it to survive during this difficult and dangerous period. After the war, however, the hegemony of the Nationalist Party seemed well established, with an army of 4.5 million soldiers. However, under Chiang Kai-shek's leadership, the Nationalist government had many troubles. For example, revolts occurred and were frequently difficult to put down. There were also powerful groups that adamantly opposed the Nationalist government, but did not dare to openly oppose it. Some of these groups resisted the government in secret and looked for opportunities for resistance.

From March, 1946 to March, 1947, the Nationalists and Communists negotiated and fought with each other simultaneously. They expanded their armed struggles in Northeast, Central, and Northern China. The armed conflict actually began in July, 1946; around that time, many people who were Communists or sympathetic to the Communists fled to the South. Hong Kong was frequently the first-choice option for these people. Specifically, they believed that they would be protected by the British Hong Kong government, which would maintain the rule of law and guarantee a stable social order by preventing violence. Even though Hong Kong was not absolutely safe, it was much safer than residing in locations, such as Canton, Nanjing, and Shanghai. Thus, some Communists and their sympathizers successfully escaped from the Nationalists and fled to Hong Kong. The Communist troops were obviously inferior to the Nationalist military, and suffered major setbacks from March to September, 1947. During these months, the Nationalist army attacked and occupied many of the cities previously firmly held by the Communist Party. In particular, the Nationalists achieved an important symbolic victory by seizing the Chinese Communist Party's capital of Yanan in March, 1947. From September 1947 to September 1948, the Liberation Army started to counter-attack. They isolated the Nationalist Party troops to several cities in the Northeast of China. The military superiority between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party gradually reversed. In the autumn of 1948, the Communist Party was obviously dominant. Many northern cities had been liberated and stabilized by the Communist Party. As it established strong footholds, some people staying in Hong Kong prepared to travel northward. The Communist Party military offensive began crossing the Yangtze River in April, 1949. Hereafter, the Communist Party's nation-building plan started in earnest. To a certain degree, many famous Democrats and non-Communists were encouraged to go to the north to participate in state-building from October, 1948 to October, 1949. Many of these people were future staff and students of the Ta Teh Institute. Some of them had left Hong Kong and their leaving should not base on the reason of the institute being closed.

The Communists and Communism were not very prominent in the prewar world. Except for the Soviet Union, substantial numbers of communists only existed in a few small locations in China; moreover, the Communist Party generally existed in an adverse environment. Communist activities in other countries were understandably prohibited by capitalist societies. The other prevailing political prewar trends were Japanese Militarism, German Fascism, and

Italian Nazism; all of these ideologies vigorously opposed communism. The extent of the suppression of communists in China was far more severe and violent than in the capitalist world. However, these three powers faded, failed, and then disappeared simultaneously after the Second World War.

The end of the Second World War made it possible for communism to search for support. It provided opportunities for many communist parties to form and organize all over the world. The Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party were the exceptions, in that they formed and organized prior to this time. Britain, the United States of America, and France utilized their capitalist system effectively to confront these communist policies. Hong Kong was one of CCP's corresponding points before the Second World War, however it acted against CCP faster than anywhere else. Interestingly, the British originally supported the Communist Party in order to suppress the Nationalist Party's development in Hong Kong. However, this strategy reversed quickly because the Chinese Communist Party continued to expand its power over the Chinese territories. Britain soon implemented policies that were openly hostile to the Chinese Communist Party. Such policies led the Ta Teh Institute to become the first academic institution to be overtly suppressed by the British Hong Kong government. I believe that the only way to achieve an accurate understanding of the establishment and closure of the Ta Teh Institute is to place it within the context of the abovementioned historical conditions.

2. HISTORICAL METHOD

From an epistemological perspective, it is necessary to attempt to understand the issue in terms of "history at the present". Fortunately, historical information is generally continuously and increasingly augmented, and the evolution of conceptual thinking is gradually achieved. These factors are quite beneficial for attaining an accurate re-constructivist understanding of historical events. It is only possible to precisely comprehend a given moment in history through the lens of its historical environment. In this way, by placing oneself in the situation at that time, it is possible to experience the reality of that moment in time. Thus, this study aims to achieve an epistemological reconstruction to more clearly describe why the Ta Teh Institute was established and closed. However, it is also important to note that no historical research method is guaranteed to make the truth known completely. We can merely make reasonable explanations about an issue and reject any untrue judgments.

3. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND CLOSURE OF THE TA TEH INSTITUTE

Zhou Yi asserted that the Ta Teh Institute was a university co-established by the Chinese Communist Party and the democrats (Zhou 2002, p.15). The perception was also expressed in Ta Teh Institute alumni publications. The aim of establishing the institute was based on the failures of past educational systems (Ta Teh Institute 1947, p.6). Thus, under this explanation, the educational policy of the Ta Teh Institute should have the following main foci:

1. generalized patriotic education;
2. peaceful democratic education;
3. progressive science education;
4. humanitarian freedom education;
5. collective mutually-aided education (Ta Teh Institute 1947, p.6).

It was reported that the institute should have the primary practical purpose of providing an environment of active learning, academic freedom, and independent living (Ta Teh Institute 1947, p.6). Furthermore, the formation of the institute was a direct reaction to perceived major deficiencies in the educational system; it was commonly believed that innumerable youth were unable to attend school, wasted their valuable time, and that this constituted a catastrophic invisible loss to the country. Thus, the creation of the institute symbolized the desire to give the youth a place to learn and become more responsible in order to serve the larger society (Ta Teh Institute 1947, p.6). At that time, there were many laws that constrained youth studying in China. When they returned to China to continue their studies, they would frequently be rejected because their credentials were judged to be insufficient. So, the Ta Teh Institute of Hong Kong provided a convenient place for these overseas Chinese youth to study. Moreover, the institute tried to supply overseas Chinese with applied knowledge and make it useful and applicable for them. Of course, in reality, such stated aims were sometimes contradictory and not completely achieved. The Ta Teh Institute was founded during a turbulent and complex time in the history of the region, and historical evidence indicates that the Communist Party had practically absolute control over the institute.

Two papers have confirmed this reality¹. In the summer of 1946, the Nationalist Party launched a comprehensive attack against the communist liberated zones. At the same time, in order to strike the pro-communist patriotic democratic movement, many brutally violent repressions occurred in their ruled areas. Under this “White Terror”, many labelled patriotic and progressive people who lived in the areas ruled by the Nationalist Party fled to Hong Kong. Among these patriotic and progressive people, there were many famous political theorists, scholars, professors, and expert and experienced teachers. Their teaching qualities were so good that the institute was an ideal place for them to fully develop and express their potential (Liang 1996, pp.77-8). When Zhou Enlai met Liao Chengzhi and Lian Guan (the head of the United Front Work, the Guangdong’s District of the Chinese Community Party) at Meiyuan in Nanjing, he indicated that the Nationalist Party would attack liberated areas and implement suppressive governance. This caused the civil war to become more contentious. In order to survive or live in relative freedom, some people, including many democratic, patriotic, cultural, and educational people, had to move to Hong Kong. The party was expected to assist in the transfer

¹ These two papers were Liang Mu’s “New type higher institute with clear era’s characteristics: historical function of Ta The Institute and its characteristics”, written in July 1996 and Xie Yifeng’s “Democratic maintained school initiative: Notes of managers, teachers and students joint conference and institute affairs committee”, written in October 1986. Details see references.

and arrange jobs for them; this was the task of the United Front of the Communists. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party dictated the Ta Teh Institute to be established through the cooperation of democratic parties, democratic and patriotic people, as well as the South China Branch of the Chinese Communist Party. In fact, the institute was prepared and created in a very short period of time. This process was described in the paper, "Democratic Maintained School Initiative: Notes of Manages, Teachers and Students Joint Conference and Institute Affairs Committee" by Xie Yifeng in 1986 (Xie 1986, in Dede xueyuan xiaoyouhui 1996, p.91-105). In the early summer, all the colleagues decided to advocate education and promote culture in Hong Kong. After seeking the opinions of many people, they decided to establish the institute in Hong Kong in July, 1946. Finally, they decided to choose Hong Kong as the location for the institute because of the convenient transportation of Hong Kong, and it was the most suitable place for communicating with domestic and international cultures (Xie in De de xue yuan xiao you hui 1996, p.91-105). After the Second World War, many famous intellectuals of various fields--- film, culture, and journalism arrived in Hong Kong from the mainland. The setting up of the Ta Teh Institute not only offered job opportunities for these intellectuals, but also helped to train distinguished young people for the New China. The Ta Teh Institute was a full-time arts college established by the Communist Party Committee of the Guangdong Area and the patriots dwelling in Hong Kong during the Chinese Civil War. The Communist Party and these patriots viewed the institute as a vital and central part of building a new communist nation.

Actually, in the first half of 1945, Dong Biwu, as a representative member of the Republic of China delegation (a Politburo member of the Chinese Communist Party and the Secretary of the Central Southern Branch), took part in discussing and signing the United Nations' Charter in San Francisco. He also requested that Chen Qiyuan² travel to Hong Kong to help found and run the institute¹³ (Jiang 2011, p.225). In the summer of 1946, Zhou En-lai³ also provided Liao Chengzhi and Lian Guan with some suggestions about running an educational institute in Hong Kong. Fang Fang, the leader of South China region of the Chinese Communist Party, convened a meeting to discuss the school's policies and party work issues. He and Lian Guan made important speeches at that time. They emphasized the critical significance of successfully running the Ta Teh Institute. They requested all of the party members to cooperate closely with democrats and patriotic people in the establishment of the institute. They were encouraged to support the Dean, Chen Qiyuan, to manage the institute, as well. The Communist Party student members should focus on attaining solidarity of all classmates and put effort into completing all of their academic tasks. The Communist Party members of the Institute were asked to become models of both learning and solidarity (Dade suiyue bianweihui 2004, p.61).

² Chen Qiyuan lived in the United States and was the former Guangdong National University President.

³ Zhou Enlai was a member of Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, Secretariat Secretary, and Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission.

The Ta Teh Institute was situated in the Tuen Mun district. Specifically, it was located in the Longjiang Villa, borrowed from Tsai Ting-kai. The famous anti-Japanese General, Li Ji-shen, served as the chairman of the institute's board. Chen Qiyuan assumed the role of the dean of the institute. The Ta Teh Institute opened on 10 October, 1946; the accuracy of this date is clear from commemorative publications. Actually, there were two prominent reasons to run the institute. First of all, they wanted to help to settle all of the progressive people who were forced by the Nationalists to be transferred by the Communists to Hong Kong (Liang 1996, p.77). Secondly, it could cultivate revolutionary cadres and nurture communist talents (Liang 1996, p.77). At that time, Hong Kong was judged to be the most suitable place to run the institute because it possessed a uniquely favorable political environment and geographical conditions (Liang 1996, p.78).

Wu Yisan's criticism was overt. Although Zhou Enlai and Dong Biwu planned to establish an organization called "the higher institute", they used the Ta Teh Institute to train the Chinese Communist Party's cadres and secret special agents. It could be said that when Chen Qiyuan returned to Hong Kong, Wan Linping, the Party Secretary of the Guangdong Province of the Chinese Communist Party, and Lian Guan conspired with He Xiangni, Li Zhishen, Tsai Tingkai, Qiu Zhe, Zhu Wenshan, and Xu Huasheng to establish the institute. In fact, they specifically appointed Wang Huanqiu, a Communist Party member, to "help" Chen Qiyuan to conduct the institute. They also appointed Zhen Shen, another Communist Party member, to be the contact person between the Guangdong District of the Chinese Communist Party and Chen Qiyuan. At that time, Fangfang expressed support for these arrangements. He was determined to make the institute into a stronghold of different democratic movements (Wu, 2006). Actually, the Nationalist government was far from achieving democracy at that time.

In addition, Zhang Hanfu, the Vice Secretary of the Hong Kong Branch of the Chinese Communist Party, Xiao Zhengfeng, the District Member of the Guangdong Province and Xia Khan, the Secretary of the Hong Kong Branch of the Chinese Communist Party, also took part in the founding of the institute. It could be observed that the Communist Party used the Ta Teh Institute as a base to seize political power. They were also utilizing Hong Kong to serve as a base of subversion against "the Central Government", referring here to the Nationalist Government under the rule of Chiang Kai-shek. This term has a quite different meaning currently.

The school's campus was originally a private residence. The school building was originally the Longjiang Villa, belonging to the former Army General, Cǎi Tíngkǎi. It had been lent to the Guangdong National University as a temporary school building before the Second World War. The school building was a grey two-story western-style building. The ground floor had an office, a study room, and a medical room. The second floor contained the principal's office, halls, and classrooms. There was a hillside behind the school building. It faced Castle Peak Bay. Grasslands and arbors could be seen in the garden. According to a 2003 Legislative Council document, the main building is the only part of the original school building that currently exists.

This school building is called the Morrison Building at present. It was designated as one of Hong Kong's official monuments in 2004.

In a chapter of a school publication, entitled "The Establishing Procedure and the Current Situation of our Institute", published in the spring of 1947, "Ta Teh" was chosen as the name of the institute because it is from an old saying, "Wisdom, Benevolence and Courage" (Ta Teh Institute 1947, p.52). This expression came from a chapter of "The Book of Rites", stating that "wisdom, benevolence and courage are virtues shared by all." This saying is generally acceptable and could be popular in an era of any prevailing morality. It should be noted that there was another Ta Teh Hall⁴ located at Pingshan of Yuen Long; this was another Ta Teh School (in this case, a primary school)⁵. When the Ta Teh Institute started to operate, there was a boys' dormitory building located at Fu Tei near the primary school, as well. Thus, the title "Ta Teh" was not only used by the Ta Teh institute of interest.

With the permission of the Hong Kong Education Department, the Ta Teh Institute started its operation on 10 October, 1946, until it was banned on 23 February, 1949. During the time that it was open, the institute had an impeccable teaching staff and developed approximately 800 promising young people for the nation's service.

Because of the Civil War between the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party, mainland scholars gathered in Hong Kong. Most of them came to the Ta Teh Institute to teach and deliver speeches. Many famous experts and scholars served as professors. They included Deng Chumin, Shen Zhiyuan, Wang Yaomin, Zhan Bozai, Hou Wailu, Du Guoyang, Qian Jiaqu, Mei Guanbin, Xu Dixin, Ceng Zhaolun, Zhong JingWen, Wu Yin, etc. They also included famous social activists, such as Zhang Bokun, He Xiangni, and Qiao Guanhua. Moreover, scholars, such as Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Xia Qian, Cao Yu, Zhou Erfu, and Feng Laichao also came to the institute to give lectures. Even Chen Junbao⁶, who had helped to save many books of the Hong Kong University's library during the Japanese occupation, also came to the institute to deliver a speech.

The descriptions of the Ta Teh Institute were not clear. Our explanation is generally similar to the information recorded about the Hong Kong Ta Teh Institute in the Wikipedia website, which was written in Chinese only. The following are translated and corrected from Chinese materials only.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Sept 1946 | The Board of the Ta Teh Institute was established. Li Jishen served as the director of the board. |
| 10 Oct 1946 | The establishment of the Ta Teh Institute was announced. Formal classes |

⁴ Ta Teh Hall was located at Ping Shan of the Yuen Long District in Hong Kong. It existed for 150 years and should be an office for managing market and public affairs office in a traditional Chinese society.

⁵ The school was founded in 1931 and was open until 1961. It was a school for students living at or near the Ping Shan area.

⁶ Chen Junbao was a cryptocommunist member. He disclosed his status by his published his daily.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | began on 20 October, 1946. |
| Dec 1946 | When the inspection officer visited the institute, he “discovered almost all the books in library were related to communism.” Many pro-Communist articles and posters could be seen on the walls. |
| Nov 1947 | The Education Department’s Report pointed out that, after the inspection officers had inspected the institute many times, very few signs of political activities were present during the last six months, although their political course might have some bias. So, the Education Department issued a qualified license to the Ta Teh Institute. The Institute also became one of the formally registered higher institutes in Hong Kong. |
| 7 Sept 1948 | A policeman intercepted a man. Some communist leaflets were seized from him that were related to the Ta Teh Institute. |
| 22 Dec 1948 | This day was the first reading of “The Education Ordinance 1913 (Amendment)” at Hong Kong’s Legislative Council. The ordinance provided the Director of Education Department with the power to reject or cancel any registration of schools, managers, or teachers to carry out any political education. This ordinance was used as the legislative preparation for the later banning of the Ta Teh Institute. |
| 28 Dec 1948 | The Hong Kong Executive Council passed Section 2 of the Education Ordinance (Amendment) as a formal ordinance. The Government immediately sent a letter to the Dean of the Ta Teh Institute to ask for reasonable explanations. Otherwise, it threatened that its registered qualification would be cancelled. |
| 20 Jan 1949 | The Hong Kong governor, Sir Alexander Grantham, issued a letter to request that the Ta Teh Institute’s Dean should provide reasonable explanations. Grantham, in conjunction with the Executive Council of Hong Kong, ordered cancellation of the qualification of registration of the Ta Teh Institute. |
| 22 Feb 1949 | |
| 23 Feb 1949 | The Information Services Department announced that, according to the governor’s command, the Education Department cancelled the registered qualification of the Ta Teh Institute because the governor believed that he had adequate evidence to prove that the institute used its school to achieve a political purpose, and that such a purpose violated the interests of public security of Hong Kong and other locations. |

During the Sino-Japanese War, the cooperation between the British in Hong Kong and the Chinese Communist Party was extremely close. And this change was supposed to be after the Xi’an Incident, whereas the Nationalist was forced to cooperate with the Chinese Communist Party. The most important contributing factor to this cooperation was the Second United Front between the Nationalist Party and the Communist party at the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War. The Eighth Route Army of the Chinese Communist Party set up a contact point in Hong Kong in January, 1938, and the Communist Party members are allowed to conduct public activities in Hong Kong. The Nationalist Party’s members, especially those who were pro-revolutionary and democratic, frequently took part in activities in Hong Kong until the Japanese troops invaded Hong Kong. Compared with the Nationalist Party, the Chinese Communist Party had relative superiority in underground resistance work when the Japanese invaded Hong Kong. The Communist Party had acted frequently in Hong Kong in order to obtain support from all parties and communities at that time. They also helped many people, including Nationalist Party officials, cultural elites, and British officials to flee from Hong Kong in 1942. When the United States Army attacked Hong Kong, the Chinese Communist

Party also cooperated with it. During the post-war recovery period, the British requested that the Communist Party help them to govern the New-Territories for a short period of time in order to prevent crime. Such facts could indicate that the relationship between the British Hong Kong Government and the Communist Party was very close. In fact, the British Hong Kong Government did not curb the Communist Party's activities, unless it publicized communism and propagandized politics. On the contrary, if the Nationalist Party had enough power, it might be able to threaten the British regime; only the Nationalist Party could have authority strong enough to demand that the British handover the rule of Hong Kong. So, apart from the Ta Teh Institute, the Communist Party's activities were mostly related to the works of organizing democratic parties, educational and labor organizations, setting up the Xinhua News Agency and newspaper offices, and publishing many cultural publications and magazines. Those organizations were used to oppose the Nationalist Government over a short time period. The Hong Kong government adopted an ostensibly neutral policy at that time. Actually, a more balanced strategy was the practical policy.

Although the institute was short-lived and was made up of a handful of intellectuals who gathered in Hong Kong during the Chinese Civil War, it cultivated many talented revolutionary people and created important connections with cultural elites. Well-known intellectuals who were lecturers or guest speakers at the institute include He Xiangning, Qiao Guanhua, Mao Dun, Cao Yu, Guo Moruo, Hou Wailu, and Qian Jiaju. In fact, this process could exert an important influence on the history of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Moreover, it was later discovered that it helped to spread communism to Southeast Asia.

In November 1947, Nationalist Party left-wing politicians convened the Foundation Joint Assembly in Hong Kong. The Chinese Nationalist Party Revolutionary Committee was established on 1 January, 1948. It was organized by Li Jishen, Soong Chingling, He Xiangni, and Tan Pingshan. After this occurred, many Nationalist Party generals surrendered. Moreover, many military personnel were captured, released, and then joined this committee. Jiang Guansheng pointed out that many Democratic Party members and independent people actually became members of the Chinese Communist Party (Jiang 2011, p.289). They were actually cryptocommunists in the Hong Kong Ta Teh Institute.

The Chinese Communist Party used the Ta Teh Institute as the first step in reconstructing the Youth League in Southern China. In the spring of 1947, according to the New Democracy Youth Comrades Regulations, which were drafted by the Hong Kong Branch of the Youth Commission, the party group of the Ta Teh Institute invited some excellent students to join and establish several new youth groups. They were led by different party branches of the Chinese Communists in Hong Kong. Actually, since all of the party members participated in underground activities and they were divided into six small groups at the institute, it was not easy for the party to promote projects because of difficulties in coordination. Until autumn of 1947, there were more than 50 party members who were introduced by the party organizations. In addition to the abovementioned branches, there were 20 one-way linked members. All

student communist members had to join the party organization before attending the institute, and they accumulated several party standings and practical work experience (Zhang 2004, p.127). In the spring of 1948, it began unifying and rearranging party group work inside the Institute. At that time, the party headquarters and branches were set up in order to facilitate more excellent students joining the Chinese Communist Party (Dade sui yue bianweihui 2004, p.61).

Students mainly came from Guangdong, Fujian, and Guangxi at the earliest stage; only a few students came from other provinces (Table 1). However, many overseas Chinese students came from Southeast Asia at the later stage (Table 3). Overseas Communist Party members could study at the Ta Teh Institute if the party organization approved their application. In the autumn of 1948, the number of mainland students was relatively reduced as they quitted school. This was coupled with an increase in the proportion of overseas students that applied for admission. So, compared to the previous semester, the number of students increased by 180 (Table 2; Liang 1996, p.81). The Ta Teh Institute was the educational organization intended to cultivate cadre members (Liang 1996, p.81). At the end of 1948, there were more than 180 new youth members. In January 1949, these new youth members fulfilled the conditions for becoming standard party members. Thus, they could become new democratic youth members. The number of party members increased to 230, and this amount comprised more than 50 percent of students in January, 1949 (Liang 1996, p.81).

Table 1. Distribution of students coming from different provinces of China

| Province | Spring of 1947 | Spring of 1948 |
|------------|----------------|----------------|
| Quang Dong | 132 | 151 |
| Quang Xi | 47 | 28 |
| Fu Jian | 19 | 61 |
| Hu Nan | 6 | 2 |
| Hu Bei | | 2 |
| Jiang Xi | 2 | 6 |
| Jiang Su | 2 | 5 |
| Zhe Jiang | 2 | 4 |
| Xia Xi | 1 | |
| Yun Nan | | 1 |
| Shan Xi | | 1 |
| He Bei | | 2 |

Ta Teh Institute 1947, p.32; Dade sui yue bianweihui 2004, p.93

Table 2. Number of students of the Ta Teh Institute at different stages

| Period | Number of students |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Autumn of 1946 | 180 |

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Spring of 1947 | 218 |
| Autumn of 1947 | 313 |
| Spring of 1948 | 265 |
| Autumn of 1948 | 444 |

Dade suiyue bianweihui 2004, p.93

To achieve an even deeper understanding of the conditions surrounding the opening and closing of the Ta Teh Institute, it is important to examine why the Chinese Communist Party could openly conduct different activities in Hong Kong at that time. In Nanjing, the British Foreign Office had been paying close attention to China's internal situation for a long time. They were also intimately connected with the British Government that was garrisoned in Hong Kong and Malaysia; they continually exchanged news with each other. Various regions had to deal with the relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the overseas Nationalist Party. They also had to face what they perceived to be the rising problem of communist activity. These regions reported on the situation to the British Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. In the beginning of 1948, the Nationalist Party still had not lost its power and influence. Its influence even led to the repression of Communist activities among Malaysian Chinese. This situation was different from Hong Kong. Two letters show evidence of this.

Mr. William

If you have time, you may care to look generally at (63⁷). It gave a depressing picture of China today; there is no reference to Malayan affairs or, rather surprising, the attempts of the Chinese National Government to exert influence among Chinese Overseas. You may be particularly interested in paragraphs 32 to 39.

Mr. W. I. J. Wallace should see.

O.H. Morris

4-5-48

(The National Archives CO537/3325)

Annual Report from our Embassy at Nanking (63). As the report itself says, the story it tells I some of almost unrelieved gloom "to anyone but a communist sympathizer."

Mr. Rees Williams may perhaps also be interested to see as he has minuted elsewhere on the potential dangers of the China war to British Colonies in the Far East.

Signed readers dated 4, 9, 10, 13, 14/5 see over

⁷ They were the same documents, hand writings. 63 was F.O. (F4378/4378/10), which was the China Annual Report of 1947 of the Foreign Office, dated 28 April, 1948.

(The National Archives CO537/3325)

At that time, Hong Kong was revealing its political changes. In the end of 1947, the approved registration of the Ta Teh Institute could only indicate that the British Hong Kong government still had not found an effective way of handling organizations with communist backgrounds. They did not issue registration yet because the situation was not so clear at the early stage of civil war, and they did not have any established position at that time. Soon afterwards, they saw that the Nationalist Party had expanded its influence. The Nationalist Party troops attacked and entered Yan'an successfully in March, 1947. Its military superiority prevailed in many places. The Nationalist Party had dominated most places to the south of the Yangtze River; many people were killed or were forced to flee. These situations made the British Government feel that its dominating status in Hong Kong would be removed if the Nationalist Party could unify China. It could be said that the British chose to give the Chinese Communist Party a chance in order to successfully oppose Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party from establishing a base in Hong Kong.

As an example of the British supporting the Communist Party, the British government awarded Huang Zuomei⁸ with the MBE (Member of Order of the British Empire) in 1947 for making contributions to coordinating with the British army. He was the first Chinese Communist to acquire the British MBE. After this, promoting related relationships became much easier and more frequent. In fact, the Ta Teh Institute obtained its registration certificate under similar conditions in December, 1947.

The internationalization of communist activities was demonstrated by a visit made from a member of the Hungary's International Students' Federation. Since the spring of 1947, the South China area started to resume armed struggle, and some institute students became involved in successful guerrilla conflicts. This situation achieved reached its apex in 1948. After the institute closed, some students relocated to different guerrilla areas. According to incomplete statistics, there were 201 Ta Teh Institute students that left the institute to take part in different armed struggles (Dade sui Yue bianweihui 2004, p.108).

There was one vice province governor, 40 or more bureau or branch cadres, 3 party secretaries or vice-principals of institutes, 11 professors or associate professors, 20 lecturers, 26 principals of secondary schools, 2 vice-managers of provincial banks, 3 chief reporters who served overseas, and 8 chief editors or vice-editors at the provincial level (Dade sui Yue bianweihui 2004, p.113). On the contrary, it should be noted that many people involved with the Ta Teh Institute experienced tragic situations with the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Anti-Right Movement, and the Cultural Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁸ He was given the Member of Order of the British Empire, MBE. He was the Second Director of Xinhua News Agency-Hong Kong Branch, founder of Xinhua's London Branch, and Member of Dongjiang Anti-Japanese Guerrillas. He was the only known Chinese Communist Party member to receive the MBE and be invited by King George VI to attend the WWII Parade in London.

The Chinese Communists captured Jinan and Shadong province on 24 September, 1948, and the war started to reverse in October, 1948. When the Chinese Communist Party finally won the Civil War, it not only surprised the western world, but also surprised the Soviet Union. The Huaihai Campaign secured East-central China in late 1948 and early 1949. The outcomes of these encounters were decisive, and forced the capitalist world to reassess the rise of communism. From the viewpoint of the British and the United States, losing Hong Kong meant, at most, losing a place which did not originally belong to them. If Hong Kong could be kept in their hands, however, its importance could be signified. Such significance could be established after the Communist Party could establish political power in China and the British government could defend Hong Kong at the same time.

Zhou Yi pointed out that the British Hong Kong government closed the Ta Teh Institute because the Nationalist Party exerted great pressure on them. He hypothesized that the British Hong Kong government was provided with evidence indicating the existence of communist activities, which was given by the Nationalist Party (Zhou 2002, p.16). However, there was a contradiction in the article. The paradoxical viewpoint was that there were 450 students, including 128 coming from overseas. The institute arranged more than 100 students in groups to travel to Beijing to take part in state tasks. More than 200 people were also organized to travel to Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, and Hunan in order to greet liberation. After the Institute had been banned, the remaining 70 students of the department of business and economics started studying at the Zhangchong Academy, which was the higher learning institute just established for the continuation of students' vocational training. The overseas Chinese students went back to their original countries with the goal of participating in communist revolutions there. The Chinese students finished their studies in July, 1949 and prepared to take part in the tasks of receiving cities in Southern China; the academy had to be closed at the same time (Zhou 2002, p.16). It was obvious that the Communist Party closed the school without being applied pressure.

Information about the alumni of the Ta Teh Institute could be found at "The Foreign Office's file FO371/75780" of the British government, and the relevant information was in Hong Kong at that time. At the early stage of the establishment of the institute, the British Hong Kong government wanted to repress an urge to give registration at that time. Although they approved the registration, they delayed issuing the formal license. They frequently assigned Education Department officials and policemen to inspect the institute activities. After the license was issued, a case was reported in which a student, Zhong Yue, was arrested and expelled from the institute in May, 1948.

In December 1948, the British Hong Kong Government introduced the "Education Ordinance 1913 (Amendment)". This regulation gave the Education Department the right to refuse or cancel schools' registration, and stop managers or teaching from conducting education with a political purpose. On 28 December 1948, the Executive Council of the British Hong Kong Government sent a letter to the institute in order to request a reasonable explanation about some

problems that occurred at the institute. Governor Sir Alexander Grantham subpoenaed the institute's head officer and staff on 20 January, 1949. He took merely 15 minutes to ask relevant questions. On 22 February 1949, the governor coordinated with the Executive Council to issue an order to ban the Ta Teh Institute.

However, the Hong Kong Branch of the Chinese Communist Central called the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Central, and asserted that the Hong Kong Government's justifications for deregistering the institute were:

1. to train students to disrupt public order;
2. to provide a location for political party gatherings;
3. to act as a communicative organization (Cao 2004, p.156).

The notice was posted on 4 March, 1949, illustrated the Institute Board's consideration and decision to close the institute on 3 March, 1949. The institute's notice of closure started and all official works stopped on 16 March, 1949. Thus, Liang Mu made the following criticisms about the Hong Kong Government's banning of the Ta Teh Institute:

"This preserved act arouses the young people to feel anger. Almost all the students, including part of new registered students were assigned by the organization to participate in revolutionary teams. Among those students, some were going northward to take part in the central and state organization duties. Some chose to study financial and banking business in the Zhangchong Academy. In July, they also went to war zones to take part in taking over cities. Part of them went to Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan and Fujian to join armed struggles." (in Chinese, Liang 1996, p.81)

This was obviously a self-contradictory explanation. Li Jishen, He Xiangni, and Liu Yazhi as the representatives of Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party, accepted the Chinese Communist Party's invitation to take part in the first meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. They also participated in formulating the "Common Program" which served as the *de facto* Constitution of the People's Republic of China for the next five years, and elected related officials who would join the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, the general argument was that when the Hong Kong government predicted that the Chinese Communist Party would win the civil war in 1949, they determined to take tough measures to restrict the Chinese Communist Party's influence in Hong Kong. Finally, the government concluded that the Chinese Communist Party was "making use of the institute to achieve its political goal" and then banned it on 23 February, 1949.

Although the institute always issued admission advertisements, Sweeting points out that an abnormally high proportion of institute students came from the areas outside of Hong Kong (1990, p.202); most of them came from China and Southeast Asia. The recorded students came from many areas of mainland China, originally (Tables 1 and 2), but this obviously changed

from the end of 1948. More students then came from Southeast Asia as the Chinese Communist Party's victory in China's Civil War was approaching (Table 3).

Table 3. Recorded overseas students of the Ta Teh Institute coming from East Asia

| Area | Number of students |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Indonesia | 38 |
| Malaysia | 32 |
| Philippines | 23 |
| Thailand | 14 |
| Vietnam | 10 |

The institute served the local Hong Kong community and had an especially strong reputation for serving the community at Tuen Mun. As previously stated, academics with high status strongly supported the communist viewpoint (Sweeting 1993, p.202). However, from the viewpoint of the Hong Kong government, Grantham told the British Foreign Officer that the school created radical and leftist professors. He further contented that the institute focused on political training and advocated communist dogma; its students strongly believed the Communist Party's ideological line. Grantham also claimed that the students strongly opposed Chiang Kai-shek and the United States government. Moreover, it was also argued that the institute recruited students to go to the mainland to participate in Communist Party activities.

When it was checked out all the books related to communism and all the posters and articles were advocating communism in December 1946, the related problems were hidden in later checking. Since the institute obtained registration in December 1947, the rumors asserting that the Ta Teh Institute was a Communist Party school became increasingly credible from April, 1948. Furthermore, on 7 September, 1948, a police officer seized a large amount of documents from a man on the street. Some of the materials were related to the Ta Teh Institute; there were some students' activity records (Sweeting 1993, P.203). These documents could prove that the institute recruited Hong Kong students to go to China's liberated areas. On 15 December, 1948, the authorities seized additional valuable documents (Sweeting 1993, p.203) in a residence of a Senior Communist Party activist. At this time, Grantham was in close contact with the British Foreign Office and sought approval for amending the ordinance in order to cancel the registration of the Ta Teh Institute.

The Legislative Council read firstly⁹ the "Education Ordinance (Amendment) 1913" on 22 December, 1948. The Executive Council discussed "Section 2 of 1948 Education Amendment

⁹ The legislation procedures can be noted. A bill is first published in the Gazette before it is introduced into the Council. It has to be given three readings for its passage by the Council. The First Reading is a formality, with the Clerk reading the short title of a bill at a Council meeting. The Second Reading of the bill starts with the government official or Member who introduces the bill moving the motion "That the bill be read the second time"

Ordinance” on 28 December. The Legislative Council conducted a second and third reading, and then passed the ordinance on 29 December, 1948. When Grantham attended the 25th Anniversary of Precious Blood Secondary School on 15 February, 1949, he indicated that some schools made use of the school for political propaganda. He asserted that the institute poisoned the minds of young students through indoctrinating the Communist Party’s politics and beliefs.

The English version of the reasons for banning the Ta Teh Institute was given by the Hong Kong Government as follows:

- it was “a centre of political indoctrination of students in a manner causing or likely to cause incentive to violence or unrest in this Colony or elsewhere”;
- it was used as a meeting place for “persons engaged in political activity who engage in our counsel violence or unrest in this Colony or elsewhere”;
- it “affords and accommodation address for the interchange or correspondence and publications between persons engaged in political activity who engage in or counsel violence or unrest in the Colony or elsewhere”.

The expressed reasons written in Chinese by the Communists were obviously insufficient for revealing the complete story behind the closing of the institute. The Hong Kong government determined that “training students to disrupt public order” and being “a place for the party to conduct assemblies” were the main reasons for cancelling the institute’s registration. The governor believed that it had adequate evidence to prove that the institute “used the school to achieve its political activities goals and they violated security interests of Hong Kong and other places.” Actually, these viewpoints could be basically confirmed by several documents from Ta Teh institute alumni. The general introduction of these documents did not cover details of closing the institute.

In fact, many students did travel to Chinese war zones to take part in secret activities and armed struggles; many professors also went northward earlier. Some professors, however, remained in Hong Kong and continued their duties. Immediately following the closure of the Ta Teh Institute, they organized “Zhangchong Specialist Night School” (Jiang 2011, p.227). The Singtao Daily explained clearly on 26 days before closing the institute. The main reason given for closing the institute was that there were too many overseas Chinese youth, most of which came from Southeast Asia. It was feared that they might the influence the politics of Southeast Asia when they returned to their original countries. This might then lead directly to conflicts with British people (Jiang 2011, p.227). According to information regarding communication among those youth, the Foreign Office and Colonial Office believed that when the Nationalist Party’s influence was decreasing, the Communist activities would become increasingly

and explaining the purpose of the bill. Usually, after the motion has been moved, the debate on it is adjourned and the bill is referred to the related Committee to allow Members more time to study it, either in the related Committee or in a bills committee set up by the related Committee specifically for this purpose.

frequent. They worried that this would lead to countries demanding independence from British rule.

In Hong Kong, Grantham also felt surprised that the Chinese Communist Party reacted at a low profile mode. He thought that suppressing Communist Party activities in Hong Kong was relatively easy. It was not necessary for the government to show its mercy when he adopted related policies and projects in the future. Therefore, the Hong Kong government banished many people and organizations that were related to the Communist Party. Moreover, the important paragraphs were reported by Grantham.

Over the years, the relations between Hong Kong and China were generally not unfriendly. Incidents, some serious, some not so serious, occurred from time to time, but their positions were never directly challenged (Grantham 1965, 2012, p.138). After the war, when the Communists in China were becoming a powerful factor, this tendency became more pronounced when the unions split into two groups, one pro-Kuomintang[Nationalist] and the other pro-communist. Generally, however, the subversive activities of the Kuomintang[Nationalist] in Hong Kong were not very effective. Although they sometimes caused considerable trouble, e.g., the incident of Kowloon Walled City, they did not constitute a real threat to the safety of the Colony, since the Chinese government was not strong enough to challenge Britain's position.

With advent of a strong government in China, this state of affairs changed completely. The new regime was violently anti-Western, anti-British, and anti-Hong Kong (Grantham 1965, 2012, p.139). However, it is not reasonable to form a conclusion about the Hong Kong Government banning the Ta Teh Institute from Grantham's book "Via Ports-From Hong Kong To Hong Kong". As a matter of fact, Grantham held his own ideas about the situation. His expression was self-explanatory. He wrote the following paragraph but it was never cited academically:

"On the one hand, we did not want to provocative; on the other we did not want to appease or appear to do so, to give way to unreasonable demands. The population of Hong Kong knew that the government across the border was unfriendly and strong. If we truckled to it we would lose the people's confidence and support; they might even turn against us. We had to do a balancing act all the time, especially when an incident occurred such as the closure of a communist school, the deportation of an agitator or the prosecution of a communist newspaper for a seditious article." (Grantham 1965, 2012, p.139)

Actually, it was an international strategy of the capitalist world to oppose the communists. It could be said that Hong Kong served as a testing field to practice and exercise such a strategy. Of course, the Chinese Communist Party was not arbitrarily manipulated by the British Hong Kong government. The immediate task was establishing the new China in 1949. How to cope with the United Front was the first priority. Using their prestige to increase the power to organize all of the people that opposed Chiang Kai-Shek was the main consideration at that time.

Hereafter, the Chinese Communist Party never rushed to take over Hong Kong. This decision was the same as “The Long-term Plans, Fully Utilized”, the Hong Kong policy that was formulated by Zhou Enlai in 1958. The Chinese Communist Party arranged the Ta Teh Institute’s teachers and students to be evacuated from Hong Kong to China in order to help the Chinese Communist Party establish its government. Unfortunately, some of them became victims during the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s. Actually, when the new government was established in 1949, the state had to seek more governing talents. Closing the institute could help the students and teachers to be transferred to locations in which they were needed. Originally, the Ta Teh Institute accepted many people being persecuted in China to come to Hong Kong for training. Now, it could send all of the trainees back to China so that they could conduct the required receiving cities and governing duties. It did not have any conflicts basically. What it did not feel right should not be the right answer about this issue.

4. CONCLUSION

The issue of the Ta Teh Institute has a history of over 60 years until now. Many famous scholars lectured there before it was closed in 1949. From the perspective of the Hong Kong government, there was a special sensitivity towards politics in Hong Kong education during China’s Civil War. The particular concern avoided embroilment in the turbulent politics of China. The original main building of the Ta Teh Institute was declared a historical monument, and it was finally preserved in March, 2004. Currently, the building is in danger because of insufficient repair and maintenance activities.

Strictly speaking, it was necessary for the Chinese Communist Party to establish the Ta Teh Institute; however, it was not necessary to use the institute to operate over a long period in order to become a base for training party members. Of course, if the Ta Teh Institute could exist in Hong Kong, it might have inevitable convenience for the Chinese Communist Party. It is similar to many other communist organizations in Hong Kong after the Chinese Civil War or during the Korean War. Hong Kong might have many superior advantages compared to other places in China that could be utilized. For example, it could avoid the influence of domestic political movements.

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