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Exploiting Anti-Imperialism

Popular Forces and Nation-State-Building During China's Northern Expedition, 1926–1927

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During the Northern Expedition, Guomindang (GMD) policy makers balanced popular anti-imperialism with measures to improve foreign relations. Military pressures meant that top revolutionary leaders could not afford to engage both the warlords and imperialists at the same time, yet rapid advances excited anti-imperialist forces eager to destroy foreign influence once and for all. Opting for security and control, party chiefs restrained popular anti-imperialism. However, when British/warlord collusion produced signs of a Southern Expedition in late December 1926, top party heads released these restraints, encouraging anti-imperialist groups to assail foreign institutions, including the British concessions in Hankou and Jiujiang. Although a great success, the move also caused Britain to initiate troop buildups. Facing new pressures, revolutionary leaders decided to dismantle revolutionary anti-imperialism. In short, mass anti-imperialist organizations were dissolved in April 1927 for practical political reasons that extend beyond factional conflict between the CCP and GMD.

Keywords: *nationalism; missionaries; Britain; agitation*

On April 12, 1927, fifteen thousand revolutionary troops and policemen loyal to Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) suddenly turned on Shanghai's popular revolutionary forces, disbanding organizations and extinguishing anti-imperialist strikes and demonstrations. The next day, labor unions and student associations retaliated, declaring a general strike and besieging military headquarters. As mass organizations squared off against revolutionary troops, Chiang's supporters responded with heavy gunfire, scattering protestors lucky enough to escape the bullets. Soon thereafter, right-wing forces sealed the headquarters of the General Labor Union, arrested union leaders, closed radical schools, and executed Communists. On April 15, as attacks spread to other cities, Chiang formed his own Nationalist government

in Nanjing, challenging the authority of party leaders heading the Guomindang (GMD) regime in Wuhan.

Official memory in both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China has long framed Chiang's coup as the unavoidable result of intense factional rivalries within the National Revolution. Since the beginning of the United Front, formed in late 1923 when Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan) inducted members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) into his own Nationalist Party (Guomindang or GMD), tensions divided top leaders. The GMD left wing, headed by Wang Jingwei, supported continued cooperation with the CCP while the GMD right wing, represented by Chiang, was opposed (So, 1991: 3). For decades, curricula and scholarship—often sponsored by regime presses and institutions on both sides of the Taiwan Strait—presented this factional division as the hallmark of the revolution. Chiang himself wrote *Soviet Russia in China* (Su'e zai Zhongguo) to highlight the factional intrigue and discord that "necessitated" his purge of Soviet and CCP leaders, who covertly sought to "hijack" the revolution. CCP/left-wing interpretations, on the other hand, denounce Chiang and members of the Western Hills faction for "betraying" the revolution by aligning with imperialists, gangsters, and warlords before turning against the masses and their Communist organizers in a "vicious" grab for power.

Observing the inner workings of the National Revolution through this lens of factional conflict, scholars have discovered patterns that nicely explain the dynamics between Stalin and Trotsky, the Communists and the Nationalists, and the GMD left and right wings. When used to illuminate other important aspects of the revolution, however, this faction-centric paradigm falls short. Interpretations of Nationalist interactions with the foreign powers, in particular, become distorted when subjected to faction-centric assumptions—that, for example, the left spear-headed anti-imperialism while the right followed a so-called moderate course (So, 1991: 83). The belief that ideology predisposed individuals toward specific stances vis-à-vis imperialism first arose during the National Revolution itself and has colored assessments of revolutionary anti-imperialism down to today. Nevertheless, the assertion has holes. Foreign observers such as J. F. Brenan, Britain's acting consul-general in Guangzhou, tried to divine meaning from factional distinctions but ultimately had to acknowledge:

> There is a tendency on the part of foreigners to attach political labels to Chinese politicians and to classify them individually as moderate or extremist, right or left, Communist or Conservative, etc., and the same foreigners are constantly being puzzled and disconcerted because the people so labeled

> do not run true to form. The truth is that the Chinese who now fill the political stage are actuated in their grouping much more by personal attraction or animosity than by political ideas and are quite ready to be either extreme or moderate as may suit their purpose for the time being. (FO 253, 114)

According to Brenan's experience, factional alignment was a poor predictor of the behavior of even major participants and factional leaders. Indeed, disagreements led to a confused variety of typological schemes. Many of Brenan's contemporaries distinguished between "moderates" opposed to anti-foreign disruption and "radicals" steeped in anti-foreignism. Some portrayed all party members as "left," while others reserved that designation for Soviet or CCP leaders only (FO 252, 156). Still others divided revolutionaries between "lukewarm reds" and "extremist reds" (CWR 34, 44). One adroit analyst came up with "moderate," "moderate extremist," and "extremist extremist" camps (FO 252, 346–47). Brenan's predecessor, James Jamieson, went further, calling Chiang Kai-shek a "moderate," Liao Zhongkai an "extreme radical," and Hu Hanmin a "radical conservative." Unable to place Wang Jingwei, Jamieson conjured up the appellation "60 per cent radical" (FO 253, 50; FO 248, 154).

Label schemes varied with the context of the observer, but also because, as Brenan indicated, individual behavior defied preconceived notions that linked factional affiliation with anti-foreignism. Some figures, such as Liao Zhongkai, always ended up on the left end of the political spectrum with a red, extremist, radical, or Bolshevist label, but others, such as Chiang Kai-shek, slid back and forth. The foreign press called Chiang the "ultra-red general" for his hot tongue, but could also refer to him as "moderate," depending on the content of his latest speech (FO 252, 138, 143). Even Mikhail Borodin—chief Soviet advisor to the GMD—could be called a "Bolshevist" one moment and a "stabilizing influence" the next. When examining top revolutionary officials, at least, foreigners watching the revolution unfold found little correlation between anti-imperialism and ideological proclivity. Although he represented the Comintern and was thought to be strongly opposed to ties with the powers, Borodin often met with foreign missionaries and routinely promised to stem anti-imperialist demonstrations. Left-wing GMD leaders, such as Chen Gongbo, mediated between foreign factory owners and labor leaders to end strikes, while right-wing officials, including Chiang himself, could spew anti-imperialist rhetoric as well as anyone (Wilbur and How, 1989: 521–22). Most revolutionary figures, such as the ever-adaptive Zhou Enlai, could encourage and restrain anti-imperialist forces in the same breath. Political labels, which

ultimately sought to explain and predict revolutionary behavior, simply did not hold. Indeed, as Jamieson put it,

> Whatever their divisions on matters of domestic policy, so far as their outlook on foreign affairs in general, and their relationship with the British Empire in particular, are concerned, there is, perhaps, little difference *in practice* between the two factions, which are both strongly Nationalist. (FO 252a, 17; emphasis added)

In sharp contrast to the multiple and ever-ranging analyses of Brenan and his contemporaries, subsequent studies generally show little struggle with typologies. Indeed, classifications have became virtually standardized, reflecting an explicit yet assumed certainty about what was "left" and what was "right." History helped. Chiang's coup in 1927 created readily identifiable battle lines between the two parties, ensuring that ensuing CCP/GMD struggles through the following decades begged for historical interpretations emphasizing factional strife.[1] Conflicts between Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek during the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Chinese Civil War, and the Cold War expedited and compelled historical accounts that emphasized revolutionary divisions.

Even while solidifying their permanence within the historiography, however, scholarship has also exposed the limits of faction-centric assumptions about revolutionary anti-imperialism. C. Martin Wilbur's meticulous studies, for example, illuminate the revolutionary practice of negotiating with the powers while simultaneously stimulating anti-imperialist activism. Wilbur never explained the relationship between these two opposing tactics, but his scholarship at least identified their coexistence (Wilbur and How, 1989: 367–71). Much earlier, Harold Isaacs noted that CCP and Soviet leaders sought to minimize the activity of popular anti-imperialism, although he concluded that they did so because they feared provoking a right-wing reaction; what anti-imperialist agitation arose, Isaacs asserts, was entirely spontaneous (Isaacs, 1961: 111–29).

While these and other studies imply that the subtle dynamics governing revolutionary foreign relations operated independent of factional differences, no study has illuminated how the dynamics worked. Factional infighting certainly tore revolutionary forces apart, but that cannot erase the fact that cooperation across factional lines also helped the revolution secure a host of impressive international triumphs. This examination of the Northern Expeditionary period will open discussion by demonstrating that when dealing with the imperialist powers—and, by extension, popular

anti-imperialist organizations—National Revolution leaders employed tactics that followed a formula quite different from that highlighted in faction-driven interpretations. Indeed, factional divisions obscured a deeper division between two opposing but complementary revolutionary agendas: popular anti-imperialist agitation and nation-state-building aimed at securing legitimacy (i.e., new treaties, international recognition) vis-à-vis the foreign powers. Interactions between these two branches ultimately contributed to the split of April 1927, producing the same result as faction-centered narratives, but via a very different path—one that highlighted cooperation rather than conflict.

Anti-Imperialist Agitation: Value and Risk

The functional divisions that separated popular anti-imperialist forces from central nation-state-building authorities, long a part of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary program, were formalized at the First National Congress. On January 31, 1924, GMD leaders unveiled a declaration of purpose that combined the long-held nation-state-building goals of national unification with an expanded agitative role for popular mass organizations. Describing the latter, the *First National Congress Declaration* announced:

> Party members are to be given education and training so they can become revolutionary figures capable of propagating ideology, mobilizing the masses, and organizing political power. At the same time, through the full strength of the party, they are to spread universal propaganda to all the people inducing them to join the revolution, seize political power, and defeat the enemies of the people. (Geming wenxian, 1976: 69.91–92)

The congress's declaration left little doubt that imperialism was an "enemy of the people" and a primary target of propaganda and popular activism. The foreign powers were denounced as a "raging tide" (*nuchao*) that had used "plunder" (*wuli de lüeduo*) and "economic oppression" (*jingji de yapo*) to steal China's independence and impose "a status of semi-colonization" (*banzhimindi de diwei*). Imperialism was excoriated and the GMD was called on to harness popular nationalism, hone it into an anti-imperialist movement, and wield it to bring about "true freedom and independence" (*zhenzheng de ziyou yu duli*) (Geming wenxian 1976: 69.84–89). Confirming his commitment to mass-based anti-imperialism, Sun Yat-sen criticized his party's past dealings with the powers, proclaiming, "From now

on, we should, without exception, give up on compromising and harmonizing means. Moreover, we must recognize that compromise is a huge mistake in our efforts to carry the revolution out to the end" (Geming wenxian 1976: 76.2).

At the same time, however, the congress's declaration offered precisely what Sun so strongly condemned—conciliation with the foreign powers through overtures to warm reciprocal relations. In accommodating tones, it called for deeper diplomatic and cooperative ties, expressed hope for new equal treaties based on the principle of "mutual respect" (*huzun*), and promised to recognize and repay all (harmless) foreign debts via imposts on commercial and social organizations. The party even vowed to identify as a "most-favored nation" (*zuihuiguo*) any power willing to retract its imperialist privileges (Geming wenxian 1976: 69.92–93). Indeed, abrogation of the unequal treaties was paramount. As a policy announcement claimed, "the Guomindang considers the abolishment of the unequal treaties and the struggle with imperialism as a necessary precondition to toppling warlord dictatorships and unifying China by establishing a democratic government" (ZXWH-1, 5, meeting 98, July 23, 1925). In short, alongside strident revolutionary rhetoric demanding the destruction of imperialism in China was a powerful nation-state-building impulse that sought just the opposite: warm foreign relations that could affirm revolutionary advances, dissolve the unequal treaties, and deny loans and weapons to the GMD's rivals.

Through 1924 and 1925, revolutionary leaders supported major pillars of popular anti-imperialism. Seeking to undermine cultural encroachment, for example, the Anti-Christian Movement challenged the right of foreign missionaries to educate and indoctrinate Chinese youth. The May Thirtieth Movement and the Anti-British Boycott, meanwhile, defied the use of foreign military might and Britain's economic interests, respectively, with mass-led strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, and so forth. In each case, CCP/GMD efforts combined with those of nonparty organizations to generate a nationwide anti-imperialist groundswell that linked anti-Christian students, labor activists, nationalistic groups, and a host of others. Popular anti-imperialism helped "awaken" popular interest, but its greatest contribution stemmed from its ability to transform relations between the revolutionary Nationalist regime and the imperialists. However, the collective might of popular organizations was of less consequence than the unique way top revolutionary officials used them in a high-stakes game of international maneuvering. Since new treaties, international recognition, and foreign aid for China's reconstruction were not forthcoming as long as the powers remained wedded to the status quo, the revolutionaries manipulated

anti-imperialist forces to make that status quo untenable and force foreign leaders to negotiate a new arrangement.

The dynamics were relatively simple. The pejorative label of "imperialism" was applied to anything inimical to revolutionary authority. However, even foreign missionary schools could shed their "imperialist" stigma if they renounced treaty privileges and accepted Nationalist oversight. To encourage foreign acquiescence to GMD authority, therefore, Borodin and members of the GMD's Central Executive Committee (Zhongyang zhixing weiyuanhui) (CEC) crudely manipulated popular anti-imperialism. On one hand, they sought to protect foreign leaders and institutions showing pro-GMD attitudes by shielding them from anti-imperialist forces. On the other hand, they denounced foreign resistance to party authority, further inflaming popular anti-imperialism. Mission schools were particularly vulnerable. Pressured by anti-Christian strikes and demonstrations, many missionaries found themselves requesting GMD intervention and assistance, giving party officials valuable leverage (Murdock, 2002: 35–40). The system worked surprisingly well, largely because agitative forces functioned independent of the regime. CEC officials could play patriotic activism off foreign interests while claiming neutrality and portraying popular activism as the natural result of imperialist offenses against China. As foreigners sought Nationalist aid against popular agitation or expressed gratitude for government intervention, the party gained legitimacy, confirmed its role as a stabilizing influence, and discredited foreign reliance on the unequal treaties.

Encouraging popular forces was also risky, however, because the autonomy that made them effective against imperialist institutions could also undermine regime control. Independent mass organizations, many of which maintained only tenuous ties to either the GMD or the CCP, often pursued first and foremost their own objectives, including everything from revenge for imperialist atrocities to higher standards of living. In short, the nation-state-building needs of the Nationalist regime did not always align with the goals of mass anti-imperialist organizations. Worse, like the small flame that becomes a forest fire, popular agitation could be easily fanned but proved difficult to direct or contain once it reached full strength, requiring careful attention. Addressing a rally of anti-imperialist workers and students in Shantou, for example, Zhou Enlai urged moderation: "We . . . are not against the British residents as individuals; we are against Hong Kong imperialism. Beyond this, however, *all our acts should be highly civilized, because we are only at the stage of giving warnings and not at that of declaring war"* (FO 250, 18–19; emphasis added). Top revolutionary authorities sought better foreign relations, not war, and struggled to restrain

anti-imperialism lest it enhance anti-revolutionary sentiment among foreign interests or encourage foreign intervention.

Anti-Imperialism Restrained: Northern Expedition Vulnerabilities

In June 1926, when the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) embarked on the Northern Expedition—a three-pronged attack to destroy warlordism and unify the country—containing agitation became far more complex. The Northern Expedition required an expanded role for popular forces in two major ways. First, revolutionized mass organizations were needed to disrupt warlord control and thereby complement GMD military strikes. By October, a pattern was clearly discernable. As NRA troops approached, popular boycotts, strikes, and demonstrations compromised warlord infrastructure. Railway workers gave revolutionary armies access to rolling stock or slowed warlord retreats by hiding equipment. Hanyang Arsenal workers struck for a month while Wuhan revolutionaries disguised as Red Cross workers engaged in sabotage. Occasionally, revolutionary activists even seized strategic sites, as in Hangzhou, or harassed warlord troops, as in Fujian (Jordan, 1976: 199; CWR 38, 18, 55, 74; CWR 39, 108; CWR 37, 198).

Second—and far more significant—mass organizations were needed to secure conquered territory. Donald A. Jordan argues convincingly that peasant, labor, and student groups played a minor role against warlord armies (Jordan, 1976: 201). However, defeating warlord forces was only half the battle; as CEC member Gan Naiguang explained,

> The majority of old local militias (*mintuan*), group protection bureaus (*tuanfangju*) and defense corps (*baoweiju*) are but illegal militias for bullies and evil gentry. These types of military forces are often utilized by imperialists, warlords, and reactionaries to break people's movements and shake the GMD and Nationalist Government's foundations, endangering the future of the party and the government. (ZWDL-YS, meeting of Oct. 28, 1926)

Entering newly conquered territory, GMD officials, staffers, and security personnel—what foreigners called the party's "political unit"—required assistance to maintain control (FO 252, 209). In the wake of NRA forces, revolutionary mass organizations offered much needed muscle, popular support, and security. As a student declaration explained, "If we want Northern Expedition armies to be successful . . . we must [form] a *suitable*

movement and tight organization to act as their rear shield (*houdun*)" (ZYQ, 1064, emphasis added).

Northern Expeditionary dependence on popular forces, however, complicated foreign relations. Extreme anti-imperialism, fed by enthusiasm for the NRA advances, sparked antiforeign and anti-Christian attacks against clergy, churches, and schools. Outbreaks appeared in virtually every city of Fujian, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui (FO 252, 52–53). Unfortunately for CEC nation-state-building, at the precise moment that popular forces were busy provoking the powers with anti-imperialist activism, the revolutionary government was least able to defend itself from imperialist intervention. With most NRA forces embroiled in battles stretching from Fujian to Hubei, the revolution's seat of power in Guangzhou lay wide open to British attack from Hong Kong. Indeed, Chiang Kai-shek was so concerned about the Northern Expedition's rear that on June 26 he called on party members to make preparations for a coming war with Britain (Wilbur and How, 1989: 503).

Exacerbating CEC concerns was the fact that there simply were not enough trained cadres to institute government control. Organization Ministry (Zhongyang zuzhibu) officials strove valiantly but had to report in October that they could not keep up with the torrent of new party organs formed in the wake of revolutionary army advances (ZXWH-2, 5, meeting 66, Oct. 30, 1926). Desperate to fill newly created local posts, harried GMD officials bent the rules, prompting CEC warnings that "Without special permission, government organs cannot use non-GMD members to fill positions."[2] Other CEC directives cautioned against opportunism and automatically denied party membership to all "bandits, local bullies, evil gentry, false officials, compradors, and indifferent selfish politicians" (ZXWH-2, 3, meeting 41, July 17, 1926). Despite the party's best efforts, leaders in Jiangxi still complained that poorly trained cadres failed to understand basic organization and propaganda, that "evil gentry and local bullies" had infiltrated all county bureaus (*xian dangbu*), and that many posts remained vacant because there simply were no qualified candidates to fill them (ZGJ, 1927).

Administrative immaturity made the Nationalists even more dependent on mass organizations to defend revolutionary power. However, popular forces excelled at disrupting, not stabilizing, political control. Without a firm regime hand to restrain them, popular protests against foreign institutions rose to "severe" levels (Lutz, 1988: 218). Christian schools and hospitals in Hunan were hit first. In August, demonstrators in Liuyang forced foreign school administrators to close the Wesleyan Boarding School for

Boys. When the decision became public, the anti-imperialists conspired to arrest the missionaries and bind them over to a "public trial." Leaked reports of the pending event gave local missionaries a chance to escape but only by abandoning all their personal belongings and leaving the campus to be converted into a propaganda school. That same month, student and nurse demonstrators demanded that Yale-in-China fire all foreign teachers and hire GMD educators in their place. Shortly afterward they seized the Yale-in-China middle school and certain buildings on the college campus. By December 9, the disruptions had worsened to the point that the faculty voted to close all academic departments (Lutz, 1988: 226–27; Giles, 1924: 40; FO 252, 241–42; CWR 39, 116). In Nanxian, students attacked the barricaded doors of the China Inland Mission offices several times before breaking through, destroying and looting the chapel and residences and driving the missionaries out of the city (FO 252, 242). Demonstrations also beset almost every mission school in Changsha, including Yale-in-China, the Hunan Bible Institute, various girls' schools, the Presbyterian mission schools, and Hunan University (CWR 39, 116).

The scale of destruction—or more specifically its ability to implicate the party with the foreign powers—aroused top CEC authorities worried about flagging control. They iterated earlier orders party members sacrifice their individual freedom and "maintain strict discipline and solid unity" (ZWQH-1, meeting 8, May 22, 1925; meeting 9, May 23, 1925). Nevertheless, wide gaps arose between party officials and mass organization leaders. As CEC member Cai Yichen reported, slack coordination meant that the Youth Ministry (Zhongyang qingnianbu) retained only loose ties with even Guangdong's various youth bureaus (qingnianbu), let alone China's scattered and numerous non-GMD youth organizations enjoying far more autonomy and independence (ZXWH-2, 2, meeting 22, Apr. 23, 1926). Irony thus confronted top CEC officials. In the party's base of Guangdong, stabilizing conditions meant curtailing anti-imperialist activism. In newly conquered territories and nonliberated territories, however, weak central control required a greater reliance on mass organizations. With administrative institutions still underdeveloped and party infrastructure struggling to consolidate control, it was left to popular groups to help watchdog local and foreign interests. At the same time, attenuated oversight by the party—the result of too much territory and too few cadres—meant no one was checking anti-imperialist agitation from rising to threatening proportions (ZXWH-2, 5, meeting 66, Oct. 30, 1926).

Recognizing the danger, CEC officials met on September 14, 1926, and issued directives that redefined the relationship between the party, popular

forces, and the powers. On one hand, they encouraged mass anti-imperialism. Eager to pressure imperialism in general but also weaken threats in Shanghai, on the Yangzi, and in Hong Kong specifically, the CEC singled out Britain for an anti-imperialist campaign. Labor Ministry (Zhongyang gongrenbu) officials ordered propagandists to distribute anti-British handbills among the masses and call for government protests condemning British "plots" to weaken the Northern Expedition's rear (CWR 38, 83, 111; ZYQ, 3384, 3385; ZXWH-2, 4, meeting 57, Sept. 14, 1926; ZWDL-YS, meeting of Oct. 19, 1926). With the regime's blessing, popular anti-imperialist forces swelled from Guangdong to Hubei, confronting the powers with a clear disincentive against intervention. On the other hand, the CEC also took steps to restrain escalation, telling mass organizations that popular demonstrations, strikes, and blockages represented just one way to manage imperialism and that activists must "make the utmost effort to avoid conflict." The CEC explicitly ordered that all public speeches mentioning foreigners had to be first cleared by central authorities and that all government officials had to exercise "extreme caution" when even discussing international relations (ZXWH-2, 4, meeting 57, Sept. 14, 1926). Propaganda produced in English for foreign consumption, meanwhile, underscored the GMD's strategy:

> Had it not been for the promptness of the Nationalist Government in controlling the incensed people, the policy of the British Navy to provoke a bloody massacre would have achieved its purpose. Although the people had in view the greater aim of the victory of the army in the field, therefore bending all their efforts to avoid trouble with the English at this juncture, *it is not to be supposed that they cannot eventually use effective means of retaliation to show the English their proper place.* (ZWDL-YS, meeting of Oct. 19, 1926; emphasis added)

The "bloody massacre" referred to any and all of a series of incidents along the Yangzi. One such attack at Wanxian slaughtered hundreds if not thousands of Chinese when British gunboats opened fire on densely populated communities. These and other instances of "gunboat diplomacy" in Sichuan and Hubei drew Nationalist condemnation. As the paragraph above indicates, however, the party also portrayed itself as the only force preventing China's "incensed people" from hurtling headlong into conflict with the British. Bloody attacks involving British gunboats earned Britain specific mention, but the subtext was clear to all foreigners: if the imperialist powers hoped to avoid conflict with China's populace they needed to work with the Nationalist regime toward improving relations. Openly admitting that only they could manage popular anti-imperialism gave GMD leaders extra

negotiating leverage, but, at the same time, represented a gamble. Popular and British forces were begging for a scrap. The British called Chinese strikers "pirates" and swore that they would be treated as such. GMD troops in the field complained that British gunboats purposely orchestrated "incidents" to provoke firing. Revolutionized students, meanwhile, demanded weapons with which to destroy the foreign threat (CWR 38, vi [Sept. 25, 1926], 79, 111).

To calm tensions and improve ties with Britain, the Nationalist Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Zhongyang waijiaobu) declared that it would meet British imperialism with diplomacy and negotiations. GMD officials reinforced police patrols to ensure that popular forces and British bluejackets had no opportunity to provoke the each other (CWR 38, 79, 130). In late September, CEC leaders, concerned about Guangzhou's vulnerability, even went as far as to unilaterally announce the end of the Anti-British Boycott in the hope of stabilizing relations with Hong Kong. On October 26, CEC and provincial leaders went further, passing five resolutions designed to persuade local anti-imperialist activists to leave foreign relations to central authorities. The first resolution identified new treaties as the GMD's primary foreign policy objective. The second lionized the "alliance between the vast masses and [their] revolutionary might under the party's guiding banner." From there, however, attention focused on securing the dominance of the CEC over popular anti-imperialist forces. Resolution three identified the party's plan to use nonagitative methods when dealing with imperialists. Resolution four promised the masses that the Nationalist Party had "not changed or fundamentally altered its foreign policy position of liberating China from its semi-colonial status." In sterner language, meanwhile, resolution five warned that "Guomindang foreign policy should be managed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. . . . It cannot be handed over to any other organ or person" (ZWDL-QC, meeting of Sept. 22, 1926; ZWDL-YS, meeting of Oct. 26, 1926). Scholars have long identified this last statement as an attempt to prevent Chiang Kai-shek from opening his own talks with the powers. Nevertheless, debates between CEC members over the final wording also betray an interest in reducing the foreign policy impact of popular anti-imperialism. As originally drafted, resolution five began, "In order to prevent misunderstandings among party members *and the people*, Guomindang foreign policy should be managed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (ZWDL-YS, meeting of Oct. 26, 1926; emphasis added).

Complementing its drive to monopolize foreign relations, the CEC took steps to bring the "people" in line by tightening restrictions over mass organizations. On September 2, for example, Youth Ministry officials announced

new regulations emphasizing strict adherence to protocol. Student unions and federations, which had served as the backbone of the Anti-Christian Movement, were ordered to report to supervising party organs (ZYQ, 0059, 10747, 13177). In November, ministry officials went still further, dispatching special commissioners (*tepaiyuan*) to attend all youth bureau meetings and all meetings by GMD members in student unions (ZXWH-2, 5, meeting 69, Nov. 13, 1926). To "clarify authority and avoid conflict," local party authorities were prohibited from forming or reorganizing branches of the National Student Union (Quanguo xuesheng lianhehui) (ZXWH-2, 5, meeting 74, Nov. 30, 1926). If student groups produced more trouble than they were worth, the CEC simply dissolved them.[3] Revolutionary leaders also curbed mass violence against mission institutions. Anxious to minimize disruption, the CCP Central Committee refused to grant popular anti-imperialist forces a carte blanche: "We must not at this time create any opportunity of actual conflict with the Church. This condition is imposed by our present situation (the Church is allied with militarists everywhere under the pretext of treaty protection)" (Wilbur and How, 1956: 300). Adopting a cautious approach, CCP leaders even removed from youth movement posts Communist Youth Corps (Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingnian tuan) leaders who could not be trusted to maintain a moderate course (Lutz, 1988: 220).

Nation-State-Building Opportunity: The Move to Wuhan

Inserting themselves between popular anti-imperialist forces and the foreign powers provided CEC authorities leverage in their quest for international recognition and new treaties. The potential benefits were great, but so too were the risks. Should either the anti-imperialists or the imperialists rush at the other, CEC officials playing the middle ground were just as likely to get crushed between the two as wrest advantage from the situation. In the fall of 1926, stakes rose when the CEC announced that it would move both the Nationalist government and GMD headquarters to Wuhan. The change offered distinct benefits: distance from Hong Kong interventionists, a chance to link with revolutionary ally Feng Yuxiang in the north, dominance over the rich middle Yangzi region, and ready access to Beijing. Along with the military advances that made it possible, the move also legitimized Nationalist claims to represent all of China. It also, however, raised the diplomatic game to a whole new level.

Initially, all signs pointed to GMD success. Foreign officials were impressed by its advances. Consuls representing Japan, Britain, and the

United States all showed a "very friendly" attitude (ZGLH, 1, meeting 3, Dec. 17, 1926). Basking in their new popularity, party leaders boldly announced that they would not discuss tariffs or foreign vessel rights until after the powers recognized the GMD regime (CWR 38, 360). Employing a softer line, General Deng Yanda (head of the NRA political division) reported to a foreign journalist:

> You must realize that when the revolutionary movement has become a success, and when the people are free, equal and independent, that the economic condition of the people of China will be improved. And so you foreigners must realize also that in those circumstances you will not lose but will enjoy even greater economic benefits from the better living conditions of the people and their greater purchasing power. It has been asserted that we are anti-foreign. This is an untrue statement and circulated chiefly by those interested in the continuance of the present feudal system. The Kuomintang [Guomindang] and the Nationalist Army have not at any time shown any attitude of anti-foreignism, but there has been a certain foreign hostility towards us, and this has brought about a natural resentment. . . . *Let me assure you that when the Nationalist government achieves success everybody will enjoy the benefits to which they are entitled, you citizens of foreign powers as well as the Chinese people.* (CWR 38, 345; emphasis added)

Exploiting the praise earned by Northern Expedition triumphs and the party's relocation to Wuhan, top GMD officials pursued closer foreign ties. The same dynamics, however, inspired the opposite impulses among agitators eager to defeat imperialism once and for all. Popular organizations quickly filled the power vacuum left by retreating warlord regimes and central GMD offices abandoning Guangdong. In the resulting turmoil, local party authorities could not compete and struggled to institute administrative control. In Guangdong anti-imperialist labor unions took measures to restore the Anti-British Boycott and savaged each other in fierce battles between rival union factions, ignoring CEC calls for unity (FO 252, 68, 174–175). In Guling, anti-imperialists posted propaganda that trumpeted a coming war with Britain while Guangzhou activists published propaganda that claimed a war against all foreigners would begin as soon as Chiang Kai-shek captured Shanghai (FO 252, 120, 123).

Local party administrators in Guangdong strove to maintain revolutionary unity and enforce central mandates but faced challenges as well. Student reports from Yingde county complained about "party bandits" who rigged elections to win seats in local GMD organizations and then used their influence to attack student activists: "Although [district] executive

committee members, they went so far as to follow the example of the imperialists . . . , demonstrating that they completely disregard party principles" (ZYQ, 6675, 6673, 6674, 6678). Conditions outside Guangdong were no better. As Chen Gongbo reported about Jiangxi:

> The executive committee members in the Jiangxi party headquarters are quite naïve. . . . Although hardworking, the younger students . . . receive no respect or recognition from the people. Even senior comrades are reluctant to cooperate with them. I suggest reform to strengthen the party. It would be very dangerous if politics cannot develop along with the military. The party will die if we absorb speculators. *At present the party cannot unite the masses because we lack talented people and the mass movements are frequently in conflict with party policy.* (ZGLH, 1, meeting 3, Dec. 17, 1926; emphasis added)

Squabbles in Shanghai became so destructive that General Deng denounced party heads there before the CEC sent agents to settle disputes and institute reform (ZGLH, 1, meeting 74, Dec. 22, 1926).

With anti-imperialist agitation swelling and local party administrations sputtering, CEC authorities began to view agitation as a distinct liability. Officially the regime continued to support mass activism, warning the British-American Tobacco Company, for example, to hike wages or lose its factory. Nevertheless, mass organizations exacted a heavy price: sweeping strikes and boycotts inflated the cost of war supplies, reduced productivity and revenues, and disrupted transportation and communications. Strikes even hit the Hanyang Arsenal and the Chinese Telegraph Administration, inconveniencing the Nationalist government and undermining efforts to support NRA troops in the field (CWR 39, 51, 54). As Chen Gongbo reminisced,

> There was nothing . . . that influenced the order and finances of the rear more than the strikes. What the GMD needed there was stability, but what the CCP needed was strikes. . . . At first the CCP base in Wuhan was very weak so this tactic was necessary. Local order, stability and sources of revenue—those were the affairs of the GMD, not the concerns of the CCP. Therefore, due to the needs of the CCP . . . Wuhan, in its depressed market and its workers parading and petitioning all day, clearly manifested the disruption of order. (Chen, 1945: 103–4)

Chen's analysis—written in hindsight years later—separates CCP interests from those of the GMD. Given his own role in stimulating mass organizations, Chen's eagerness to blame the communists is somewhat disingenuous. His observation does, however, illuminate the problems that mass organizations created for the CEC.

Concerned that popular agitation jeopardized stability, weakened unity, and sabotaged foreign relations, top revolutionary leaders took more forceful action to dull agitation's sharpest edges. Soviet political advisor Karachev criticized Guangdong mass organizations because they looked past antiwarlordism and anti-imperialism to embrace selfish agendas rooted in the peasant and labor issues. On December 6, an emergency meeting of Guangzhou's Central Political Conference (Zhongyang zhengzhi huiyi) banned strikes affecting military manufacturing, finance, communications, public services, or "necessities" (FO 252, 152; CWR 39, 104; Wilbur and How, 1956: 377; Wilbur and How, 1989: 360). In response to merchant complaints, the conference also denounced "bad elements" (*buliang fenzi*) heading labor organizations and announced regulations prohibiting labor leaders from making arrests, staging demonstrations, carrying weapons, closing factories and shops, or confiscating goods (FO 252, 174–75, 375; CWR 39, 110, 206).

On the same day, in response to merchant threats to close all markets, Wuhan leaders established a special commission of representatives from labor unions, the chamber of commerce, the Labor Ministry, and government officials to institute strict GMD control over labor organizations (Wilbur and How, 1989: 360; Isaacs, 1956: 113–14). In Lushan, on December 7, top party officials—including Chiang Kai-shek, Borodin, Song Qingling, Sun Ke, Song Ziwen, Xu Qian, and Chen Youren—went further, voting to curb labor agitation outright. On December 13, CCP leaders added momentum to the drive against mass activism by deciding to curtail labor and peasant activity. Comintern leaders in Moscow concurred, resolving to submit popular mass movements to Nationalist direction instead of encouraging them to pursue their own specific agendas (Wilbur and How, 1956: 374, 376–77, 380–81). In Hunan, meanwhile, foreigners reported that the "strictest orders" must have been issued against anti-foreign violence because it had slowed considerably (FO 252, 144).

Despite these decisions, however, revolutionary leaders were still dependent on the cooperation of mass organizations, which did not come automatically. Checks notwithstanding, anti-imperialist demonstrations and strikes against missionary institutions, for example, still raged. In Jiujiang, anti-foreign NRA troops became so hostile that British and American Catholics had to be smuggled out by trusted converts (FO 252, 119–20, 169–70). In Fuzhou, attackers cleared out virtually every missionary institution. For their protection, foreign women and children were evacuated from Sichuan, Hunan, and Jiangxi. In other areas missionaries simply abandoned their posts (FO 252, 170–72; CWR 39, 138). Describing conditions

in Wuhan, a foreign report noted, "The officials in the Hankow [Hankou] district, anxious to make [a] good impression for the administration, have tried to prevent serious labor trouble from developing, but they have been powerless against the radical elements in the Kuomintang [Guomindang] who are bent upon causing all of the havoc possible" (CWR 38, 364).

"Havoc" even included open defiance of the government as demonstrated by an incident involving anti-imperialist strikes at Hankou's British and American Tobacco Company. In November, when foreign owners responded to strikes by deciding to close the factory, pickets retaliated by kidnapping five foreign employees. British officers threatened military action while American expatriates formed an armed posse. Undeterred, the strikers dug defensive trenches around the factory, leading to a showdown. Representing the GMD's provincial government of Hubei, Chen Gongbo eventually secured the hostages' release by promising the strikers that the government would nationalize the factory. When he reneged afterward, however, he had to pay a thousand dollars to silence further worker threats (FO 252, 108). A week later the NRA's General Political Department (Zong zhengzhibu) and Hubei provincial party headquarters (Hubei sheng dangbu) tried to defuse the standoff by ordering the strikers to return tobacco stores that they had confiscated. Nevertheless, as late as December 17, Song Ziwen still had to report that not only had the strikers failed to return the seized tobacco, they had even captured the company representative sent to receive it. Irritated, Borodin ordered that the union leaders next time explain their actions to party authorities, but there was little else he could do. Mass organizations still operated outside the control of the party (ZGLH, 1, meeting 3, Dec. 17, 1926). Apologizing to foreign representatives, Nationalist foreign affairs officials could only blame the labor union and continue to seek a solution (FO 252, 109).

Anti-Imperialism Reinstated: Southern Expedition Threats

To preserve warming foreign ties and avoid provoking the powers, central revolutionary authorities took steps to minimize anti-imperialist parades, demonstrations, and strikes. In mid-December, however, shifts in China's political climate dissolved all incentive for maintaining an accommodative approach and presented the Wuhan regime with a new threat. Impetus came from the north. Alarmed at rising GMD prospects, northern warlords joined forces. This in turn, roused anti-GMD British officials,

sinking revolutionary efforts to secure international recognition. Worse still, newspapers claimed that Hong Kong interests had offered the warlord Fengtian regime in Beijing £5,000,000 to finance a "Southern Expedition" to roll back the Northern Expedition and drive the Nationalists from Hubei (FO 252, 250; CWR 39, 26, 81).

On December 15, Borodin presented a plan of counter-action for CEC approval. On one hand, he argued for keeping channels with Britain open via continued negotiations and Ministry of Foreign Affairs guarantees to protect British lives and property. On the other hand, he asked party leaders to excite popular anti-imperialist forces. Recommending specific changes in propaganda, he declared, "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must ensure that the people of China and Britain understand the mutual benefit of Sino-British relations and the fact that *the British government has rejected an understanding that would benefit both sides in favor of escalating danger*" (ZGLH, 1, meeting 1, Dec. 15, 1926; emphasis added).

Anti-imperialist forces did not need to be prompted twice. The very next day popular groups in Hanyang hosted a meeting of the hastily organized Anti-British/Fengtian Movement that attracted no less than 150 organizations. Delegates resolved to form propaganda corps to acquaint Chinese "with the insulting tactics of the British Imperialists in enticing [northern] troops southward" (CWR 39, 134). On December 17, Borodin called for stronger ties with the "people," broader reach of propaganda, and deeper media coverage to spread revolutionary views and foreign policy announcements (ZGLH, 1, meeting 3, Dec. 17, 1926). That same day, NRA troops began regular marches through the foreign concessions in Hankou. British barricades diverted the soldiers through back roads but increased tensions in the process. Given a green light by the government, anti-imperialist activism soared. Fueled by violent anti-British speeches by Borodin and Sun Ke, huge demonstrations erupted in Hankou on December 19 and 20 (FO 252, 302; CWR 39, 136; ZGLH, 1, meeting 3, Dec. 17, 1926). Meeting with foreign journalists, Chiang Kai-shek recounted GMD intentions to nullify the unequal treaties, expel all foreign troops and naval units, cancel all port leases to foreigners, regain sovereignty over tariffs, and take control over all missionary institutions (FO 252, 72–73; CWR 39, 89). In Changde, Nationalist officials demanded Tls30,000 from foreign merchants, arrested Chinese employees of foreign firms, and closed a Japanese match factory. In Hankou, leaders and delegates representing the Grand Alliance of Peasants, Workers, Merchants, and Students (Nonggong shangxue dalianhehui) began coordinating anti-British activities. In Jiujiang, meanwhile, strike announcements and a propagandist's arrest sparked demonstrations

so large that foreign authorities had to land marines to shore up the British concession's defenses (FO 253, 325; CWR 39, 47, 134, 137, 166).

On December 22, the overwhelming response of anti-imperialist organizations prompted Borodin to refine his approach, adding that the party must continue to encourage anti-imperialism but must also make sure that events unfolded as a series of popular demonstrations rather than as a nationwide movement headed by the GMD headquarters. He then cautioned that local leaders must "avoid activities that might lead to conflict" or skirmishes. As soon as he had taken steps to reduce the Nationalist's liability, however, Borodin pulled all stops, arguing that anti-imperialist propaganda and demonstrations must highlight that "the foreign concessions have become the headquarters of anti-revolution and therefore represent a trap. . . . The people's revolution must destroy this trap. Therefore, there is an increasing need to recover the concessions" (ZGLH, 1, meeting 4, Dec. 22, 1926).

In the following two weeks popular anti-imperialist organizations hammered mission institutions and foreign concessions. On Christmas day demonstrators swarmed missionary institutions in Hankou. Propaganda alleging that Catholic orphanages dug out the eyes of dead children for medicine spawned widespread violence, forcing the Wuchang dispensary to close. NRA troops in Wuchang seized the Catholic mission's high school, church, and convent; others in Huangshi took the convent, school, and hospital while the local peasants association (*nongmin xiehui*) seized Franciscan properties. Nationalist troops and mass activists ransacked and looted missionary institutions and residences in Nanchang, Jiujiang, and Wuhu. Riots in Ningbo attacked mission properties and wrecked churches, burning and tearing up Bibles and hymnals in the process (Yip, c. 1980: 68; CWR 39, 136; Breslin, 1980: 54). On December 26, the Great Citizens of Wuhan Anti-British Movement Conference (Wuhan shimin fanying yundong dahui)—a federation of over two hundred mass organizations representing some one hundred thousand people—announced its resolve to destroy British "conspiracies" (ZGLH, 2, meeting 6, Dec. 27, 1926).[4] Hankou anti-Christian groups called for a boycott of British goods and seizure of the British concessions. On December 29, the GMD press published scathing criticisms of British imperialism. On January 1, the day the Nationalist government officially recognized Wuhan as its new capital, Nationalist papers lashed out at Britain's "policy of aggression" and exclaimed that the imperialists were digging their own graves (FO 253, 51; CWR 39, 137–38, 166).

Surging anti-imperialism produced quick results. On January 1, 1927, Chinese Christian leaders in Wuhan renounced imperialism, declared allegiance to the GMD regime, and ordered missionaries opposing the revolution to leave China (Lutz, 1988: 222–23; Yip, c. 1980: 68). On January 4,

massive crowds of anti-imperialist demonstrators forced the British to withdraw from the Hankou concession. Three days later crowds also overran the British concession in Jiujiang (Munro-Faure, 1989; FO 252, 167–68; FO 253, 115–18).

Within a matter of weeks, anti-imperialist agitation had tipped the balance of power in favor of the GMD. Despite its refusal to acknowledge the revolutionary regime in Wuhan, Britain was forced to open negotiations to settle affairs vis-à-vis the lost concessions. Meanwhile, shifting Chinese Christian loyalties caused missionaries to drop their support for the unequal treaties. Borodin's tactics had worked remarkably well. At the same time, however, they had convinced Britain to begin pouring military might into Shanghai to guard against further popular uprisings there. Anti-imperialism justified British military buildups aimed at protecting British nationals and interests. Foreign troops on Chinese soil, in turn, stimulated mass organizations' fury against "gunboat imperialism." With both forces surging at and provoking the other, CEC leaders found themselves again scrambling to keep the two sides apart, pitting revolutionary nation-state-building interests against popular anti-imperialism.

Eager to avoid war and preserve what advantages they had gained, the CEC again decided to bridle anti-imperialism. Popular revolutionary fervor was still building steam, fed in part by rumors that the Nationalists would soon take revenge on all foreigners (FO 252, 170). Nevertheless, on January 5, when anti-imperialist leaders sought government permission to seize more concessions and launch a general strike protesting Britain's troop buildups, Borodin rejected the petition, claiming that continued disruption would refute party claims that it had things under control. Explaining his decision to other Nationalist leaders, he exclaimed, "No general strike should be launched at this time for should the concession fall into our hands it would be tantamount to opposing ourselves. If we cannot secure it [via negotiation], then we can reconsider at that point." Evidently convinced, the CEC ordered all labor and merchant organizations to return to business as usual (ZGLH, 2, meeting 10, Jan. 5, 1927). On January 7, further instructions ordered all provincial GMD officials to protect British lives and property. Three days later, official GMD pronouncements began urging restraint, using slogans such as "rigorous people's discipline!" (*yanmi de qunzhong jilü!*) (ZGLH, 2, meeting 11, Jan. 10, 1927).

Inflammatory anti-imperialist statements from top party officials abruptly stopped. On January 12, Nationalist military and civil officials greeted enormous and enthusiastic crowds at the Hankou race course. Addressing the throng, Chiang Kai-shek urged all present to (1) unite to

better support the revolution and government, (2) obey government mandates, and (3) join and follow the GMD. Russian leaders echoed the theme of "unity." It soon became clear, however, that what Chiang and others meant by "obedience" and "unity" was a reduction in anti-foreign activism (CWR 39, 216). In Fujian, authorities promising to protect foreign interests shot a dozen agitators for robbery and rumor-mongering, reducing anti-foreign molestations (FO 252, 458–59; FO 253, 112). In Guangdong, General Li Jishen was appointed Labor Bureau chief (Gongrenbu buzhang) after party leaders argued that military power could more effectively keep labor disruptions under control. Guarding key junctures, Huangpu cadets soon slowed anti-British activity (CWR 39, vi [Jan. 8, 1927], 212, vi [Jan. 29, 1927]).

Despite these efforts, anti-imperialism still blazed in certain hot spots. In Fuzhou, for example, anti-Christian propaganda spread sensationalized stories of murder and cannibalism at a Spanish Dominican orphanage, inciting popular calls for a general "massacre" of all Chinese and foreign Christians. On January 15, crowds and Nationalist Seventeenth Army troops attacked and looted the orphanage, driving out children, novices, and missionaries alike (Lutz, 1988: 216; Yip, c. 1980: 67; FO 252, 457; FO 253, 112). Within days popular anti-Christian organizations and Nationalist troops—sometimes former northern warlords and bandits who had defected to the revolutionary side—systematically looted all mission properties in Fuzhou, including the YMCA, the Central Institutional Church, three mission hospitals, the Girls School, the Dominican orphanage, and the homes of American Board Mission missionaries. General He Yingqin—the GMD's chief military officer of Fuzhou—issued strict orders protecting foreign lives and property. Nevertheless, foreign confidence was shaken. American families evacuated to the Philippines while British missionaries congregated in the treaty ports (FO 252, 457–59; FO 253, 112).

Guangzhou anti-imperialists threatened even greater destruction. Local revolutionary propaganda inflated accounts of the events leading up to the concession takeovers in Hankou and Jiujiang, portraying them as imperialist-led "massacres" that required avenging (FO 252, 275, 280). Labor unions and NRA troops responded by planning attacks on the Shamian concession. Nationalist police broke up planning meetings, but not before British and French authorities warned that any move against the concession would be met with "vigorous defense" and that "Hankou tactics" would not work this time. American and Japanese consuls issued similar threats, announcing that a mass attack on Shamian would end their "neutrality." Undeterred, popular anti-imperialist forces began preparations for a massive anti-British rally to be held January 15. Intervening, the GMD Ministry of Foreign Affairs

assured foreign consuls that no disturbances would be allowed and ordered organizers to postpone the rally. The protest did transpire on January 16, but passed without incident because the demonstrators were not allowed to approach Shamian or any foreign enterprise. Reporting to his superiors, British consul J.F. Brenan offered three explanations for this "fortunate" turn of events: (1) British promises to defend Shamian were backed up by sufficient naval support; (2) the Americans and Japanese intimated that they would not stand by idly; and (3) the Nationalist government ordered that local officials "allow no trouble with the foreigners" (FO 252, 275–76, 280).

In Guangzhou, Nationalist authorities averted an international incident because they possessed muscle beyond mass organizations themselves and could use troops to enforce their directives. However, in other locations farther north, left in the wake of advancing Northern Expedition front lines, party leaders had limited access to troops, still struggled to consolidate power, and had to rely on less-reliable sources of force, such as popular revolutionary organizations. Once again, however, agitative forces were difficult to manage. CEC and provincial officials instructed all military and political leaders to urge restraint and "exert every possible effort to prevent untoward events" that might give British troops cause to act (Chesneaux, 1968: 351; CWR 39, 288–92). By February the CEC had an even greater reason to restrain popular agitation. After fruitful negotiations, the British signed agreements on February 19, transferring the Hankou concession to GMD control. In Jiujiang they went even further, agreeing to dissolve the concession outright and transfer its assets to the Nationalist government.

Meanwhile, NRA troops made ready to march on the lower Yangzi. The battle for Shanghai, however, represented far more than a conflict between revolutionary and warlord forces. Anti-imperialist activists such as the CCP's Tan Pingshan urged students and workers to "shatter the prestige of the foreigners" and tear the unequal treaties to "shreds" (FO 252, 83, 306). Others with the All-China General Labor Union (Quanguo zonggonghui) denounced compromise with the powers and urged resistance against "imperialist attacks" (Chesneaux, 1968: 347). Meanwhile, the concessions in Shanghai had positioned thousands of foreign troops to guard against demonstrators and disruptions. Caught in the middle were CEC officials who needed the support of popular organizations, but also looked "askance at any move on the part of the radical element to create disorder" (CWR 40, 118). Disorder threatened disaster should anti-imperialist agitation prompt the foreigners to intervene in favor of northern warlord troops.

Circumstances did not bode well for CEC control. From February 19 to 24, hundreds of thousands members of the Shanghai General Labor Union

(Shanghai zonggonghui) launched a general strike (CWR 40, 18; CWR 39, 347, vi [Jan. 29, 1927]; Wilbur and How, 1956: 328). On February 28, the All-China General Labor Union launched its own one-hour general strike among two million workers in seven provinces to protest foreign troop buildups (Chesneaux, 1968: 347). In Wuhu, a rally of thirty thousand welcomed NRA troops with fiery speeches denouncing foreign troops in Shanghai, provoking attacks against foreign establishments and driving off foreigners before Nationalist forces dispersed the crowds. Guangzhou anti-imperialist groups raged against foreign-controlled institutions such as the post office, which still employed a half-foreign, half-Chinese administrative system. Lingnan University and the American Presbyterian Pei Ying (Pui Ying) School endured disruptive outbreaks, but the John G. Kerr Hospital, the Hua Ying (Wah Ying) Middle School of Foshan, and the Trinity College of Guangzhou all had to close (CWR 40, 87; CWR 39, 288, 319). In Hangzhou, demonstrators closed a British hospital before putting all British nationals to flight. In Chongqing, a protest of ten thousand forced foreigners to hide indoors. In some areas, the CEC successfully calmed mass activity. In Shanghai, however, it did not have the leverage (FO 253, 113, 163).

On March 12, as NRA troops approached the Yangzi delta, popular agitation exploded. Shanghai-Nanjing Railway mechanics struck in Wusong. Three days later Shanghai-Hangzhou line engineers joined as well, disrupting warlord communications. On March 21, the arrival of vanguard NRA units triggered a General Labor Union general strike in Shanghai, labor uprisings against northern troops, sabotage that cut electricity and severed phone lines, and a takeover of the Jiangnan arsenal (Chesneaux, 1968, 356–57; CWR 40, 116). Armed popular forces attacked warlord police stations and northern army headquarters in Zhabei—the district directly adjacent to the foreign concessions. Fighting lasted through the night. To prevent anti-foreign attacks, NRA general Bai Chongxi ordered his troops to protect foreign lives and property. Concerned nonetheless, the Japanese landed fifteen hundred troops while the Americans added fourteen hundred marines. Fires burned out of control in Zhabei and stray bullets from the mêlée there peppered the international settlement. When mass organization forces gained the upper hand, panicked northern troops tried to flee into the concessions. British forces responded with gunfire, killing some sixty-five warlord troops and wounding scores more before taking about two thousand prisoners (CWR 40, vi [Mar. 26, 1927]). Despite the tinderbox conditions, however, no major international crisis erupted before General Bai's troops took control of Shanghai the next day. Popular organizations had provoked pitched battles near the concessions and foreign troops had

intervened, but neither had attacked the other as feared. Rather, both had confronted the revolution's northern warlord foes.

In Nanjing, however, events played out very differently. On March 24, while revolutionary forces routed Sun Chuanfang's armies, troops wearing GMD uniforms attacked foreigners, killing several. In response, nearby U.S. and British gunboats shelled the city. News of this "Nanjing Incident" and rising anti-imperialist sentiment associated with the use of gunboats panicked foreign missionaries (Breslin, 1980: 56). Some five thousand left China for good while another 2,500 gathered in the concessions of Shanghai and elsewhere. Within weeks only about five hundred remained in China's interior (Latourette, 1929: 820; Breslin, 1980: 51–52). The exodus represented a significant blow to the GMD's hopes for international recognition. The GMD needed favorable reports from missionaries that it was protecting foreign interests (CWR 40, 40, 118). Before the Nanjing Incident, party officials had asked missionaries to trust the government, promising to protect property and rights (CWR 39, 288, 319). Afterward, however, no amount of persuasion could keep them at their stations.

Anti-Imperialism Aimed Inward: Factional Intrigue

Who initiated the anti-foreign attacks in Nanjing has never been clearly established. Regardless, they transformed GMD/British relations by triggering foreign calls for intervention. Angered that the Nationalist government had reneged on its promise to protect foreign lives and property, critics insisted that British troops retake the Hankou concession (Yip, c. 1980: 74; FO 252, 477). In the words of one editorial, "It is time the Powers acted swiftly and severely to punish the wrong done at Nanjing and to teach [Nationalist leaders] that if we cannot prevent them from ruining their own countrymen, we can at least avenge the crime committed against ours" (*North China Daily News*, Apr. 2, 1927). Others demanded military action to restore British prestige or scoffed at GMD assurances of order (FO 253, 353, 345). At the core of all interventionist arguments was the question of whether the party would or could restrain anti-imperialism. As a British official claimed:

> The whole of the Yang-tse [Yangzi] Valley has now been submerged in the advancing wave of revolutionary and militant nationalism, and as the wave increases in size the puny figures of the Nationalist Government, riding like froth upon its crest, become, it seems to me, less and less able to control

> the storm and turmoil they have created. Labour runs riot, propaganda rages, and masterless armies overrun the countryside under the red flag of the Kuo Min-tang [Guomindang]. It is a strange and incalculable mixture of revolution, Bolshevism, youthful idealism and crime. . . . Neither [the GMD Minister of Foreign Affairs] nor anyone else here can for the moment control the forces of disorder let loose on the lower river. (FO 253, 315)

Hoping to mollify foreign animosity, GMD leaders responded with sympathy and more. CEC officials in Wuhan blamed the Nanjing Incident on "counter-revolutionary" schemers hoping to embarrass the party (FO 253, 291). Shanghai NRA commanders pledged to stop extremism, rejected suggestions that the attacks were part of a larger anti-imperialist strategy, and swore that diplomatic negotiations alone would determine the fate of the Shanghai concessions (CWR 40, 121–23). Official statements assured foreign interests that anti-imperialist organizations would not replicate in Shanghai the events of Hankou and Jiujiang. By mid-April, however, party guarantees were by no means assured. Shanghai anti-imperialist forces were stronger than ever. They controlled a military training center in Zhabei, had captured thousands of warlord weapons, had organized seventy-five new unions, and enjoyed the support of hundreds of thousands of workers and students (Chesneaux, 1968: 359, 362).

Given its energy and momentum, the anti-imperialist movement would have been difficult to bridle under the best conditions. In March, however, new tensions made the task even more onerous. Since the National Revolution's inception, top officials of all revolutionary factions had generally voted in unison when playing the popular-anti-imperialism card. Guided by larger nation-state-building concerns, Borodin and Chiang, more often than not, agreed to expand or limit popular organizations as necessity required. CEC announcements almost always advised caution: warnings against implicating anti-foreign incidents, support for negotiations, and assertions that anti-imperialism was the prerogative of the Nationalist government rather than the masses. By March 1927, however, rupturing relations between CCP/GMD left-wing leaders, represented by Wuhan's CEC, and GMD right-wing leaders favoring Chiang Kai-shek's military forces, again transformed dynamics between anti-imperialist and foreign interests. Right-wing leaders worried that left-wing Wuhan might encourage an anti-imperialist incident in Shanghai to provoke a foreign backlash against Chiang's nearby troops. At the same time CCP/left-wing leaders worried that Chiang might ally with Shanghai interests and the imperialists to counter-balance Wuhan's authority. As usual, anti-imperialist forces were viewed as a tool that could manipulate

the foreign powers. The difference this time, however, was that they had now become a weapon of factional strife.

Battle lines were drawn in early March at the Third Plenum of the Second CEC, when the leaders in Wuhan lifted restrictions on anti-imperialism. Borodin and other left-wing leaders denounced Britain's "trivial concessions" (*buzhongyan de rangbu*), troop buildups, aid to the north, and efforts to "devastate China's masses" (*cuican Zhongguo minzhong*). Pronouncements warned the Chinese people that "[Britain's] latest strategy is to claim that it supports the expectations of China's people and [will] cooperate with the backbone of the Nationalist revolution while only opposing the radicals. Obviously, this is a strategy to break up our revolutionary forces." Further statements attacked earlier efforts to negotiate with the powers and declared Wuhan's renewed support for mass organizations, described as the "foundation" for fighting imperialism (ZWQH-2, 1927). A CEC notice declared:

> We oppose those who are tired of revolution and who have compromised with imperialists. They are the enemies of the revolution. We shall point out their mistakes and crimes and overthrow them. . . . [Mass organizations] do not oppose the interests of the National Revolution but strengthen revolutionary efforts to overthrow imperialists, warlords, and all other reactionaries. . . . We must oppose efforts aimed at weakening mass movements so they can develop rapidly. . . . It is wrong for some people to believe that we can still succeed without helping the masses and without the support of oppressed people in other countries. . . . Those who believe this are in fact helping the imperialists and reactionaries. (ZWQH-2, 1927)

Wuhan's new objective—as scholars of Republican China have long argued—was to isolate Chiang by declaring treasonous all "unsanctioned" contact with foreign or warlord interests. Third Plenum pronouncements justified the shift, claiming that "individual will" (*geren yizhi*) had supplanted "party will" (*dang de yizhi*) and that politics had fallen "more under the control of the army than under the control of the party" (ZWQH-2, 1927). With Wuhan using anti-imperialist forces as a counter-balance to right-wing military influence, Chiang and his supporters took a dim view of mass organizations. Eager to preempt another anti-foreign incident that might embroil his forces with foreign troops, Chiang attacked (FO 252, 112). The perpetrators behind the Nanjing Incident may have remained obscure but agitators in Shanghai were not. They caught the brunt of right-wing repression. Popular forces were ordered to give up their arms while right-wing leaders organized an anti-Communist labor union. Then, on

April 12, Chiang ordered attacks on all communists. On one level, this infamous purge sought to expunge from the National Revolution all CCP and Russian influence. At the same time, however, it also aimed to dismantle popular anti-imperialist groups in Shanghai. From there, the destruction of mass organizations spread. In Guangzhou, anti-imperialists planning to overrun the Shamian concession, or at least create another incident when foreigners defended it, were scattered by right-wing troops. Schools and student unions in Shantou, Changsha, Chengdu, and Chongqing were also "cleansed" (FO 253, 346–347, 481; Li, 1966: 629, 666, 669, 702). During all of these brutal right-wing attacks, precautions were taken to ensure the safety of foreigners. No Chinese were allowed to approach Shamian and Hong Kong steamers were advised to anchor away from the wharves so anti-imperialist forces could not engage them (FO 253, 347). By April 16, the minister of Foreign Affairs representing the Nanjing regime could write to the Guangzhou British consul that the Nationalist government had swept away "disorderly elements planning unlawful activities" and could take full responsibility for the protection of foreign life and property (FO 253, 351).

Repression shut down anti-imperialist activity in right-wing areas. Content that Shanghai and Guangzhou were both secure, the foreign powers turned their attention to Wuhan. Foreign gunboats dropped anchor at Hankou, prompting Wuhan to reconsider its position. On April 23, the Wuhan CEC denounced Britain's "imperialistic" posturing but then dramatically reversed its rhetoric. Instead of encouraging the anti-imperialist masses to action, the regime warned against any activity that might provoke foreign intervention or provide a pretext for war. The next day the Hubei General Labor Union (Hubei zonggonghui) issued its own declaration, reiterating the CEC's premise that anti-foreign incidents must be avoided at all costs while adding a series of regulations and penalties for disobedience. To minimize the chance that hostilities might break out accidentally, CEC leaders set up ad hoc committees charged with seeking out and repressing "counter-revolutionary activities"—now defined as anti-imperialist acts that might incriminate the regime. Strict regulations governed all mass organizations and their conduct. Wuhan CEC leaders even met with representatives from missionary societies to arrange the return of schools, churches, and residences seized in anti-imperialist episodes and expelled troops living in foreign-owned buildings. Under a cloud of regime disapproval, anti-Christian and antiforeign agitation faded (Chapman, 1928: 133–36).

Within weeks, the Wuhan CEC had launched its own purge of CCP and Soviet influence while protecting foreign nationals and restraining anti-imperialist forces. In June, Wuhan circulated notice to all GMD members

arguing for the protection of missionary schools and churches, noting that such institutions "have their own value," that "religion is permitted by law," and that "the government protects Catholic and Protestant churches" (Wan, 1927: 5–6). Regime oversight minimized anti-imperialism and stabilized foreign relations, but left popular mass organizations shaken and bitter. Many viewed the purges as antimass events (Rea, 1977: 66). Troubled by rising popular hostility, right-wing party leaders took steps to justify their sudden disinterest in anti-imperialism and its champions. Communism emerged as the perfect scapegoat. Decrying alleged Comintern plots to seize control of the National Revolution and China's sovereignty, Nanjing authorities fingered an enemy far worse than even the imperialists—one so insidious as to necessitate the bloody purges of mid-April and the continued repression of popular organizations, the alleged basis of CCP power.

Conclusion: Anti-Imperialism Disengaged

Chiang's white terror coup has long been described as a reactive attack aimed at securing his own power by destroying CCP and Soviet influence. Basically this is an apt portrayal. However, the purge also represents the logical culmination of a complex interplay between the National Revolution's anti-imperialist and nation-state-building agendas. Shifting emphasis between one and the other, CEC officials were able to pressure foreign interests, push them to the negotiating table, make good on promises to maintain stability, win foreign sympathy, and, in the end, compel foreign offers to rewrite the treaties. The approach succeeded because revolutionary leaders of both countries (the Soviet Union/China), both parties (CCP/GMD), and both factions (left/right)—from Chiang to Borodin—responded to foreign relations in a very similar fashion, releasing anti-imperialist forces, keeping them on a short leash while threatening to release them, or curbing their activities altogether. Borodin, as well as Chiang, could expand anti-imperialist agitation, limit its excesses, or show frustration when it refused to comply.

This collaboration led Brenan to conclude in March 1927 that individual revolutionary actors could act either "extreme" or "moderate," depending on circumstance and opportunity. It was also this cooperative relationship that allowed CEC leaders to secure significant nation-state-building foreign relations objectives. Anti-imperialism thrived, but was closely monitored by CEC authorities who used their influence to steer its impact. By the spring of 1927, when progress and pressures on the diplomatic front

required the demobilization of popular anti-imperialist forces, CEC leaders took steps to minimize it. Factional politics complicated a clean break with popular anti-imperialism, but in the long run helped justify—via anti-communist rhetoric—a reality long coming: anti-imperialist agitation had fulfilled its purpose and would enjoy no further role in a modernity defined primarily by the needs of nation-state-building.

Notes

1. Literature on the Nationalist revolution emphasizes the two factions, left/right interactions, and/or a narrative defined by factional relations. Several works treat the Soviet involvement, including Brandt, 1958; Jacobs, 1981; Saich, 1991; North, 1963; Jiang Yongjing, 1972; Wilbur and How, 1989. Others concentrate on the CCP, including Meisner, 1967; Dirlik, 1989; Van de Ven, 1991; and Feigon, 1983. Still others examine the Nationalist revolution through the lens of the GMD right wing (see, e.g., Li Yun-han, 1966). Studies of parallel historical issues—such as Chesneaux, 1968; Marks, 1984; and Jordan, 1976—are also heavily colored by left/right factional divisions.

2. The only exceptions were personnel in technical or professional posts (ZXWH-2, 5, meeting 69, Nov. 13, 1926).

3. Concerned about student union problems, the CEC ordered the Youth Ministry to form Committees for Dissolving the Student Tide (*jiejue xuechao weiyuanhui*) at the local level. Weeks later, the committees were disbanded when GMD leaders determined that the "student tide has been quelled" (ZYQ, 1158, 1159, 7874, 7871, 1161, 1162.1, 1162.2, 1163.1, 1163.2).

4. CEC leaders were given full reports of activities.

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