

4 Ideas and Politics in Warlords' China

The CYP's National Socialist Movement, 1924–1937



Map 4.1 Important cities for the Chinese Youth Party's development after 1928 (Map of China in 1929). Marked areas were primarily controlled by the Nanjing GMD government (GMD), Guangxi clique (LI&BAI), Yan Xishan (YAN), Feng Yuxiang (FENG), and Zhang Xueliang (ZHANG). Unmarked areas were ruled by various individual or groups of warlords *Source*: Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009), 102

In early 1927, right before the arrival of the northern expedition of the GMD and CCP, Jiang Guangci wrote a novel based on the heroic struggles of the Chinese proletariat in Shanghai.¹ In the novel, titled *Sans-Culottes* (*duankudang*) after the impoverished revolutionaries of the French Revolution, Jiang caricatured the nationalists of the Chinese Youth Party (*guojiazhuyizhe*, CYP nationalists)² as organized reactionaries. Despite his Marxist black and white narrativization, however, Jiang provided us with an important clue to understanding the fractured nature of Republican China in the age of rising extremes, contested by various political forces with different radical ideologies. As he sarcastically termed it, the CYP nationalists excused themselves for working with Sun Chuanfang, a powerful Beiyang warlord. Yet, this sarcasm also meant that, just as the Communists found a convenient device in the armed Nationalist Party to achieve their proletarian revolution, the CYP nationalists also found solutions in other military powers to promote their own national socialist plebiscitarian revolution specific to the Chinese sociopolitical context. For them, some “warlords” of the north (*beiyang*), such as Sun Chuanfang, were not necessarily more vicious than the militarists in the south.³

¹ Jiang Guangci, “Sans-Culottes” (*duankudang*), originally published in 1927, in *Shaonian piaobozhe* [The Wondering Youth] (Zhuzhou, Hunan: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1998), 78–81.

² At its beginning, the CYP was often called “The Nationalist Group” (*Guojiazhuyi pai*). I will use “CYP Nationalist Group” to refer to *Guojiazhuyi pai* again to differentiate it from the GMD-Nationalist Party. To be clear: “Nationalists” here refers to the GMD members as commonly used. I will use “CYP nationalists” for the members of the Chinese Youth Party or the CYP Nationalist Group.

³ Previous scholarships tend to characterize the GMD and CCP as more legitimate political forces as compared to their warlord competitors. For example, see Hsi-Sheng Ch’i, *Warlord Politics in China, 1916–1928* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); Jerome Chen, *The Military-Gentry Coalition: China under the Warlords* (Toronto: University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre on Modern East Asia, 1979). Ch’i and Chen stand for the earlier modernization school, treating warlordism in general as an obstacle to China’s political modernization while giving credit to the Nationalist and Communist parties to different degrees. According to Ch’i, the Nationalist Party is the only example showing the power of political ideology among the established military factions after 1923. Chen treats the alliance of the Nationalist and Communist parties in the early 1920s as a modern political force confronting warlordism, whose nature is a coalition of warlords and gentry. He also identifies the Nationalist Party’s turnover to a warlord-gentry power later as it broke with the Communists while incorporating the existing military-gentry powers into its governing structure. However, the problem is that, in the 1920s, the GMD and CCP were not necessarily seen better. For example, Liang Qichao worried about China’s future in front of the Northern Expedition of the GMD and CCP. Also, Zhang Taiyan claimed that those who abandoned the Five Colored Flag and thereby declared to establish a party-state are all traitors of the republic. See Jiang Yihua, *Zhang Taiyan pingzhuan* [On Zhang Taiyan] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002), 264. In this context, the CYP founders did not

The CYP founders represented by pseudonyms in Jiang's novel were the Chinese vanguards of global national socialism in challenging communism and capitalism. To achieve a national socialist revolution between 1924 and 1937, the CYP founders strove to mobilize, discipline, and incorporate mass support through its organized political operations while seeking warlord allies. It is true that the CYP founders were intellectuals, because they were mostly professors or journalists, including its most important five – Zeng Qi, Li Huang, Zuo Shunsheng, Chen Qitian and Yu Jiaju. However, in contrast with our general understanding about intellectuals who fight only with their pens, the CYP founders also fought through actions – even military actions – preparing the way for the CYP's subsequent development in various regions throughout this era.⁴

Specifically, in its first phase the CYP developed well in the middle and lower Yangtze regions.⁵ As the National Revolutionary Army advanced northward from Canton (starting in 1926), the CYP expanded its influence even further into north China, Manchuria, and Sichuan in different periods. As a result, just as one CYP leader claimed in late 1929, the CYP nationalists had caused influential mass political movements around China.⁶ Furthermore, in December 1930, according to a report of the GMD, the CYP members were dangerously influential in north China.⁷ If that were really the case, what then created this paradoxical situation, when the CYP expanded so rapidly while facing harsh persecution by the GMD? The answer concerns the specific character of mass party struggles in the scattered spaces of republican China, defined by

consider that they had chosen to work with more vicious military powers in their competitions with the GMD and CCP.

⁴ For example, according to Edmund Fung, the CYP contributed to democratization between 1937 and 1949 while working inside the established political system as an opposition party but does not treat it as very important due to its "limited political clout." (See his "The Alternative of Loyal Opposition: The Chinese Youth Party and Chinese Democracy, 1937–1949," 261.

⁵ Yi Jun, "Guojiazhuoyi tuanti liangnianlai de gongzuo [On the CYP Nationalist Groups during the Past Two Years]," *Xingshi*, no. 105 (1926), 24–27.

⁶ See Chen Qitian, "Minguo shi'ernian dao xianzai de guojiazhuoyi yundong [The CYP Nationalist Movements Since 1923 until Today]," 1929 and in *Zhonghua mingguoshi dang'an ziliao huibian vol. 5 ed. 1 zhengzhi 2* [Compiled Materials of Republican China, vol. 5 ed. 1 Politics 2], ed. Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'anguan (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991), 890–891. As examples of the Youth Party's organizational network, Chen cited the affiliated political groups in Beijing, Henan, Sichuan, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Anhui, Guangdong, Yunnan, and even in Japan, the United States, and France.

⁷ Ibid., Jia Yi, "Qing fangzhi guojiazhuoyipai huodong cheng [To Prevent the Activities of the CYP Nationalist Group]," 1930, in *Zhonghua mingguoshi dang'an ziliao huibian vol. 5 ed. 1 zhengzhi 2*, 912.

the transformed party-military relations since the mid-1920s. As regionalized warlords' forces were empowered in place of the fragmented civil political authorities,⁸ and their civil wars intensified to cause further nationalist passions,⁹ it was in the ideological visions and political movements of mass political parties that the civil-military relations were reformed to combine with different ideological principles, including the CYP's national socialism.

This chapter explores the ideas and politics of the CYP in warlords' China through three sections. The first section examines the CYP's adaptation of national socialism to China, which made it easier for educated Chinese youth to embrace in the post-May Fourth years. The second and third sections delve into the CYP's attempts to forge favorable political environments, specifically by its bottom-up mass political movements and top-down collaboration with certain leading warlords. As the ideology-driven mass political parties and military powers arose together to reframe the structure of the Chinese state, the CYP offered an alternative model on the radical right in competition with the CCP and GMD: For the CCP, the party-dictated army was an internalized component for achieving the Communist revolution; for the GMD, the militarist party domination was a precondition for constitutional governance. In contrast to both, the CYP formed collaborative party-military relations for its plebiscitarian revolution between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s.

Chinese National Socialism

In mid-1924, Zeng Qi and Li Huang returned to China. As they set out to mobilize the revolutionary Chinese youth in Shanghai, they were supported by a wide array of intellectuals and students on the ascending radical right. As explained in the last chapter, the CYP was founded in Paris partially because of the intensified internal struggles of the Young China Association between the CYP nationalists and the Communists. Therefore, when Zeng Qi stayed in Shanghai guiding the CYP's general affairs and Li Huang taught at Wuchang University in Wuhan responsible for developing the CYP in central China, they were also supported by their comrades within this association. Chen Qitian and Zuo Shunsheng, for example, worked as editors at Zhonghua Book

⁸ See Edward McCord, *The Power of Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

⁹ See Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924–1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Company (*Zhonghua shuju*). With their aid, the CYP could establish its first flagship journal, the *Awakening Lion Weekly* (*Xingshi zhoubao*), in October 1924.

Besides them, the CYP also secured support from leading intellectuals of the older generation. Among them were Zhang Taiyan and Liang Qichao. Although Zeng Qi did not study with them directly, he identified himself as their student through close individual contacts. In fact, upon Zeng's request, Zhang Taiyan presented him with a beautiful calligraphy of *Xingshi* for having it as the front cover of the *Awakening Lion*,¹⁰ and later also helped contact other prominent intellectuals, politicians, and military officers to support Zeng as Zeng engaged in undercover political activities.¹¹ Likewise Liang praised the CYP's revolutionary vitality, though also cautioned their fascist traits at the same time.¹² While Liang did not lead them – as urged by the young CYP leaders – his son, Liang Sizhong, joined the CYP upon his graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point in the early 1930s,¹³ partially demonstrating Liang's good relationship with them.

Furthermore, the CYP's projects were sustained by other nationalist intellectuals and students, such as Chen Bulei of *Commercial Daily* (*Shangbao*), He Gonggan and Sa Mengwu of the Solitary Army Society (*Gujunshe*), and Luo Longji and Liang Shiqu of the later Great River Society (*Dajiangshe*), as well as some of the later rightist Western Hill faction members of the GMD. By having these individuals within its political circles, the CYP not only expanded its organizational networks in both China and abroad, but also found eloquent contributors to its publications and secured occasional financial support in the mid-1920s. In fact, because of their support, the *Awakening Lion* expanded its scale significantly. According to Zuo Shunsheng, its circulation soon

¹⁰ Zuo, *Wanzhulou suibi*, 294–295.

¹¹ See transcribed letters from Zhang introducing Zeng to merchants and intellectuals in Hong Kong and Canton, as well as to the militarists of Guangdong and Guangxi in Box 6 and Box 7, in Zeng Qi Papers, No. 2010C27, Hoover Institution Archives (Zeng Qi Papers, hereafter). For example, see his letter to Lu Pengshan in Hong Kong and Huang Qiguang in Canton (probably in December 1928) in Box 6.

¹² “Liang Rengong nianpu changbian chugao [The Chronicles of Liang Qichao]” in *Zhongguo qingniandang* [Chinese Youth Party], ed. Li Yibin (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1982), 200.

¹³ Zhu Wenbo, “Liang Sizhong,” *Zhongguo qingniandang xunguo sinan ji yigu tongzhi luezhuan* [Brief Introduction of Comrades of the Chinese Youth Party Who Died for the Country], ed. Zhongguo qingniandang zhongyang zhixing weiyuanhui xuanchuanzu (Taipei: Xielin chubanshe, 1972), 175–177. According to Zhu, Liang Sizhong joined the CYP through Zeng Qi's reference. Zeng expected him to be one of the CYP military leaders, and therefore was heartbroken upon his death in 1932 from an unexpected illness.

amounted to about 8,000–9,000 issues a week.¹⁴ And within a year, as addressed by Xiao Chunü, its sales might have reached 18,000 a week,¹⁵ demonstrating its rapid expansion. As a result, they were able to reach a large number of the Chinese youth across China. How could they establish this influence? This is first related to the CYP's adaptation of national socialism to China, making it easier for the educated Chinese youth to embrace it in the wake of May Fourth.

Indeed, the Communists often called the CYP nationalists “fascists.” However, we have to make it clear that, although the CYP founders received influences from the national socialist movements in Europe, they were still the Chinese national socialists, maintaining some general characteristics as national socialists on the one hand and differentiating themselves from the Europeans on the other. By exploring the continuous ideological conversations between the CYP founders and Communists of the Young China Association, particularly through the *Awakening Lion* of Zeng Qi and *Chinese Youth* (*zhongguo qingnian*) of Yun Daiying, we can identify the CYP's ideological characteristics. With their spiritualist and idealist readings of the Chinese national past and present, the CYP members were surely radical nationalists. Yet, they were culturist rather than racist as to the constituencies of the Chinese nation, political intellectualist rather than proletarian syndicalist in causing actions in reaction to the development of industrial modernity, integral nationalist attached to a twisted federalism and corporatism rather than typical centralist in their vision of the Chinese state organizations.

First, in contrast with those radical European national socialists who often addressed the question of racial/ethnic purity/superiority in the interwar era, we can uncover the CYP's distinctive culturist stance in its calls to maintain Chinese nationality (*guoxing*) in its own ways. In this culturist stance, we can find the fundamental disagreements between the CYP leaders and the Communists despite the fact that they were all antiimperialist, particularly seen in the anti-Christianity movements in the 1920s. For the Communists, the rise of Christianity in China symbolized the drives of both the foreign imperialists and Chinese bourgeoisie to blind the Chinese proletariat and prevent them from recognizing the oppressive capitalist material conditions that might have otherwise encouraged them to fight more for their own class. Therefore, in *Chinese Youth* in late 1924, the Communists promoted a campaign to discredit Christianity, taking the religious activities of the churches

¹⁴ Zuo, *Wanzhulou suibi*, 294–295.

¹⁵ Xiao Chunü, “Shei jiao xingshipai ren xue Li Hanjun? [Who Asked the Xingshi Faction to Learn from Li Hanjun],” *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 86 (August 1, 1925).

during Christmas time as a good opportunity.¹⁶ The CYP leaders also antagonized Christians, but for the quite different motivation of their defensive culturalist interpretation of the Chinese nation. As Li Huang clarified, “nationalism” should be translated as *guojiazhuyi*, but not *minzuzhuyi*, because it is not unusual in a modern state (*guojia*) that “some nations (*minzu*) live in the same realm with one territorial sovereignty, maintain the same beliefs within an integrated culture, and share the same historical memories formed in their common long past.”¹⁷ Thereby, rather than a race-ethnicity based nation, Li Huang conferred the CYP with an orthodox nineteenth century European (particularly French) interpretation of nation via cultural integration and historical memorialization of all nationals of the state with the mutual consent of men of reason. By reframing the Chinese nation, space, and time as such, the CYP leaders were thus able to emphasize “nation” of *guojia* as an integrated one without differentiating the lineage-based racial/ethnic groups of *minzu*, and rationalized and supported the Chinese republic of the five nations (*wuzu gonghe*) retaining all the multiethnic and territorial legacies of the Qing empire. This was, therefore, different from Sun Yat-sen’s emphasis on one Chinese state out of a single Chinese nation, because for the CYP leaders – the Manchus and Uyghurs, for example – were standing side by side with the Han in difficult times (*huannan xianggong*) while confronting all the predatory external imperialists and internal oppressors in the historically and culturally integrated territorial realm of China; and so, the CYP’s national salvation was not only for the Han, but also for all others of the Chinese nation. It was then through the presentation of themselves as the vanguards of this defensive culturist (but not ethnic/racial) nation that the CYP leaders found cosmopolitanism (*shijiezhuyi*) inappropriate (*buheshiyi*)¹⁸ while demonstrating their “progressive” (*jimbude*) side through the conservatist terms when addressing Chinese intellectuals and students.

Nevertheless, in the same way as the nationalist representatives of all hegemonic races/ethnicities in modern nation-states, the CYP founders defined the cultural contents of the Chinese nation mostly based on the hegemonic Han Chinese traditional heritage, while rejecting the self-determination of the others in the territorial realm of the republic. For example, as to what formed the core elements of the cultural integration

¹⁶ “Fandui jidujiao yundong [On the Anti-Christianity Movement],” *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 56 (1924).

¹⁷ Li Huang, “Guojiazhuyi de zhengming [Clarification of Nationalism],” *Xingshi*, no.3 (1924).

¹⁸ See advertisement of Awakening Lion in *Shibao* (*The Eastern Times*), December 26, 1924, 1.

and historical memory of the Chinese nation, Chen Qitian suggested they could be Confucian “loyalty” (*zhong*) and “filiality” (*xiao*), when he explained how the CYP nationalists had risen to awaken the “lion” by restoring and readopting the Chinese national spirit.¹⁹ Alternatively, in Li Huang’s words, they could be Confucian universalist notions (*rujia de datongzhuyi*), including “one for all under the heaven” (*tianxia weigong*), but again expressed in terms of Chinese national history confronted with external barbarism.²⁰ Precisely because of this culturally conservative stance, Christianity and communism were both the enemies of the CYP, for the former demonized Chinese traditions in order to be more widely accepted and the latter discredited Chinese culture and history for the materialist interpretations of class conflicts.²¹ In the meantime, the CYP was also alarmed by the way both Russian and Japanese imperialists were exploiting the sentiment of separatism in Mongolia and Manchuria. Therefore, they were often enraged by the Chinese Communists who advocated self-determinations of ethnic minorities. For the CYP nationalists, with the shared historical and cultural heritages, the “Chinese nation” (*da zhonghua minzu*) was just as inseparable as the French and American nations. Hereby, “self-determination” really only meant the defensive demands of the “big nations” (*da minzu*) – that is to say, those sovereign states currently under foreign occupation, and was not at all intended as support for the separatist movements of these ethnic nations.²² Therefore, whether it was the restorationist interpretation of the Chinese emperor’s historical role in integrating the other four ethnic nations of the republic – like Kang Youwei – or the Communist emphasis on the independence of those ethnic nations as a necessary condition for the coming world proletarian revolution – such as Chen Duxiu – as far as the CYP members were concerned, they were all traitors to the Chinese nation.²³

Second, while both fascist syndicalism and Communist proletarianism in interwar Europe found critical sources of power in industrial workers, the national socialist CYP primarily targeted the educated class in China with its strong political intellectualism, congruent to the Chinese

¹⁹ Chen Qitian, “Xingshi yundong faduan [The Beginning of Awakening Lion Movement],” *Xingshi*, no. 4 (1925).

²⁰ Li Huang, “Guojiazhu yi de jianguo fangzhen [Principles of the State Building of the CYP Nationalists],” *Xingshi*, no. 48 (1925).

²¹ For example, see Yu Jiaju “Gongchandang yu jidujiao [The Communist Party and Christianity],” *Xingshi*, no. 29 (1925).

²² Hu Guowai, “Minzu zijue yu menggu duli [Self-Determination and Independence of Mongolia],” *Xingshi*, no. 41 (1925).

²³ Yugong, “Gongchandang yu fubidang [The Communists and the Restorationists],” *Xingshi*, no. 28 (1925).

traditional notion of the responsibility of gentry-scholars (*shiren*) for state affairs. This was why Yun Daiying (editor in chief of *Chinese Youth*) termed the contributors of the *Awakening Lion* as the incapable gentry-scholars for national salvation (*shidafu jiuguo*).²⁴ For the CYP founders, however, this intellectualism, reflected in its emphasis on the leadership of the educated class, was essential, because they found a different industrial reality in China as opposed to in western countries. They, therefore, believed in the capability of the educated youth in the construction of the Chinese state confronted by the western imperialists, as manifested in the mass political movements of the previous few years, particularly in the May Fourth movement.

The CYP founders were modernists, so different from the traditional Confucianists of the previous centuries who traced an idealistic world order in the long past and maintained the same sense of time on the linear development of industrial modernity as their European counterparts. Although they claimed that Chinese traditional culture was overall no worse than that of the Europeans' in materializing a modern nation state, they did recognize the significantly under-industrialized material conditions of China as compared to the European countries. Therefore, when they specified China's locus in the rise of the capitalist world between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, where different states had developed unevenly and competed unfairly, they found China's present in the Europeans' past, primarily in the German experiences in the early nineteenth century confronted by England and France. Therefore, as Li Huang passionately proclaimed, the CYP nationalists were advocates of protectionism through tariff autonomy and interventionism so as to help developing domestic industries, ideas initially formulated by Friedrich List.²⁵ In their national socialist claims based on the thoughts of Johann Karl Rodbertus and Ferdinand Lassalle, they thus contrasted sharply with the anarchists and Communists, who wished either to abolish all oppressive political organizations or to bring the proletarian world revolution against all established political organizations, by emphasizing the effective role of the state in redistributing wealth among different classes, as well as in strengthening the domestic industries to compete with other countries.²⁶ Finding an even more fractured present day China than Germany before its 1834 Customs

²⁴ Yun Daiying, "Guojiazhuyizhe de shiji xingdong [Actions of the CYP Nationalists]," *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 125 (1926).

²⁵ Li Huang, "Guojiazhuyi de jingjizhengce [Economic Policies of the CYP Nationalists]," *Xingshi*, no. 50 (1925).

²⁶ This was through the claims of Rodbertus and Lassalle. Ibid.

Union, the CYP leaders urged the foundation of a strong Chinese state with economic independence first. On whom did they believe they could rely at that time, when in China there was not yet a robust bourgeoisie class, let alone powerful groups of industrial workers? As Li Huang highlighted in 1925, to build the new Chinese state the CYP planned: (1) to establish the new beliefs of the Chinese nation through education; (2) to overthrow all evil political powers through a revolution; and (3) to materialize a plebiscitarian state through the patriotism of all Chinese.²⁷ For them, the leading force to carry out these plans could only be the unselfish, passionate, and patriotic educated Chinese youth (certainly including themselves), reflected in the CYP's official name, because they were intelligent enough to understand China's current crises and also capable enough to cause revolutionary actions.

To highlight the leading role of the educated youth, for example, Zeng Qi characterized May Fourth based on his own experiences as a leading activist in this movement.²⁸ According to him, May Fourth was particularly important among the recent mass political movements, because it gave significant momentum to the rise of radical student movements and thus created an important starting point for the emergent nationalist movements in the 1920s. For Zeng, this movement not only demonstrated the actions of exterminating internal oppressors and resisting external imperialist powers, but also exemplified the Chinese national spirit for the plebiscitarian collaboration without class differences. Indeed, the aforementioned five CYP founders were all active in this movement, and their actual experiences helped them establish the CYP's initial principles for noncompromise with internal oppressors and non-friendship with external imperialist powers. This stance broke sharply from the Communists of the *Chinese Youth*, who treated May Fourth as a turning point for the Chinese to understand the importance of international collaboration of all oppressed people around the world on the path to the Communist revolution.²⁹ Due to the CYP's emphasis on the leading role of intellectuals and students in national salvation, we can thus see its different attitudes in the May Thirtieth movement in 1925 confronted by warlordism and imperialism. The CYP leaders and the Communists all found hopes in May Thirtieth, but for the Communists, it reflected the ascendance of the Chinese proletariat,

²⁷ Li, "Guojiazhu yi de jianguo fangzhen."

²⁸ Zeng Qi, "Wusi jinian yu wujiu jinian [May Fourth and May Ninth]," *Xingshi*, no. 82 (1926).

²⁹ In terms of the Communist views, for example, see Liansheng, "Zeng Qi de chou biao gong [Zeng Qi's Ugly Manifestation]," *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 122 (1926).

and for the CYP leaders, it formed an important springboard to revitalize the young intellectuals (*zhishi de qingnian*) to lead the masses (*qunzong*).³⁰ With this belief in mind, the CYP founders officially declared in their first national congress in 1926 that the nationalists of the intellectual class (*zhishi jieji*) were determined to lead the masses to cause a plebiscitarian revolution and save the Chinese nation currently in crisis.³¹ Far from being marginal, the intellectuals and students were thus the central force of the Chinese popular front in their national socialist movement.

Third, as to the fundamental framework of the Chinese state, in contrast to the centralists of the GMD and CCP, the CYP members were integral nationalists, attached to a twisted federalism and corporatism specific to the Chinese sociopolitical context. Namely, while they were integral nationalists in the same way as their counterparts in Europe, particularly in France, prioritizing the protection and consolidation of the conventional territorial and national state irrespective of any individuals or classes, they also adopted this integral nationalism with a particular type of federalism, along with corporatist organizing principles to accommodate the vast regional differences, ethnic diversities, and fractured sociopolitical realities of China. How did they reach this political stance? The first is related to their concerns with their principled idealist (and realist) understanding of national community in sharp contrast to the materialist (and constructivist) interpretation of it by the Marxists and Anarchists. It was indeed through this interpretation the CYP leaders confirmed the validity of integral nationalism everywhere, including China. For them, "nation" was not a concept which had simply been constructed by the oppressors in order to exploit the oppressed materialistically, but rather a result of communities that had naturally developed over thousands of years. To justify this claim, Li Huang turned to the influential social scientific studies of that time – for example, Emile Durkheim, James George Frazer, and others on the totem societies in the early twentieth century world. Through their research, he traced the origin of political organizations of human beings to the spiritual needs and communal demands of the primitive societies.³² Although Li recognized the emergence of the exploitative privileged classes later on, for him, the French revolution and the subsequent nationalist movements in the nineteenth century in Europe established

³⁰ Li Guanqing, "Wusa yundong de yanjin [Evolution of the May Thirtieth Movement]," *Xingshi*, no. 85 (1926).

³¹ "Zhongguo guojiazhu yi qingniantuan diyici dui shiji xuanyan [The First Declaration of the CYP Nationalist Youth Corps]," *Xingshi*, no. 97 (1926).

³² Li Huang, "Guojiazhu yi da ke nan-1. Da wuzhengfu zhuyi [On Nationalism-1. To Anarchists]," *Xingshi*, no. 12 (1924).

not only the principles, but also the realities of the popular sovereignty based nations, where the quality of individual lives was tied closely to the prosperity of the national community. Therefore, for Li and other CYP nationalists, the concept of "nation" had been a historical reality in the past and was still the contemporary reality of the present.

With this integral nationalism in mind, the CYP founders thus advocated a plebiscitarian politics for all Chinese nationals, making individual and class interests subordinate to national interests. Therefore, as the CYP founders had taken plebiscitarian politics as faith in their political endeavor in China since 1924, the more they sought dialogues with their former YCA friends of the editorial team of the *Chinese Youth*, the more the two sides became enemies. Their parameters were completely different and, furthermore, uncompromisable. As shown in Zeng Qi's case, he was irritated when he found out Yun Daiying and Xiao Chunü were continuing to criticize the CYP founders for aiming to suppress the proletariat.³³ Zeng's irritation was indeed legitimate, but at the same time we have to be clear that the Communists did not criticize the CYP founders out of context, either. The problem was that the idealist (and realist) observation of the Chinese nation of the CYP leaders and the materialist (and constructivist) understanding of class conflicts of the Communists were a mutually unacceptable empty talk. As a result, when the CYP founders claimed to empower the Chinese proletariat through the unity of the Chinese nation, it seemed to the CCP leaders that the CYP ignored the essential interests of the proletariat.

How then specifically did the CYP aim to put this nationalist ideology into practice? For the CYP nationalists, it was through a plebiscitarian revolution, based on a twisted federalism of state unification with corporatist organizing principles for societal empowerment. Different from western Europe, there were no established liberalist political and economic orders to sweep away in a true national revolution. Rather, there was a weakened and fractured China ruled by various regional warlords. Therefore, instead of discovering Chinese national fragility in the liberalist decadence in liberalist democratic politics and capitalist economic development, they took Chinese warlords as well as foreign imperialists as their main target – both materialistically powerful but ideologically weak opponents. Consequently, unlike their European counterparts, they did not have to fight with the liberalists, including liberal socialists, over the interpretations of legacies of the French Revolution and the heritages of the subsequent republics. They therefore continued to treat

³³ Zeng Qi, "Gongchandang ying you de fanxing [The Necessary Reflections of the Communists]," *Xingshi*, no. 70 (1926).

them as the CYP's ideological reservoirs to materialize the true Chinese national spirit. It was in this political and ideological context that the CYP founders did not break apart from the May Fourth youth activism for social revolution completely, but rather turned their previous ideological explorations in local construction and associational movements into a special political path not to destroy, but to "restore" the Chinese republic, making it easier for Chinese educated youth to embrace their slogans in the post-May Fourth years. Therefore, regarding the GMD and CCP as traitors of the ideals of the 1911 revolution, the CYP proposed the founding of solid regional autonomies as the first step to realize their plebiscitarian revolution, creating the ideological grounds for the CYP members to collaborate with regional warlord forces at a later stage. In this revolutionary process, federalism based on solid local and provincial constructions existed as a practical method to unify and strengthen China, and corporatism based on occupational associational political participation was to train and empower the Chinese people to materialize the former.

In fact, federalism and corporatism were both fashionable thoughts in the 1920s, and thus not particular to CYP members. However, by incorporating these thoughts into their plebiscitarian revolution, the CYP offered a different vision of state unification and construction on the radical right compared to the GMD and CCP. In 1925, Li Huang formulated initial plans for the CYP on a federalist China based on local and provincial constructions.³⁴ According to him, China was so vast and diverse territorially that it made centralist unification unattainable. Therefore, as long as the Chinese aimed to achieve unification, it should start with local construction in the counties and with the collaborations of the well-governed counties; provincial autonomy for regional affairs should be achieved first. It was further through the alliance of the well-consolidated provincial polities that Li Huang urged the Chinese to promote state unification. How could these local and provincial polities be consolidated? For Li, the corporatist political organizing principles became crucial. Because, according to him, the region-based electorate system did not reflect people's diverse economic and social life, and a representative electorate body based on occupational associations and other social groups should therefore also be installed in order to achieve Chinese social empowerment.

As the CYP struggled with the GMD and CCP more intensely as from mid-1926, the CYP leaders officially advocated federalist unification and

³⁴ Li Huang, "Guojiazhu yi de jianguo fangzhen xu [Principles of the State Building of the CYP Nationalists, 2]," *Xingshi*, no. 49 (1925).

corporatist elections. For the CYP leaders, the essential problem of the GMD and CCP was their ignorance of China's complexities. Namely, the GMD and the CCP would overthrow the founding spirit of the Chinese republic based on the unity of five nations, and its attempts to establish party-state would hinder China's reintegration, due to the conflicts between their centralist revolutionary drives and the ethnic diversities/provincial differences.³⁵ To compete with the GMD and CCP, the CYP leaders specified their federalist visions further. For them, it was certainly undeniable that federalism contained potential separatist risks, but it was still a sound strategy to deal with the long-existing localism in China. Specifically, according to Chang Yansheng, federalism should be adopted in China's unification and construction process, because: (1) it prevents unnecessary civil wars; (2) it enhances people's political awareness through local affairs; (3) it develops real revolutionary forces rooted in people's local lives; (4) it establishes representative governments based on local people's will and in the extension of a central government based on a national will; and (5) it promotes local and provincial construction as the basis upon which to materialize the former four.³⁶ Among these, it is in item five we find the CYP's emphasis on the importance of corporatist organizing principles for social empowerment. Indeed, as Chang claimed, as the critical foundation to form a solid federalist central government, the representatives from local occupational and other social associations should take the lead to formulate a provincial constitution and to further consolidate provincial autonomy.³⁷ Why did the CYP members emphasize the corporatist principles? For them, there were already too many problems in the region-based electorate system based on the European experiences. For example, this system overlooked the diverse social and economic relations in modern societies and the dictating of capital and power in the established institutions. A corporatist electorate system was thus better for China as a method to avoid those problems. Citing Charles Benoist particularly, as Deng Shugeng highlighted, corporatist elections could help put the economy in order, solve social problems, and eradicate class struggles.³⁸

³⁵ "Zhongguo qingniandang zhenggang [Principle of the Chinese Youth Party]," *Xingshi*, no. 49 (1925), 16.

³⁶ Yansheng, "Lianzhi jiuguo de buzhou [Steps toward Federalist National Salvation]," *Xingshi*, no. 162 (1927).

³⁷ Yansheng, "Lianzhi jiuguo de buzhou 6 [Steps toward Federalist National Salvation 6]" *Xingshi*, no. 170 (1928).

³⁸ Deng Shugeng, "Xiandai falanxi de sige zhiyedaibiao zhuyi zhe [Four Corporatists in Modern France]," *Xingshi*, no. 162 (1927).

If simply based on these federalist and corporatist claims, it sounds to us that the CYP was just in favor of bottom-up political institutionalization and thus more democratic than the GMD and CCP. However, this was not the case. We have to make it clear that the CYP was revolutionary at least until the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War. It was indeed as authoritarian (or more extremely speaking, totalitarian) and militant as the GMD and CCP while it acted as a revolutionary party in the harsh political struggles in this era. Therefore, whenever the CYP members raised federalism and corporatism, there was a precondition: They must have been based on the ground of integral nationalism. All their visions and movements must have been for the communal demands of the Chinese nation – that is to say, its strengthening and unification. For this ultimate goal there had to be a strong national organization to order, guide, and coordinate the federalist movements and corporatist electorate institutionalizations.³⁹ Certainly, no one but the CYP could take this role, mirroring the contemporary Chinese regime today in the twenty-first century.

In the post-May Fourth years, the Chinese Youth Party presented itself as revolutionary and progressive to the Chinese youth on the radical right, utilizing the terms of national socialism. Yet, instead of emerging as a political force challenging both the conventional right (which did not exist in China yet) and the radical left, the CYP members came to stand for the voices and actions of the Chinese right with its culturalist, intellectualist, and integral nationalist stances specific to the Chinese political context. If the most distinctive character of “fascism” is “a synthesis of a new kind of nationalism and a certain type of socialism” for “a revolution of the spirit,” according to Zeev Sternhell,⁴⁰ the CYP members were undoubtedly so; but still, we have to be clear that they contributed to forging, but not rejecting, radical conservatism in their opposition to the Nationalists and Communists in China. Whatever type of radical they were, they were at least not fascists in the Italian and German sense, and we find neither a spiritualist sense of crisis rooted in the material conditions of industrializing societies nor a sharp hatred toward the established liberalist political order. Therefore, in the crucibles of the republic, there was only new order for them to found: an order resting on the historical legacies of the 1912 republic, substantiated by a varied form of national socialism. It is in this form of national socialism we find reconciliations, rather than tensions,

³⁹ Yansheng, “Lianzhi jiuguo de buzhou 2 [Steps toward Federalist National Salvation 2],” *Xingshi*, no. 165 (1927).

⁴⁰ Sternhell, *Neither Right Nor Left*, 5, 272.

between the totalities of tradition and modernity in the radicalizing political environment of Republican China in the 1920s.⁴¹

The CYP nationalists and the Communists of the Young China Association ended their friendship in 1925 due to their ideological and political conflicts. What Yun Daiying described reflected that ending process: At first he just found them too spiritualist, but that did not affect his general feeling toward them; in the following stage, he did not like their gentry-scholar salvationism, but still thought it possible to collaborate. In the end, he realized they were anti-Communist by all means, and had hoped they were true revolutionaries.⁴² For the CYP founders, however, they were already true revolutionaries working for the Chinese nation by means of their national socialism. By this decisive departure from each other, we see that mass party politics rooted in the Chinese intellectual and sociopolitical political context began.

Mass Political Movements

In order to materialize its national socialist revolution, the CYP engaged in a series of mass political movements, including the following four: (1) general student movements in the highly politicized academies; (2) the federalist Five Colored-Flag movements against the GMD; (3) the anti-imperialist movements against Britain, the Soviet Union, and Imperial Japan; and (4) the Movement for Recovering Educational Right. It was through these movements that the CYP established its image on the radical right.

Student Movements in the Politicized Academies

In the same way the leftists tactically staged radical student movements, the CYP nationalists also promoted their own in the highly politicized academies in Shanghai and Wuhan in the beginning. In Shanghai between 1924 and 1927, the CYP widened its support through its publications and organized operations among the radical youth.⁴³ Particularly Daxia University became an important institution for the CYP leaders, as Zeng Qi taught here while editing the *Awakening Lion*

⁴¹ Therefore, even if they were cultural conservatives, they were still not antimodern, just as Edmund Fung characterizes the cultural conservatives in general during the Republican era. See Fung, *The intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity*, 62.

⁴² Yun Daiying, "Ping Xingshipai [On the Awakening Lion Faction]," *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 76 (1925).

⁴³ Zeng, *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 3, 1555.

Weekly, and Zhang Mengjiu headed its Faculty of Arts.⁴⁴ By their collaborative efforts, the CYP leaders expanded the CYP's organizational networks at this university.⁴⁵ As a result, exactly as claimed by critical Communists, the CYP nationalists not only prompted the founding of the Daxia Youth Corps (*Daxia qingniantuan*), but also "manipulated" its university-wide student association, resulting in their overwhelming influence among the Daxia students and professors.⁴⁶ Another example was Xueyi University established in 1925. While this university was very small (as there were only some dozens of people present at the beginning), according to Guo Moruo, there were already three groups of students at this time: the CYP nationalists, the opposition group, and the neutral ones.⁴⁷ Guo was a Communist, but by his writing, we know the CYP nationalists were capable of mobilizing the intellectuals and students in the academic world of Shanghai. Specifically, as Cheng Cangbo's case shows, he was attracted by the appeals of the *Awakening Lion* when he studied at St. John's University in Shanghai in late 1924, and thus visited its editorial office along with his friends.⁴⁸ Also, according to Shen Yunlong (a well-known historian of modern China) Shen was inspired by the CYP founders nearby Shanghai before the arrival of the Northern Expedition Army in the lower Yangtze region, and subsequently joined the CYP's movements.

Besides Shanghai, Wuhan was also important for the CYP's initial development. The CYP nationalists in particular enhanced the CYP's fame among the radical youth through their struggles with the Communists at Wuchang University and the Chinese University (*zhonghua daxue*). Between 1924 and 1925, Yu Jiaju and Li Huang taught at Wuchang University. In competition with the Communists, Li Huang helped a group of students found the National Alarm Society (*Guoduoshe*).⁴⁹ Following Zeng Qi's directive, he then made this society affiliated with the CYP, guiding its leaders in the establishment of the CYP Nationalist Youth Corps in 1925 in the midst of the May Thirtieth

⁴⁴ Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 233.

⁴⁵ "Lu Deyin," in *Zhongguo qingniandang xunguo sinan ji yigu tongzhi luezhuan*, 202–203. Also, see Zhu Wenbo's experiences studying with Zeng Qi at Daxia University, "Wo yu muhan xiansheng (With Mr. Zeng Qi)," in *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji* vol. 3, 1624.

⁴⁶ Zaifu, "Shanghai Daxia daxue xuechao zhi yuanyin jiqi jieguo [The Causes and Results of the Student Movements at Daxia University in Shanghai]," *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 110 (1926).

⁴⁷ Guo Moruo, *Guo Moruo quanji* vol.12 *Moruo zizhuan* [Guo Moruo's Autobiography] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1992), 258–259.

⁴⁸ Cheng Cangbo, "Wo yu muhan xiansheng de jiaowang ji dui qingniandang de kanfa [My Contact with Mr. Zeng Qi and the CYP]," in *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 3, 1638.

⁴⁹ Li, *Xuedunshi huiyilu*, vol. 1, 187–188.

Movement. As a result of the CYP's organizational drives, the student movements in Wuhan were divided. Consequently, when the Communists attempted to initiate student movements in the latter half of 1925 in Wuhan, they found they first had to struggle with "reactionary" CYP nationalists to win support of the students.⁵⁰ As a reflection of the high tide of the CYP's struggles with the CCP, we should review an incident that occurred at the Chinese University in June 1926. When Chen Qitian held a public lecture, the Communists suddenly interrupted, delivered fliers to the audiences, and smashed the speech site and the president's office of the university.⁵¹ This incident prompted outcry from the students on the right, triggering further anti-Communist campaigns of the CYP not only in Wuhan, but also across major cities in China through its educational and organizational networks, as well as publishing channels.

In the meantime, the CYP began to increasingly confront the GMD starting from mid-1926. This was why wherever the GMD's National Revolutionary Army advanced, the CYP's publications were banned, its schools terminated, its property confiscated, and its members often arrested and even killed.⁵² Although on one occasion in 1927, some GMD leaders sought to incorporate the CYP,⁵³ they failed due to resistance of the CYP leaders toward the party-state. From that time onward, the CYP continued to cause massive public campaigns against the GMD through its publications, educational channels, and organized demonstrations. As a result, the CYP as an organized mass political party often occupied the vacuum on the right among the Chinese students, as the GMD lost the mobilizational power upon its purge of the most active movement organizers who had worked alongside the Communists, particularly in Shanghai and Wuhan first, and later in Beiping and Tianjin. Due to their expanding influence, in May of 1928, the CYP declared the party would oppose the GMD violently if the GMD continued to reject their demand for multiple party politics.⁵⁴ Therefore, when the GMD

⁵⁰ Zhige, "Junfa, jingxin lianghupai, guojiazhuizhe weigongzhong de wuhan xuesheng [The Wuhan Students under Attacks of Warlords, Jingxin Lianghu Faction, and the CYP Nationalists]," *Zhongguo qingnian*, no. 109 (1926).

⁵¹ Chen Qitian, "Wei gongchandang daohui wuchang zhonghua daxue shi gao quanguo qingnian [On the Communist Wrongdoings at Chinese University in Wuchang]," *Xingshi*, no. 89 (1926).

⁵² Chen Qitian, "Zhongguo guojiazhuizhe yundong de guoqu yu jianglai [Past and Future of the CYP Nationalist Movement]," *Xingshi*, no. 191 (1928).

⁵³ Primarily through Chen Bulei and Huang Fu. See Chen, *Jiyuan huiyilu*, 27; and Zeng, *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji* vol. 3, 1577–1588.

⁵⁴ "Zhongguo guojiazhuizhe qingnian tuan zhi guomindang shu [From the Chinese Nationalist Youth Corps to the GMD]," *Xingshi*, no. 188 (1928).

enacted the Act of Punishment regarding the Crimes of Jeopardizing the Republic in 1931 (*weihai minguo jinji zhizui fa*), the CYP nationalists were also targeted as the “reactionaries.” To warn the GMD leaders, one Nationalist intelligence report in the early 1930s specified the Youth Party’s influence in educational circles by listing key universities and high schools in Dongbei (Northeast), Beijing, Hebei, Shandong, Canton, and Sichuan.⁵⁵

The CYP, as it engaged in struggles with both the Nationalist and Communist Parties between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, was certainly placed in an exceedingly difficult situation. Yet, because of this difficulty, the CYP members demonstrated their distinctive nature in contrast to the dictatorial, fractured, and corrupt Nationalists and the leftist Communists, and managed to be a viable political choice for the radical intellectuals and students on the right.

The Federalist Movement for the Five-Colored Flag

During its northern expedition, the GMD raised the Flag of Blue Sky, White Sun, and Red Earth (*qingtian bairi mandihong*) as the symbol of its centralist revolution. In response, the CYP promoted a nation-wide campaign for the Five Colored Flag (*wuseqi*) as the Chinese national flag. For the CYP, only the Five Colored Flag – legally ratified by the 1913 parliament – could symbolize the legacies of the 1911 Revolution as well as the founding spirit of the Chinese Republic. If it could be said that one of the warring parties had turned away from the spirit of the Republic, then according to the CYP founders, it was the GMD. Therefore, from late 1926 to late 1928, the CYP called for the protection of the Chinese national flag in its publications, particularly the *Awakening Lion*, and organized the Great Alliances of the Five Colored Flag across the lower Yangtze region and later North China. Furthermore, the CYP members also extended this movement abroad in Japan and France.⁵⁶ Particularly, in Japan, there even occurred physical confrontations on the national days of 1926 and 1927, in Tokyo and Kobe respectively.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See Zhongyang diaocha tongjiju ed., *Guojiazhuyipai qingniandang zhuanji* [Special Issue on the CYP Nationalists], 1933, Archives of the Bureau of Investigation, Ministry of Legal Affairs (*Fawubu diaocha ju*) in Taipei (ABI, hereafter): 168.2.808. 57860.

⁵⁶ As to the case in France, see, *The Guomindang in Europe: A Sourcebook of Documents*, eds. Marilyn A. Levine and Chen San-Ching (Berkeley, CA: University of California-Berkeley Center for China Studies, 2000), 145.

⁵⁷ “Xu shenhu wei guoqi er zhan de tongbao [On the Chinese Brothers and Sisters Fighting for the National Flag in Kobe],” *Xingshi*, no. 160 (1927).

For the CYP supporters, the Nationalists and Communists were all traitors to the Chinese republic.⁵⁸ Therefore, faced with the GMD's party-dictatorship, like their predecessors fighting the Qing in the 1911 Revolution, the CYP founders declared a determined struggle to restore the republic. As a rite to consolidate their will, the CYP required its new members to make an oath before the Five Colored Flag in its party participation ceremony.⁵⁹ Also, wherever they maintained influence, the CYP members promoted this flag – for example, at the CYP-controlled colleges and schools. Among them was the Jinling Academy of Military Officers (*jinling junguan xuexiao*) established by Sun Chuanfang. According to Li Sen, once a student of this school, one of the official slogans formulated by the CYP leaders was “Long Live the Fived Colored Flag!”⁶⁰ To further promote this movement, the CYP members also attempted to make the flag alive in the semiindependent realms of warlords' China. Indeed, as the CYP leaders allied with Liu Cunhou in Sichuan between 1928 and 1931, they persuaded him to fly the Five Colored Flag in his domain as a symbol of the fight for the ideals of the earlier Republic.⁶¹

The CYP opposed the centralist military unification at the beginning, not only targeting the Nationalists but also the Beiyang militarists, such as Wu Peifu, with whom they affiliated in the late 1920s. Therefore, in its party declaration in mid-1926, the CYP founders criticized both the GMD and Wu Peifu for a federalist state.⁶² It is true that federalism faded as the Nationalist Nanjing government obtained its ruling legitimacy in the Anti-Japanese War. But still, it symbolized a strong political preference among the Chinese through the 1920s and the early 1930s, championed by the CYP.

⁵⁸ “Guoqi yu guoti [National Flag and Nationality],” *Xingshi*, no. 105 (1926).

⁵⁹ Zhongyang dangyuan tongxun ju, *Qingniandang rudang chengxu ji* “*Qingniandang banxiao xuzhi*” *yanjiu baogao* [Upon Joining the CYP and the Founding of CYP Schools], 1947, ABI:168.2.811.12054.

⁶⁰ Li Sen, “Guojiazhuqi qingniandang yu wusheng lianjun de yixie guanxi [The CYP and the Allied Army of Sun Chuanfang],” in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji 44* [Selection of Wenshi Materials 44], ed. Zhengxie quanguo weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2001), 109.

⁶¹ Wang Qian, “Qingniandang-Guojiazhuqipai kangzhan qian de fandong huodong [The CYP's Reactionary Movements Before the Anti-Japanese War],” in *Sichuan junfa canjia paoge ji youguan ziliao* [Materials on the Sichuan Warlords in the *Paoge* Circles], Sichuan Provincial Archives (SPA, hereafter): File Jianchuan, No. 033. 01 0471, 9.

⁶² Zhongguo qingniandang ed., *Zhongguo qingniandang de guoqi yu jianglai* [Past and Future of the CYP], 1929, ABI: 168.2.7422.08459, 35.

Anti-Imperialist Movements

Symbolized by its principle of nonfriendship with external powers (*duiwai de feiqinshan zhuyi*), the CYP was ultranationalist between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, particularly with regards to the UK, the USSR, and Imperial Japan, because the party saw them all as imperialists preying on China, albeit in different ways. Therefore, whatever these countries claimed – be it liberalism, communism, or Asianism – the party leaders opposed it as a kind of imperialism. For them, the UK represented “white imperialism” (*baise diguozhuyi*), the Soviet Union “red imperialism” (*chise diguozhuyi*), and imperial Japan the greatest security threat for China’s survival, particularly after the Manchurian incident.

Although the CYP founders harshly criticized the alliance of the Nationalists and Communists in the mid-1920s, they were still willing to collaborate with them in particular antiimperialist movements. One typical example was the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925. Like the leftists, the CYP initiated its own antiimperialist campaigns. In the *Awakening Lion*, for example, the CYP founders assigned a special issue on the May Thirtieth Movement to stimulate the Chinese resistance.⁶³ Zeng Qi thereby demonstrated his will to collaborate with the Nationalists and other patriotic groups in fighting the British imperialists. Facing the unyielding British, the CYP leaders further promoted the student protest movements. Chen Qitian, for example, proposed severing all educational and economic ties with the British, which meant boycotting work affiliated with British schools and avoiding purchase of any goods from the British companies. Additionally, Li Huang at Wuchang University at this time encouraged his students to organize public meetings, hold lectures, and advertise the slogan of the CYP: “Exterminate domestic bandits and resist external imperialist powers.”⁶⁴ As a result, the CYP also expanded its influence significantly across China during the May Thirtieth movement.⁶⁵ As the British took a tough stand in the negotiations over the fixed tariff and attacked Wan county in Sichuan to solve local conflict caused by the British commercial ships, the CYP was able to lead the movement to fight them.

The CYP members also targeted the Soviet Union. For them, the Soviet Union was also imperialist, taking advantage of China’s weakness, as exemplified by the following two realities: (1) The Soviet Union

⁶³ “Waikang qiangquan hao [Special Issue on Resisting the Foreign Powers],” *Xingshi*, no. 35 (1925).

⁶⁴ Li, *Xuedunshi huiyilu*, vol. 1, 188.

⁶⁵ For example, see *Zhongguo qingniandang gaikuang* [Overview of the Chinese Youth Party], 1947, ABI: 168.2.842.8301.

established a puppet state in Mongolia, and still maintained special privileges over the Eastern Railway in Manchuria; and (2) it supported the Chinese Communist Party.⁶⁶ From the outset, CYP members were suspicious of the sincerity of the Soviet Union. Therefore, as the Soviet Union separated Outer Mongolia from China in the early 1920s, the CYP founders took it as solid evidence of its treacherous nature. Furthermore, as the Soviet Union claimed to maintain its special privileges over the Eastern Railway in Manchuria, the CYP leaders also questioned its Karahan declarations, and further rose to support Zhang Xueliang to fight for the Chinese sovereignty, by staging student movements and engaging in propaganda. In the meantime, the CYP attempted to raise Chinese awareness of Russian support for the Chinese Communists. Although the CYP and the CCP fought the Nanjing regime at the same time from 1927, for the CYP members, the Communists were simply national traitors, as were their enemies.

We can observe this hostility more specifically in an incident that occurred at Peking University on March 10, 1926. On this day, the CYP organized a mass meeting to publicize the Soviet Union's persecutions of the Chinese overseas. They stressed the Russian suppression of the Chinese protests in Moscow during the May Thirtieth movement, as well as the confiscation of the Chinese overseas property during the Russian Revolution.⁶⁷ Yet, the Communists suddenly intruded and caused a bloody fight. According to *Shanghai News* (*Shenbao/Shun Pao*), there were more than 80 CYP nationalists and more than 60 Communists involved in this fight, resulting in three life-threatening casualties.⁶⁸ Perceiving this fight as a result of the directives of the Russians, the CYP leaders initiated another wave of campaigns to denounce the "red imperialists," as well as their Chinese "running dogs."

Finally, as to imperial Japan, the CYP founders considered it a threat from the time of its founding in the early 1920s. For Zeng Qi personally, imperial Japan was already his enemy since his years there between 1916 and 1918, particularly warning the Chinese to be aware of the Japanese deceptive Asianist claims. For the CYP founders in general, as they started the *Awakening Lion*, they assigned a special issue in May 1925 to commemorate the Chinese humiliation caused by the Japanese

⁶⁶ "Zhongguo quanguo guojiazhu yi tuanti lianhehui guanyu zhongdonglu shijian tongdian [The CYP's Public Statement on the Eastern Railway Incident]," *Xingshi*, no. 69 (1926).

⁶⁷ "E'ren zhihui zhongguo gongchandang daoluan Beijing fan'e yuanqiao dahui [The Russians Directed the Chinese Communist in Attacking the Conference on Fighting Russia and Supporting Chinese Overseas]," *Xingshi*, no. 76 (1926).

⁶⁸ "Beijing fan'e dahui zhi xuezhuan [Bloody Battles in the Anti-Russia Conference]," *Shenbao*, March 17, 1926.

Twenty-One Demands to highlight the Japanese imperialist nature.⁶⁹ The CYP's anti-Japanese stance was extremely firm, so despite the GMD's bloody crackdown against them, the CYP founders still fiercely denounced imperial Japan for its military intervention in Shandong. It is true that the Japanese targeted the GMD's party army as the army advanced northward, in a sense relieving the CYP members in Beijing and Tianjin. However, as the CYP founders claimed, whatever the Chinese domestic condition was, it should be the business of the Chinese and not of others.⁷⁰ For whatever reason, the CYP leaders found the Japanese arrogance in their denial of Chinese sovereignty. If Japan was still among other imperialists by the late 1920s, the Manchurian incident made it distinctive in 1931. In the early 1930s, the CYP leaders fought imperial Japan not only with words, but also through military actions (to be explained in Chapter 5).

Movement for Recovering Educational Right
(shouhui jiaoyuquan yundong)

If the CYP's antiimperialist movements were for the physical independence of China, its quest in the Movement of Recovering Educational Right in the 1920s was to materialize the spiritual independence of the Chinese. Based on the nation-building experiences of France, the CYP nationalists claimed they would restore the Chinese national soul in opposition to the foreign and religious education of Christianity.

Christian education officially started in China in 1844, as the Qing court allowed French missionaries to educate the Chinese by the Treaty of Whampoa. Although Christian schools increased steadily after that point, the number remained relatively small until the late Qing. This situation drastically changed in the early Republican era, as the number of Chinese students enrolled in Christian schools doubled from slightly more than 100,000 right before the 1911 Revolution to 245,049 in 1920.⁷¹ As the ratio of students in Chinese schools and Christian schools reached roughly 100 to 32 in the early 1920s,⁷² Chinese intellectuals began to problematize the latter due to their lack of compliance with the educational code of the Chinese government. Among these intellectuals

⁶⁹ "Wujiu guochi jinianhao [Special Issue on the May Nineth]," *Xingshi*, no. 31 (1925).

⁷⁰ "Zhonghua liuri guojiazhuyi qingniantuan guangdao bu wei riben chubing jinggao guoren [To My Country Men: From Chinese Nationalist Youth Corps in Hiroshima in Japan]" *Xingshi*, no. 137 (1927).

⁷¹ Yang Sixin and Guo Shulan, *Jiaoyu yu guoquan* [Education and National Right] (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 2010), 53, 58.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 169.

were members of the Young China Association (YCA) and the CYP founders. For them, Christian education did not promote “science” and “democracy” among the Chinese people, but rather hindered their learning.

In its official publication of *Young China* in 1921, the YCA had already problematized religion, particularly Christianity, in the Chinese nation-building process.⁷³ Grounded in the Chinese nationalist sentiments emerging from the May Fourth, their discussions led to the larger Anti-Christianity Movement in 1922. In response to this movement, Li Huang and Yu Jiaju published *Education of Nationalism* (*Guojiazhuayi de jiaoyu*) in 1923, harshly criticizing Christian schools as being institutionalized education unsuitable for the Chinese nationality (*minzuxing*). For Li and Yu, while it might be true that most Chinese were eager to “engage in private confrontation; ignore public benefit; and cheat and utilize one another,”⁷⁴ it was impossible to transform these traits by Christian education. Rather, a transformation could only occur through a national education based on Chinese traditions. For them, Christianity was absolutely no better in terms of its superstition and bigotry, and the Chinese could also cultivate “reason” and “science” on their traditional soil; for example, in their words, “Confucian humanism.”⁷⁵ Their nationalist claims caused significant echoes in the YCA, and later contributed to forming the CYP’s cultural conservatism in its movements, including the Movement of Recovering Educational Right.

We find a robust rise of this educational movement in 1924, when Zeng Qi, Li Huang, and Yu Jiaju returned from Europe, and Chen Qitian graduated from the Dongnan University in Nanjing, starting his work in the Zhonghua Publishing Company (*Zhonghua shuju*) in Shanghai along with Zuo Shunsheng. As members of the CYP nationalist faction, Zeng Qi established the *Awakening Lion*, and Chen Qitian became the editor in chief for *Chinese Education* (*Zhonghua jiaoyujie*). As a result, the CYP founders secured two powerful platforms to voice their claims to deter the Christians, both Chinese and foreign, from influencing the Chinese national formation through education. Because the CYP founders were mostly educators themselves, they expanded their influence using their colleagues in the same circles. The Chinese Society of Educational Reform (*Zhonghua jiaoyu gaijinshe*) was important in that

⁷³ See special issue one on religion in *Shaonian zhongguo*, 2:8 (February 1921); and special issue two on religion in *Shaonian zhongguo*, 3:1 (July 1921).

⁷⁴ Yu Jiaju and Li Huang, *Guojiazhuayi de jiaoyu diyiji* [First Volume on Nationalist Education] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1923), 50.

⁷⁵ See Yu Jiaju, “Jiaohuizhuayi wenti [Problems of Christian Education],” in Yu Jiaoyu and Li Huang, *Guojiazhuayi de jiaoyu*.

respect because it was in this society that Yu Jiaju and Chen Qitian (along with their YCA comrades) proposed the recovery of the educational sovereignty of China in July 1924. In the latter half of that year, the CYP members further collaborated to create a larger public campaign within the Chinese educational circles and contributed to calling for a separation of education from church in the National Association of Education (*Quanguo jiaoyu lianhehui*), resulting in the decision to ban religious rites as well as to regulate foreign involvement in Chinese educational institutions. For the CYP leaders, the expanding movement was a sign of encouragement, because it reflected the rising spirit of CYP's nationalism (*guojiazhu yi*).⁷⁶

In mid-1925, the anti-Christian education movement reached a high tide among Chinese intellectuals and students, corresponding with the radicalizing May Thirtieth Movement. As numerous Chinese students poured into the streets around Chinese cities in protest of British and Japanese imperialisms, church schools generally preferred their students maintain a distance. For example, as a result of the confrontations between Chinese faculty members and students and school administration at St. John's University in Shanghai, many of the former left and established Guanghua University. This incident enraged the educational circles again, and further weakened overall Chinese support for Christian education. For the CYP members, this was an exact reflection of the goal of those Christian schools, which was not to help shape good Chinese nationals, but to form followers of foreign countries.⁷⁷ To further promote the anti-Christian education and to materialize Chinese national formation, the CYP leaders thus founded their own Association of Nationalist Education (*guojia jiaoyu xiehui*) along with their YCA fellows.

As a result of the anti-Christian education movement in the mid-1920s, increasingly there were moves among Chinese intellectuals and students to encourage students to leave the church-sponsored schools so as to resist the foreign "cultural invasion" (*wenhua qinlue*).⁷⁸ Because of the CYP founders' contribution, this movement became an important springboard for its organizational development. For sure, this movement did not last very long, as the Chinese political topography changed rapidly in the late 1920s, hastened by the GMD's unification wars. Nevertheless, the CYP's educational movement still continued, not

⁷⁶ Zuo Shunsheng, "Ke zhuyi de dishijie quanguo jiaoyu lianhehui [We Should Pay Attention to the 10th National Educational Conference]," *Xingshi*, no. 5 (1924).

⁷⁷ See the articles on this incident, in *Xingshi*, no. 36 (1925). For example, Chen Qitian, "Lun yuehan daxue tuixue fengchao [On the People Leaving the St. John's University]."

⁷⁸ Tang Jiqing, "Zhongguo jiaoyujie yu jiaohuixuexiao tuixue xuesheng [Students Leaving the Church Schools and the Chinese Educational Circles]," *Xingshi*, no. 43 (1925).

targeting Christian education this time, but advocating a “true” national education against the GMD’s party-based education. Due to its consistent inputs in China’s national education to develop the Chinese “nationality” (*guoxing*), the CYP established its cultural conservatist image. For a moderate like Hu Shi, the CYP founders sounded too traditionalist and too nationalist,⁷⁹ but among the radicals on the right, this “traditionalist” stance helped the CYP maintain its political vitality until the mid-1930s.

Mass Party Struggles in Warlords' China

In 1924, Zeng Qi highlighted the CYP’s plebiscitarian revolution through various means, including: public opinion, mass training, organized assassinations, and well-planned military actions based on local militias.⁸⁰ For him at this stage, it was in this socially motivated revolution the CYP differed from the old revolutionary party.⁸¹ However, in 1926, the CYP changed radically, and began to work with influential regional warlords: (1) Sun Chuanfang, Wu Peifu, and Zhang Zuolin between 1926 and 1928; (2) Zhang Xueliang, Yan Xishan, and Han Fuhu between 1928 and 1933; and (3) Song Zheyuan and the leading Guangxi warlords in addition to Yan and Han between 1933 and 1937. By working with these military powers, the CYP forged favorable political environments for its developments across China between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s.

Initial attitude toward the GMD, 1924–1926

In its initial stage between 1924 and 1926, the CYP was not very hostile to the GMD. Distancing themselves from all established political powers, the CYP founders criticized corrupt warlords’ politics while problematizing the class struggles of the Communists. Still, they found it possible to work with the Nationalists. Although the CYP members were often characterized by the left faction of the GMD as the running dogs of warlords and imperialists,⁸² they did not really confront the GMD as a

⁷⁹ Hu Shi, “Huainian Zeng Muhan xiansheng [Mr. Zeng Muhan],” in *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 3, 1608. Hu Shi found Zeng Qi quite traditionalist, often publishing writings with the pen name “Heitou” (Black head). According to Li Huang, Heitou was actually Zuo Shunsheng.

⁸⁰ Zeng, *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 2, 674. ⁸¹ Ibid., 675.

⁸² Zeng Qi, “Gongchandangren yingyou de fanxing [Necessary Reflections of the Communists],” *Xingshi*, no. 70 (1926). In this article, Zeng showed his anger to his previous YCA friends, Yun Daiying, Xiao Chunü, and Liu Wenjing, claiming that the CYP never antagonized the labor class, and were never the collaborators of the warlords

whole. Due to this attitude, Zeng Qi was able to meet Sun Yat-sen in the winter of 1924.⁸³ Yet, unfortunately for Zeng, Sun did not listen to his suggestion to expel the Communists.

For the CYP leaders in the mid-1920s, the GMD was also an old political power. However, in their eyes, there were still some values in Sun's Three People's Principles, and there remained a historical legacy as to the GMD's contribution to the Republic in the past. Therefore, although the aforementioned talk with Sun did not go well, the CYP's connections with the GMD remained, especially with some leading figures of the Western Hill faction, such as Xie Chi and Ju Zheng.⁸⁴ For this reason, although the CYP founders criticized Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin more straightforwardly,⁸⁵ their disapproval toward the GMD was more nuanced, more like cautioning rather than condemning at the beginning. Because of this stance, upon Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, the CYP dedicated a special issue on Sun in the *Awakening Lion*. Zeng regretted his death for six reasons: (1) the republic was still disintegrated; (2) the revolutionary forces remained fractured; (3) his revolution had encountered a deadlock; (4) his ideas were now subject to the Communists' interpretation; (5) the Beijing government would become more highhanded; and (6) the Qing restorationists might find a chance to rise again.⁸⁶ Zeng further discussed three similarities between his and Sun's ideas: (1) the Three People's Principles are included in CYP's nationalism; (2) they all claim to retain the Chinese traditional values, expressed by loyalty (*zhong*), filiality (*xiao*), benevolence (*ren*), love (*ai*), faith (*xin*), righteousness (*yi*) and peace (*heping*); and (3) they all believed in the power of mind and the need of a national spirit.

Despite this nuanced stance, however, the CYP members began to challenge the Nationalists during the years of change between 1926 and 1928, when the latter carried out their military unification of China. As the National Revolutionary Army advanced northward, particularly in the middle and lower Yangtze regions, the CYP was also severely suppressed. Specifically, in Wuhan in late 1926, the CYP's operation was forced to stop, and later in Shanghai in 1927, the CYP's publishing

and foreign imperialists. Zeng in turn questioned how they explained their own nature as intellectuals and their treatment of the Soviet Russia as god.

⁸³ Zeng, *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 3, 1554–1555.

⁸⁴ In terms of Ju Zheng, see Chen, *Jiyuan huiyilu*, 24.

⁸⁵ For example, see Kuangchang, "Shao Piaoping jun beihai tongyan [Painful Comments on the Murder of Shao Piaoping]," *Xingshi*, no. 81 (1926).

⁸⁶ Zeng Qi, "Dao Sun Zhongshan xiansheng bing xu haineiwai geming [In Memory of Mr. Sun Zhongshan and to the Revolutionaries in China and Abroad]," *Xingshi*, no. 24 (Special Issue on Sun Yat-sen) (1925).

house was shut down and Zeng Qi was arrested,⁸⁷ forcing the CYP leaders to flee northward or to foreign countries. In this situation, although the CYP called for equal collaboration in China's national reconstruction in mid-1927,⁸⁸ increasingly its founders found no room to settle with the Nationalists, and thus turned to regional warlords for their own survival.

For many radical educated youths on the right in this era, the GMD did not represent their political interests, and the CCP was simply out of the question. Therefore, the CYP was a truly revolutionary party for them because of its sound ideologies and actions. While in exile in Japan in late 1927, for example, Zeng Qi introduced the revolutionary nature of the CYP based on the following criteria: (1) it acts with sacred goals; (2) it treats revolution as a means; (3) it struggles for a modern state; (4) it treasures both public and private morals; (5) it appreciates both reason and emotion; (6) it respects both leaders and members; (7) it emphasizes social cultivation before political actions; (8) it prioritizes unity rather than individuality; (9) it is structured through a strict organization; and (10) it works with discipline.⁸⁹ For CYP supporters, the unprincipled GMD was simply not revolutionary at all.

At one point in 1927, Huang Fu, representing the GMD, sought to push the CYP leaders to join GMD. However, the CYP refused this invitation in its second national congress in Tianjin.⁹⁰ For the CYP, the GMD was fractured, corrupted, and very arrogant about how it should control the Chinese masses. Despite some similarities in their ideology, the CYP founders thus found neither political superiority nor individual morality in the GMD leaders, including both Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei. To overthrow and replace the GMD, the CYP then assigned specific roles to its leaders for its expansion: Zeng Qi was responsible for developing the CYP in north China; Li Huang took the lead in Sichuan; Chen Qitian was in charge of Hubei; Zhang Zizhu concentrated on Yunnan and other regions in the south; and Zuo Shunsheng remained in Shanghai to direct the lower Yangtze region.⁹¹

⁸⁷ See "Qishi size [Four Notices]," *Xingshi*, no. 151 (1927).

⁸⁸ "Zhongguo guojiazhuyi qingniantuan quanguo daibiao dahui dui shiju xuanyan [Declaration of the National Congress of the Chinese Nationalist Youth Corps]," *Xingshi*, no. 141 (1927).

⁸⁹ Zeng Qi, "Xin gemingdang zhi jingshen ji dangyuan yingyou zhi xiuyang [New Revolutionary Spirit and Party Members' Nature]," *Xingshi*, no. 167 (1927).

⁹⁰ Chen, *Jiyuan huiyilu*, 27.

⁹¹ See Yishan "Sannian lai zhi zhengzhi yundong baogao [On Political Movements in the Past Three Years]," Box 2, Zeng Qi Papers; Zhongyang diaocha tongjiju, *Diaocha Zhuanbao-Guojiazhuyipai xiezhen* [Special Report: Picturing the CYP], April 1, 1935, ABI: 168.2.7135. 8400, 33–34.

Wu Peifu, Sun Chuanfang, and Zhang Zuolin, 1926–1928

Facing the GMD's northern expedition in 1926, Zeng Qi feared the CYP's political quests might end up hollow words if the CYP was not armed.⁹² In the same vein, Yu Jiaju also recognized that the CYP members, strongly rooted in the educational and cultural circles, had no means to resist the militaries of the Nationalists and the Communists. Accordingly, Yu concluded that China could be reconstructed only through the new type of military men disciplined with new political ideas.⁹³ For them, from 1926 onward, established military powers were indispensable to continue their revolutionary movements.

In the meantime, the leading warlords also reconsidered their own roles in the rise of mass party politics. For example, Zhao Yusong, a staff member of Wu Peifu, wondered whether it was still possible to achieve China's unification only through military force in the mid-1920s.⁹⁴ He then turned to "political party" as a means to train the warlords' armies and modernize their political institutions. Referred by his colleague, Zhao then met Zeng Qi in Shanghai in late 1926, and joined the CYP immediately. As an expression of his commitment, Zhao went to Wuhan to persuade Yuan Zhuming, his previous warlord boss, to join the CYP. Although he failed as Yuan was soon assassinated by the GMD, his attempt symbolized the transformative moment as to the civil–military relations in the mid-1920s. For those leading warlords, ideological mobilizations and mass political movements were now indispensable to take part in national politics.

Specifically, between 1926 and 1928, the CYP maintained good terms with Wu Peifu, Sun Chuanfang, and Zhang Zuolin. As a result of his defeat in the Second Zhili-Fengtian war, Wu Peifu retreated to station himself in the middle-Yangtze region in 1925. Then, as Sun Chuanfang stabilized his control in the lower Yangtze region and Zhang Zuolin controlled the north while the GMD remained as a provincial power in Guangdong, it seemed to many impossible for the GMD to unify China militarily in the near future. For example, upon the beginning of the GMD's northern expedition, Zeng Qi predicted its ultimate failure based on his analysis of both external factors and internal difficulties of the

⁹² Zeng Qi, "Zeng Qi zizhi nianpu [Self-Authored Chronicle of Zeng Qi]," in *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*. vol. 3, 1555–1556.

⁹³ Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 235–236.

⁹⁴ Zhao Yusong, *Geishunka-Chōikushyō no chūgoku kakumei kaikoroku* [Blossom in the Spring: Zhao Yusong's Memoir on His Revolution], trans. Matsumoto Masuo and Furusawa Toshio (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1978), 94.

GMD.⁹⁵ Yet, contrary to his expectations, the reorganized GMD swept away its northern enemies, forcing the once mutually hostile Beiyang warlords, Wu, Sun, and Zhang, to align with each other to resist the GMD in one year. It was at this stage the CYP expanded its national socialist ideas by mobilizing the widespread antipathy against the Nationalists and Communists with the aid of these military powers.

Although the CYP's well-established intellectual networks were not directly useful in resisting the GMD, these networks helped the CYP members cultivate relationships with those powerful warlords. As to Wu Peifu, the key figure was Liu Siying, a former member of the Young China Association. In the early 1920s, Liu worked for General Yang Sen in Sichuan, and maintained close contact with Wu as Yang's emissary. When Wu later stationed at Da county in Sichuan, Liu became his chief of staff. Due to this connection, as Wu hoped his cadres be trained politically, the CYP offered support.⁹⁶ Because Wu Peifu and the CYP leaders all planned to overthrow the regime in Nanjing, their relationship was consolidated. As the *Chengdu Express Daily* (*Chengdu kuaibao*) reported in late 1929, Wu was then accompanied by a large group of CYP nationalists planning uprisings against the GMD.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, this collaboration did not last long, as Wu abandoned his ambition to reemerge. Nevertheless, the CYP leaders secured some significant routes to reach other Beiyang militarists in the southwestern, northern, and northeastern provinces. Among them, for example, was Yu Xuezhong, a general who in the early 1930s went on to control Beiping (Beijing).

Besides Wu, Sun Chuanfang was another powerful warlord stationed along the Yangtze river regions. As one of the leading Beiyang warlords, Sun came to prominence only in the early 1920s. Due to his military talent as well as his enlightened image, Sun appeared as a hope for the intellectual political activists fearing the Communist revolution. As a result, as Liang Qichao recorded, many of his students (including Zhang Junmai and Ding Wenjiang) worked for Sun in direct response

⁹⁵ Zeng Qi, "Lun Chiang Kai-shek beifa buneng chenggong zhi liuda yuanyin [Six Reasons for the Ultimate Failure of Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition]," *Xingshi*, no. 98 (1926).

⁹⁶ Zhang Boling, "Qiyi de qingniandang dangyuan Yang Shuming xiansheng [Yang Shuming, Uprising as a Party Member of the CYP]," in *Chengdu wenshi ziliao*, no. 3 [Chengdu Wenshi Materials, no. 3] (Chengdu, 1988), 42.

⁹⁷ For examples, see "Yong guojiazhuyi haozhao qingnian, yong taozei mingyi lianluo junren [Mobilizing Youth through the Slogan of Nationalism and Contacting Military Men through the Slogan of Fighting the Enemies]," *Chengdu kuaibao*, November 11, 1929, 2.

to the Nationalist rise.⁹⁸ For the CYP leaders, it was thus not difficult to secure a place in Sun's camp through their ideological allies. Meanwhile, for Sun, the CYP was useful in forming the anti-Nationalist public opinions. For example, as the GMD replaced the Five Colored Flag with the Flag of Blue Sky, White Sun, and Red Earth in its northern expedition, the CYP responded by founding the Great Alliance of the Five Colored Flag (*wuse guoqi datongmeng*) in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Hangzhou through its affiliated students' societies and allied intellectual groups.⁹⁹ To confront the GMD's political campaigns, Sun needed popular support of this kind. Therefore, he invited the CYP leaders to join his staff, including, for example, Yu Jiaju, and also sponsored the CYP's political movements.

At Sun's request in 1926, Yu Jiaju directed the political education of the Jinling Academy of Military Officers, and subsequently filled the teaching posts for ideological training with the CYP members. The officers here were then all required to study a political curriculum designed by their CYP teachers centered on CYP nationalism (*guojiazhuoyi*). Through their instructions, these officers specifically studied, for example, "Plebiscitarian Politics" opposed to the Communist ideologies and "life philosophies" of military officers for the Chinese nation.¹⁰⁰ Although there are no materials showing the specific contents, according to Yu, the guiding principles were "maintaining faith to Confucius and Mencius" (*yuanzong kong meng*) and "learning ways from Zeng Guofan and Hu Linyi" (*jinfu Zeng Hu*).¹⁰¹ In order to inculcate the CYP nationalism among the students in their daily life, Yu and his comrades also wrote a school song, calling for their courage and nationalism and guided students to make calls advocating for the Five Colored Flag and CYP nationalism during all morning and evening gatherings. As a result of these efforts, the CYP leaders acquired a group of capable military officers as their followers and formed one significant basis of their later development in north China in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

As Wu Peifu fled to Sichuan and Sun Chuanfang retreated northward, the Fengtian clique of Zhang Zuolin was the last resort to resist the National Revolutionary Army of the GMD. Regardless of their previous mutual antagonism, Wu and Sun began to strategize with Zhang. It was

⁹⁸ See *Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu changbian chugao* [First Draft of the First Edition of the Chronicle of Mr. Liang Qichao], eds. Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2009), 704.

⁹⁹ See *Xingshi* from late 1926 to early 1927.

¹⁰⁰ Li, "Guojiazhuoyi qingniandang yu wusheng lianjun de yixie guanxi," 109.

¹⁰¹ Yu Jiaju, "Yu Jiaju huiyilu 4" (Yu Jiaju's Memoir 4), *Zhuanji wenxue*, 172 (September 1976), see "On Jinling Military Academy."

in this vein that the CYP members also extended their influence within the Fengtian clique. In 1927, the retreating army of Sun finally joined the Fengtian army in Hebei, and in so doing the CYP leaders formed a collaborative relationship with Yang Yuting, Zhang's subordinate. Upon Yang's request, Yu Jiaju worked to educate the workers of the arsenal in Shenyang, and Zhao Yusheng also strove to ally the Sichuan warlords with the Fengtian clique.¹⁰² Furthermore, through Yang and others' support, the Jinling Academy of Military Officers merged with the Dongbei Military Academy (*dongbei jiangwutang*), giving the CYP members another important channel to affect the Chinese military circles in the north. As a result, according to Yu Jiaju, between 1927 and 1932, the CYP Nationalist Group was very influential among the Dongbei and Huabei armies, particularly of Yu Xuezhong, Fang Zhenwu, and Gao Guizhi.¹⁰³

In addition to military officers, the CYP developed its organizations in Northeast China under the Fengtian militarist patronage. In this case, Feng Yong, a famous educator as well as a close associate of the Fengtian clique, was the CYP's consistent ally, making his university (Feng Yong University in Shenyang) one of the most active platforms for the CYP's political operations.¹⁰⁴ Although Feng did not fully commit to the CYP's organizational operations, he did join the CYP once.¹⁰⁵ Thus, due to CYP leaders' energetic promotion through the influential figures of the Fengtian clique as such, Shenyang became one of the central places of the CYP's activities.

In the same way as structured state Confucianism of imperial China that contributed to China's earlier cultural coherence and territorial integrity, the concept of "political party" helped dissipate regional conflicts and eliminate the tensions between the military and intellectuals at this time,¹⁰⁶ and thus reforged civil-military relations. Confronted by the party army of the GMD, the northern warlords acknowledged the utility of ideology and mass political movements in their own governance

¹⁰² Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 237; "Yu Jiaju jianbian nianpu [Brief Chronicle of Yu Jiaju]," in *Yu Jiaju yu jindai zhongguo* [Yu Jiaju and Modern China], ed., Zhang Kaiyuan (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2007), 407; Zhao, *Geishunka*, 137.

¹⁰³ Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ For example, see Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 237–239; Li, *Xuedunshi huiyilu*, vol. 1, 250–251.

¹⁰⁵ See "Gengzi di yi hao [An Organizational Report from Zeng Qi to the Youth Party's Central Committee]," in Shuxin 4 in Box 7, in Zeng Qi Papers.

¹⁰⁶ Luo Zhitian, "Nanbei xinjiu yu beifa chenggong de zaiquanshi [Reinterpretation of the Success of the Northern Expedition in the New and Old of the South and North]," *Wenshi tiandi* (September 2000), 54.

formerly based on an informal code of familism and individual loyalty.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, to ideologically inspire the Chinese people, as had the GMD, Sun Chuanfang raised the “Three Love Principles”: namely love subject (*aiwu*), love people (*aimin*), and love world (*aishijie*).¹⁰⁸ Zhang Zuolin also declared the “Four People’s Principles,” adding “People’s Morality” (*minde*) besides “Nation” (*minzu*), “People’s Right” (*minquan*), and “People’s Livelihood” (*minsheng*). Indeed, Yu Jiaju framed Sun’s political agenda, and Zeng Qi proposed the four people’s principles to Zhang Zuolin.¹⁰⁹ These ideological slogans did not cause significant political impacts as Sun and Zhang lost to the GMD, but their collaborations meant that old warlord politics had already changed in the rise of mass political parties.

Zhang Xueliang, Yan Xishan, and Han Fujū, 1928–1933

Set up by the GMD, Zeng Qi was arrested in late August 1927 in the French settlement but was discharged thanks to his friend’s help.¹¹⁰ To escape the constant surveillance on him, he asked Li Huang in Sichuan to return to Shanghai to direct the CYP’s general affairs. He then departed for Japan in early September, where he stayed for the next two months. In late 1927, Zeng hid in Hong Kong, while closely monitoring Chinese domestic political changes, and subsequently left for Tianjin in the summer of 1928. From then until 1933, he directed the CYP in north China as aided by various militarist leaders, particularly Zhang Xueliang, Yan Xishan, and Han Fujū. Three factors contributed to forging the collaborative party-military relations between the CYP and these warlords in this period: consolidation of the GMD’s tutelage, expansion of the CCP, and further encroachment by the Soviet Union and imperial Japan.

For the CYP members, the Nationalists were traitors to the Republic, because: (1) they claimed to materialize a national revolution, but forbade people’s movements; (2) they utilized the youth, but stopped youth movements; and (3) they proclaimed liberation, but instead installed a

¹⁰⁷ Ch’i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 180–190.

¹⁰⁸ Kikuchi Takaharu, *Chūgoku daisan seiryoku siron* [On the Third Powers in China] (Tokyo: Kyūko shoyin, 1987), 293. According to Kikuchi, it was “Love Subjects, Love People, and Love World.” Yet, according to Yang Tianshi (“Jiang Jieshi yu beifa shiqi de jiangxi zhanchang [Chiang Kai-Shek and the Jiangxi Battlefield during the Northern Expedition],” *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 5 (1989), 52), it was “Love Country, Love People, Love Enemy.” I suggest it should be the former.

¹⁰⁹ *Minguo dang’an shiliao huibian*, vol. 5 ed. 1 *zhengzhi* 2, 912.

¹¹⁰ Particularly through Wang Chonghui and Ma Junwu’s help. See “To Bai Chongxi” February 20, 1929, in Shuxin 1, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

dictatorship.¹¹¹ Therefore, as Zeng declared, the CYP was determined to achieve the fourth republic of China, after the 1911 Revolution, the 1915 Yunnan uprising, and the 1917 suppression of the restorationists.¹¹² Raising the French Third Republic as a symbol, Zeng thus called for his comrades' continuous contribution to fighting the militarist dictatorship of the GMD. In addition to the GMD, the CYP was extremely concerned about the Communist expansion and foreign invasions. This was because the CYP leaders understood the CCP's capability in mobilizing popular support, and also found it urgent to counter the imperialist ambitions of the Soviet Union and imperial Japan in the Chinese domestic upheavals. Therefore, when they approached those warlords, they addressed these concerns, attempting to establish good relations, specifically with Zhang Xueliang, Yan Xishan, and Han Fuju.¹¹³

Despite their apparent submission to the GMD, Zhang and Yan still maintained independent "kingdoms" in north China and functioned as the leading warlords affecting Chinese national politics from the late 1920s. Han Fuju started out as a subordinate to Feng Yuxiang but became an important player after the Central Plains War in 1930, first dominating Henan and subsequently Shandong. With their aid, the CYP's operations were not much disturbed by the GMD, leading to the party's rapid development in north China. In return, the CYP leaders also worked as these warlords' staff members, organized movements against both the Nationalist and Communists, bolstered communication efforts with other warlords, and developed strategies for them against the Soviet Union and imperial Japan.

First, as to Zhang Xueliang, although the CYP founders extended their reach within the Fengtian clique in 1927, their relationship with Zhang was rocky at the time. As aforementioned, the CYP founders were closer to Yang Yuting, who saw Zhang Xueliang as the incapable son of Zhang Zuolin. Consequently, as Zhang executed Yang in January 1929 to stabilize his rule in the wake of his father's death, the CYP actually lost one of its most powerful patrons in Manchuria. However, due to a mutual need in real politics, the CYP founders and Zhang

¹¹¹ "Zhongguo guojiazhuyi qingniantuan zhi guomindang shu-duiyu guomindang de shida zhiwen [To GMD from the Chinese Nationalist Youth Corps-Ten Questions toward the GMD]" in *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 2, 704–711.

¹¹² "Yu youren lun disi gonghe yundong shu [Discussing the Fourth Republic with Friends]," 1928, in Shuxin 1, Box 7, in *Zeng Qi Papers*.

¹¹³ They claimed so in a party report of 1923. "Zhongguo qingniandang yu zhongguo guomindang zhongguo gongchandang shinianlai douzheng zhi jingguo [The CYP's Struggles with the GMD and CCP in the Past 10 Years]," probably in 1933, in Box 2, *Zeng Qi Papers*.

Xueliang still chose to establish collaborative relations thereafter. The CYP utilized Zhang to fight the GMD, suppress the CCP, and keep a keen eye on the moves of Soviet Russia and imperial Japan in the north-east, while Zhang utilized the CYP to raise further popular support for him.

According to letters between Zeng Qi and Zhang Xueliang,¹¹⁴ the two maintained routine communications throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s. Particularly in the fall of 1929, Zeng had close contact with Zhang regarding his war against Soviet Russia triggered by his attempt to terminate Russian privileges over the Chinese Eastern Railway.¹¹⁵ Zeng encouraged Zhang to fight on the one hand, and directed the CYP members forming supportive public opinions in Shanghai and Hong Kong through publications and organized demonstrations on the other. During the Central Plains War in 1930, Zeng urged Zhang to stay neutral at first, and then intervene when the war reached a stalemate for both his individual victory and the Chinese state reconstruction of democratic politics.¹¹⁶ Yet, Zeng was still not influential enough to affect Zhang's strategic formulation, and the war did not reach a stalemate for a while. Within a few months, the situation came to favor Nanjing, and Zhang allied with the winning side. This was certainly disappointing for Zeng, but still did not affect the CYP's overall expansion. Because Zhang sided with Chiang Kai-shek to establish a strategic basis inside Shanhaiguan to prevent the latter from advancing further north, Zhang and his generals not only overlooked, but as was often the case, protected the CYP members.

As another powerful warlord, Yan Xishan collaborated with the CYP until the late 1940s. Yan dominated Shanxi from the early Republican era, and emerged as a leading militarist, along with Chiang Kai-shek, Feng Yuxiang, and Li Zongren after his submission to the GMD. Zeng first contacted Yan in early 1927 through Zhang Taiyan's intermediation,¹¹⁷ but did not consolidate this connection due to Yan's undecided attitude between the northern and southern camps. Yet, as the CYP moved its center to the north in 1928, Yan's support became crucial because of his dominance in the Beijing and Tianjin regions. In the meanwhile, Yan Xishan did not get along with Chiang Kai-shek due to

¹¹⁴ Particularly see the transcribed letters between Zeng and Zhang in Shuxin 2, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹¹⁵ See the letters to Zhang Xueliang, on August 7, 1929, September 1, 1929, and September 24, 1929, in Shuxin 1, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹¹⁶ See the letters to Zhang Xueliang on June 7, 1930, September 4, 1930, and September 20, 1930, in Shuxin 2, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹¹⁷ See the letter to Yan Xishan on November 8, 1929, in Shuxin 1, Box 7, Zeng Qi papers.

the latter's tactical dictatorial leadership in weakening other military camps. Particularly, after Chiang defeated the Guangxi clique and the northwestern army in 1929, it was now Yan's turn to face Chiang's oppression, forcing him to utilize whatever means he could to stabilize his rule. It was at this point the CYP forged collaborative relations with Yan.

Zeng Qi met Yan Xishan sometime in 1929, and successfully added Chang Yansheng to Yan's staff members. From that point onward, the CYP leaders supported Yan by contacting other warlords, politicians, and intellectuals, and contributed consistently to chasing and suppressing the Communists. In particular, the CYP leaders worked hard to affect the course of the Central Plains War fought between Chiang Kai-shek and the alliance of Yan Xishan, Feng Yuxiang, and Li Zongren's Guangxi clique. While Yan worked with Wang Jingwei, whom the CYP opposed, its founders still attempted to strengthen Yan's camp in order to weaken the Nanjing regime at this time. Therefore, utilizing their established political and intellectual networks, they also contacted other provincial warlords on behalf of Yan. For example, by 1930, the CYP leaders maintained good relations with most of the leading warlords in Sichuan, collaborated well with Zhao Hengti in Hunan, and maintained contacts with Lu Xingbang in Fujian and Jin Shuren in Xinjiang. At the outset of the Central Plains War, the CYP leaders then sought to contribute to Yan's side.¹¹⁸ Although these regional warlords did not really get into the war, they were at least willing to be listed on the anti-Chiang Kai-shek declaration for Yan in this period.¹¹⁹

The CYP collaborated with Yan first to establish a free realm for its own actions in the north, and second to restore the Chinese republic. The first goal was achieved, though the CYP founders often struggled with Wang Jingwei's faction. In late 1929, for example, more than 30 CYP members, including Yu Jiaju, were arrested in Beijing

¹¹⁸ Letter to Yan Xishan on January 9, 1930, letter to Jin Shuren on April 26, 1930, letter to Liu Chunhou on September 16, 1930, letter to Yang Sen on September 16, 1930, letter to Deng Xihou on September 16, 1930 in Shuxin 1, and letter to Lu Xingbang on May 31, letter to Yan Xishan on August 31, 1930, letter to Liu Houtong on September 9, 1930, in Shuxin 2, in Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹¹⁹ See "Yan Xishan Feng Yuxiang deng sishiwuwei jiangling wei zhuzhang toupiao jie jue dangzheng de tongdian [Forty-Five Generals, Including Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang, on Voting as a Solution to the Party and State Affairs]," February 14, 1930, 350–354, and "Lu Zhonglin Shang Zhen deng lianming fandui Jiang Jieshi yonghu Yan Xishan wei hailukongjun zongsiling de tongdian [Some Generals, Including Lu Zhonglin and Shang Zhen, Advocate Yan Xishan to Be the General of Navy, Army, Air Force against Chiang Kai-Shek]," March 15, 1930, 388–398, in *Zhang Xueliang yu zhongyuan dazhan* [Zhang Xueliang and the Central Plains War], ed., Liaoningsheng danganguan (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1991).

(Beijing) at the instigation of the latter.¹²⁰ Yet, in the following month, Yan Xishan directly ordered the Beiping local police station to release them. As a result of this kind of protection, the CYP had been able to develop well in the Beiping, Tianjin, and some other Hebei regions, challenging the Nationalists without fearing serious retaliations.

The second goal failed as Yan, Feng, and Li were relatively quickly defeated by Chiang. The CYP leaders had expected the war to last long enough to prepare for a larger political movement to unite all other anti-Nationalist forces. Therefore, while supporting Yan, the CYP leaders developed two strategies. First, as a necessary precondition to overthrowing the GMD, they promoted an alliance between the Fengtian clique in the northeast and the warlords in the southwest in order to induce the two warring camps in the Central Plains War to listen to their demands.¹²¹ Second, they contacted Xiong Bingshan, Tang Shaoyi, Zhang Taiyan, and other prominent politicians and intellectuals to convene a national congress (*guominhuiyi*) to draft a new constitution to replace the Nanjing government.¹²² If these strategies went well, the generals across 11 provinces in north China and the leaders of Sichuan, Hunan, and Guangxi were supposed to restore the Chinese republic on December 25, the memorial day of the 1915 Yunnan Uprising.¹²³ However, as Zhang Xueliang joined Chiang Kai-shek, Yan Xishan was forced to relinquish his power, and the CYP's strategies had no chance to bear fruit.

The third leading warlord who collaborated with the CYP in north China was Han Fuju. Han was once Feng Yuxiang's subordinate, but switched sides in 1929 due to a personal conflict with Feng. First, he took Henan as Chiang's reward but later dominated Shandong after the Central Plains War. The CYP founders sought his support through Zhao Yusong due to Zhao's intimate connections within the Beiyang factions, and deepened this relationship after the Manchuria incident in 1931. In particular, when the Nanjing regime could not respond well to the Japanese invasion, as sponsored by Han, the former Beiyang militarists planned to organize the Great Alliance of the Beiyang Faction (*Beiyangpai datongmeng*) to challenge Chiang Kai-shek in north

¹²⁰ See letter to Yan Xishan on January 9, 1930, in Shuxin 1, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers; and also, Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 239–240.

¹²¹ See letter to Liu Chunhou on Sep 16, 1930, in Shuxin 1, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹²² See letter to Tang Shaoyi on September 30, 1930, and letter to Zhang Taiyan in Shuxin 1, and letter to Pu Dianjun on September 13, 1930, in Shuxin 2, in Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹²³ See letter to Zhang Hengti on November 13, 1930, in Shuxin 2, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

China.¹²⁴ Zeng Qi and his comrades also joined, taking it as a chance to consolidate their relationship with Han. Although this plan was not carried out due to the GMD's intervention, as a result of their collaborative work, according to Li Sihao in a 1932 Japanese consulate report, the anti-GMD atmosphere in Shandong was still strong, and there were moves among Yan Xishan, Han Fujun, Liu Xiang (in Sichuan), Shi Yousan, and Sun Dianying to resist Chiang Kai-shek collaboratively.¹²⁵

The CYP and Han Fujun also collaborated to suppress the Communists. Therefore, Zeng Qi sent more than 100 CYP members to Shandong to help Han engage in propaganda and eradicate the Communists in the winter of 1931.¹²⁶ Among them were a group of CYP members who left remarkable records of fighting the Communist activities in Tianjin. To address Han's concern, the CYP members thus formed a special unit within his Military Law Office (*junfachu*) and took three primary means to identify the Communists: (1) utilizing the Communists defectors; (2) infiltrating the Communist units with the CYP members; and (3) intercepting letters and publications.¹²⁷ What was the effect of their work? While the CYP's records tend to overstate their feat, the Communists' narratives, by the same token, tend to belittle it. However, according to a Japanese intelligence report, the CYP members did in fact contribute to restraining the Communists' development in north China in the early 1930s.¹²⁸ The leading figure of this unit at the time was Cheng Zhida, who the GMD subsequently assassinated.¹²⁹

Because of its collaborations with these leading warlords, the CYP developed well in north China. Between mid-1928 and mid-1931, the CYP established formal provincial branches in Tianjin, Beiping, and Shenyang. Specifically, Zeng initiated the expansion of the CYP's political bases by means of: (1) attracting military officers' participation; (2) founding local militias; and (3) expanding the CYP's influence among

¹²⁴ Wang, "Guojiazhuypai kangzhanqian de fandong huodong," 6.

¹²⁵ See "Anti-Chiang Movements in 1932," in Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR hereafter): B02031802200.

¹²⁶ See "Zeng Qi zizhi nianpu," 1560–1561.

¹²⁷ Wang Weinong, "Han Fujun de tiedie he Zhang Zongchang de beisha [Special Agents of Han Fujun and the Killing of Zhang Zongchang]," in *Zhongguo qingniandang*, 197.

¹²⁸ According to a Japanese report on the CCP's self-reflection, the CCP's development was obstructed by the CYP's expansion in the early 1930s. See "Chūgoku kyōsantō 1933 [CCP in 1933]," 1934, JACAR: B02130945400.

¹²⁹ Zeng Qi, "Zhongguo qingniandang yu zhongguo guomindang zhongguo gongchandang shinianlai douzheng zhi jingguo." According to Yu Jiaju, Cheng was assassinated by the Communist, Yu, *Yu Jiaju jingtao xiansheng huiyilu*, 40. I suggest the former record is a correct one, as it was written in the early 1930s, and was not subject to the Nationalist pressure that Yu might have experienced when he resided in Taiwan.

intellectuals and students through the platforms of education and publication. Zeng achieved significant success, particularly in the first and third aspects. For instance, under Yu Xuezhong's protection, the CYP controlled even the Education Bureau of Beiping and freely published articles attacking the Nationalists.¹³⁰ As a result, according to a GMD report from early 1931, the Beiping and Tianjin regions were under significant influence of the CYP nationalists.¹³¹

Though not as fruitful as in those two aspects, the CYP leaders also strove to develop local militias. One example was the CYP's local militia in Cangzhou, Hebei, established through the collaboration of the CYP members and local leaders.¹³² Without fearing the GMD, those local powers provided the CYP with the channels to collaborate with other militia leaders in north China, helping it to destroy the GMD's local branches; for example, in Henan and Anhui.¹³³

Due to high confidence based on its expanding influence, the CYP made three demands to the GMD – namely the rights of party politics, social movements, and local autonomy,¹³⁴ which could possibly have helped the CYP realize its own kingdoms in north China. Three cases demonstrate the CYP's potential. First, in early 1930, although the Hebei provincial government officially banned CYP publications, they were still widely circulated without restrictions.¹³⁵ Also in early 1931, provoked by the Nationalists' revelation of the CYP leaders' list on the North China Daily (*Huabei ribao*), the CYP raided its editorial office with guns, leading to some near fatal injuries (see Figure 4.1).¹³⁶ The CYP members, despite the Nationalist strong order to punish them, were not deterred. Finally, in early 1932, some CYP members were arrested for

¹³⁰ Jia Yi, "Qing fangzhi guojiazhuypai guodong cheng."

¹³¹ "Pingjin yidai chongman guojiazhuypai zhi kongqi [The Empowered CYP Nationalists in Beiping and Tianjin]" in "Zhongguo guomindang beiping tebieshi dangwu zhengli weiyuanhui gonghan zheng zi di 325 hao [Official Letter of the Executive Committee of the Beiping Branch of the GMD No. 325]," Beijing Municipal Archives (BMA, hereafter): J181.17.1707.

¹³² Yishan, "Daibiao banshichu diyici baogaoshu [First Report of the Representative Office]," March 1, 1929, Shuxin 4, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹³³ See (1) "Henan sheng dangwu baogao [Report on Henan Party Affairs]," November 17, 1931, Kuomintang Archives in Taipei (Kuomintang Archives, hereafter): 4.1/35.18; "Chengqing sihou duiyu guojiazhuypai zhi chuzhi ni yinyong weihai minguo jinji zizhuifa chengzhi jingqi caiduo shixing you [To Punish the CYP Nationalists by the Act of Punishment Regarding the Crimes of Jeopardizing the Republic]," December 14, 1934, Kuomintang Archives: Zhongyang zuweihui zi 17829.

¹³⁴ Yishan, "Daibiao banshichu diyici baogaoshu."

¹³⁵ "Chengwen geng zi disanhao baogao [Official Letter of Geng: The Third Report]," April 23, 1930, Shuxin 4, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹³⁶ "Beiping zuo dian [Beiping, Yesterday]," *Shenbao*, March 10, 1931, 3.



Figure 4.1 “After Mobs’ Attack,” *Huabei ribao*, March 14, 1931: Report on the CYP nationalists’ attack of *Huabei ribao*’s headquarters.

their anti-Japanese street actions. Yu Xuezhong, however, simply ordered their release.¹³⁷

In late 1931, the CYP encountered its first organizational crisis in northeast China. Because the northeast was one of the CYP's political bases, they at this point faced a life or death retreat in this region upon the Manchurian Incident. Without compromising themselves with the Japanese, the CYP turned this crisis into an opportunity through their energetic resistance movements in Rehe, Liaoning, and other regions in Manchuria and north China. Although they lost, they gained further support from the patriotic students and military, especially among the people who fled from the northeast. As a result, as one GMD source clearly indicates, the CYP Nationalist Group became even more influential after the Manchurian incident, supported by various patriotic organizations. Among them were the National Association of Self-Reliance (*Guomin zijiuhui*), the Student Action Society (*Xuesheng yundong dui*), and the Discussion Group of Contemporary Affairs (*Shishi zuotanhui*) of the intellectuals in Beiping.¹³⁸

To suppress the CYP, the GMD then initiated a series of campaigns. Just as they understood the CYP in this era: "The CYP Nationalist Group has been active in the wake of the September 18th Incident, as they transform propaganda into actions. Its aim is to overthrow the Nationalist Party and to destroy the Republic in the same way as the Communists. If we do not suppress them severely now, the CYP will be more detrimental later."¹³⁹ The GMD thus pushed to ban its publications, arrest its members, and oust them from their workplaces.¹⁴⁰ However, it was not until the CYP encountered another crisis in 1933 that the Nationalists could put their crackdowns into force.

*Song Zheyuan and the Guangxi clique beside Yan Xishan
and Han Fuju, 1933–1937*

Faced with the GMD's military dictatorship, "military" was an important solution for the CYP founders and "party" was a useful tool for those

¹³⁷ "Zhi Yu Xuezhong shu [To Yu Xuezhong]," February 10, 1932, and "Yu Xuezhong fuhan [Reply from Yu Xuezhong]" February 13, 1932, Box 4, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹³⁸ *Guojiazhuyipai qingniandang zhuanji*.

¹³⁹ "Beiping difang fayuan jianchachu, shouxi jianyueguan yue yijian [One Report to the Chief Prosecutor of the Prosecutor Office of the Beiping Regional Court]," in *Hebei gaoyuan guanyu guojiazhuyipai anjian yiji minguo jinji zizhuifa chengzhi deng xunling* [Order on the Publishment of the CYP Nationalists by the Act of Punishment regarding the Crimes of Jeopardizing the Republic, issued by the Hebei high court], BMA: J028.0001.00090.

¹⁴⁰ Wang, "Guojiazhuyipai kangzhanqian de fandong huodong," 4–5.

leading warlords. Yet, there were obvious limitations in the CYP's collaboration with those warlords. The mutual need between the two sides certainly helped the CYP develop rapidly, but the CYP founders were not able to institutionalize these collaborative relations. Therefore, when one side found no need for the other, these relations easily fell apart. This was exactly what happened between the CYP leaders and Zhang Xueliang between 1933 and 1934. When the CYP encountered an internal organizational crisis, and the GMD further oppressed the CYP, Zhang Xueliang also turned to crack down on the CYP.

We can trace one origin of the CYP's organizational crisis to its second congress in Tianjin in 1927. As to the CYP's fundamental attitude toward the GMD, there already appeared to be conflicts between Zeng Qi and Chen Qitian at this time. Zeng wanted to fight the Nationalists, whereas the latter sought a possible compromise.¹⁴¹ Because of the overwhelming support of Zeng Qi, the conflict between Zeng and Chen did not cause significant troubles until 1932, when the seventh national congress was held. To challenge the GMD more effectively, some proposed to make Zeng Qi the so-called *führer* of the CYP for a streamlined implementation of the CYP's general strategies. But Chen and others opposed that. While it was true that the CYP maintained some fascist traits under the influence of European national socialism, it was still not the same as the fascist parties in Europe. For the CYP founders of the May Fourth generation, it was not acceptable to revere someone as an absolute dictator, and even Zeng Qi himself was not ready to take that role.¹⁴² Yet, due to the confrontations that emerged in this conference, the members of the central executive committee all resigned.¹⁴³ This was a rash move, as Chen Qitian recalled later.¹⁴⁴ Because of the retreat of its founders, the CYP's leadership weakened, and the party could not deal well with the critical crises that came up between 1933 and 1934.

Although the CYP expanded its membership through its anti-Japanese actions, it still lost impetus as its guerrilla squadrons were defeated in Rehe and Manchuria, while facing increasing crackdowns from the GMD before and after the Tanggu truce in north China in 1933. In order to survive, Zeng Qi, along with others, decided to move the center of the CYP's activity to southwest China,¹⁴⁵ and subsequently caused the Incident of Wang Jiexia and Huo Weizhou. Wang Jiexia and Huo

¹⁴¹ Wang, "Guojiazhuypai kangzhanqian de fandong huodong," 2.

¹⁴² Zuo Shunsheng, *The Reminiscences of Tso Shun-sheng* (New York: East Asian Institute of Columbia University, 1975), 92–93.

¹⁴³ *Guojiazhuypai qingniandang zhuanji*, 6.

¹⁴⁴ Chen, *Jiyuan huiyilu*, 165.

¹⁴⁵ Li, *Xuedunshi huiyilu*, vol. 1, 303–304.

Weizhou were both from the northeast, and each significantly contributed to the CYP's development in the north and northeast. As Wang and Huo disagreed with this move, they defected from the CYP along with more than 1,500 members in Beiping. Treating this move as treason, the CYP assassinated Huo, triggering an organizational crisis for the CYP in north China. To make the situation even worse, rather than aiding the CYP at this difficult moment, Zhang Xueliang began to crack down on the CYP.

After the Manchurian Incident, Zhang lost his power base in the northeast to squarely face Chiang, forcing him to be very cautious to maintain his force inside Shanghaiguan and to take a less confrontational attitude toward the Nanjing regime. As a result, as the CYP kept expanding in north China and within his army, Zhang found it necessary to constrain the party in order to reconsolidate his power. This was the case in Beiping and Tianjin in 1933 and, as Zhang was further pressured by the GMD to persecute the CYP forces, the CYP was no longer favorable for him. Accordingly, when Zhang found that Yu Xuezhong still maintained a close relationship with Zeng Qi, he urged him to keep a distance.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, as Zhang was provoked by the CYP's move to kill Wang Jiexia and Huo Weizhou, and as it was also revealed by the Nationalist intelligence unit that the CYP could mobilize about 10,000 men in his army in 1934, he was determined to take a firm measure.¹⁴⁷ Dozens of military officers were subsequently arrested, causing an end to the CYP's organization within the Dongbei army.¹⁴⁸ Zhang and Zeng Qi still retained some contacts afterwards, but never worked together again.

The CYP's predicament also reflected the GMD's consolidating rule in China. As the GMD's army advanced into Sichuan – the CYP's last stronghold – in its extermination campaigns against the Communists, Li Huang and Zuo Shunsheng decided to make a compromise in 1934 in order to keep the CYP alive. Although Zeng Qi disagreed, he had little support from other leaders. Yu Jiaju had already decided to follow Li and Zuo, and Chen Qitian had proposed this compromise even earlier, so

¹⁴⁶ Zhu Wenbo, "Weng Zhaoyuan," in *Zhongguo qingniandang xunguo sinan ji yigu tongzhi luezhuan*, 156.

¹⁴⁷ "Cai Mengjian dian Yang Yontai [To Yang Yongtai from Cai Mengjian]," September 13, 1934, Academia Historica: Jiang Zhongzheng zongtong wenwu, 002080200179056.

¹⁴⁸ "Zhang Xueliang dian Jiang Zhongzheng [To Chiang Kai-Shek from Zhang Xueliang]," September 14, 1934, Academia Historica: Jiang Zhongzheng zongtong wenwu, 002080200179095.

Zeng was unable to resist. However, due also to his strong revolutionary stance, the other leaders tacitly agreed he should take minimal underground actions. Therefore, between 1934 and 1937, Zeng and his followers kept their activities even more discreet and clandestine. In this period, Zeng worked with Song Zheyuan, in addition to Yan and Han in north China, and found new collaborators in Guangxi.

Song Zheyuan was Feng Yuxiang's subordinate but was nominally commanded by Zhang Xueliang after the Central Plains War. His army stationed in south Shanxi after the war, and then took the leading role in defending the Chahaer and Hebei regions from 1932 onward. According to Shen Yunlong, Zeng Qi started to contact Song in the late 1920s. The two strengthened their relationship as Song took charge of the border zones with the Japanese dominated Manchuria.¹⁴⁹ Besides Shen's testimony, Zeng also reported to the CYP's central committee regarding this collaborative initiative in 1935.¹⁵⁰ Although Zeng was not very sure about Song's sincerity at the beginning, their collaborations went much further in their projects against imperial Japan, as well as against Chiang's leadership.

Three cases specifically inform the intimate relationship between Zeng and Song – first, in the anti-Japan projects. As the Nationalists made further concessions to Japan in 1933, Song could not expect consistent military support from the central government in north China. It was at this stage that Zeng often worked with Song in formulating strategies against Japan. For example, when Song was dismissed from the chairmanship of Chahaer, and was subsequently reappointed as the leading general to defend the Beiping and Tianjin regions in 1935, he discussed with Zeng how to deal with these issues.¹⁵¹ Although Song was deeply disappointed, Zeng urged him to remain in the north, claiming his support through the CYP's human resources, its public opinion formations, and financial backup from the Chinese overseas.¹⁵² The second case is found in anti-Nationalist projects. Song showed a strong antipathy

¹⁴⁹ Shen Yundong, "Song Zheyuan jiangjun yu Zeng Muhan xiansheng de jiaowang [As to the Relationship between General Song Zheyuan and Mr. Zeng Muhan]," *Zhuanji wenxue*, no. 182 (1977).

¹⁵⁰ Yishan, "Sannianlai zhi zhengzhi yundong baogao [Report on the Political Movements in the Past Three Years]," in Box 2, Zeng Qi papers.

¹⁵¹ See Shuxin 4, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers. There were several copied documents of Song. I suggest, in his secret communication with the Nanjing government as well as in this secret negotiation with the Japanese army, Song always copied and forwarded the related documents to Zeng.

¹⁵² See, for example, "To Song Zheyuan," July 16, 1935, "To Song Zheyuan," September 17, 1935, and "To Yan Xishan," September 20, 1935, in Shuxin 3, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

toward the Nationalists. Therefore, Zeng encouraged him to found another government under the Five Colored Flag while conferring with Yan and Han.¹⁵³ As the Guangxi and Guangdong cliques rose against Chiang in 1936, Zeng also communicated with the southern generals on behalf of Song. While advising caution on the Japanese moves, Zeng hoped that Song could work with those generals to overthrow the party-dictatorship of the GMD.¹⁵⁴ The third example is found in the Xi'an Incident. The Xi'an Incident was a turning point in modern Chinese history. Song Zheyuan also expressed deep concern at this moment, and again discussed it with Zeng. While communicating with Yan Xishan, Zeng urged him to declare Chiang Kai-shek's life should be saved in order to avoid further internal turbulence while confronting Japan.¹⁵⁵ From these cases, as we see, Zeng still maintained his revolutionary passion even after the CYP's official compromise.

As to the Guangxi Clique, the CYP leaders made some friendly contacts in the late 1920s. Utilizing their intellectual networks in early 1928, Zeng Qi dispatched Li Huang to Guangxi to contact the principal of Guangxi University, Ma Junwu. The goal was to seek the Guangxi militarists' collaboration in not suppressing the CYP so severely. Through Ma, Li met Huang Shaohong and secured his commitment to prevent Bai Chongxi in north China from repressing the CYP.¹⁵⁶ From that time on, the CYP leaders maintained a friendship with the Guangxi leaders. Therefore, though not deeply involved, the CYP leaders expressed their support of the Guangxi clique's military campaigns against Chiang in the early 1930s. As the CYP's organizational basis collapsed in north China and temporarily moved their headquarters to Hong Kong in 1934, the CYP leaders were able to further strengthen their relationship with the Guangxi clique.¹⁵⁷

Between 1933 and 1937, Zeng Qi traveled back and forth between Hong Kong and Beiping. Particularly in Hong Kong, he became acquainted with Li Zongren of the Guangxi clique. Upon Li's invitation in 1933, Zeng traveled to Guangxi to observe its provincial construction. He then left with a good impression.¹⁵⁸ And, as they agreed to fight

¹⁵³ See "To Song Zheyuan," January 6, 1934, in Shuxin 6, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹⁵⁴ See "To Song Zheyuan," May 6, 1936, and "To Song Zheyuan," June 20, 1936, in Box 4, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹⁵⁵ Zeng Qi "Wunianlai chaoye xielizhi huigu [As to the Collaboration between the Ruling and Opposition Parties in the Past Five Years]," in *Zeng Qi xiansheng wenji*, vol. 1, 242.

¹⁵⁶ Li, *Xuedunshi huiyilu*, vol. 1, 236–237.

¹⁵⁷ Wang, "Guojiazhuypai kangzhanqian de fandong huodong," 6.

¹⁵⁸ "To Li Delin," May 31, 1934, Shuxin 3, Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

Chiang Kai-shek together in the mid-1930s, Zeng also became familiar with Chen Jitang, the most prominent military leader of the Guangdong clique, having been introduced to him via Li.¹⁵⁹ From then on, Zeng attempted to help found an alliance between Li Zongren and Chen Jiang in the south and Song Zheyuan, Yan Xishan, and Han Fuqu in the north to confront Chiang's Nanjing regime together.

Therefore, when the Guangdong and Guangxi militarists collaborated to challenge Chiang Kai-shek in 1936, Zeng sent his representatives to join them as well, while communicating with the generals in north China. In this case, Zeng Qi proposed to take four steps to rise against Chiang: (1) in the southwest, meaning Guangxi and Guangdong; (2) in the north, meaning Hebei, Shanxi, and Shandong, respectively ruled by Song, Yan, and Han; (3) in the upper Yangtze region, meaning Sichuan; and (4) in middle and lower Yangtze regions, where Chiang had his power base.¹⁶⁰ Zeng secured Song's commitment first. Then he would be confident in his ability to unite the three warlords to rise together if the southern militarists could repel Chiang's army. Unfortunately, this plan was never realized, as Chiang Kai-shek crushed the Guangdong clique in the first month of their uprising, forcing the Guangxi clique to compromise in the next two months. The three northern military leaders could do nothing in this particular moment but issue statements urging Chiang to accept the southern demand to start the Anti-Japanese War.

The CYP engaged in revolutionary struggles against the GMD for more than 10 years, beginning in 1926. Yet, as Zeng Qi – the CYP's most militant leader – also agreed to turn the CYP into a civil democratic party in the Anti-Japanese War, the CYP's revolutionary quest ended officially. Nevertheless, the CYP's previous movements were by no means meaningless. The CYP had been a critical actor on the political right, contributing to the formations of the alignments and partitions across different political and military camps. Furthermore, these collaborative relationships also fermented in a later era. For example, as Huang Shaohong remembered, the reason Li Zongren won the vice presidency in the 1948 election was indeed partly due to the CYP's support.¹⁶¹ The losers certainly contributed to shaping the changes of political topography as well.

¹⁵⁹ "To Huang Xuchu," May 15, 1936, "Transcribed Letters," Box 4, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹⁶⁰ "To Song Zheyuan," May 6, 1936, *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Huang Shaohong, "Guanyu Li Zongren xuan fuzongtong [As to Li Zongren Competing for the Vice Presidency]," *Huang Shaohong huiyilu* [Huang Shaohong's Memoir], ed. Guangxi wenshi yanjiuguan (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1991), 616.

Conclusion

In 1950, Zeng Qi regretted his political failures during the previous three decades, including the CYP's most radical and influential years between 1926 and 1937.¹⁶² However, the political landscape is never decided solely by the winners or rested solely on the mercy of the winners. Therefore, in a different political setting during the civil war in the late 1940s, as we see, the GMD collaborated with the right faction of the Democratic League, while the CCP proposed "New Democracy" for its left. These two parties had to do so, because the other parties also established their political influences among Chinese masses, showing us a historical reality of intricate struggles by different political constituencies.

In the revolutionary years between 1924 and 1937, the CYP took a leading role on the radical right through organized mass political movements along with more informed powerful warlords. This was why, when Sun Ke called to unite the Chinese in the wake of the Manchurian incident, he urged the GMD in the middle to tolerate other political parties, including the CCP on the radical left and the CYP on the radical right (*jiyou*).¹⁶³ In some critical regions in different periods, such as north China, Manchuria, and Sichuan, the CYP members were indeed able to outstrip the Nationalists and Communists for a while. However, the CYP was unable to institutionalize its collaborative relations with those leading warlords and could not make their established political power robust enough to consistently survive the violent struggles between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s. Therefore, although the CYP did not lose in its ideological appeal and was able to organize mass political actions among the radical educated youth of this era, it was not capable enough to keep its political influence through extremely difficult situations. Therefore, as we see, with the loose party-military collaborations between the CYP founders and those warlords, the CYP developed rapidly once it had established a safe realm for its political actions. However, as the party was directly exposed to the violence of the GMD, and was without extensive protection of regional military powers, it often lost political magnitude.

When the CYP began to compromise with the GMD, roughly between 1934 and 1935, Zeng Qi had still not given up his revolutionary ambition, waiting for the arrival of another significant moment to topple the GMD. However, the CYP did not have the chance to base itself firmly in

¹⁶² A draft of a letter in Box 7, Zeng Qi Papers.

¹⁶³ "Sun Ke zhaodai baojie [Press Conference of Sun Ke]," *Shenbao*, April 26, 1932, 1.

Chinese society as the CCP did in its rural bases in north China during the Second Sino-Japanese War. As China joined WWII in alliance with the US and UK internationally and the dictatorial GMT began to accommodate the other parties internally, the CYP's radical nationalism became a misplaced ideology. It was at this stage that the CYP founders, including Zeng Qi, formally bade farewell to revolution, transforming themselves from radical national socialists into civil democratic socialists.