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Communists Versus Koreans: Other Aspects of  
the Han-Ul-Ping Communist Movement

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M.A degree in History

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COMMUNISTS VERSUS PEASANTS:  
THE OTHER ASPECT OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT  
IN HAI-LU-FENG

By

Bixin Huang

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History

1990

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNISTS VERSUS PEASANTS:  
THE OTHER ASPECT OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT  
IN HAI-LU-FENG

By

Huang Bixin

Using materials newly available, this thesis reviews the peasant movement taking place in Hai-Lu-feng counties in the south-east coastal area of China during the 1920s. Arguing against opinions represented by previous scholarship, the study finds that there was not a substantial change in the social-economical structure in that area before the movement. Nor was there a deterioration in relations between the peasants and the landlords. The so-called "peasant movement" was in fact an extension and continuation of a urban elite movement in the first two decades of the century. It was more a traditional peasant movement than a "modern", Communist one.

From the perspective of the role of Communist ideology, this study also finds that there was a great contradiction between Communist ideology and the interests of the peasants. It was this contradiction that explained the total failure of the Communists in the area who tried to use the conservative peasants as agents for the Communist revolution.

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## INTRODUCTION

If there is any single county in China which has a history interesting to historians both in China and the West, it is Haifeng. So far at least three monographs in the West have been written on the history of the county.<sup>1</sup> The county gains its important position in modern Chinese history because it is the birth place of the earliest Communist-led peasant movement and the first Communist regime in China---the Haifeng Soviet.

Lying on the southernmost edge of Guangdong province, approximately mid-way along the coastline linking the two largest cities in the province in the 1920s---Guangzhou and Shantou---Haifeng was richly endowed by nature. Haifeng has "favorable natural conditions, and has been called a land of rice and fish".<sup>2</sup> Compared with many other inland counties in the province, the sea provided an extra resource from which people could earn a livelihood. Growing rice and yams was the primary economic activity in the county, while salt-making and fishing also provided important means of income for the people. Peasants at the turn of the century at least had enough to eat in years of normal harvest. This is clearly shown by an investigation into the life of the Haifeng people carried out by an intellectual in the early 1920s. (The details of the investigation will be reviewed in Chapter 3.) Although

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statistics showing the position of Haifeng, in terms of economic development and the living standard of the people, in relation to the other counties of the province are not available at this time, as a native of Haifeng I know that historically the county was richer than most of its neighboring counties such as Huiyang, Zijin and Wuhua. This remained true until 1949. In my talks in the 1970s with martial arts masters, peddlers, and artisans who had traveled a lot before 1949, I always heard stories about how poor people's lives had been in those neighboring counties.

However, although the county was economically richer than its neighbors, it was as obscure to the world as its neighbors at the turn of our century. It was considered by contemporaries as an "out-of-the-way and unenlightened" place.<sup>3</sup> It is true that banditry, rice riots, peasant rebellions and secret societies did appear in its history before the 1920s. But these forms of "peasant collective action", (as some historians like to term them) had not made the county stand out among the nearly 100 counties of the province, for these actions were commonly found in every county's local history.

There seems to have been only one thing which made Haifeng, as well as its neighboring county Lufeng, different from the others. This was the organization known as the Black and Red Flags. The origins of the Flags are still obscure to us. All we know is that every village in

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the two counties identified itself with either the Black or the Red Flag in sectional struggles, i. e., struggles between lineages, clans, or villages. Bloody fights between the two Flags took place frequently in the counties' history.<sup>4</sup> However, it must be pointed out here that the Flags as organizations for factional struggle were only unique in their form, not in their involvement in factional struggle itself. Factional struggles, as far as we know, were common everywhere in Southern China.

This ordinary county suddenly became conspicuous to the whole country, even to the world, in the early 1920s, like a nova appearing in the sky. Under the leadership of a native intellectual named Peng Pai, Haifeng became the scene where the earliest and most violent Communist peasant movement unfolded. At the peak of the movement, the membership of the county peasant union was as large as 100,000 people, accounting for more than two fifths of the county's population. Violence featuring the movement shocked the whole country. "Thunder in the sky, Hai-Lu-feng in the earth" became a phrase in the city of Guangzhou beginning in the 1920s. What happened in the county gave it four "firsts"---Haifeng saw the first Communist peasant union, the first Soviet regime, the first Communist-led armed uprising and the first Communist revolutionary base in modern Chinese history.

But the splendor disappeared as abruptly as it came. With the collapse of the Soviet in early 1928, Haifeng

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ceased being a hot point of the Communist revolution in China. It became a "common" county in China as well as in the province again. Although the Communists never ceased their activities there, the time for mass peasant movements had gone forever.

Why the Communist revolution could succeed has been a heated subject of discussion among historians in the West. Most of them note the role played by the peasants---their support of the CCP and their involvement in the revolution. However, scholars differ sharply from each other on answering further questions such as how the party gained the support of the peasants and what the peasants' motives were in joining the revolution. As Yung-fa Chen summarizes in his book, some people emphasize the peasants' nationalism energized by Japanese invasion in the 1930s, contending that it was the meeting of the CCP's anti-Japanese leadership and the peasants' nationalism that resulted in the CCP's wartime growth which provided a foundation for the military victory after 1945, while others argue that it was the CCP leadership and its organizational weapon that provided the key to peasant mobilization. To Chen himself, the question of peasants' motivation is complicated. He stresses the congruence of many different motives and factors instead of a certain single decisive factor in prodding peasants into the Communist movement.

The quick rise and fall of the peasant movement in

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Haifeng provides a fine case for us to study the questions mentioned above. What made the 1920s such a special period for the Haifeng peasants? What was the impetus for the massive, violent movement? Why did the impetus last such a short time? And what was the relation between "Communism" and the peasants? These have been some of the main questions historians have tried to answer in studying the history of the Communist movement in Haifeng.

For official historians in China, the answer for the question of the origins of the movement is simple. The movement broke out in Haifeng because first, the "class oppression there was extraordinarily grave, and class struggle there was extraordinarily intense". Second, the people in the county "had a good historical tradition of revolution". Unfortunately there has not been a book or an article which discusses seriously the question of the origins of the movement. These two reasons are taken for granted by almost all the supposedly academic works. Except for citing the words with which Peng Pai justified the correctness of his decision to stir up a massive "class struggle" in Haifeng, official scholars in China cannot give more support to their argument. The passage of Peng Pai's words usually cited is from an article he completed in 1925, composed of several statements such as "in the last years there have suddenly appeared a group of rising bourgeoisie" and they "plunder brazenly!" 5

Opinion in the West is not unanimous. As summarized by

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Marks, two tendencies can be identified. One is to emphasize the role of revolutionary elites, mainly, Peng Pai. Roy Hofheinz is in this camp. Although he agrees that social conditions in Haifeng, such as a disadvantaged minority, "might be declared the decisive factor in preparing the ground for a peasant movement", he believes that without Peng Pai, "Haifeng would not have produced China's first Communist peasant movement", and without certain prominent local political elites' help, Peng Pai would have remained just another "disgruntled Chinese student".<sup>6</sup> This school could be labelled as the "organizational" school or the "political" school.

Galbiati's and Marks' scholarship represent another tendency. Also using Peng's words as support, Galbiati contends that there was a steady worsening of relations between landlords and peasants after 1911. Tension between the two classes intensified. The "lines of battle were being drawn up".<sup>7</sup> Marks draws heavily on the "moral economy" approach. This theory was originated for peasant studies by James Scott, who stressed that peasants would participate in social movements such as rebellions or revolutions only when they found that the officials or the landlords had failed to perform their moral responsibilities in social-economic relations, and the rebellions and revolutions were not for overthrowing the long-existing social order, but for the restoration of a former state of a moral community. This "moral economy"

approach is not effective in interpreting a Communist peasant revolution which aimed at establishing a new social system. Therefore, Marks tries to blend it with his own theory. He argues that there was a change of social and economic structure caused by imperialist invasion in Haifeng in the late nineteenth century, which would shape the new form of the "collective action" of the Haifeng peasants. By the decade after the 1911 Revolution, "both landlords and the peasants began to act more in terms of class than of lineage or Flags". In the decade class grievance had become so strong that it would "take very little to bring to a boil".<sup>8</sup>

Although Marks charges that the Marxist approach in China, just like the American approach, is an "elitist" one, which sees the problem of peasant revolution from the top down, (a wrong critique of the official approach in China, I believe), the arguments he made in his book have drawn him close to the Marxist approach he criticizes, that is, to reduce everything to class struggle, and emphasize the inevitability of the coming of the peasant movement.<sup>9</sup>

As to the cause of the failure of the movement, the official scholarship in China always attributes it to the disparity of strength between the peasants and their enemy, namely the landlord class represented by the Nationalists (the Guomindang). In the West, a consensus has not been reached on that issue.

The above brief summary of the state of studies on the

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Haifeng peasant movement suggests that research on the subject is far from being exhausted and satisfactory. Some of the major arguments made by the two schools---the "political" school and the "moral economy" school--- seem to be problematic. For example, a scrutiny of Marks' book would reveal that his assertion that at the turn of the century the social structure in Haifeng was dramatically changed lacks support. Moreover, the peasant movement in Haifeng from 1923 to 1928 is treated by the previous scholarship as a whole. It is a "Communist peasant movement", although to some scholars like Hofheinz it was the Chinese Communist peasant movement while to some others it was a peasant movement. A close review of the movement would indicate that both of the arguments have the problem of oversimplification. The pattern of relations between the Communists and the peasants varied with time.

Therefore, a better understanding of the movement through a closer review of its history is necessary. Such an attempt has been made easier to realize by the accessibility of new materials in recent years. The following discussion is based mainly on those new materials, and aims to shed new light on the interpretation of the movement, and the Communist revolution in China as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

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### 1. The Movement before the Peasant Movement

By 1934, almost all the Communists who participated in the Hai-lu-Feng Peasant movement in the 1920s had been killed by the Guomindang (GMT) authorities in the fighting or after they were arrested, except those who had betrayed the movement or fled overseas. Almost all the chief leaders of the movement were among those who were martyred, including Peng Pai, the founding father of the movement, the "king of the peasants", Li Laogong, the commissar of agriculture and propaganda of the Guangdong Peasant Union, and Chen Sunyi, the first secretary general of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) committee in Haifeng, and the chief commander of the Peasant Corps. In 1987, a book entitled The Haifeng Martyrs ( 海丰英烈 ) was compiled and published jointly by the Communist Party Committee and the government of Haifeng county. The book provides fifty-four brief biographies of the most important Communist martyrs, all of them initiators of or activists in the Haifeng peasant movement in the 1920s.

Among the 54 people, 43 were literati (see table 1) before they became Communists, having educations ranging from upon elementary schools to colleges. Among the 27 intellectual initiators and organizers of the Haifeng peasant union who began their careers as social revolutionaries before 1925, 25 were natives of Haifeng.

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The only two exceptions were Li Chuntao and Yang Sizheng,<sup>11</sup> both of whom were classmates of Peng Pai when they were studying at Waseda University in Japan from 1918 to 1921. All of the 25 initiators and organizers were literati. More

Table 1 Composition of the 54 martyrs

grouping	number	percentage
native of Haifeng*	30	56
intellectual**	43	79
participant of peasant movement before 1925	27	50

Source: The Haifeng Martyrs .

\* Most of the non-natives were soldiers attached to the troops which participated the Nanchang and Guangzhou Insurrections in 1927, and then came to Haifeng.

\*\* Defined as people who received education in any kind of school before they joined the peasant movement.

Table 2 Background of the 25 native initiators of peasant movement

birth place	family background	education
county seat and its suburbs	landlord	overseas college
	merchant	domestic college
other market towns	professionals* (doctor, teacher, etc.)	middle school
rural areas	peasant	normal school
	labor worker	higher school
unknown	unknown	primary school
		<u>sishu</u> (village school)
		unknown

source: The Haifeng Martyrs  
 \* Some of the merchants and professionals were also landlords.

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detailed statistics on their background is shown in table 2.

An investigation of the composition of the Executive Committee of the Guangdong Peasant Union set up in Haifeng in 1923 also shows that among the twelve members six were intellectuals who occupied the key positions of the Committee, and all of the six people were from landlord families. Biographical information on the other six people marked in Peng Pai's report as "peasant" are not available, except for the one named Yang Qishan. He was the most prominent one among the six non-intellectuals: he was the vice chairman of the County Peasant Union, and the financial minister of the Provincial Peasant Union. But he could hardly be considered a peasant, for according to his biography, he had been living as a master of martial arts and as "itinerant chivalrous man" (jiang hu yixia 江湖义侠) since his childhood. 12

These statistics show a strong connection between the Communist peasant movement and the native intellectuals of the county, and a connection between these intellectuals and the landlord class. It also suggests a strong connection between the new-style education and the galaxy of intellectuals with revolutionary ideas. A short review of the expansion of new-style education in the county at the beginning of the twentieth century is necessary for us to have a deeper understanding of where and how these intellectuals were shaped, and of the "peasant movement" itself.

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The first public school in Haifeng was established by the county magistrate in 1839, at a site in the northern suburbs of the county seat called the "Five Hills", where today's Peng Pai's Memorial Middle School stands. It was a school for training candidates for the imperial examination of the Qing Dynasty.<sup>13</sup>

After the Reform of 1898 came the abolition of the imperial examination system in the whole country. To prepare new teachers for new-style public schools, another county magistrate set up a normal school in the Confucian temple of the county in 1904. Many students enrolled were former licentiates (xiucai 秀才). The dean of the school, Ye Cuan, and some of the teachers, were supporters of the 1898 Reform with anti-Qing sympathies. To show their support for a "national revolution", they cut off their pigtails at the risk of being punished by the authorities for "rebellious".<sup>14</sup>

Radical ideas of teachers like these were passed on to some of their students. Among them the most important were Chen Jiongming and Ma Yuhang.<sup>15</sup> The former later became the governor of Guangdong province under Sun Yat-sen, and a fierce adversary of the Communist peasant movement; the latter was appointed by the county government to the post of principal of the First Higher Primary School of Haifeng (海丰第一高小), set up in 1905.

The First Higher Primary School (FHPS) became a hot bed for Haifeng's new intellectuals with radical ideas.

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Although it was a "primary" school, many of the students it first enrolled were in their thirties or forties because it did not have a limitation on the age of students. Under Ma Yuhang, the school was dominated by anti-Qing revolutionaries. In 1906, a new teacher was appointed to the school by the county government, but his class was boycotted by students backed by Ma, because they thought that the new teacher was a Qing loyalist.

The role of the FHPS as a hot bed for radical intellectuals was eclipsed when the Haifeng Middle School (HMS) was set up on the site of the first public school---the Five Hills---in 1913. Five years later, another school called the Lu-an Normal School was set up by it and in fact attached to it. The words "lu-an" meant the Haifeng and Lufeng counties.<sup>18</sup>

These two schools came into being at a time when great changes had been made in Hai-lu-feng, as in the whole country, although much still remained to be done. After the 1911 Revolution, the rule of the "alien" Manchus had been overthrown, taking with it the monarchical system in China. In this sense, what those radical teachers and students in the FHPS advocated and struggled for before had been realized. However, that did not mean a fading of the momentum for the intellectuals to press for social change. "Looking around at our country, every aspect of society is as dark as it ever was," said the declaration of the founding of a political society (the Lufeng Society For

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Promoting Social Progress, 陆丰社会促进会 ) in Lufeng in 1920. "The purpose of our society is simply to renew society and to promote cultural development."<sup>17</sup> On the eve of the tenth anniversary of the 1911 Revolution, an intellectual lamented in Haifeng that although ten years had passed, the goal of creating a democratic country was still far away. Furthermore, people's sufferings had increased greatly. Therefore, he said, the "national day" deserved no celebration, and "maybe we need another national day".<sup>18</sup>

Under such conditions, the radical intellectuals re-directed their struggle and sought for new ways to achieve social change. In the HMS, the arrival in office of a principal named Dai Dexun resulted in an influx of teachers with democratic, socialist or communist ideas. Dai was a graduate of Peking University. Among the teachers and guest lecturers he hired or invited were several returned students from the United States, a graduate of Lingnan University in Guangzhou (which was run by American Presbyterian missionaries), and several returned students from Japan. There were also some teachers who were former members of the Revolutionary Union of China ( Tongmenghui 同盟会 ) headed by Sun Yat-sen. Dominated by teachers like these, one might expect that the school would become a vehicle for them to disseminate their political ideas. The subject of the admission examination of the normal school after its inauguration was "education and the salvation of

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Many students of the school were graduates of the FHPS. Among the 25 Haifeng natives in Table 2, thirteen, including some of the most prominent people, were graduates of the HMS; most of them were from the FHPS. Peng Pai was one of the first students of the FHPS when he was thirteen, and then became one of the first students of the HMS when he was seventeen.<sup>20</sup>

The composition of the faculty and the students foreshadowed the role the school would play on the local political arena. This was proved when a demonstration by its teachers and students was staged in 1916 to mark the first anniversary of the "Day of National Shame", the day when President Yuan Shikai made concessions to the Japanese government's "Twenty-one Demands". The demonstration was led by a teacher called Ling Jingting, a former member of the Revolutionary Union. Several months later, a student protest was led by Peng Pai and his friends to protest a decision by some gentry to set up a statue of the chief military commander of the county. The commander, Lin Ganchai, had executed several innocent peasants as anti-Yuan Shikai elements and members of the Triad.<sup>21</sup> But the gentry headed by Chen Yuebo praised him for another reason. In the early part of 1916, Chen's village, Dongwu, which belonged to the Black Flag, was in a fight with another village called Yanggubu which belonged to the Red Flag. It was Commander Lin who led his men to help Chen to win the

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fight.<sup>22</sup> The statue was damaged by students at the cost of some of the students being bitterly beaten by the followers of the gentry. A petition was signed by all the students and teachers of the school and sent to the provincial government. They won the day finally. The commander was dismissed and his statue thrown into the sea.

A short three years later, when the ripples of the May Fourth Movement in Peking reached Haifeng in the same month, the students of the HMS took the lead in turning themselves out into the streets, stirring up among the intellectuals in the county a passion of patriotism. An ensuing campaign for boycotting Japanese products was pressed by the students throughout the whole county. What was more significant was that in the campaign the "Haifeng Student Union" (HSU) was formed based in the HMS, beginning the rapid growth of political societies in the Hai-lu-Feng region.

The surge in forming political societies around the 1920s was an unprecedented phenomenon in the local history of the region. Besides the Student Union, Haifeng at that point also saw the births of the "Progress Together Society" (共进会), the "Competing Progress Society" (竞进会) the "New Life Society" (新生活社), and the "Society for Fostering Capable People" (培才会), and so on. In one year after his return from studying in Japan, Peng Pai formed or initiated at least three political societies, open or secret. Political societies also expanded rapidly

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Among the twenty-five initiators and organizers in Table 2, at least seventeen were mentioned in their biographies as initiators or participants of political societies that grew up in Haifeng. Forming political organizations was taken by those new intellectuals as one of the major means of bringing about some changes in the society. The specific aim of each organization, however, was not always the same. The "Progress Together Society" was formed at first for the leadership of the late 1916 student unrest mentioned above. As we have shown, the ostensible purpose of the "Society of Promoting Social Progress" in Lufeng county was to "promote the cultural, to renew the society". Evidently the purpose of Peng Pai's "Society for Socialism Study" was to disseminate the ideas of socialism, although what kind of "socialism" Peng favored was unclear.

The day-to-day affairs of most of the political organizations were to hold discussions on social problems and their cures, and to issue publications. Only a very small remnant of these publications have been preserved. But they can still provide us with a clear idea of what kind of social changes those intellectuals in Haifeng wanted in the early 1920s.

Among the political organizations the HSU, founded in 1919 was the most influential and largest, having more than 700 members. It began to issue its organ New Haifeng in

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1921. The only two issues of the magazine published still exist today. What the contributors of the two issues advocated may be classified as follows:

**Anarchism.** This was the most fashionable idea in China at that point, as Arif Dirlik points out. It prevailed in radical thinking during the period when Marxism was introduced into Chinese thought, and in fact it served as "midwife" to Marxism. One of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP), Li Dazhao, was first an anarchist and then became a Marxist.<sup>23</sup> Anarchism was most systemically and earnestly accepted and advocated by the contributors of the journal. Its chief advocates were Peng Pai and Li Guozhen, who was a participant of several political societies and later became the secretary of the CCP Committee of Haifeng, and one of the figures in the Haifeng Martyrs.<sup>24</sup> Another advocate was Ma Xin, who later became an official in the GMD's central committee in Wuhan. In an essay entitled "Addressing my compatriots", Peng Pai denounced law, government, state and private property as the most evil sources of the bitterness and sufferings of people, and called for their total destruction: "Law deserves no existence. Government and state certainly must be eliminated". The only means to go about this was "social revolution", which was also a means to realize socialism. He made it clear that socialism was a society without state, government, law, and private property. Apparently his socialism was Kropotkin's anarchism, though the name of

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Kropotkin did not appear in the article. It did, however, in Li Guozhen's article "My Outlook of Life", in which he gave an introduction to Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid, and praised it as a "very wise, very bright truth in the twentieth century, dominating every principle of human life". To achieve a better society, "everything that clashes with this principle must be overthrown thoroughly".<sup>25</sup>

**Marxist-Leninism.** As reflected in these essays, the new intellectuals in Haifeng had only piecemeal knowledge of Marxism-Leninism. The traces of this ideology we can find are mainly in Peng Pai's same article advocating anarchism. He mentioned in one place the "evil of the capitalist social system", and he asserted elsewhere in the article that "the recent tendency of the world is not the antagonism between countries, but antagonism between world proletarian and privileged class (i. e., bureaucratic-capitalist class)", and that this would be the character of wars in the future.

Another person who seemed to have inklings of Marxism was Zheng Zhiyun, the chief editor of the magazine, who later became the head of the CCP East River Special Committee.<sup>26</sup> In one of his essays he asserted that Marxist socialism was a result of the study of "changes of the economic history and the defects of the current social structure", therefore it was a theory "based on experiments".<sup>27</sup>

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**Social reform.** Not everyone was so radical as to advocate a social revolution. Many essays appealed for social reforms such as educating women, improving the quality and living condition of teachers, carrying out "social movements", and so on. Among those advocates of social reform were future CCP local leaders and peasant movement initiators, such as Zhou Dalin, a one time party secretary of Haifeng, Lufeng and Zijing counties,<sup>28</sup> and Zhong Yimou, an early organizer of the peasant movement and the author of the book, The Hai-lu-Feng Peasant Movement, published in 1957.<sup>29</sup>

**Democracy and human equality.** In the introduction to the magazine itself, it was declared that the notion of "new Haifeng" connoted a new life, that is, a free and equal life. Mei Pu in his essay, "My Thoughts on the Double Ten Holiday", sadly lamented that what the 1911 Revolution had been staged for --- democracy and freedom under a constitution---was still far from being realized, and that people had been fooled and cheated by those warlords and politicians, implying that another revolution for a democratic government was necessary.

Judging from what we have just seen, the main schools of ideology advocated in Haifeng at that time were generally in accordance with what was fashionable in other parts of China, particularly in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Owing to the development of new-style education, and with the return of a big group of students from

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overseas studies and the circulation of radical magazines and books such as Chen Duxiu's New Youth, Haifeng was no longer an "out-of-the-way place". Entering the twentieth century, it was intellectually integrated into the new trend in China. A very active group of urban elites emerged in Haifeng. Peng Pai was merely one, although the most prominent, of the group. By forming political societies, airing their advocacy of social changes, and launching political parades and student unrest, these urban elites made the market towns and particularly the county seat places filled with political hubbub, fermenting a political storm. They felt strongly obliged to bring change to their society. However, they did not have a clear idea about what the future society should be, and there was no consensus inside the group about the aims and means of the social change. Besides, so far they had confined their activities to the circle of the intelligentsia, forming political societies, issuing magazines, leading discussions and parades and demonstrations. All of these indicated that they looked at no people except themselves as the agents to press for social change.

## **2. From Elite Movement to "Peasant Movement": the Mechanics of the Transmission**

While there was a hubbub of intellectual agitation going on in the towns, until the early part of 1922 the rural areas of Haifeng were peaceful and quiet. The peasantry,

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which composed more than ninety percent of the county population, was entirely aloof from the political agitation. However, things changed quite abruptly. On New Years Day of 1923, the General Peasant Union of Haifeng (GPUH), declared its founding. It was a huge organization with twelve constituent branch unions covering ninety-eight villages of the county, and with more than 2700 families and over 16,000 people as members. Considering that half a year earlier not even a single peasant had been a member of the union, the expansion of that organization was really a miracle.

It is logical for historians to look back at the history of Haifeng prior to the 1920s to search for factors which could explain the sudden emergence of such a massive movement. In addition to the "tradition of peasant collective actions", as we have mentioned in Chapter 1, both the Chinese official scholars and some Western historians contend that the class antagonism between the peasants and the landlords in Haifeng had intensified before the 1920s. The most serious argument is made by Marks. He argues that significant change had happened in the social structure in Haifeng entering the twentieth century. The class contradiction between the landlords and the peasants in Hai-lu-Feng intensified because of foreign capitalist economic aggression. Owing to the purchase of large amounts of raw sugar from Guangdong by some foreign companies, according to Marks, the peasants in Haifeng readjusted their cropping pattern from growing rice to

sugar cane in late nineteenth century. However, with the prices of sugar in the world precipitously falling after 1905, the foreign refineries stopped buying sugar in Guangdong. As a result, Guangdong peasants switched land back to rice and other crops. In Haifeng, this "sugar market crash" had two consequences. First, peasants now "had to seek loans, land, and other favors once again from the lords of Haifeng. And lords could now bargain for terms more favorable to them from peasants who were in no position to argue too strenuously". Therefore, land tenure arrangements became more unfavorable to the peasants than before. Second, using Peng Pai's words that "over the two decades from 1900 to 1920, peasant freeholders had declined "in some villages by eighty percent", Marks asserts, the tenancy rate in Haifeng had doubled in the period.<sup>30</sup>

Whether or not there was a deterioration in relations between peasants and landlords is a key question in our discussion of the connection between peasant traditional peasant collective action and the new Communist component in the 1920s' peasant movement. If such a deterioration did happen, that may mean that the peasants had been right on the verge of rebellion. Hence the movement in the 1920s may be more "traditional" in nature than "Communist". In short, the answer to this question is important to our understanding of the movement.

It must be pointed out, however, that the argument that this deterioration did happen is far from persuasive. As we

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have seen entirely in the case of the Chinese official scholars, and partly in the case of Marks and Galbiati, the support for this argument is from Peng Pai's article published in 1925. If one reads the article, one finds that his description of Haifeng's situation before the peasant movement is a mechanical copy of Marxist-Leninist doctrine rather than a serious investigation. For example, he asserted that after the 1911 Revolution, Haifeng saw a sudden increase of "countless warlords, bureaucrats, new officials, politicians, nobles, and a newly-risen landlord class (i. e., those half-landlords half-warlords)!" He also asserted that "since the invasion of imperialist-capitalism," the "peasant freeholders and the half-freeholder-half-small-landlords" (自耕农和半自耕农半小地主), who were "previously capable of being self-sufficient", now declined and gradually "proletarianized."<sup>31</sup> Having no material or statistics to support them, Peng's assertions are not valid to be used as self-evident conclusions.

As to Marks' argument that there had been a dramatic change in the tenancy system in Haifeng in the 1910s, we have to say that the support he can give to the argument is not sufficient. No written records about the alleged shifts of cropping pattern in Haifeng have been found in historical archives in Haifeng or elsewhere. In an investigation I have done among the elderly people living in rural Haifeng, there was no respondent who had any memory of the shifts. In short, we can not find any

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information about the shift existing in the written or oral histories of Haifeng.<sup>32</sup>

Then where does Mark's assertion come from? If we read his book more carefully, we can find that the main places he talks about in the relevant paragraphs are Guangdong province as a whole, and the Chaoshan region, which as a geographical conception did not include the Hai-Lu-feng region.<sup>33</sup> Almost all the materials cited to support the allegation are in fact relevant to those places. The only evidence the author can use to connect Hai-Lu-feng to the boom of sugar cane growing is the stoppages at Haifeng's port city, Shanwei, by two steamship lines linking Hongkong and Shantou run by two foreign companies which were involved in the sugar refining industry.<sup>34</sup> However, he cannot provide any evidence to prove that the steamships stopped at Shanwei for loading raw sugar. Besides, Marks' conclusion that a significant amount of lands were leased under a new term of tenancy is vulnerable because of the absence of supportive statistics or any other evidence. All these make his argument about the intensification more a surmise than a truth.

Of course, even though we can come to the conclusion that Mark's evidence is faulty, it still does not mean that we can easily rule out the possibility that there was a deterioration in landlord-tenant relations at the turn of the century. However, other evidence available counters the argument that this relationship at the beginning of the

century had been worse than before.

In 1921, Ma Huanxin, who was a very early participant of the student movement and one of the initiators of the peasant movement, did an investigation of the "living conditions of Haifeng people" for the purpose of staging a "social revolution". The result of the investigation was published in New Haifeng.<sup>35</sup>

Geographically and economically, Ma divided the county into four areas---the Western, Southern, Northern and Middle-eastern regions, characterized by four different economic patterns---rice-yam planting, fishing-salt-making industry, tea-charcoal industry and multiple economy. (This division is still the case in today's Haifeng.) Ma also classified people living in each area into four classes: the "rich", the "medium", the "average" and the "vagrant". In the case of the first area, that is, the Western region with a rice-yam planting economy, Ma's definition for the "rich people" were those who "buy a lot of lands and lease them to the average people." "Medium" meant people who "do not have very much land to lease", but generally had long- and short-term hired hands. As to the "average", they did not have "even a mu of land", and had to be tenants of the "rich". As for those who were dubbed "vagrants", they were peasants "moving around without jobs". Interestingly, these four classes compare quite closely with the four classes the CCP would later divide the Chinese rural population into, that is, the landlord, rich peasant, tenant-poor

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peasant and the hired labor classes. The difference is that Ma's division blurred the distinction between landlord and peasant, and he did not identify a middle peasant class between the "medium" and the "average," as the Communist party does.

And what did Ma find about the life of the "average" people who accounted for fifty percent of the population in the Western region? "Although all year long the whole family cannot have a moment of leisure, they still have lots of rice and yams left after paying off the rent and saving for food. They can use them to trade for other necessities in towns." Only for those "vagrants", according to Ma, was surviving a problem.

Things in the Northern region, which was a coastal area, were even better than in the Western region, for fishing and salt-making were more lucrative than farming. Therefore people there were generally not living close to the edge of subsistence. This was reflected in the region's lower percentage of those "moving without jobs". (See Table 3)

The Northern area, which was a mountainous region, was the poorest area in the county, with a population mainly living upon tea-planting and charcoal-making. This kind of industry was inefficient, and could make only a poor profit. The region was not self-sufficient in food. Even in the "normal" harvest years, some people had to sell their children for food, or themselves became beggars. The relative

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poverty in the area was also reflected by the higher percentage of "vagrants" shown in Ma's survey.

Table 3 Demography of Haifeng in the 1920s reported by Ma Huanxin

percentage of population in	Middle-East West		South*		North
			(part 1)	(part 2)	
agriculture	90	20	5	20	40
commercial and other business	10	5	3	5	25
fishing	/	60	17	/	25
salt-making	/	15	60	/	
tea-growing	/	/	/	35	15
charcoal-making	/	/	/	40	
industry	/	/	/	/	5
the "rich"	15	15	20	5	13
the "medium"	30	45	50	20	50
the "average"	50	37	28	50	30
the "vagrant"	5	3	2	25	7

Source: Ma Huanxin, "An investigation on the present-day life of the Haifeng people". See HMHR, vol. 1, pp 65-72.

\* Ma divided the Southern region of Haifeng into two sub-areas mainly on an ecological basis. Salt-making industry was featured in one part, while fishing was featured the other part.

As for the Middle-eastern region, it was located between the mountain area in the North and the costal area in the South. Unlike the sandy soil in the costal area,

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land in this region was generally fertile for farming. Therefore, people in the region mainly lived by growing rice and yams. However, owing to the geographical position of the region, many peasants also made extra money by conducting commercial activities. One of these activities was to buy salt from the costal area and then carry it to the mountain area (usually on the peasants' shoulders) and sell it. On the way back, people could also buy some timber and resell it in their native area. Moreover, some peasants went to the seashore to participate in fishing or salt-making industries. Therefore, Ma called this region an "area with a population composed of all professions," and people there had an easier time finding jobs. As a result, they generally had a decent life.

Therefore, the picture of peasant life in most parts of Haifeng in the early decades depicted by Ma was a peaceful idyll. What his investigation suggests is that in most parts of the county the overwhelming majority of peasants had enough food to live on, at least in normal years. Only in the northern part of the county did a social crisis seem apparent. However, as we shall see later, this poorest region was not the place where the communist-led peasant movement first broke out or was particularly active. It was much less densely populated than the other regions in the county, and was mainly occupied by Hakka people, who were immigrants from the northern parts of China, who were a minority community isolated from the native population of

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the county.<sup>36</sup> Ironically, this poorest region was an area where "reactionary villages", which were adversaries of the peasant union, clustered. One question that should be answered here is to what extent was Ma's report valid? To evaluate it needs comparison. Unhappily Ma did not tell that in what way his survey was conducted, and we do not have other investigation with which a comparison can be made. However, we still have reason to believe that Ma's discovery was basically true.

First, in view of the purpose for which the investigation was done, there was no reason for Ma to prettify the life of the peasants. The investigation was done as a prerequisite for "social reform". The main point Ma tried to make was that society in Haifeng was still "dark" and backward, therefore a social change was urgently needed. With such a purpose, there was more possibility for him to exaggerate the difficulty of the peasants than to cover it up.

Second, his conclusion in the investigation is confirmed by Communist documents. The "Public Letter to Our Compatriots from All the Haifeng Peasants Weeping with Grief", issued after the peasant union was disbanded in 1923, admitted that "we peasants in Haifeng ...have enough to eat and to wear in good years", while stressing that they "cannot escape from suffering from hunger and cold in bad years".<sup>37</sup> In Peng Pai's article, "The Haifeng Peasant Movement," written between 1923 and 1925, the only case he

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could cite to support his assertion that the "poor peasants had rebelled and desired to rebel " before the Communist peasant movement was the prevalence of the Triads during the late Qing and a 1895 rebellion led by someone called Hong Yazhong, who was an "unemployed peasant" and led "several thousand people to revolt in Haifeng, looting everywhere".<sup>38</sup> No case of peasant unrest after 1900 could Peng Pai find in Haifeng. Moreover, there was no serious natural calamity recorded in Haifeng's archives from 1900 to 1922.

Therefore, we have not found any material suggesting that around the turn of the century, there was a dramatic change taking place in the tenant-landlord relations in Haifeng. The Marxist or Marxism-Leninism-influenced historian's claims that the peasant movement began in 1922 as a result of the intensification of antagonistic class relations between peasants and landlords is too far-reaching. Besides, while an unprecedented intellectual agitation for social change was seething, "peasant collective action" in any form was in hibernation, if there had been any of this kind of action in the region before. No events such as peasant unrest, rebellion, or rice riots, were registered in the decades before 1922. Peasants were not, in short, on the verge of revolt. This would be further confirmed by the unusual difficulties Peng Pai met in his efforts to stir up a "class struggle" in the rural areas. To those difficulties we will give detailed discussion later.

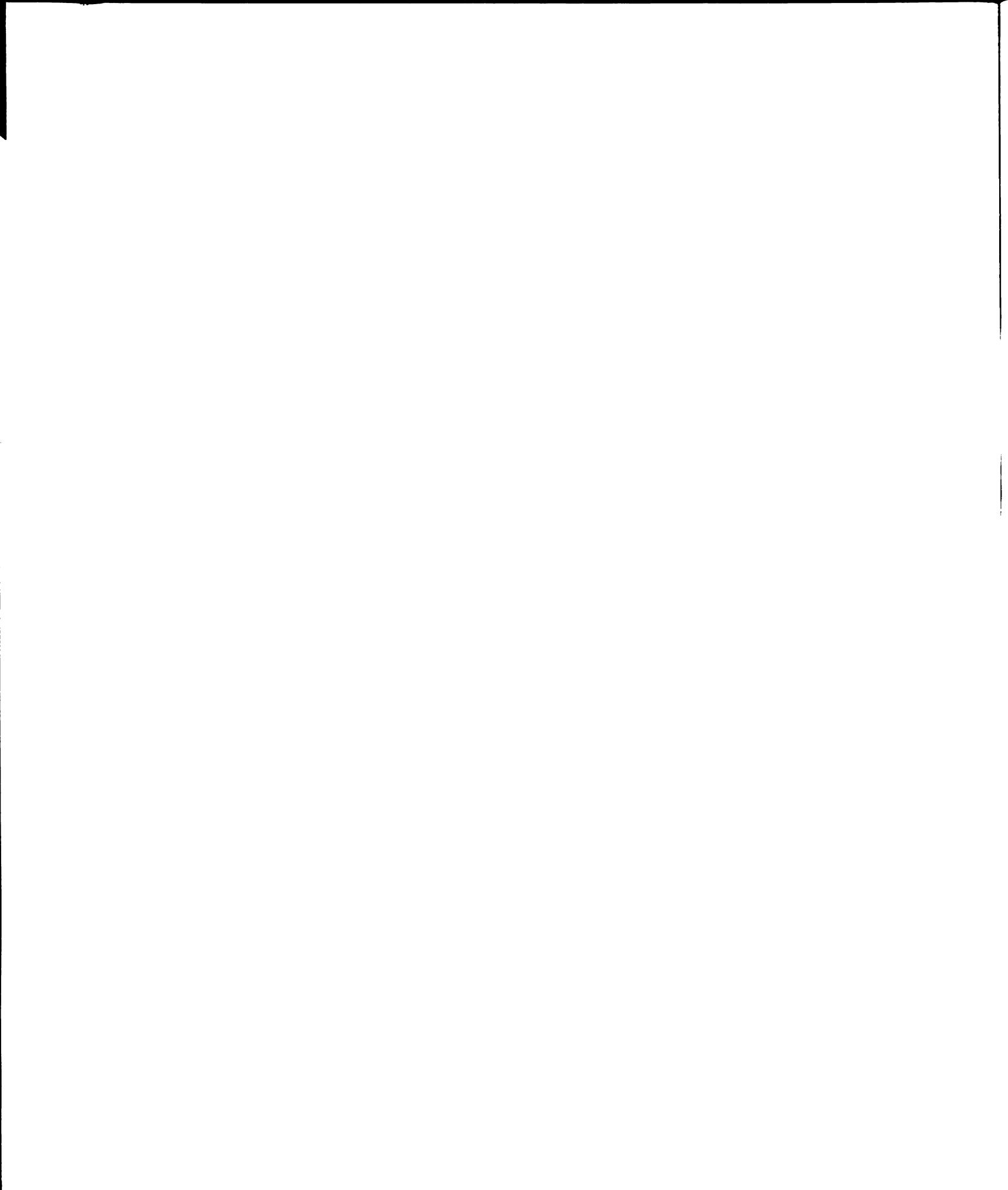
Then, how did the peasant movement arise in the latter part of 1922? It has been recognized by many scholars that Peng Pai played a key role in it. But why did Peng Pai, a leading spirit of the intellectual movement, turn to the peasants? How could he stir up such a big surge in a quiet sea? These are the two questions we must answer.

Peng Pai's determination to "go among the peasants" came all of a sudden in June 1922. Before that point he did not show his concern for peasants' problem so much in his talk, writings and actions, except that in 1921 he once sharply criticized the "separation of education from poor people." "Today's education has long been not an education for the class of poor people (贫民阶级 pinmin jieji)--- laborers, peasants and poor people (劳动者, 农夫, 贫民 laodongzhe, nongfu, pinmin), but only for aristocrats, bureaucrats and capitalists", he said.<sup>39</sup> Nor was his decision to go to the countryside made under instruction from the CCP. He was not a member of it until 1924, and he was very suspicious about the role of the CCP. He "believed deeply in anarcho-Communism before," he wrote to his friend in September 1923, "and began to believe in Marxism only two years ago". "We must form an extremely durable organization," he went on to say, "which must also be very secret and very active. I do not understand the Chinese Communist Party so much. I am afraid that it is useless."<sup>40</sup>

Besides, relying on the peasantry to press a social revolution was not in line with the thought of Marx or

Lenin. Then why did Peng Pai shift his interest from the intellectuals to the peasants? Based on Peng's own description, both Marks and Hofheinz believe that the inspiration came after Peng had a quarrel with his mother, brother and sister, who were annoyed by his article. Peng suddenly thought that "if peasants read this article, their hearts must be very happy." So he went to the countryside right after that.<sup>41</sup> If this is true, Peng must have given up his new efforts very soon, for as we shall see, he was going to find that few peasants would like to listen to his propaganda of class struggle and socialism. There must be some deeper reasons explaining his decision to go to the countryside.

Interestingly, it was not Peng Pai, but rather a person named Chen Xiu who was the first in Haifeng to suggest that intellectuals should shift their main frontier of "social movement" work from cities to villages. Chen was one of the leaders of the HFSU and one of the earliest supporters of Peng Pai in his effort to mobilize the peasants. He published an essay entitled "Social Movements and Rural Haifeng" in New Haifeng in September 1921, observing at the beginning that "the scope of society is so vast that its reform cannot be fulfilled if we rely only upon a few youths with consciousness". The correct approach was to mobilize the populace by propaganda, he continued. The populace could be divided into two groups---city residents and peasants. "According to my experiences of lecturing and



performing street operas,<sup>42</sup> I find that city residents are cunning and opinionated, and never pay much attention to what we say. Residents in the villages have simple minds. But their minds are more open to new ideas". Therefore, he concluded that if they shifted their work of propaganda from the cities to the countryside, "the effect would be ten times stronger". He even put forward the idea of organizing peasants into unions, though he used other names for them. "We must form for them self-governing societies in villages, or study societies or clubs, using temples for their locations and temple properties for their funds."<sup>43</sup>

There is no available evidence showing to what extent Peng Pai's decision to go to the countryside was inspired by Chen's idea. What we do know is that Chen was one of the few intellectuals who supported Peng's activities in the countryside. There is a lot of evidence to show that Peng Pai's decision was prompted by his disappointment in intellectuals. In an article written in late 1923, Li Chuntao, Peng Pai's faithful comrade and former classmate in Japan, had this to say:

(Peng) held that every person was originally innocent. It is the systems which should be blamed for sins. Therefore he not only appealed to those who were poor to stage social revolution, but also and particularly to those who were educated. But later, he absolutely despaired of intellectuals. By that point he began to reproach himself, and resolutely, all alone, went among the knowledge-free and property-free class to go about the practical movement.<sup>44</sup>

But what caused his despair? The first thing was his

dismissal from the post of education commissioner of the county. In May 1921, because of his grandmother's illness, Peng Pai rushed back to Haifeng from Japan. In October, he accepted an appointment by the Haifeng magistrate as county educational commissioner. The appointment was made under the instructions of Chen Jiongming, then the Governor of Guangdong and the army Commander-in-chief under Sun Yat-sen's Guangdong Military Government. Chen was the person who had the highest power over Haifeng's political affairs. As for Peng, taking that appointment from the authorities was to bring about a change in the society through education. In May 4, 1922, using his official power, he summoned teachers and students from all schools in the county to stage a parade to mark the May First International Labor Day in the county seat. Four days later, an article appeared in a local newspaper sponsored by Chen Jiongming and controlled by conservative local gentry, the Luan Daily, sharply criticizing Peng for "airing the fallacy of socialism in the guise of education". On the day after, he was dismissed. "As late as May 1922 I was still dreaming of starting the social revolution through education," Peng admitted later.<sup>45</sup> But now, with the loss of his post of education commissioner he had also lost the vehicle he could use for that purpose.

As a factor causing his despair, however, this was less important than the quarrel among intellectuals over "isms". A gathering at the end of the May 4 parade unexpectedly

became a verbal battle among lecturers over what they were celebrating on that day. Some lecturers argued that they were celebrating the day of May 4, the day of "rescuing the country"; some others argued that the parade was for the Labor Day, a day of social movement. Among those leaflets distributed in the parade, some advocated super-nationalism, some socialism.<sup>46</sup> In order to disseminate his "socialism", Peng Pai organized a new political society under the name of Red Heart Group (赤心小组). The vehicle for its propaganda was a periodical called the Red Heart Weekly (赤心周刊). However, he soon found himself being bogged down in the mire of debate with other intellectuals. What angered him the most was the attack from the Luan Daily. It held that Peng Pai was not the right person to "come out to advocate socialism" because he was rich. "Now I am advocating with merely a pen and a mouth. But they criticize me for 'singing too high a tone', and for being 'too new' and 'too far from our lives.'" Peng Pai complained in the fourth issue of the Weekly. "If I really push the social revolution by sacrificing my family property, they would certainly regard me as a rebel and help the officials to arrest me!"<sup>47</sup>

Evidently Peng Pai was bored by the quarrel, which he dismissed as "futile" later, and was disappointed by the outcome of his efforts to spread his idea of socialism. His family members had also shown their loathing and worry over what he had said in the magazine. But at that point he

still pinned his hopes for socialism on intellectuals from rich families. "Frankly speaking, we are now expecting those who live in manors and eat rice to come out and advocate socialism genuinely! For they were born to rich families, and therefore they certainly have had more opportunity to receive education...They should wake up more entirely, more rapidly!"<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately not many intellectuals would hear his cry. As Li Chuntao observed in 1923, Peng at first not only called poor people to stage social revolution, but also called those people with knowledge to stage it. But later, "his faith in the people with knowledge was totally smashed." The sixth issue of the Red Heart Weekly became the swan song of the Red Heart Group. After that, "owing to various reasons, comrades dispersed, bringing the magazine an unexpected suspension. From then on, Peng Pai began to apply himself to the peasant movement".<sup>49</sup> The dispersal of the Group was the last straw causing Peng Pai's change of mind.

Now the history of the Haifeng movement reached a turning point. The intellectual agitation seemed have entered a blind alley and lost its momentum. But one of its most important leading figures---Peng Pai, was going into another Haifeng---the rural Haifeng---to stir up rebellion there. The continuity between these two movements was the idea of a "social revolution" held by some radical urban elites. The discontinuity was that the agents through

which this revolution were to be implemented were different. Through our above discussion, we can see that the transmission of these two movements was to a great extent contingent on several factors. Had not Peng Pai become totally disenchanted with intellectuals while still keeping his zeal for a social revolution, had not he suddenly thought that peasants might be the last potential agent for the revolution, there might not have been a "peasant movement" as it was in Haifeng's history. The history of the genesis of the "peasant movement" has indicated, and I will further indicate later, that this movement was one created by non-peasants---the urban elites. More importantly, when the creator was going to the villages, his primary purpose was not to "liberate" the peasants. Rather, he was looking for a last candidate whom he thought might be the agent to fulfill his goal of a social change. This meant that there would be two discrepancies built into the "peasant movement" itself: the discrepancy between the ideals of the urban elites and the reality of the peasants and rural society; and the discrepancy between the primary goals of the leadership and the interests of the peasants. These two discrepancies were two key factors which would shape the movement, as we will see in our following discussions.

### 3. The Rise of the "Peasant Movement"

Although Peng Pai had emerged from his illusion about intellectuals, he had at the same time become caught in a new one about the peasants. The rural area of Haifeng, he believed when he was going to villages, was like a keg of powder, which would explode only when ignited by someone like him from outside peasant society. The social status of the Haifeng peasants, he thought, had become much worse since the 1911 Revolution for four reasons. First, there had emerged "numberless" new warlords, officials and politicians. They composed a "newly-risen landlord class" suppressing and exploiting the peasants "cruelly and fiercely". Second, owing to the "imperialist-capitalist invasion" Chinese handicraft industry had been "smashed into powder". So the prices of "ordinary goods" were rising daily, while prices of agricultural products "remained at best the same." Furthermore, there were continuous wars staged by warlords allied with imperialism. All of these influences combined to make Haifeng's rural areas poorer and poorer. Third, the "new-style educational system" also contributed to the plight of the peasants. It was even worse than the old one. It was "a way to slaughter people without a sword."<sup>50</sup>

Thus Peng came to the conclusion that peasants in the county "are thinking about insurrection, about rebellion at

every moment", and that " the pure proletariat in the countryside has a deep hatred against the landlord-capitalists. Therefore, class antagonism in the countryside has long existed. What is needed is some one to awake it and incite it".<sup>51</sup> Obviously his observation was basically a mechanical copy of Marxist-Leninist doctrines.<sup>52</sup> However, it was this conviction with which he went to the Village to kick off his new project.

The place this inciter chose to stir up the class struggle was a village in Chishan yue ( 约 ). (During the early Qing, Haifeng county was divided into four administrative divisions called du, each of which was composed of ten yue.) Chishan yue was in the eastern suburbs of the county seat, belonging to what Ma Huanxin termed Middle-eastern ecological area. Chishan yue was a typical agricultural area in this part of the county, with a rice-yam-growing economy. Since it was located in the suburbs, peasants there had a closer link with the county seat than those who lived in most other parts of the county. Lands rented by the peasants in Chishan were mostly owned by landlords living in the town. The yue was one of the major sources of vegetables the townspeople needed daily, while the human wastes of the town were one of the major sources of fertilizer for the peasants. In addition, the town was the main marketplace for the Chishan people.

No previous work has asked why Peng Pai chose Chishan to kick off his new campaign. The living condition of the

peasants there around the 1920s was not the best compared with the other parts of the county, but neither it was the worst, according to memories of my elderly family members whose ages range from seventy to ninety today. Generally speaking, it was somewhere in the middle. Peng Pai himself never explicitly said why he picked this yue, but the reason seems simple: Chishan was the nearest rural area to his home. It took only ten minutes on foot to reach the nearest village in the yue from Peng's home. He might have chosen the place mainly for convenience, although the fact that his family had some tenants in the yue might also be one of the factors. Economic and political situation was not something he took into account first, since he believed that the whole county was like a powder keg.

However, Peng quickly found that his conviction that the peasants would be "very happy in their hearts" to hear his voice was wrong. The way in which he got his campaign started was to go to the villages to talk the peasants. But he found that it was very hard to find a peasant who would like to converse with him. Having tried in vain for several days, he finally got a villager who seemed not to shun talking with him. Peng seized the opportunity to enlighten him with class struggle theory, trying to convince him that he had been exploited by landlords. But the peasant laughed at what he said and turned away.<sup>53</sup>

Peng decided to change his tactics. Now he tried to lecture to peasants at an intersection where hundreds of

peasants, most of them from the Chishan yue, would pass by on their way to the county seat every day. The intersection was about five minute's walk from Peng's home. The main feature of the intersection was a huge banyan tree beneath which the passing peasants liked to sit down and relax a little bit. Peng seized the opportunity to lecture them, telling them "the cause of their bitterness, and the way out, indicating the proofs of how landlords suppress peasants and the need of their solidarity". The result after more than two weeks' effort was that he got some six followers, while many of the peasants began to regard him as a madman and tried to shun him.

Peng lost no time in organizing the six people into an organization which he later called the "Six Persons' Peasant Union" (六人农会).

Interestingly, although he openly called on the peasants to unite, the first peasant organization he set up took a form very close to the one characteristic of the Chinese traditional secret societies. The name of the organization was in fact called "Poor People's Party" (贫民党). A solemn vow was taken by all the members at the ceremony of the founding of the Party. The gist of the oath was "obey the order" and "maintain secrecy". As a member, one must be obedient even if he was ordered to "catch the tongue of a tiger or to roll on a bush of thorn". All knowledge of the organization including the founding of the Party must be kept from the members' parents, wives, and brothers.<sup>54</sup>

The form of the first peasant union could be seen as an indication that at that moment Peng was still doing things in the the same style in which he had led the intellectual movement---by recruiting some people to form a esoteric group to press his goal of the "social revolution".

With an organization as his aid, Peng Pai now changed his tactics for the second time. He went to villages again, but this time in the evening and with the help of the six followers. He invited villagers to come and listen to his talk in the village. And he found the crowds coming to listen to him were getting larger and larger. However, it was questionable whether those people, the majority of them women and children, had come to the gathering for his lecture, or for the magic he performed each time before the lectures and the phonograph he brought with him, which in the eyes of peasants was also magic. The main story he told the crowds was still how landlords "oppress" peasants. More than one month later, despite Peng's desperate work, and the fact that the crowds gathered in his lecture sometimes were as big as two hundred people, Peng Pai was still lamanting that "to ask the peasants to join the union is more difficult than to do anything else".<sup>55</sup> Even some of the six earliest members became dispirited because their families got angry seeing them "strolling around" with Peng every day and doing no work in the field.

But the difficulty did not mean that the peasants did not like the idea of mutual help. What they were reluctant

to do was to join an organization whose benefit to them was not clear. Besides, they were prudent, as Hofheinz tries to prove in his book.<sup>58</sup> Seeing their names were written down by Peng when they agreed to join the peasant union, the peasants were "scared and ran away". Peng responded to this by promising that he would no longer write down the name of the new members. By so doing, after more than one month, Peng had a peasant union with thirty-odd members. Since the peasants would like to join the union only orally, Peng Pai had to abandon his original idea to organize them into a tight, formative organization like the "Poor People's Party". Before long, another obstacle for peasants' joining---the uncertainty over the advantages of joining---was broken by an accident.

In August, a six-year old daughter-in-law died from an accident in a village in Chishan yue named Yunlu. As usually happened after this kind of incident, a dispute quickly developed between the girl's matrimonial family and her natal family. The girl's natal family, who lived in another yue, gathered some thirty people (probably mostly relatives) to go to Yunlu village to seek revenge on the presumption that the girl had been mistreated to death by her matrimonial family. A civil dispute like this could result in different outcomes, ranging from a peaceful settlement through outside mediation to large-scale bloody fighting involving different Flags or whole clans or lineages.

This time, however, the dispute had a unique role to play in the history of the county. The father-in-law of the dead girl happened to be a member of the peasant union. Peng decided to seize the opportunity to advertise the role of the union. He summoned the other thirty or so union members to meet the coming mob of the girl's birth family in Yunlu village. And he achieved his goal: the mob of outsiders who had come to demand a life for a life backed down and went back to where they had come from without causing any further trouble. "We took it as material for propaganda, telling people that if we do not unify ourselves we are powerless and will surely be buried by others. If you want to be powerful, please join the peasant union now."<sup>57</sup>

This incident has been commonly mentioned in previous scholarship both in China and in the West. The Chinese official scholars try to make people think that what deterred the outsiders was that they saw the peasant union was so strong that the people in Yunlu could ignore the authority of the head of the yue who came to mediate. Marks correctly points out that it was by writing down the names of the outsiders and by threatening that they might go to jail if they would not quickly disperse, that Peng won his day.<sup>58</sup> What needs to be noted here is that such a bluff could only be made by a person like Peng Pai who had a appearance as a gentleman and the capability of writing. Peng Pai acted as an official before those simple-headed

peasants, to whom he appeared to be an unfathomable stranger. But the means Peng used to deter the mobs was not important for the villagers of Yunlu. What they had seen was that Peng was a great man who could easily help them to win a victory in a lineage dispute. And they must have also realized that if this powerful man was on "their side" when they had trouble with other people, the result would be good.

After the incident more and more peasants joined the union. If we can say that "the cult of Peng Pai", as some historians have termed it, was one of the key factors in mobilizing the Hai-lu-Feng peasants, and that the cult began with this event, then we must also realize that Peng Pai's cult was built first by making use of lineage struggle and by borrowing the peasants' fear of the authorities. More importantly, the incident meant that Peng had deviated from his original line, that is, to mobilize the peasants to stage "class struggle". The first struggle he led the peasants to stage was a lineage struggle instead of a class one. The weapon he used for his first victory was not any new idea he learned from anarchism or Marxism, but the traditional mentality of the peasants---the fear of the authorities, not the spirit of rebellion.

Evidently the experience of the incident had provided inspiration to Peng Pai. Seeing the membership increased very rapidly after the event, he must have felt that real benefits, instead of empty preaching about class struggle,

were much more effective in making the peasants move. His new conception was indicated by a re-orientation of his effort. Actions instead of words became the major means in Peng's struggle to organize the peasants. After the event, Peng applied himself to pressing for several things.

The first was to draw up a regulation prohibiting member peasants from contending with each other for tenancy. The regulation stipulated that without sanction from the peasant union, no member peasant could rent a piece of land previously rented by another member peasant. If a member's tenancy was lost to a non-member contender, the union would "admonish" the non-member peasant to return the tenancy to the former owner. Obviously the regulation was made mainly to protect the interests of member peasants against non-member peasants.<sup>59</sup>

The second was to defy attempts by "local tyrants in the city" to collect fees. Usually a peasant's boat anchored at the docks in the county seat to load fertilizer would pay a fee of twenty fen. We do not know for sure at this moment who were the people who collected the fee and were condemned by Peng as "local tyrants". The countermove decided by Peng was to collect a "road fee" (路费) from any "city local tyrant" (城市工豪) who passed through rural area, and from boats owned by citizens of the town when the boats had to anchor in the countryside. Peng himself said that by so doing the collection of "dock fees" came to an end.

The third was to arrange mediation for peasant union members involved in disputes, so that peasants' families would not collapse. A decree was issued by the union demanding that in any case when a dispute happened among members, the parties should resort to the union for mediation. If any member involved first consulted the gentry or the authorities on the case, he or she would be dismissed from the union. Furthermore, "regardless how justified the dismissed member might be in the dispute, the union would support his rival thoroughly." In case of member peasant versus non-member peasant, or member peasant versus landlord, the involved member should report the case to the union first. Otherwise no help from the union would be given to the member.

The fourth step was to form a funeral society. But the society was suspended one week after its founding, because six funerals occurred for which its members were supposed to share the expense. Six in a week was far more than Peng had expected, and it was surely too many for its one hundred and fifty members to afford.

The fifth step was to set up a peasant clinic in the county seat. In fact there were only two medical personnel in the clinic---a Western style doctor, and his wife who acted as a midwife. All of the union members could see the doctor without charge and pay only half of the price for the medicine picked up in the clinic. The same policy was applied to women members when they asked the doctor's wife

for help in their deliveries. This clinic was very attractive to the peasants. It was said that even some non-member peasants came to see the doctor with a borrowed I.D card of the peasant union.<sup>80</sup>

Of the five things the union had done, only the first could be said to have overtones of class struggle---without competition for tenancy among the peasants, it became relatively difficult for landlords to raise rent. The second item benefited peasants more in a context of rural-urban confrontation than in class struggle. The last three items were in the nature of mutual aid. In attracting the peasants to join the union by declaring that no support from the union would be given to a member peasant who did not report his dispute with a landlord to the union first, Peng had gone quite far in compromising his political principle of class struggle to achieve a short-run success.

By so doing the membership increased rapidly. Peng Pai decided in October 1922 to upgrade the Six Person Peasant Union to the Chishan Yue Peasant Union, and then on January 1, 1923 to the General Peasant Union of Haifeng (GPUH). The GPUH's ten-thousand-odd members accounted for more than one fourth of the county's population. This remarkable success marking the first surge of the peasant movement in Haifeng was brought about by Peng's shrewd adaptation to the reality of the society and the peasants. The vitality of a massive, overt peasant union rested first on two things: the willingness of the peasants to join it and the

unwillingness of the ruling social forces---the authorities, landlords, traditional ideologies and systems, etc---to suppress it. By running the union as a moderate mutual aid instrument, Peng Pai successfully achieved both conditions. Since so far the union appeared to be a tool for "horizontal struggles" --- struggles between peasants, clans, lineages, and between countryside and market towns-- -challenging seriously no aspect of the established social system, no reaction from the landlord class had been registered, and the county magistrate decided neither to support nor to suppress it.<sup>61</sup>

Evidently, Peng Pai decided to hold the line after the founding of the GPUH, at least for a while. The office of the GPUH was composed of nine departments. They were: the Secretary, Agriculture, Propaganda, Arbitration, Finance, Public Relations, Education, Public Health, and General Affairs Departments. However, only the work of four of the departments was praised in Peng's report published in 1925. It is worthy to take note of what the GPUH did after its establishment.

The business of the Propaganda Department was sending persons to lecture the peasants in the countryside, using as opportunities the traditional ritual activities when large groups of peasants gathered, such as performances of dramas or ceremonies to "welcome the gods".<sup>62</sup>

The achievement of the Education Department was something of which Peng felt very proud. Under the slogan

of "peasant education", the department set up more than ten "peasant schools" in the countryside. (Probably one in each village.) The funds for these schools were raised in this way: each school rented a large quantity of land from landlords. Then in their spare time, the parents of the school pupils, and sometimes the pupils themselves, would farm the land with seeds and fertilizers provided by the union. The yields from the land were to go to school teachers as salary, after paying rents to the landlords. Only primary arithmetic and Chinese were in the curriculum. All together about five hundred children of union members were enrolled.<sup>83</sup>

Supposedly the task of the Agriculture Department was to improve farming technology. But no one in the office was an expert in that. Besides, Peng thought that under the tenant-landlord system peasants had no enthusiasm for raising the yield of their land. Therefore, he decided that the business of the department at the moment was to persuade the member peasants to plant pine trees on hills around their home villages. The purpose of doing that was to "nurture the idea of commonalty". (养成公共观念). When the trees grew up, they would be the "public property of the whole peasantry in the county". There is no available material indicating to what extent this project was carried out.

The Arbitration Department might have been the busiest department. The role of the department was "to act as a

peace maker", Peng declared, "but in so doing we can condemn the evil of the existing private ownership". According to statistics made by the department, the different categories of cases handled by it were as shown in Table 4.<sup>64</sup>

Table 4 Category of cases handled by the Arbitration Department

Category	Percentage
Matrimonial	30
debt	20
tenant-landlord relations	15
property rights	15
murder	1
superstition	10
violation of union regulations	1
others	8

Material about totally how many cases the department handled is not available. Nor is it known how those cases were handled. Judging from Peng's statement that it acted as a peace-maker, we can surmise that the department served as a mediator rather than a court. What deserves our attention more is the relatively low percentage of cases of tenant-landlord disputes. It suggests again that class contradiction was not a prominent issue in Haifeng at that moment.

Obviously, all of these major undertakings of the GPUH were merely a development, in terms of scale, of the four major actions its predecessor---the Chishan Yue Peasant Union--- had taken. In fact, some of the functions of the GPUH served to stabilize the established social order instead of to upset it. For example, if the Arbitration Department did work effectively, it could pacify minor civil disputes before they developed into large-scale social conflicts. In fact, to safeguard the established social order was even an avowed goal of the union in its propaganda. The GPUH's "Declaration Concerning the Current Political Situation" issued in January 1923 stated that "we are not hostile toward any party, any government. But as to those who disturb the peace and disrupt the order of our countryside, we peasants...will rather defend ourselves against them legitimately than wait for their unjustifiable harm!"<sup>85</sup>

This moderate profile of the union was kept by Peng Pai for two or three months immediately before he upgraded the Chishan Peasant Union to the GPUH. It continued to be tolerated by the local authorities and the landlord class. No action against the union was taken or even seriously planned by them, although some landlords became alert and watchful after March 3, 1923, when Peng organized a massive gathering attended by six thousand union members, and some lecturers, among them Peng Pai, at the gathering asserted that the purpose of the meeting was to show the strength of

the peasants to the "exploiters", to prepare the peasants to "kill enemies".<sup>66</sup>

What should be discussed here are the characteristics of the peasant movement in Haifeng so far. The movement from 1922 to 1928 has been viewed as a whole by the previous scholarship both in China and in the West. It has been labeled as a "revolution" or a "'Communist peasant movement." However, judging from the activities of the union so far, the movement could hardly have been regarded as a "Communist" or a "revolutionary" one. Basically the union was an organization for mutual aid. In this sense it was more of the nature of anarchism than Communism. Its role was to dispel social conflicts instead of to stir them up. It was a reformist movement instead of a revolutionary one. Even the intellectual leaders of the union denied its radical characteristics. In 1924, Li Laogong, who became an aide of Peng Pai in organizing the peasant after 1923, refuted someone's allegation that Peng and his peasant union was "Bolshevik". The only evidence those people could give to support the allegation, Li said, was one of the union slogans, that was, "preventing landlords from raising the rent and canceling tenancy." This could not be viewed as something "Bolshevik", Li argued, because this was a passive means the union had to take to "protect the peace and development of agriculture." Even the capitalist government of Hong Kong always needed to enact policies to "protect the peace and development of commerce." <sup>67</sup>

This is the answer to the question we asked in Chapter 2, that is, why Peng Pai could fan up a massive peasant movement while the peasants in Haifeng were not on the verge of rebellion. Now we know the peasants joined the union not for a life-and-death class struggle, nor for a rebellion against the landlords and the officials. They joined it for mutual aid they needed in their struggles against other peasant individuals, households, clans and lineages, against townspeople, and against disasters the natural environment could bring to them, such as disease and death. In these matters the traditional institutions of the rural society failed to provide aid, or provided insufficiently. For example, neither the official bureaus nor the Flags or the Triads (which had existed in Haifeng since 1858, see editor's note on p 128, HMHR.) had provided the peasants with means to educate their children, medical treatment they could afford, and "free" arbitration of their disputes. (A lineage organization might arbitrate disputes between its own members, but it was not helpful to settle disputes between members and non-members.) The peasant union filled needs that the authorities and the traditional forms of "peasant collective action" did not.

However, the non-revolutionary character of the union did not mean that its organizers---the radical intellectual elites---had abandoned their original aims in mobilizing the peasants. The radical speech at the gathering was only one of several revelations of Peng's real purpose behind

organizing the peasants. He once told one of his friends in February 1923 that what the GPUH was doing was to "train peasants for economic struggle and to prepare them for seizing political power".<sup>68</sup>

Emphasizing strategy and tactics in political struggle was one of the most important contributors to the CCP's triumph in 1949. As some students of modern China note, although Peng was not a member of the Party until 1924, this feature of the Chinese Communists was evident in Peng's behavior. To prepare the peasants to be agents of a social revolution, while avoiding stirring up reaction from the authorities and landlords, Peng worked out two programs for the GPUH. One was for the "insiders", that is, for the peasants; the other one was for the "outsiders"---those potential enemies of the union. The first item of the former one was "rent-reduction". The rest of the items were all concerned with abolition of exorbitant levies from landlords and policemen. Most of these levies had existed since times immemorial, such as providing meals for landlords who came to villages to collect their rents. The program for outsiders included three items: to improve agriculture; to increase peasants' knowledge; and to engage in philanthropy.<sup>69</sup> Needless to say, so far Peng had been mainly carrying out the "program for outsiders."

Sophistication in political struggle was shown by the existence of these dual programs. But the programs also indicated the discrepancy between Peng Pai's aim of social

revolution and the benefits of the peasants. In a society in which tenant-landlord relations was the basic economic system, rent-reduction was the most effective and feasible means to improve the peasants' lives, if the possibility of destroying the entire system was not on the horizon for the time being. Peng clearly knew this, which was why he put rent-reduction as the first item of the program to mobilize the peasants. But at the same time, he was not yet willing to go about it, because for him rent-reduction was a means instead of an aim of his social revolution, and the use of a means must be timely. "As for rent-reduction, it is not possible to do it at present. We plan to go about it after training (the peasants) for five years", Peng wrote to Li Chuntao. But why did it need as long as five years to train the peasants? Because the reduction Peng wanted was unusual. He made it clear to Li in the letter that rent-reduction "would be of no significance, if we press it in a bad harvest year". But again, why? Peng further explained, "because [we] are afraid that they might forget the meaning of rent reduction and our aim." Then what was the meaning of the rent-reduction? And what was "our aim"? Li explained for Peng in an article later in this way:

To my understanding, rent-reduction is the starting point of class struggle in the countryside. It is true that rent-reduction in a bad harvest year can save <the peasants> from dying. But sometimes the tenants may lose their class consciousness because of the landlord's grace, for which the peasants feel grateful. Therefore, rent-reduction in a bad year is of little use. On

the contrary, a rent-reduction in a good harvest year is an expression of the right that a laborer should get all he has created. So it is useful. As to our aim, certainly it is to overthrow the current capitalist organization (sic) and to establish future socialist organization. The only means to achieve that aim is social revolution. The agent to carry out this revolution is the peasant class. The most important thing to do about this peasant class before it finishes its mission of social revolution is to sharpen its class consciousness, to discipline its vanguard, and to inspire its fighting spirit...Therefore...a rent-reduction in a bad year is of no use.<sup>70</sup>

Peng and Li's words showed clearly the continuity of the two movements in Haifeng: the intellectual movement and the "peasant movement". They were led by the same group of radical urban elites with a constant general goal---to overthrow the existing social system. Their idea about rent-reduction also shows that to those elites who were moving the peasants, the interest of the peasants was subordinate to the aim they were pursuing. In his struggle to organize the peasants into a force he could use for his social revolution, Peng was clever in adapting to the reality of the peasants by changing his tactics from using an empty theory of class struggle to giving the peasants some small favors. On the other side, however, unlike those radicals among the earlier intellectuals who had committed themselves to the aspiration for a better China, the peasants involved themselves in the peasant movement merely for real social and economical benefits. So far Peng Pai had been successful. However, this success had been

achieved by Peng's reconciliation of political goals with peasants' interests. Underneath the success still lurked the discrepancy between the his political goal and the interests of the peasants. How far his reconciliation could go was a question Peng Pai would soon find had to be answered.

#### 4. The Coming of the First Setback

As we have seen above, Peng Pai was confident that he could tightly control the movement, or in other words control the movement, or in other words control the peasants he had mobilized. This confidence was shown by his plan to avoid starting class struggle in five years.

However, his confidence was soon to be proved to be another fantasy. Just one week after the formation of the GPUF, an event almost brought the peasant union into a direct confrontation with the landlord class.

The event began as a dispute between a landlord named Zhu Mo living in the county seat and his six tenants who lived in Gongping, another market town about ten miles away from the county seat. Zhu requested a rent increase. The six tenants refused because the fields were rented under contract as fenzhi tien ( 贖質田 ). Under the contract, the landlord could not take back the field or increase the rent unless the tenant delayed paying rent without a valid

excuse. The six tenants happened to be members of the peasant union. Their reporting the dispute to the GPUF resulted in a decision that they could unilaterally cancel their tenancy. This was done by the six peasants. But Zhu brought a lawsuit against them, charging that the area of the fields returned was smaller than it should be. In the first trial at the court of the county, Zhu was accused by the judge (who was a friend of Peng Pai) of having inadequate proof. That meant Zhu would very possibly lose the suit. This galvanized the whole circle of landlords in the town. "We landlords have never lost a lawsuit to a peasant so far. If this time we do, it must be the peasant union that does the mischief". The landlords thought in that way, according to Peng's description. Interestingly, as a counter action, the landlords decided to establish an organization as a counterpart of the peasant union. "Since the peasants have their union, we must have ours", said one of the most prominent landlords in the town, Wang Zhuoxin, who would soon be appointed to the post of county magistrate.<sup>71</sup> The union of landlords, under the name of the "Agriculture Protection Society" ( 粮业维持会 ), was immediately formed at a meeting by landlords held at the request of Zhu. By threatening the judge and organizing some sixty landlords to attend the next trial as auditors, they finally forced him to yield and put the six peasants in custody.

Peng Pai simply could not afford a defeat in the first

confrontation between the two unions. He realized that if the six tenants lost the lawsuit, it would be a "failure of the more than one hundred thousand member peasants". To reverse the situation he mobilized about six thousand peasants at the county seat to "petition the court for releasing the detainee". A small fact indicated that now Peng had a better understanding of the peasants' characteristic: to attract as many peasants as possible to join the "petition", he ordered a free meal for every participant to be provided by the GPUF.

When the "petition" occurred in mid-March, it turned out to be almost a rebellion. The peasants marched to the house of the court, then forced a way into it in defiance of police efforts to prevent them. Facing a mob as big as six thousand strong, the judge felt helpless and made a reconciliation by releasing the six peasants immediately. The six peasants were welcomed by the mob as heroes. Again, similar to what had happened at Yunlu village, many peasants attributed the victory to Peng Pai's talent. Their "cult of Peng Pai" was once again strengthened by the fact they had seen. Also once again, Peng seized the victory to advertize the "strength of the peasant union".<sup>72</sup>

For the peasant union, the action of the "petition" was a big step leading to a direct confrontation against the landlord class. It could possibly become a "starting point" of class struggle", which Peng and his colleagues had long desired but had temporarily tried to avoid. But something

should be noted here. First, although the peasants' action could be considered to some extent violent, the dispute between the two "unions" was basically peaceful and was kept within the scope of "lawful struggle". Second, although six thousand peasants and many landlords were involved in the event, it was after all a matter directly concerning individual landlords and peasants. These provided room for Peng Pai as well as the old gentry to step back again when the excitement cooled down. In a talk with someone named Chen, who was sent by the Agriculture Protection Society to the office of the GPUF to seek an opportunity for reconciliation, Peng Pai had this to say:

(The Peasant Union) is working for the interests of peasants presently. But in the final analysis it is for the purses of landlords. Why? First of all, if peasants starve to death, or are suppressed to death by landlords, gentry and the authorities, then it would be very difficult for landlords to collect their rents, or even worse, there would be no rent to be collected at all. In the meantime, it would cause a social famine. In that case, landlords must starve to death too. Second, if peasants can have a happy life, they will not become thieves. Then the society could be peaceful, and landlords could have their sound sleep. Third, if peasants' lives are improved, naturally they can have some money to improve lands, increase fertilizer. Thus landlords' lands will become more fertile and collecting rent will become easier. Fourth, if peasants gain some more benefits, they would work for landlords happily, and would not be against any landlord. Look! Peasant union will benefit landlords so much! But landlords do not know about that! And they are always against it. They are really pitiable and hateful!<sup>73</sup>

Apparently what Peng was doing here was to disguise before the face of landlords the real purpose of the peasant union. The interests of landlords and a peaceful society based on

the harmony of the interests of peasantry and landlords were not what he was struggling for. And the picture he had painted here was mythical: in fact there was no record in Chinese history of a famine so large that landlords could not find someone else to till the land. His words only showed his willingness to continue to hold the line---not to enrage the whole landlord class and stir up a full-fledged class struggle until the time was ripe. He got what he wanted, at least for a while. After the event, great restraint was shown by the landlords. No further action against the peasant union was taken. The union "enjoyed a period of calm and tranquility", according to Peng himself. The agriculture Protection Society disbanded itself shortly after the six detainees were released, while the huge, unprecedented peasant union continued to swell. This did not mean that the landlords believed that the aim of the peasant union as Peng described it to them was genuine. Rather, this was because they had not seen any action by the union which really threatened the interests of the landlords as a class. In June, Peng reformed the Huizhou Peasant Union into the Peasant Union of Guangdong Province. Its headquarters was still in Haifeng, with Peng Pai as the chairman of its standing committee.

Nevertheless, the tranquility did not last long. Peng Pai's strategy was suddenly interrupted by something he did not expect---natural disaster. Two violent typhoons visited Haifeng in late July and early August of 1923,

respectively. What made these two typhoons more devastating was the timing: July and August were the season when paddy was being reaped. If reaping paddy was destroyed by the strong winds and floods which characterized typhoons, there could be no redemption. According to an investigation done by the provincial peasant union, in disaster areas, "ninety percent of the crops were lost" after the two typhoons.<sup>74</sup>

Traditionally in Haifeng, in a bad harvest year like this, a tenant would ask his landlord to inspect the harvest. Usually a rate of rent-reduction would be settled on after the inspection. In case an agreement could not be reached by the two sides, according to the "old customs", the tenant had the right to divide the yield of the rented field equally between the two sides.<sup>75</sup>

But that was what would have been done when there was no peasant union. This time, since the peasant union had claimed to the peasants that rent-reduction was its first priority, the peasants naturally turned to the union for help in their request for that purpose. Daily the figure of peasants asking to join the union doubled after the two typhoons. There were some villages whose inhabitants had been contemptuous to the union, and none of them had joined the union. But now many of these villagers offered humble apology to the union and asked for admission. It seemed that the two typhoons provided the peasant union a "natural" chance to develop again.

According to Peng's own description, all of the twelve members of the Executive Committee of the Peasant Union of Guangdong Province thought that a rent-reduction should be pressed.<sup>76</sup> But they were divided into three factions over the question of how it should be pressed. The first faction wanted an "unregulated reduction". That is, the Union need not draw up a unified rate for the reduction. Peasants could settle it with their landlords from case to case. In other words, things could go on in a traditional way. This idea was rejected by many other committee members because it could not "stir up a raging tide of class struggle among the peasants, thereby a chance to raise their class consciousness will be lost". The second faction advocated a total exemption from rent. They clearly foresaw a failure of such a drive. But, "even if the struggle fails, it does not matter. For after the defeat, the peasants would have a firm belief in the Union." "They can be convinced that the Peasant Union was the sole organization which struggles for peasants' interests." Besides, "since the peasants have had the union, they have become complacent and arrogant. If the struggle for rent exemption fails, but then we boost the Union again, that will bring about remarkable progress, while the peasants can be taught a good lesson. Therefore the failure will not be a failure. It will be a means to promote a success".<sup>77</sup>

The third faction thought that "free reduction" was a compromise with the landlords, while the idea of

"exemption" was too radical to be accomplished. So, the best way was to set a reduction rate for all the peasants. Peasants should not pay more than thirty percent of their rent to landlords, they advocated. The demand of "thirty percent at most", they contended, "is not so radical that peasants will consider it wishful thinking". But was such a demand feasible? It seemed that no one asked that question. As a final solution to the debate, the options were put to a vote by a congress of peasant representatives coming from all over the county, and the option of "thirty percent at most" was adopted.<sup>78</sup>

Peng Pai did not mention which members of the Executive Committee advocated what course. Nor did he indicate his own opinion. However, we have reasons to believe that the idea of "thirty percent at most" was put forward by or favored by Peng Pai. Because, as we have seen before, a "cult of Peng Pai", although not deliberately built by Peng Pai himself, had been set up among the peasants. There was little possibility that the meeting of peasant representatives would pass a resolution against Peng's will. Peng's own description also provided a clue suggesting this interpretation: the voting was held immediately after they listened to Peng's "report" on the disaster situation and the debate among the members of the Executive Committee. His "report" made the peasants who attended the meeting as auditors so excited that they roared to support the idea of an exemption from rent. But

their chanting was "stopped" by Peng. So far Peng's stance on that issue had been clearly shown.

Yet the most important evidence indicating that the demand of "thirty percent at most" was Peng's idea was provided by his estimation of the situation. In a letter to Li Chuntao at the end of July 1923, Peng admitted that he formerly thought only a rent reduction pressed in a good harvest year would be "useful." However, "the disasters of wind and flood have suddenly brought a very good situation to the class struggle in the countryside, the class antagonism has been intensified, the cause of revolution has stepped forward, although the disasters grieved me very much." Besides, "I have worked out with assurance the means to deal with the landlords." The only thing he was worried about at that moment was the scarcity of "comrades" (meaning intellectuals who could help him to lead the peasants). Without enough staff in the leadership, the movement would be "too peaceful," Peng worried.<sup>79</sup>

The opinion expressed by Peng conformed to the idea of the "third faction" in the Executive Committee. This faction argued that although according to the "previous plan," a demand for rent reduction should not be raised until three years later, now the "situation has changed."<sup>80</sup>

Therefore the typhoons had changed Peng's strategic plan which had decided not to press a rent reduction and start the class struggle until five years later. The time had become ripe for a new bid, for the second step of his

social revolution, he believed. To start a full-fledged class struggle, pressing a rent reduction in the traditional way was not an effective means, of course. A too radical course like a total exemption of rent would not work either, for the peasants would consider it as wishful thinking and be reluctant to follow. A demand for "thirty percent reduction" would meet both of the requirements. That is: it was radical enough to stir up a class confrontation, while it sounded reasonable enough to raise support from the peasants.

Peng Pai also had a very optimistic estimation of the strength of the peasant union in comparison to its potential enemies. Through the mouth of the "second section" in the debate, he said that "landlords have no armed forces, they cannot resist the peasants' pressure for rent reduction. Besides, except for a few policemen, there is no garrison in the county which landlords can use. The policemen are usually afraid of the peasant union like rats facing a cat." It was also believed that it was impossible for the county magistrate to "incur a bad reputation by suppressing peasants in a bad harvest year." The worst outcome could only be a lawsuit by the peasants and the landlords in the court house." And the court "has only eight policemen."<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately, Peng and his aides in the Executive Committee had made two major miscalculations here: they underestimated the sternness and power of reaction by the

landlord class when it felt that the peasant union was a threat to its basic interests; and they also underestimated the fragility of the peasant union and the difficulty in reviving the "peasant" movement once it was smashed.

The decision of "thirty percent at most" alienated students first. They "usually praised the peasant union. But now they have changed their tones, complaining about the peasant union . Some of them even serve as spies for landlords". Some members of the standing committee also openly opposed the resolution and betrayed the union. For example, Ma Huanxin, the one who had done the investigation of the lives of the Haifeng people, now the education commissar of the provincial Peasant Union, refused to go to the office and wrote to the county magistrate to criticize the decision of the peasant union. Peng had to dismiss him from the union.<sup>82</sup> Of course, the strongest and most powerful objection was from the landlords and the county authorities. Petty landlords agreed to the resolution of the Union. But larger landlords firmly refused to come to terms. Their strategy was aggressive rather than defensive: they wanted the elimination of the peasant union.

The county government also decided to exert its power to stop Peng and the peasants from going further along the way of zhaofan (造反). It found an excuse when some official rent collectors were beaten by some peasants who rented public fields. Three peasants involved were detained by the government. Peng Pai decided to stage a mass demonstration

in the county seat to force the release of the peasants: the same tactic he had applied successfully in the event of the "six tenants". But his experience was misleading this time: although the authorities failed to stop the demonstration from happening, (twenty-thousand-odd peasants participated in it, according to Peng's own account), the same night several hundred policemen and militia surrounded and stormed the headquarters of the Peasant Union of Guangdong, arresting twenty-five its leaders and staff. On the next day the magistrate of the county declared that the peasant union was disbanded and that Peng Pai was on the wanted list. Peng and about ten other union leaders fled and hid themselves in a Taoist temple located on a mountain about ten miles from the county seat.<sup>83</sup> The General Peasant Union of Lufeng was also disbanded by the authorities several days later.

Thus the demand of "thirty percent at most" vanished like a soap bubble. Some peasants in the Gongping district tried to insist on the demand in early September. But what they got was a bloody suppression by the official of the district.

Before the moment when the headquarters of the Union was stormed, Peng and other leaders of the Union "had no preparation for fighting". They had no idea at all that they were "in any danger". About six months before the debacle, Peng summarized several "advantages" of peasant movement which a "labor movement in city cannot have." Among those "advantages" was that peasants had the "spirit

of loyalty to brotherhood", and they were "loyal to their class whole-heartedly ". Besides, since lands were not movable like machines in factories, it would be "extremely easy for peasants to seize lands in the future." Based on his conceptions about lands and peasants, he predicted that if necessary, peasants could stage economic sanctions" against the county seat. And by so doing, within three days, "the peasants will win their victory".<sup>84</sup>

All of these advantages were proved to be fantasies overnight. The provincial union, although it claimed to have more than one hundred thousand members, proved to be no match for several hundred armed soldiers and policemen. The dream that the movement could be revived if the push for rent-reduction would fail was shattered, too. Peng and his followers hiding in the mountain simply did not know what was to be done next. In a fit of passion Peng proposed to gather a crowd of peasants and stage a counterattack. It was his brother Peng Hanyuan who persuaded him not to do that. Finally they came up with the idea that they might gain sympathy and support from Chen Jiongming, then dominating the East River with his warlord forces.

Thus in the following six months Peng applied himself to win over the support of Chen. Seeing Peng Pai as a capable man with remarkable political and organizational talents, and considering that organized peasants might be something he could use as a force for his political

ambition, Chen once agreed that peasant union in his home county should be restored when he went back to Haifeng for his brother's funeral in January 1924. Peng Pai decided to declare the restoration of the GPUH by holding a mass gathering in the county seat on the 17th of March, 1924. But Chen did not like the idea of making a fuss over the restoration. Old gentry, landlords and officials of the county also exerted pressure on Chen, and finally persuaded him to withdraw his support of Peng's request for restoring the union. On the 21st of March, Chen at last instructed the magistrate of the county to outlaw the peasant union again. The fortune of the "peasant" movement was thus dictated by the political elites of the county. Peng Pai could not see any means to revive the movement once Chen Jiongming gave his final words. He left Haifeng for Hong Kong on the 26th. From then on until March of the next year, the once tumultuous "peasant" movement in Hai-Lu-feng died out almost completely. The typhoons blew away peasants' crops. The radical program of "thirty percent at most" blew away the achievement for which Peng Pai had struggled for more than one year---the organization of the peasant union.

It was not easy for the revolutionary elites to see the main cause of their setback. On the eve of the crackdown, Peng Pai felt that what he needed the most at that moment was "comrades". "I dream almost every night of meeting comrades. But where are they? If I am going to take a wrong direction, or bungle the opportunity for people's



liberation, it must be attributed to the shortage of comrades". Li Chuntao concluded in early 1924 that "for a peasant movement, success or its lack depends entirely on whether or not the peasants have had their class consciousness". But his other conclusion seemed relatively more relevant to the real cause of the failure. "The more peaceful the movement is, the greater pressure we suffered, culminating in the disbanding [of the Union] and the arrest [of our men] on August 16", He said.<sup>85</sup> This was true. The major reason for the failure lay in the discrepancy between those revolutionary elites' goals' and the means they adopted: to stage a social revolution with a legal struggle. This seemed to have dawned on Peng Pai. "Peasants need arms". This was the most significant lesson he drew from the defeat in 1923. "To be violent" thereafter became his new doctrine, which was going to play an important role when its time came.

## 5. The Rollbacks

A new chance for Peng Pai to pursue his "social revolution" finally came in January 1924, when the First National Congress of the Nationalist Party (the GMD) was held in Guangzhou, marking the founding of the first CCP-GMD Revolutionary United Front. Hai-Lu-feng and the whole East River region became a bone of contention between the Guangdong Revolutionary Government headed by Sun Yat-sen

and his former general Chen Jiongmíng, now Sun's chief enemy in the province. The First Congress of the GMD adopted a policy of protecting "worker and peasant movements". In early April, Tan Pingshan, who was both a member of the CCP central committee and an official of the Guangdong Revolutionary Government, sent his agent to Hong Kong to invite Peng Pai to join the government. Peng accepted the invitation and was appointed to the post of "Secretary of the Peasant Department" of the GMD central committee shortly after he arrived at Guangzhou. Now it is believed by Chinese historians that he joined the CCP around this point but not earlier, as has been believed before.<sup>86</sup> He was virtually in charge of the Department, for its minister was a figurehead. Now, the former outlawed "king of the peasants" had the authorized political power to carry out his disrupted program.

However, this did not mean that he had a completely free hand to pursue his goals. First of all, his power could not reach areas under control of someone other than the Guangdong government. He could not revive the "peasant" movement in his hometown until March 1925, when the territory was captured by Sun's forces from the hands of Chen Jiongmíng. Second, and more important, his authority was borrowed from the Nationalist government. To keep this authority with him meant the peasant work" had to be subjected to the program of the National Revolution led by the Nationalists. Inside the United Front, the Communists

and the Nationalists were sharing the same bed but dreaming different things. The ultimate goal of the Communists was to establish a new economic-political system with the means of class struggle. But the revolution which the Nationalists wanted, as L. Eastman points out, was not a revolution of one economic class against another, nor a revolution of one ideology against another. The Nationalist Revolution was directed against warlordism and imperialism, aiming at a creation of a new and effective political system. That was, in other words, to restore political unity, economic plenty, national pride and security to the Chinese people.<sup>87</sup> Evidently, this was not the revolution Peng Pai had been pursuing.

The different political program of the two parties was reflected by their different policies toward peasants. At a regular meeting of the GMD Central Executive Committee held some day in August 1924, a Nationalist leader complained that peasants involved in their unions had directed their spearhead at the government by refusing to pay rent for the land belonging to the government. Peng Pai, who attended the meeting as a substitute for the minister of Peasants, argued that the peasants were forced to do so because farming is a losing proposition. Sun Yat-sen replied that if that was the case, why didn't the peasants quit farming?<sup>88</sup>

The dichotomy of revolutionary aims of the two parties posed a new problem for Peng Pai to deal with. What we see

is that he shrewdly adopted a two-handed policy. On one hand, he buried his original desire of staging a "class struggle" in rural areas once again, and reconciled his radical idea with the GMD's political program. In March 1925, the Revolutionary Government in Guangzhou launched the First Eastern Expedition against Chen Jiongmings forces in the East River region, which meant the vast area of the southeast part of Guangdong province. This operation put Hai-Lu-feng under the control of the government. Peng went back to his home county and re-established the peasant union at each level.

In July 1925, the First Peasant Congress of Haifeng was held. In the "Declaration of the Peasant Association of Haifeng" (a new name for the former GPUH) , and the "Resolution of July the Seventh"---the two documents passed by the congress, "anti-imperialism" and "anti-warlordism" became the chief goals of the Haifeng peasants in their "movement", replacing the "rent-reduction" in his 1923 "internal program" of the peasant union. Although "landlord" was still listed in the documents as the enemy of the peasants, the term was now ranged below "imperialism, warlord", and "corrupt officials". Besides, only "big landlords" should be fought against. "We peasants must see clearly that our enemies are imperialists, warlords, capitalists and big landlords", the documents said. "What is happening today? Japanese, British and American imperialists are slaughtering our compatriots in Shanghai, Hankou and

Guangzhou... How can we keep our mind on our farming?"<sup>89</sup>

Of course, having experienced mobilizing the peasants for some years, Peng knew clearly that those empty notions such as "imperialism" could not raise peasants' interests in participating in a movement. Something more must be done. Therefore, "rent-reduction" as a slogan was put forward again. But this time, it was pressed in a moderate way compared with 1923. In spite of the fact that the situation was much more favorable than last time, (For example, the county magistrate was Peng Hanyuan, Peng Pai's brother and supporter. And most important, Peng now was acting with official power.) the reduction rate set by the Association for the peasants was forty percent in Haifeng and thirty percent in Lufeng (compared with "at least" seventy percent formerly). The demand was intended to be met with consultation instead of force. This was indicated by a passage from the "Declaration about Rent-reduction by the Lufeng Peasant Association":

The lives of the peasants are so disturbed. Peasants are the foundation of revolution. The disturbance of their life is harming seriously this revolutionary foundation, and constantly threatening social security. In the meantime, the interests of landlords would suffer a lot too... To demand a rent-reduction (of thirty percent)... is a decision absolutely necessary to lighten peasants' burden. As to the landlords, they will gain a lot in so doing though in form they would lose something. The reason is evident: if the peasants are forced by the hardness of life to make reckless moves, the countryside would decline, and landlords would suffer a lot more. Therefore, rent-reductions are to be carried out for the interests of landlords too. Our dear landlords, we beg for your understanding.<sup>90</sup>

At the Second Congress of Haifeng Peasants held in

August 1926, a speech given by a leader of the Haifeng Peasant Association expressed the same idea. The interests of the peasants and the landlords were compatible instead of mutually exclusive. Rent-reduction would serve landlords in the long run. One can easily see the similarity between the argument and Peng Pai's talk to Chen Xiaolun in 1923. The similarity indicated the retreat of Peng's line from a radical one back to the moderate one. In July 1923, a "declaration" about rent-reduction was also issued. It asserted that "the lands owned by landlords have not been bought by them with money. Instead, they were snatched from us by their ancestors". Not a word about the landlord's interests was mentioned.<sup>91</sup>

The retreat from radical policy, however, was only one side of Peng Pai's strategy in conducting the "peasant movement". He had never forgotten his original aim of changing the social system fundamentally with "class struggle" as the means. For this purpose, he seized any opportunity to indoctrinate the peasants with the idea that land belonged to peasants but not landlords.<sup>92</sup>

Another major step in preparing the peasants for a radical revolution was to expand the organization of peasant associations. By mid-1925, the effort of organizing peasants reached its peak in the whole process of the "peasant movement" in Haifeng: the membership of the county peasant association expanded to 190,000---70,000 more than the amount in 1923.<sup>93</sup>

Yet the most significant step taken by Peng was the establishment of armed forces controlled directly by the Communists, an idea he came up with after the fiasco in the fall of 1923. "Peasants must be armed. And the essential question of the peasant association is that peasants must have arms", Peng asserted on many occasions.<sup>94</sup> The Peasants' Self-defense Army (PSA) was first organized in Guangzhou under the instruction of the Revolutionary Government for the purpose of supporting the Eastern Expedition Force, which was about to move into the East River region controlled by warlord Chen Jiongmíng. Soldiers of the PSA were recruited from Haifeng peasants who had abandoned farming and come to the city to seek better luck. Peng took over the force after it arrived at Haifeng, and turned it into a standing army with three hundred soldiers in uniform. Besides this, Peng organized by the end of 1927 about thirty thousand peasants in villages into a non-standing armed force equipped with jianchuan (spear), a "conventional" weapon in struggles between the Flags.

Although it was strictly controlled by the CCP branch in Haifeng, to avoid objections from the Nationalists and the landlord class, Peng declared that the purpose of the standing army was mainly to "suppress anti-revolutionaries", namely, the "remnants of Chen Jiongmíng". On public occasions Peng also required the army to protect the interests of landlords as well as peasants. Peng praised the army as a model army in the country, observing that

"now, the landlords, merchants, gentry and students can live and work in peace and contentment...this is because of our protection---the Peasant Army".<sup>95</sup>

Thus by borrowing the military triumph of the Nationalist Revolutionary Government, and by suppressing his desire of going about a radical Communist revolution, Peng Pai brought the Haifeng "peasant movement" to a new plateau by 1926. However, the dichotomy of revolutionary aims of the two parties would make the final breakdown of the United Front inevitable. With the development of the National Revolution, ruptures between the two parties also mounted. Cases of the "Party Army" (a popular name for the Nationalist army) suppressing the peasant associations" were reported to Peng frequently, and complaints and protests from Peng Pai were sent to, and always ignored by, the Revolutionary Government in Guangzhou. Sensing that their ally in the United Front would probably become their foe, the Communists stepped up the buildup of their own strength. In an instruction given by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League (an auxiliary organization of the CCP) to its branch in Haifeng in 1926, the Communists in Haifeng were told that although the revolution was developing rapidly in the county, the "proletariat" should build up its own strength, so that it would not "be fooled by the bourgeoisie after the success of the revolution". Feeling that a showdown between the two parties was imminent by the end of 1926, the Communists in Haifeng set

out to expand the Communist Party dramatically. Quantity was put before quality in absorbing new party members. Sometimes peasant representatives attending a meeting were asked to join the Party collectively. By so doing by March 1927 the membership of the CCP in Hai-Lu-feng jumped from seven hundred at the end of 1926 to forty thousand . The PSA was also expanded.<sup>96</sup>

"True gold fears no fire", Wu Zhenming, a Communist intellectual in charge of the PSA, encouraged his soldiers in 1925 to "sacrifice, struggle, and shed blood". "Only in this way, does the revolution have a hope of success".<sup>97</sup> Now the real fire was approaching. The Communists would have to find out if their "gold" could stand it or not.

## 6. The Hai-Lu-feng Soviet: Its Shadow and Its Entity

The days of fire finally set in on 12 April, 1927, when Jiang Jieshi, the Commander-in-chief of the Northern Expeditionary Army, launched an anti-Communist coup in Shanghai, marking the debacle of the First KMT-CCP United Front in Chinese history. A campaign of "party purge" (清党 qingdang) was staged by Jiang in many parts of the country. Li Jishen, a native warlord of Guangxi province who by now controlled Guangdong, followed Jiang's order of liquidation and began to slaughter the Communists in the cities of Guangzhou and Shantou on the 15th.

But Haifeng was quiet for the time being, for Jiang and Li's purge gave priority to the large cities. When news about the purge reached Haifeng, the branch of the CCP, with the absence of Peng Pai who was in Wuhan at that moment, decided to "save the Party (GMD)" and form a "people's government" by staging an armed insurrection. This decision was realized in Hai-Lu-feng. Two "armed insurrections" were staged on May 1 and in the middle of August by the Communists with their PSA. In both cases most of the towns in the two counties were occupied. But the insurrections were staged when the GMD army pulled out for warlord wars. As soon as the GMD troops came back, the Communists had to abandon the towns and fled to mountain areas.

At the end of October, with the support of remnant troop which participated in the failed Nanchang Mutiny in Jiangxi province in August 1, 1927, and which had arrived at Haifeng in September, the Communists in Hai-Lu-feng launched their third struggle to seize political power in the two counties. Haifeng's county seat was occupied on the first of November, and Lufeng's on the fifth, thus opening the most brilliant chapter in the history of the Communist "peasant movement" in Hai-Lu-feng.

On 18 November, the Haifeng Congress of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers (the HCWPS) was inaugurated in the county seat and declared the founding of the Haifeng Soviet Government. Its counterpart had already been founded in

Lufeng five days earlier. After the Congress, under the instruction of the CCP provincial committee, Soviet governments were established at each township (xiang, 乡) and district (qu, 区) of the two counties. Thus, the so called "first Soviet political power" was founded in Hai-Lu-feng.

Many resolutions were passed by the HCWPS. They show a thorough break from the political program of the GMD, and from the past moderate line Peng had been trying to keep. Among those resolutions adopted were ones about killing reactionaries, confiscating lands, improving the life of workers and soldiers, and banning the export of rice to other countries, etc. The first resolution which was really carried out was "killing the reactionaries". Peng Pai believed that to strengthen the Communist regime the most important thing to do was to kill all the "reactionary elements". At the closing meeting of the HCWPS, he asserted that the political power in Haifeng was not seized by "staging land revolution, killing local tyrants and evil gentry, landlords and anti-revolutionary troops". Instead, it was gained because the enemy army had evacuated by itself. Such a regime was not stable. "I expect it could fail once again," he told the peasants. "But there was a solution. That was to make up the killing. He required people attending the meeting to "go all out to kill all the reactionaries, until no one of them is left". He estimated that at least there were forty thousand reactionaries

existing in the villages of the county, and they ought to be killed. Therefore, he asked all those attending the meeting that when they went back to where they had come from after the meeting, "each person must kill at least ten reactionaries. And then each person must lead peasants and workers to kill ten more reactionaries. That is to say, each of you is in charge of killing twenty people. Three hundred representatives must kill six thousand people. That would still be far from enough". So, what they must do was "kill, kill, and kill! Kill people until the harbors of Shanwei and Magong become red..."<sup>98</sup>

The other resolution carried out was the confiscation and re-distribution of land. By February 1928, it was said, eighty percent of land in Haifeng and forty percent in Lufeng was confiscated and re-distributed. Not only lands of landlords, but also those belonging to land-holding peasants were confiscated.<sup>99</sup>

Other major undertakings by the Haifeng Soviet government were expanding Communist-led armed forces and the Party. A new force called the Fifth Regiment was formed with soldiers exclusively recruited from native peasants, and was attached to the remnant troops of the Nanchang Mutiny, which was now reorganized by the Communists into the Second division of the Worker-Peasant Revolutionary Army of China (WPRA), with the informal name of "red army". Red Guards (chiwei dui, 赤卫队) were also established at the levels of county, district and village. By February 1928,

the membership of the CCP in Haifeng had swelled to eighteen thousand.

In addition, spreading armed insurrection to neighboring counties was plotted. Many "mass gatherings" were held in the county seats. Participants of such gatherings sometimes reached one hundred thousand. Hai-Lu-feng was viewed by the Central Committee of the CCP as a model of land revolution. In a resolution made on 3 January, 1928, the Central Committee praised the "Communist land revolution" in Hai-Lu-feng by saying that it "started with the largest scale. In terms of land revolution, its depth is unprecedented. It is a very organized, very active force. In the history of the Chinese revolution, it is the first time that hundreds of thousands of peasants have realized the slogan of land revolution with their own hands. It is the first time that a worker-peasant-soldier political power, which acts on its own will completely, has been formed."<sup>100</sup>

Looking at the surface, it seemed that the Communists in Hai-Lu-feng were also indulging in a mood of joy brought about by their achievements. "This new revolutionary political power is expanding from the East River area to the whole of Guangdong province, and then to the whole of China!" a Communist elite predicted in an article written in early 1928.<sup>101</sup> Peng Pai himself seemed to be more optimistic. "From now on", he told his audiences at the HCWPS in November 1927, "as long as we can slaughter

ruthlessly all the local tyrants and evil gentry, landlords and capitalists, kill every reactionary element, burn all the land deeds, by next year we will be able to redistribute land. By the year after next we will be farming with big machines bought from foreign countries. A year later, we can have electric lights, tap water, amusement parks, schools, libraries in each village..."<sup>102</sup>

However, all of the successes and achievement were superficial.. Behind the facade and joy of victory were a serious crisis and deep fears. First of all, the successes of the three armed insurrections had been won by chance. Generally speaking, the Nationalist troops had an overwhelming military superiority. However, owing to the frequent outbreak of warlord wars, the Nationalist regular army stationed in Hai-Lu-feng had to pull out from time to time. All of the three Communist armed insurrections were staged after the withdrawals of the Nationalist army. The Communists, both those in the counties and those in the provincial committee, saw this clearly. "You must realize, that your occupation of Haifeng was not won by peasant insurrection. You won because of the enemy's withdrawal...", the provincial committee wrote to its comrades in Hai-Lu-feng shortly after the third insurrection.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, the easy collapse of the governments established after the first two insurrections had proved that if the Nationalist army decided to fight back, the

Communists were hopeless to resist. In short, the Soviet was fragile when compared with Nationalist military strength. Since the Communists had created the government and made a fuss over it, to keep it alive became the first concern of its creator.

Naturally the Communists thought that they had hundreds of thousands of peasants upon whom they could rely. If the peasants could give their allegiance to the Soviet and would, as the Communists hoped, "pledge to fight to the death in defending it", then the Soviet might be able to survive. For this reason, mobilizing the peasants continued to be the main task for Peng Pai and his colleagues. However, as the "peasant movement" in Hai-Lu-feng transcended its stage of "legal struggle" and rushed into a violent revolution, the old subject of mobilizing the peasants became a new problem for Peng to cope with. For the first time, the Communists found that there were some disadvantages in using the peasants as the agents of a revolution.

First of all, they found that the peasant army "could only march but not retreat". That is to say, the peasants could keep their morale only in triumph and could not bear even a slight setback. "Once an insurrection starts it must keep going, victory must come every day. Only in this way can the courage of the masses be kept." "A piece of slightly discouraging news would make them disheartened at once", and would make it very difficult to ask a peasant

for help, even if the one asked was a "comrade" (that is, a member of the CCP). If the enemy comes to a village to liquidate the Communists, and it happens to be the case that there is an organ of the party in the village, then not a single native liaison man ( jiao tongyuan 交通员 ) can be seen when the situation turns bad." "Peasants' aversion to discipline is one-hundred-times worse serious than workers in cities."<sup>104</sup>

Peasants' localism became evident too. They were "generally reluctant to leave their home villages". "In many cases, if a peasant hears that his home village was visited by the enemy, he will leave everything behind him and go home to take care of his property and wife and children, even he is involved in fighting at the front when the news comes".<sup>105</sup>

These discoveries were good enough to break down Peng Pai and his colleagues' illusions about the peasants. As we have seen, Peng and other revolutionary intellectuals once thought that the peasants were loyal to their brotherhood and would be "loyal to their class whole-heartedly". Now they realized that the "revolutionary characteristics of the peasants" were highly conditional and limited. However, the revolution had to be carried out by someone. The problem was how to keep the enthusiasm and morale of the peasants from dropping. Based on their lessons, the Communists came up with the conclusion that "to be adventurous is wiser than to be prudent. The danger of being prudent is more serious

than that of being adventurous...To stage an adventurous attack against the enemy with the ardent revolutionary zeal and courage of the masses, this is what a revolution is all about."<sup>106</sup>

Another way to maintain the zeal of the peasants was to connive at their "demands", or rather, to unleash their lust, including their impulses to murder licentiously, and to burn down houses and villages of those whom they hated.

The experiences in the past struggles have convinced the Party and the masses that toward anti-revolutionaries [ we] should rather be excessively cruel than to be lenient. So we allow the masses to kill people on their own. Slaughter is the most important work in an insurrection... Some reactionary villages are burned to the ground entirely, for this is the demand of the people. Whenever the anti-revolutionary villages or houses are set on fire, the peasants are especially enthusiastic. Thousands of people would go to participate, vying with each other... Is that wrong? No. We think this is advantageous to us.<sup>107</sup>

Another Communist document made it even clearer: "We not only use the slogan of 'land belongs to peasants'...but also allow the masses to snatch properties of landlords and rich gentry , and to burn and kill people at will, so as to make them happier."<sup>108</sup>

To burn down houses and kill people were convenient ways to create hatred between peasants and those people who the Communists thought must be the foes of the peasants. And creating hatred for the peasants was actually not a new idea. Even as early as 1923, a Communist document of which Peng Pai was one of the drafters instructed its comrades to

lead the peasant union to "provoke the landlords," because "without pressure from an external enemy, a peasant organization tends to become loose. So, to create an enemy for the peasant union is really a good means to promote a development of the peasant movement."<sup>109</sup>

Thus 1927 saw the beginning of something the Communists in China later would call the "ultra-left line" in the Hai-Lu-feng revolution. By January 1928, according to Communist statistics, 1,686 people had been executed as "reactionary elements", and 1,580 houses had been burned to the ground.<sup>110</sup> Many people were killed in the most barbarous ways, such as eye-ball-gouging and heart-gouging.

A crucial question ought to be raised here. That is, was the unleashing of such savagery really "advantageous" to the Communists or not. Many contemporary Communist documents show that most of the peasants were loath to do things like that. "Except for those comrades and peasants who are very brave and conscientious, all the ordinary peasants think of themselves as "good people" who are not supposed to do things like that," a Communist document admitted. "Seeing us treat the reactionaries in such a way, some comrades worry that the reactionaries would treat them back in the same way. So they dare not work actively...Some peasants in Lufeng reject following us by saying 'don't be too fierce and tough, the peasant union is doomed', because they have seen us raising money, murdering people and burning down houses so fiercely."<sup>111</sup>

The most extreme instance showing the peasants' reluctance happened in a district in the southeast part of Lufeng. A leader of a peasant union at the township level was ordered to pick up and kill several persons in his own village. He said nothing at the meeting where the order was given. But when he came home, he tried unsuccessfully several times to commit suicide. When asked why, he answered: the Communists want me to kill several villagers. I would rather die than do so.<sup>112</sup> His words made the whole village united and they resisted the order of the Communists. The villagers as a whole became hostile to the peasant union.

But why did a small number of peasants like killing and burning? Who were these peasants? An investigation into the issue of where and why some areas suffered the bulk of the atrocities can give us at least a partial answer.

Large-scale, indiscriminate slaughter and arson mostly happened to those so-called "reactionary villages and towns". (fandong xiangchun 反动乡村) What is noticeable is that all of these "reactionary villages and towns" were characterized by two things: first, they were all single-clan-occupied or dominated; second, these clans had the largest population in the marketing systems centered on market towns. For example, one of the "reactionary towns" of which the eastern part was almost entirely destroyed by fire was Meilong. This destroyed part was exclusively occupied by the Lin clan with a population of about 3,000, while the

western part of the town was occupied by a multi-surname population. The Lin clan owned the bulk of the stores in the town. Besides, among the three-hundred-odd villages in the Meilong district (at that time, Haifeng county was divided into nine administrative districts basically in accordance with marketing systems,) more than half rented land from the Lin. The Lin clan had enjoyed the prestige of being a wangzu (望族, distinguished family) since it immigrated into Haifeng from Denghai county (a county about 300 kilometers away to the east of Haifeng) in the early Qing Dynasty, and had been at odds with clans surrounding it since.<sup>113</sup>

Another "reactionary village" which was burned to the ground in the Gongping district was occupied by people who all belonged to the Dai surname. Dai was the largest clan in the Gongping district centered on the market town of Gongping. Unlike the Lin, the Dai was not a wangzu in the district. Most of its members were poor peasants.<sup>114</sup>

Still another "reactionary town" in which slaughter and arson were committed by the Communist-instigated peasants was Jiesheng, a walled coastal town in the southern part of Haifeng county, about thirty miles away from the county seat. Its residents, most of them of the He surname, lived off fishing and salt-making industry, having a better life than people in the surrounding area, who lived off farming in poor sandy fields. The residents of the town and surrounding peasants had long opposed each other. In early November 1927, Peng Pai ordered the armed peasants to attack

the town. Under the leadership of a gentry named He Xunyi, who was a ju ren (举人) in the Qing dynasty, and a graduate of the Guangdong College of Politics and Law (广东法政学校), the whole town united and held fast to their birth place in the face of the attack from the armed peasants for more than two weeks, and the battle became a stalemate. Peng Pai had to send his regular Red Army on the 19th to finally capture the town. About five hundred residents, most of them surnamed He, were massacred after the fall of the town, and the whole town was burned to the ground.<sup>115</sup> In other cases of "reactionary villages and towns", such as the town of Jieshi in Lufeng, city-countryside antagonism and clan struggle as gradients in the atrocities were also evident.<sup>116</sup>

Flag struggles were also important factors. Qingkeng was a typical district where the number of people executed as "reactionaries" by the peasants was extremely high. (Only Jiesheng district had more.) The district was a historically famous place for Flag and clan struggles. There were five major clans in the district---the Yu, the Lin, the Zheng, the Liu and the Wang. The first two belonged to the Black Flag and the rest to the Red. In the summer of 1910, a heavy fight broke out between the Yu and the Wang. The war lasted for more than one month, killing more twenty people. In the heaviest battle, more than two thousand people were involved.<sup>117</sup> In early 1928, Shagang village, which was exclusively occupied by the Zheng clan, was besieged by

armed peasants from surrounding areas. The Communists cheered the event as a deed of revolutionary peasants.<sup>118</sup> But in fact whether those killings and fights happening in the district were carried out in the context of Communist revolution or in that of the traditional clan and Flag feuds is an unanswered question.

Some Communist documents provide firm evidence for clan feud as an ingredient in "revolutionary struggle". For example, a document reveals that the Peng surname and the Luo surname in Hetien district in Lufeng had fought bloodily against each other before the peasant movement. During the Soviet period, since the Luo had close ties with the Nationalists, the Peng were easily won over by the Communists. More than one thousand armed peasants from the Peng surname came out to help the Communists in fighting the Luo and the Nationalists.<sup>119</sup>

Therefore, it can be concluded that beside the instigation of the Communists, instead of "class consciousness", what fueled the blaze of killing and burning were the feuds built up in historical confrontations between city and rural areas, clans, the Flags, and possibly, personal or family hatreds caused by other reasons. All of these feuds and hatreds found ways to vent themselves under the name of so-called Communist revolution. Forty years later, such pseudo-revolutionary characteristics were also featured in the Great Cultural Revolution, which is not a subject to be discussed here.

Unfortunately, the Communists saw the peasants' reluctance to follow as a sign of the inadequacy of their "propaganda work", and intensified their press of terrorism.

The most important means taken by the Communists in Hai-Lu-feng to mobilize the peasants was, of course, land redistribution. Peng Pai overtly used it as an incentive for the peasants to join the revolution by putting a policy of "no revolution, no land" as the sacred criterion for land re-distribution.

This policy was firmly carried out in the campaign of land- redistribution in Haifeng. To be "revolutionary" meant doing every thing the Communists asked one to do, including participating in mass gatherings of various sorts organized by the Communists, ferreting out "anti-revolutionary elements", joining peasant Red Guards, etc. A Communist document confessed that in some parts of the county, the Communists demanded that peasants must hand in "reactionaries" before they could get their land re-distributed. As a result, some peasants had to hand in their elderly fathers who had been considered by the Communists as "reactionaries". A "reactionary" must be executed. But if a family would not sacrifice its old man, the whole family would starve because they had no fields to farm.<sup>120</sup>

Thus the "red terror" overtly advocated by Peng Pai had not only its effect on landlords and old gentry, but also played a key role in controlling the peasants for whose interests Peng Pai claimed the Party and the Soviet were

struggling. Red terror was "one of the factors" explaining why peasants were so "enthusiastic" to attend each mass rally. "Because if one does not attend, one could be regarded as a reactionary, and will probably be executed at any moment", a contemporary Communist document admitted.<sup>121</sup>

Another problem in land re-distribution was Peng Pai's idea of destroying all the tianbo (田界 field boundaries), which were earth ridges built between plots of land. Mainly they had two functions: technical and social. Technically they made irrigation and farming possible in a small-agriculture system; socially they were the boundary marks of private property. But in Peng Pai's eyes, they were nothing but symbols of landlord's ownership of land, "invented" by the landlords for the purpose of exploiting the peasants. He did not know that peasants saw it in a different way, and so ordered against the peasants' will that all the tianbo must be destroyed.

Destroying tianbo thus became one of the major tasks for the Soviet and the peasant union at each level. The order met strong resistance from the peasants. The Chairman of the Peasant Union of Chishan Yue was arrested and jailed by the district (qu 区) Soviet at the end of 1927. The accusation: refusing to carry out the order. In fact, he led peasants to the field and asked them to destroy tianbo, but no one moved. The peasants asked "how can we farm the field after tianbo are destroyed?" The chairman thought that his men's words were right, and reported the matter to the higher

authorities, and thus brought on his own arrest.<sup>122</sup> A report from the Haifeng committee of the CCP to its provincial committee in January 1928 admitted that most of the peasants still did not understand the "significance of destroying tianbo". Only when they were urged by the peasant union would they do the work even perfunctorily.<sup>123</sup> Seeing the reluctance of the peasants to carry out his order, Peng later revised his demand into "destroy those tianbo which are useless in farming".<sup>124</sup> But his old policy had already done the land re-distribution more harm than good.

Yet the most serious flaw, which almost offset the positive effect the land re-distribution could have had in mobilizing the peasants, was the policy about the distribution of output of the fields re-distributed to the peasants. The CCP East River Special Committee (the ERSC) ordered that only fifty percent of the output from a field re-distributed to a peasant could belong to the peasants. Of the other half, forty percent should be surrendered to the yue peasant union, twenty to the district union, and forty to the ERSC. This meant that the peasants could get nothing more than they did before the land re-distribution, if not even less. (Usually the rate of rent in Hai-Lu-feng was forty to fifty percent.) For the peasants, the acquisition of fields thus became something nominal. Even under the Red Terror, some peasants dared to complain that the Party collected rent in the way landlords did.<sup>125</sup>

Besides, the Communists stipulated that a party member

could get two times the quantity of fields that an ordinary peasant did. Maybe Peng Pai thought that by so doing he could attract more people to join the Party. But he did not realize that "equality" had long been the highest goal for peasant rebellions in Chinese history. "Mind only inequality but not scarcity" (患均不患寡), as the Chinese saying goes, was one of the aspects of the "Chinese peasant mentality". The double standard in land re-distribution helped to alienate the Party from the peasants but not the other way round. The peasants complained about the double standard sarcastically that the Communist members were "double-built persons" (双料).<sup>126</sup>

All of the measures mentioned above can be viewed as efforts made by Peng Pai to mobilize the peasants. Maybe those measures were the best he could find. Unfortunately they only made the peasants isolate themselves from the CCP. In the eyes of the peasants, the Soviet was not as good for them as the peasant union had been. They would choose the peasant union over the Soviet nostalgically if they got a chance to do so. In early 1928, the CCP provincial committee of Guangdong once instructed that peasant unions at each level be abolished and Soviets be installed in their place, on the assumption that the role of the peasants could be taken over by the Soviet. However, the Communists in Haifeng found that most of the peasants were opposed to the idea.<sup>127</sup>

Therefore, with the "peasant movement" in Hai-Lu-feng becoming more and more politicized, alienation and

contradictions between the Communist elites and the peasants developed. Peng and his colleagues became more and more concerned with the problem of keeping the peasants aligned with the political program of the Party. Ill omens of losing the control of the peasants were frequently noted in the Communist documents. The peasants, they found, seemed to join insurrections only for the purpose of looting. When the Red Army was attacking a town named Jieshi in Lufeng in November 1927, thousands of peasants showed up with large sacks in their hands waiting for a chance to loot. At first the Communists thought they had come to help in fighting the "reactionaries". But then they found that "it was easier to ask them to die than to ask them to help with carrying the wounded or to act as guides".<sup>128</sup> The soldiers of the PSA were said to behave better than those peasants. When they entered a new place, they would "kill first, then loot, and then burn houses."<sup>129</sup> In January 1928, a "Peasant Congress of the East River" was held in Haifeng. Seventy-nine peasant representatives from seven counties attended the meeting. However, they were always late for every meeting on each day. They chatted and dozed off when attending a report or discussion, paying no attention to the proceedings of the Congress. Peng and other Communist leaders gave speeches personally to the Congress. But this could not change the indifference of the peasants. The Congress ended without any achievement.<sup>130</sup>

What seemed more worrying to the communist elites was

the undependability of armed peasants. During the Soviet period, beyond the regular troop---the WPRA---the Communists in Hai-Lu-feng had three levels of peasant armed forces: the PSA, which as we mentioned before was reorganized as the Fifth Regiment of the Second Division of the Worker and Peasant's Revolutionary Army; the Red Guard, which was equipped much worse than the PSA; and the Spear Corps (the jianchuan dui ), which was loosely organized and equipped with nothing but spears. In fact no training had ever been given to the last category. The soldiers of the last two categories, the Communists found, "like to get rich each time when they are carrying out a task. Rarely can a brave and skillful soldier in battle be found".<sup>131</sup> In early 1928, the Fifth Regiment had to be dismissed because ninety percent of its soldiers had deserted.

This left the WPRA as the only armed force upon which the Communists could count. It was composed of two divisions---the Second Division derived from the remnants of the Nanchang Mutiny, and the Fourth Division derived from the remnant of Guangzhou Uprising in December 1927. The two "divisions" together in early 1928 had about two thousand persons, but among them fewer than one thousand were combat soldiers.<sup>132</sup>

But the WPRA also had its serious problems. Among them the most prominent one was that no native peasants were willing to join it. Consequently, recruitment was impossible for it and its men kept decreasing with the

passage of time. Besides, the communists were at their wit's end to find sources of money to keep the soldiers paid and ammunition replaced. By the end of 1927, the soldiers had merely tens of cartridges on average.<sup>133</sup>

Having so many problems, the Communists sensed how fragile the regime was. Behind their militant and confident rhetoric (such as: "the strength of the masses is strong enough to subdue all the reactionaries," and "we invite the enemy to come"), what the Communists---included Peng Pai himself---really had deep in their hearts was fear and diffidence. The so called "Twenty-eight incident" (二八事件) was a vivid evidence of that. On the morning of December 28, 1927, the CCP Committee of the East River in the county seat of Haifeng received an unconfirmed report that an enemy troop six hundred strong had reached Hetian, a market town in a neighboring county, about a two day's journey (on foot) away from the county seat of Haifeng. All organizations and personnel of the Party and the Soviet government were thrown into great panic immediately. Many organizations declared their dissolution. Officials and staffs of the CCP county committee, the Soviet government, the County Peasant Union, and the County Worker's Union, vied with each other in fleeing the town, leaving behind equipment and official documents. The PSA and Red Guard units "either fled or dispersed". Many party members refused to obey orders. "Everything was done in a mood of horror". By the evening, the county seat was entirely abandoned by the Communists

while many residents also fled, making it a dead town.<sup>134</sup>

Several days later, the information about the enemy's arrival proved to be false. The Communists began to show up in the town again. But "the prestige of the Party" had been seriously damaged. A Communist document lamented that the "Twenty-eight Incident" was a proof indicating that "our party's capability of leading the masses was not increasing daily, but weakening daily. What a heavy loss it is!"<sup>135</sup>

However, what made the situation really hopeless to the Communists was that the Communists were really at their wit's end to solve most of the problems they were facing. The ERSC had no person who was capable of conducting military affairs. Therefore, the Red Army in the East River area was, to use the words of a Communist document, "not well-organized". Several times the Communists in Haifeng asked their provincial committee to send some one who was militarily talented, but received no response.<sup>136</sup>

The reason why the provincial committee did not send any person with military talent to Hai-Lu-feng was not that such a person could not be found. The committee had been admonishing the Communists in Hai-Lu-feng not to "commit the mistake of military opportunism". It was wrong to rely upon the army in staging armed insurrections and struggle for defending the Soviet, the provincial committee insisted. The "masses" must be mobilized and be used as the main human agent for the revolution.<sup>137</sup>

But for those who were really conducting the revolution

in Hai-Lu-feng, they had lost their confidence in relying upon the peasants. They realized that an armed force was more vital than the "masses" to the survival of the Soviet. But the real problem was that they also met great difficulties in strengthening their military force. In addition to those difficulties we have mentioned above, they even could not find anyone who knew how to get the Red Guard better organized and trained, although they realized that training was critically important. As a result, during the four months of the Soviet existence the Red Guard received "no training at all" and its soldiers were "absolutely free" to do anything. In fighting it could not play a role in supporting the regular Red Army. It is not an overstatement to say that the Red Guard was nothing but a decoration of the Communist revolution in Hai-Lu-feng.

Thus, almost all the things vital to the survival of the Communist regime proved impossible to be done or done well. But the Communists needed to do something, and it turned out to be the pursuit of formalism and symbolism.

The number of "demonstrative mass rallies" (群众示威大会) they could hold became a measure of their achievement in their reports to the provincial party committee. From late December of 1927 to mid-January of 1928, according to one of those reports, "many" such rallies were held, including rallies to "celebrate the Guangzhou Insurrection", and to "celebrate the Peasant Meeting of the East River". The number of peasants attending these rallies ranged from ten

thousand to five thousand".<sup>138</sup> According to one source, the expense of holding such meetings could be as high as four thousand yuan each time.<sup>139</sup> At contemporary prices this amount of money was enough to buy food to feed a force 1,000 strong for 26 days.<sup>140</sup>

More ridiculously, even on the eve of the enemy's military offensive, the Communists seemed to have no other method of resistance but to hold rallies. In January 1928, when the Nationalist troops attacked the town of Gongping, the Communists were having a mass rally there. When the "armed masses" saw the enemy soldiers, they fled helter-skelter. A similar story also happened in Daan, a Communist dominated district in Lufeng country.<sup>141</sup>

Building a "red sea"---to paint as many things as possible red---was another important task on the Communists' agenda. All the walls of the two county seats, and some in other market towns in the counties, were painted red. Large slogans, which the peasants could not read, were written everywhere with red paint. Large amounts of money were spent to hold rallies and to purchase red clothing from Hong Kong so that red flags and red slogan posters could be made, while the Communists had not enough money to feed the Red Army. "The sky is covered by red flags", "we have changed the whole of Haifeng into a red county", the Communists cheered. Even on the eve of the general counter-attack from the Nationalist troops, the ERSC took "hoisting red flags everywhere " as one of the tactics to resist the

anticipated attack.<sup>142</sup>

Evidently symbolism was used by the Communists to create a semblance of victory, in the hope that by so doing the peasants could be psychologically encouraged, and be confident with the Soviet regime. However, without the show of real strength, this was a futile effort. The "Twenty-eight Incident" had been a proof. Therefore, the Communist regime in the two counties was like a building on a base of sand. It would easily collapse even in a gust. The force that finally brought it to a ruin was something more than a gust. It was a typhoon.

The two mutually hostile warlords---Li Jisheng and Zhang Fakui---ended their war in February 1928, with a solidification of Li's political power in Guangdong province. Now Li had the leisure to tend to the mess in Hai-Lu-feng. He ordered his Eleventh division to march westward from Shantou to Lufeng, and his Sixth division to march eastward from Huizhou to Haifeng, while some forces were deployed to block the northern border and the southern coast of the two counties.

The Eleventh Division reached the territory of Lufeng on 26 February, and swept over the two counties in five days, capturing all the major towns. Organized resistance was staged by the Red Army, but it proved to be far from a match for the warlord army, and suffered heavy losses. The performance of the peasants was even more shameful for the Communists. When the enemy troops rushed into the county

seat of Haifeng, several hundred jianchuan dui soldiers were gathering in the Red Square. ( The Red Square in Haifeng was an imitation of the one in Moscow, a symbol of the Communist victory elaborated by Peng Pai.) Ignoring orders to move to the front and dispersed in a hubbub, the peasants complained that the Communists were sending them out to die. All the Communist institutions fled in a hurry, leaving documents and treasures behind as they had done in the Twenty-eight incident.<sup>143</sup>

Fighting broke out around Shanwei. The town was occupied by Li's troops without meeting any resistance on 2 March. On the next day Communists launched a counterattack when they saw that the bulk of the occupying troops had pulled out of the town. At first several thousand armed peasants showed up in a gesture to help the Red Army. As soon as the enemy began to charge, the peasants fled as fast as they could.<sup>144</sup> Several hundred Lufeng peasants came to Haifeng with Li's troops to kill and loot. As soon as Haifeng was controlled by the Nationalists again, former members of the peasant union turned themselves into mintuan (民团, local militia) soldiers. It was said, according to a Communist document, that at first these peasants told the Communists that they had been forced to join and were still loyal to the peasant union. But when they followed the Nationalist troop to besiege and attack villages where the Communists stayed, they found that it was lucrative to be a mintuan and "became more and more reactionary".<sup>145</sup>

It is evident that the revolutionary elite's efforts since the early 1920's had brought little in-depth change to traditional social relations and institutions in the villages. It was admitted by the Communists that in the southeastern part of Haifeng, "the revolutionary masses' tendency to change sides" was stronger than elsewhere, because there "lineages and clans had a very strong role to play". "After the arrival of the enemy, when a large clan or a large village became reactionary, small villages had to follow suit. Otherwise they would suffer a lot from the large village. If someone in a strong clan or lineage became reactionary, he would use the institution to call the families in the lineage to unite themselves and struggle against revolutionaries in other lineage. Therefore, usually once a person became reactionary, the whole lineage followed suit." Ironically, this was particularly the case in the Qingkeng district, which had been set by the Communists as an example for organizing peasant armed forces and redistributing land during the Soviet.<sup>146</sup>

The phenomenon of changing sides also happened in many parts of Lufeng. Chiefs of villages which had been "revolutionary" during the Soviet now led the whole villages to "surrender to the enemy" and expelled from the village persons who were still loyal to the Communists. While their chiefs were doing this, "all the villagers would muddle along. They do not care whether there is a red flag or a white flag". "Unless we can train them for an extended

period, this segment of the masses are by no means our men!" the county committee of Lufeng lamented in its report.<sup>147</sup>

In early April, Li's Sixth division arrived at Haifeng too. The situation became more hopeless to the Communists. But the CCP provincial committee continued to call for counter-attack and armed insurrection in Hai-Lu-feng and their neighboring counties. It asserted that the recent failure of the Soviet was "absolutely not because of the strength of the enemy, but the cowardliness of the ERSC."<sup>148</sup> The Communists in that region had to follow the instructions of their superiors. But this time peasants were no longer willing to move. The remnant Red Army had to act without a co-star, even nominally. Unfortunately each military action it took turned out to be suicidal. By October, the two "divisions" of the WPRA had only several hundred men left, most of whom were wounded or sick. They became more a burden than a useful force for the Communists, "now, for all the red armies, the only way to obtain supplies is to steal sweet potato from the peasants at night." The army units could not simply be disbanded, because for those non-native soldiers, "they have no home to go to." With the agreement of the provincial committee, an arrangement was made to help all the soldiers of the Red Army to go to Hong Kong. This project was carried out during the following months. The way it was carried out was that "after propagandizing and explaining to them," the Communists brought them to the highways in Huizhou or Danshui, then "let them run their

course".<sup>149</sup> The tide of the "Communist peasant movement" in Hai-Lu-feng was gone forever.

### Conclusion

The history of the peasant movement in Haifeng, as we have seen, was not a history which can be characterized with one single conception such as "Communist" or "revolution". Three phases can be identified in the whole process of the movement from 1922 to 1928: from the middle of 1922 to late 1923 was the first phase, from early 1924 to early 1927 the second, and from the middle of 1927 to April 1928 the last. Each phase had its own characteristics.

It is an oversimplification to regard the first as a Communist movement. None of the leaders of the peasant movement in this stage was a member of the CCP, though some of them like Peng Pai were Communist-influenced. More importantly, the programs of the peasant union and their implementation were basically so moderate that they were even tolerable to the landlord class and the county authorities. Judging from the undertakings of the peasant union, the movement in this stage was more a social reform movement than anything else.

The second phase of the movement can hardly be regarded as a Communist movement either. Although during that period the leadership of the peasant union and the peasant army was in the hands of the Communists, owing to their alliance with the Nationalists, the Communists had to restrain their desire to carry out a radical Communist revolutionary program. The peasant union and the peasant army served

basically the political program of the GMD. The most radical step the Communists could take was still rent reduction. If we can say that there was a revolution going on in Haifeng at that time, it was a Nationalist one, not a Communist one.

Only the third stage of the movement can be viewed as a Communist movement. However, while its characteristics of a "Communist movement" became prominent, the characteristics of a "peasant movement" were fading: if the peasants joined the movement in the first phase voluntarily and enthusiastically, in the last phase they were coerced into the movement passively and reluctantly.

The peasants' detachment from the movement was rooted in the discrepancy between the Communist elites' politics and the interests of the peasants. In Marks' view, the invasion of imperialism had changed the social structure in Haifeng to a "modern" one. The changed social structure accordingly changed the form of peasant collective action, and therefore the peasants participated in a modern revolution.<sup>150</sup> The facts we have seen, however, do not support this argument. Our review of the origin of the movement has shown that the "peasant movement" was virtually an extension and transmutation of an urban intellectual movement. There was no sign showing that the peasants were on the verge of rebellion. What Peng Pai finally used to make the peasants move at the beginning of the movement was not any modern revolutionary ideology but real economic and social benefits, which could be secured within the old social

structure, and almost without risking anything. During the second phase, the biggest attraction to the peasant, as in the first phase, was still rent reduction, which was not a "modern" concept but a traditional desire of the peasants.

Beginning from the second phase, political programs of modern revolutions did become salient aspects of the movement. To keep the peasants' enthusiasm in joining the modern revolution, the Communist had to find something which could probably combine the modern revolutionary ideology and the traditional mentality of the peasantry. The best thing they could find was land re-distribution, which had in fact been performed in Chinese ancient peasant rebellions, though in different forms. However, the overt emphasis on using land re-distribution as leverage to secure peasants' participation in the Communist revolution, the misconduct in the new rent policy, and the ultra-left policies, detracted from the effectiveness of land re-distribution as a means to mobilize the peasants.

Having failed to find an effective economic incentive to keep the peasants' enthusiasm in a political revolution, the Communists had to rely on administrative authority to coerce the masses into participation. This was possible during the second phase and especially in the Soviet period, because in these periods the Communists were the power holders. Yet to transform political power into mass action needed organization as a channel. Therefore, the Soviets and peasant unions at each level, and the Red Guards, etc., were

organized and used by the Communists as tools to exert their power, thus changing the nature of those organizations: they were no longer peasants' "own" organizations for their social and economic benefits. They had become, in a sense, "official" organizations of a political regime, or in other words, parts of the governmental apparatus to govern the people. In light of this development, if we can say that the emergence of the peasant union in the first phase marked a "peasant movement", it is wrong for us to regard what happened in the second phase and especially in the third phase as a "peasant movement", just as we cannot say that the peasant Red Guards in Jiangxi in the early 1930s and the land reform movement in the early 1950s were signs of "peasant movements".

The role of peasant unions and other mass organizations as tools to serve the Communist revolution was highly limited. Although the peasant unions and the Red Guards could help in organizing the peasants to attend massive gatherings, they could not even carry out the orders from the CCP such as destroying the tianbo. More significantly, these organizations were impotent in military struggle, which was the lifeline of the Communist revolution after 1927.

This leads us to the question of why the Communist revolution in Hai-Lu-feng failed once and for all. Peng Pai went to the villages with the hope that the peasants could be the agents he needed for staging a social revolution. But

he soon found the peasants indifferent to political ideology. To mobilize them he had to suppress his political program. However, since the movement in Haifeng was taken over by the CCP after 1924, compromising the political goals of the Communists and the interests of the peasants became much more difficult. As a result, the discrepancy between the two expanded. While the Communist revolutionary program was pushing ahead, the peasants were withdrawing from the movement. The gap between the Communist revolutionary goals and the peasants' interests became so wide that in early 1928, while the peasants were reluctant to fight even for other villages, the CCP was demanding that they "pledge to fight to the death in defending the Soviet", and to "defend the Soviet Union with arms" (武装保卫苏联).

The whole process of the movement in Haifeng can be viewed from another angle. Before 1924, it was basically a peaceful, legal movement. After April 1927, the Communist movement in Haifeng was characterised by military struggle. Peasants' organizations proved not to be useful to win military struggle against the powerful Nationalist regular army. The only solution to the problem was to build a professional Red Army. Owing to all kinds of factors, however, this never materialized. Therefore, Peng Pai created a tumultuous movement, but later found no agent to maintain and continue it. By that point, the life of the Communist revolution in Hai-Lu-feng had already ended, although the GMD troops were not ready to move to the two

counties.

The case of "peasant movement" in Hai-Lu-feng challenges the preconception that the Chinese peasants supported the Communist revolution, and that this support was the main reason for the Communist success in China. What we have seen in Hai-Lu-feng is the discrepancy, rather than the harmony, between Communist revolutionary goals and the interests of the peasants. Peasants' support of the Communist movement was highly conditional and limited---they would participate in the movement voluntarily only when they decided that the participation was good for their practical, short-run personal benefits. Communist ideology, and the political programs of the CCP, were far from peasants' concerns.

The study we have made above also provides insight into the question of how the CCP mobilized the peasants. The role of the CCP leadership and organization should not be overemphasized. In the period from 1922 to 1923, without the organization of the party, Peng Pai and a few of his intellectual followers could mobilize hundreds of thousands of peasants to join a social movement. By contrast, during the period from 1927 to 1928, Peng and his followers found that it was difficult to keep the peasants in compliance, although by that time the leadership of the CCP was given to the movement, and many organizations, such as the Soviets and the Red Guards, were established.

Finally, the case of Hai-Lu-feng indicates that the Communist revolution in China was after all an affair of

war, a rivalry of military strength. For a social revolution characterized by military struggle, conservative, personal-interest-oriented peasants were not the right agents to carry it out. The history of Communist revolution in Hai-Lu-feng indicates that a professional armed force instead of the "masses of the peasants" was the crucial pillar of the existence and expansion of the Communist movement.

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## NOTES

1. Robert Marks, Rural Revolution in South China. University of Wisconsin Press, 1984; Fernando Galbiati, P'eng P'ai and the Hai-Lu-feng Soviet. Stanford University Press, 1985; Roy Hofheinz, Jr., The Broken Wave. Harvard University Press, 1977.
2. Ye Zuoneng, Xie Gansheng, "Haifeng zhaqi nongmin yundong gaishu (A short description of the early peasant movement in Hai-Lu-feng)". Hai-lu-feng geming shiliao (Historical materials of Hai-Lu-feng revolution, hereafter HMHR). Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1986. Vol. 1, p 648.
3. "Lufeng shehui chujin she xuanyan shu" (Manifesto of the Lufeng Society for Promoting Social Progress) (1920). HMHR, Vol. 1, pp 1-2.
4. About the Flags, see Marks, pp 66-77; Galbiati, pp 182, 36-42, 121.
5. For an example of the official description of the outbreak of the movement, see Hai-lu-feng geming genjudi yanjiu (Studies on the Hai-Lu-feng revolutionary base). Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1988. Also Peng pai zhuan (Biography of Peng Pai). Renmin Chubanshe, Beijing, 1986. pp 1-3.
6. Hofheinz, p 142.
7. Galbiati, p 53.
8. Marks, p 151.
9. Ibid, p XVI.
10. Among those most important new materials are Hailufeng geming shiliao (Historical materials of the Hai-Lu-feng revolution), a two-volume collection of publications, CCP party documents, and personal communications, all of which appeared in the period from 1920 to 1933; Haifeng yinglie (The Haifeng martyrs), which provides biographies of sixty-four of the most prominent Communists who participated in the Communist movement in Hai-Lu-feng and got killed by the GMD; and Guangdong geming wenjian huibian, jia zhong, no 25 (Collection of Guangdong revolutionary documents, Section

A, Vol. 25), in which fifty-nine Communist documents issued from 1927 to 1934, all related to Hai-Lu-feng, are included.

11. Li Chuntao, 1897-1927, was born in Chaozhou city, Guangdong. A Nationalist leftist, Peng Pai's closest friend and aide in peasant movement. Once became an editor of Political Weekly run by the Department of Propaganda of the GMD in Guangzhou, 1925. Arrested and killed by Nationalists loyal to Jiang Jieshi after the April Twelfth coup. See Haifeng yinglie (The Haifeng martyrs), vol. 1. Compiled and published by the CCP Haifeng committee and the Haifeng county government, 1987. pp 31-35.

Yang Sizhen, ? -1927, born in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province. Became a member of the Communist cell in Tokyo when he was studying there. At the invitation of Peng Pai, came to Haifeng and took the office as the principal of the First Higher Primary School in early 1922. He was the organizer of the Socialist Youth League of Haifeng, and an aide to Peng Pai. Arrested and killed by the Nationalists in Chaozhou city. Ibid, pp 43-47.

12. Peng Pai, "Haifeng nongmin yundong" (The Haifeng peasant movement, hereafter HPM ). 1925. In HMHR, vol. 1, p 164; The Haifeng martyrs, Vol. 1. p 252.

13. Liu Buoji, Guangdong shuyuan zhidu yange (The evolution of academy system in Guangdong). 1930, p 103.

14. Collections of the Compilation Committee of Haifeng County History. Vol. 1, No. 24.

15. Chen Jiongming (Ch'en Chiung-ming), 1875-1933, a native of Haifeng. Became a xiuca in late Qing, and a one-time governor of Guangdong province and the Commander-in-chief of the Guangdong Army under Sun Yet-sen in 1920. turned against Sun Yat-sen after June 1922. See Duan Yunzhang, Chen Jiongming de yisheng (The life of Chen Jiongming). Henan Renmin Chuban She, 1988.

Ma Yuhan, (1882-1938,) was born in the county seat of Haifeng. Became a xiuca in the late Qing, member of the Tongmeng Hui, Treasury Minister of the Guangdong provincial government after the 1911 Revolution. Assassinated by unidentified people in Shanghai in 1938. ( Source: collections of the Compilation Committee of Haifeng County History)

16. Collections of the Compilation Committee of Haifeng County History. Vol. 1, No. 24.

17. HMHR, vol. 1, p 1.

18. Maipu, "Wo duiyu shuangshi jie de ganxiang (My thoughts on the Double-Ten Holiday). (Oct. 1921.) Ibid. p 64.

19. Haifeng wenshi (Haifeng history and literature). Vol. 1, 1958. p 88.
20. Chai Luo, Peng Pai zhuan (Peng Pai's biography). Renmin Chubanshe, Beijing, 1986. p 9.
21. Ibid, p 9.
22. This information was provided by Yu Shaonan in an interview given to a historian in 1989. Yu was a participant of the Communist movement in Haifeng in the 1920s.
23. Arif Dirlik, The Origin of Chinese Communism, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989. p 21.
24. Li Guozhen, 1902-1931, born in Haifeng. A returned student from Japan, activist in the Society for Study of Socialism in 1921 and in the New Student Society in 1924. Became the Propaganda Commissar of the Hai-Lu-feng District Committee of the CCP in 1925. Executed by the GMD as a member of the Executive Committee of CCP Fujian Committee in 1931. See The Haifeng martyrs, Vol. 1, pp 187-194.
25. HMHR, Vol. 1, pp 8-12, 17-18.
26. Zheng Zhiyun, 1901-1928, was born in Haifeng. A founder of the Society for Progressing Together (共 进 会) set up in 1919, editor of the New Haifeng, the Secretary of the CCP East River Special Committee in 1927. Executed by the GMD in Huilai county of Guangdong. See The Haifeng martyrs, vol. 1, pp 138-145
27. Zheng Zhiyun, "Shiyan zhuyi de yousheng he kexue fangfa de zhongyao" (The superiority of practice and the importance of scientific method). HMHR, vol. 1, pp 46-52.
28. Zhou Dalin, 1901-1933, born in Haifeng. Member of the CCP East River Special Committee. Executed by the GMD in Shantou. Ibid, p 23.
29. Zhong Yimou, 1899-1963, was born in Haifeng. Once received education in a middle school run by American missionaries in Shantou. An activist in the intellectual movement and the peasant movement in Haifeng. Took refuge in Malaysia after the failure of the Haifeng Soviet. Went back to China in July 1949. Arrested and sentenced to three years in prison by the Communist government for "harboring landlords" and "attempting to flee to Hongkong." Appointed to the post of research fellow of the Research Institute of Culture and History of Guangdong Province in 1957, but was soon determined as a "Rightist". Committed suicide at his hometown (the town of Gongping) in 1963. (Source: collections of the Compilation Committee of Haifeng County History.) Zhong is the author of the book Hailufeng nongmin

yundong ( The peasant movement in Hai-Lu-feng), which was published in 1957 and has been widely cited by the previous scholarship. (Source: Collection of the Compilation Committee of Haifeng History.)

30. Marks, pp 108, 109.

31. Peng Pai, HPM, HMHR, vol. 1, pp 129, 132.

32. The investigation was done on my behalf in 1989 in Haifeng by a senior teacher in history in the Peng Pai Memorial Middle School, a member of the Party History Study Committee of the county. The investigation was carried out in the Chishan area where the first peasant union in the county was founded in 1922, and in the Guandong (关东) area where peasants traditionally grow more sugar cane than peasants elsewhere do because of the geographical conditions. The age of the twenty respondents ranged from ninety to fifty. All of them were peasants.

33. The conception of "Chaoshan region", as it is usually termed today in China, refers to the Chaoshan plain, which historically belonged to the Chaozhou prefecture (府) centered on Chaozhou city, and which became the Shantou district (汕头地区) centered on Shantou city after the liberation. Historically Haifeng and Lufeng counties belonged to the Huizhou prefecture centered on Huizhou city instead of the Chaozhou prefecture. After 1949, the two counties still belonged to the Huizhou district except in the period from 1958 to 1983. Geographically the two counties are of hill terrain and outside the rim of the plain, which is equivalent to the Han river delta. Besides, the dialects spoken by the people in the two counties are also different from the one used in the Chaoshan area.

34. Marks, p 101.

35. His report on the investigation is included in HMHR, vol. 1, pp 65-72, under the title of "Haifeng ren zhuijin shenghuo diaocha de gaikuang" (An investigation into the present-day lives of the Haifeng people).

36. On the Hakka, see Hofheinz, 1977, pp139,256.

37. "Haifeng quanxian nongmin qigao tongbao shu"(A public letter to our compatriots from all the Haifeng peasants weeping with grief". (Aug. 1923) HMHR, Vol. 1, p 119.

38. Peng Pai, HPM. Ibid, p 128.

39. Li Chuntao, "Haifeng nongmin yundong jiqi zhidao zhe Peng Pai" (Peasant movement in Haifeng and its instructor Peng Pai, hereafter PMPP), (1923) Ibid, p 91.

40. Peng Pai, "Guanyu Hailufeng nonghui zhao junfa chuichan qinkuang deng zhi Liang xiong xin" ( A letter to brother Liang about the destruction of the Hai-Lu-feng peasant union by warlords) (Sep. 1923). Ibid, p 86.

41. Marks, p 173; Hofheinz, p 146.

42. After the May Fourth movement students in Haifeng began to play modern dramas on the streets to inspire the patriotism of the people. The names of the dramas including "national enemy of conquered Korea", etc. See The Haifeng martyrs, p139.

43. Chen Xiu, "Shehui yundong he Haifeng de xiangcun" (Social movements and rural Haifeng), (1921) . HMHR, Vol. 1, pp 52-59.

44. Li Chuntao, PMPP. Ibid, p 99.

45. Peng Pai, HPM. Ibid, p 137.

46. Li Chuntao, PMPP. Ibid, p 96.

47. Ibid., p 98.

48. Ibid., p 98.

49. Ibid, p 99.

50. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 137.

51. Peng Pai's letter to Li Chuntao (Feb. 1923). See Li Chuntao, PMPP. Ibid, p 122.

52. For example, as far as I know, most of the important traditional handicraft industries in Haifeng such as umbrella-making and wooden-shoe-making existed well into the late 1950s when plastic products began to prevail.

53. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol.1, p 140.

54. "The reminiscence of Li Sixian" (recent), collection of the Haifeng Revolutionary Archive.

55. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 144.

56. Hofheinz, p 137.

57. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, pp 145-146.

58. Marks, p 176.

59. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol.1, pp 145-155.

60. Marks, pp 146-149.
61. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 154.
62. Marks, p 151.
63. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 152.
64. Ibid, p 153.
65. Li Chuntao, PMPP. HMHR, vol. 1, p 111.
66. Peng Pai, HPM. Ibid, p 155.
67. Li Laogong, " Dui Haifeng nongmin yundong de yige guancha" (An observation of the peasant movement in Haifeng). Ibid, p 232.
68. Li Chuntao, PMPP. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 111.
69. Peng Pai, HPM. Ibid, p 154.
70. Li Chuntao, PMPP. Ibid, pp119, 124.
71. Ibid, pp 157-158.
72. Ibid, pp 155, 161.
73. Ibid., p 162.
74. Ibid., p 172.
75. Ibid., p 171.
76. Ibid, pp 169-172.
77. Ibid., p 173.
78. Ibid., p 174.
79. Li Chuntao, PMPP. Ibid, p119.
80. Ibid., p 169.
81. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 170.
82. Ibid, p 176.
83. Ibid., p 181.
84. Li Chuntao, PMPP. HMHR, Vol. 1, pp 121-122.
85. Ibid, pp 119, 123.

86. The Biography of Peng Pai , 1984. p 97.
87. Eastman, Lloyd, The Abortive Revolution, Harvard University Press, 1974. p xii.
88. Lin Wunong, "Huiyi Peng Pai" (Recalling Peng Pai), Yangcheng wanbao ( The ram city evening paper), Aug. 26, 1980.
89. See HMHR, Vol. 1, pp 523-524.
90. Ibid, p 524.
91. Peng Pai, HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 174.
92. Li Chuntao, "Tiandi jiuqing shi shei de ne?" (Land belongs to whom?) (July 1925). Ibid, p 416.
93. Yong Yu, Lin Zheming, "Hailufeng renmin geming douzheng dashiji" ( Chronology of Hai-Lu-feng people's revolutionary struggle)(1986) Ibid, p 668.
94. He Shen, "Jinnian wuyi zhi Guangdong nongmin yundong" (Guangdong's peasant movement this May Day", (April 1925) Ibid, p 337; Peng Pai, "Weilao chi" (A speech appreciating the peasant army) (Aug. 1926), Ibid, p 561.
95. Peng Pai, Ibid. pp 562-567.
96. Ye Zhuoneng, Xie Qiansheng, "Hailufeng zhaoqi nongmin yundong gaishu" (A summary of the early Hai-Lu-feng peasant movement) (1986). Ibid., p 663.
97. Wu Zhenming, "Zhenya fangeming yi nonghui" (On the peasant union and the suppression of counterrevolutionaries) (April 1925). Ibid., p 330.
98. Peng Pai wenji (Collection of Peng Pai's works), Renmin Chubanshe, Beijing, 1981. pp 292-293.
99. Chen Hanchang, "Hai-Lu-feng geming genjudi de tudi geming" (Land revolution in the Hai-Lu-feng revolutionary base). Studies on the Hai-Lu-feng revolutionary base , Renmin Chubanshe, 1988. p 165-167.
100. See Ye Zhuoneng, Lin Zheming, "Hailufeng geming genjudi gaishu" (A summary of the Hai-Lu-feng revolutionary base) (1986), HMHR, Vol. 2. p 731.
101. Luo Fu, "Zhongguo diyi gesuwei" (The first Soviet in China) (Nov. 1927) Ibid, p 55.
102. "Hailufeng suwei" (The Hai-Lu-feng Soviet" (1928). Ibid., p 88.

103. "Zhonggong Guangdong shengwei guanyu zhanlin Hailufeng hou de gongzhuo zhi Hailufeng xianwei han" ( A letter from the Guangdong Provincial Committee to Hai-Lu-feng County Committee about the works after the two counties were captured) (Nov. 1927). Ibid, p 55.

104. "The Hai-Lu-feng Soviet", ibid, p 112-119.

105. Ibid., p 112.

106. Ibid., p 112.

107. Ibid., p 119.

108. "Huilai fangmian de qingxing" (A report from the ERSC to the Provincial Committee about the situation in Huilai county". Peng pai yanjiu shiliao (Historical materials for study of Peng Pai), Guangdong Renmin Chuban She, 1981, p 54.

109. " Yuan Xiaoxian, Liu Ersong gei tuanzhongyang de baogao" (Report from Yuan Xiaoxian and Liu Ersong to the Central Committee of the Socialist Youth League" (1923). Ibid, p 9.

110. "Zhonggong Haifeng xianwei guanyu gezhong gongzuo de tongji gei shengwei baogao" (Statistic on various matters prepared for the Provincial Committee by the Haifeng County Party Committee" ( Jan. 1928), HMHR, Vol. 2, p 219.

111. "The Hai-Lu-feng Soviet". Ibid, p121.

112. "Dongjiang tewei gei shengwei de baogao" ( A report from the ERSC to the Provincial Committee) ( Dec. 1927). Guangdong geming lishi wenjian huibian ( Collection of Guangdong revolutionary historical documents, hereafter Documents). The Central Archive of the CCP, the Guangdong Archive (ed.). 1983. p 33.

113. Chen Shaobai, Haifeng chihuo ji (The red peril in Haifeng). Canton, 1932. p 29.

114. I once lived in the Gongping district for two years in the late 1970s, acquiring knowledge about social conditions of the district.

115. Chen Shaobai, pp 31-33; "The Hai-Lu-feng Soviet", HMHR, Vol. 2, p 131.

116. Chen Shaobai, pp 33-38.

117. "Shejiao yundong zhongjie" (The conclusion of the Socialist Education Movement). Collection of the Haifeng Archive.

118. Gun Wu, " Haifeng nongmin baodong yi dizhu zhengfu gaoya de qingkuang" ( The peasant insurrection in Haifeng and the high pressure from the landlord's government" ( 1928) , HMHR, Vol. 2, p 425.

119. " Zhonggong Lufeng xianwei guanyu eryue zhi liuyue de douzheng qingkuang gei shengwei de baogao" ( Report from the Lufeng Committee to the Provincial Committee about the struggles from February to June) (1928). Ibid, p 342.

120. "Guanyu Hailufeng de shixian yi dangqian xingshi de baogao" (A report about losing Hai-Lu-feng and the current situation" (March 1928). Documents, pp 102-103.

121. Ibid. p 103.

122. The chairman is my grandfather. Later he was arrested and killed by the KMT in 1929. This story about his jailing by the Communists is well known in my family and in my home village.

123. "Zhonggong Haifeng xianwei guanyu muqian zhengzhi xingshi he tudi geming gongzuo baogao" (A report from the Haifeng Party Committee about the political situation and the land revolution work) (Jan. 1928), HMHR, Vol. 2, p 175.

124. "The Hai-Lu-feng Soviet", ibid, p 159.

125. "Guanyu Hailufeng de baogao" ( A report about Hai-Lu-feng) (March 1928). Documents, p 130.

126. "A report about losing Hai-Lu-feng and the current situation" (March 1928), ibid, pp 102-103.

127. Ibid, p 102.

128. " Hailufeng shiyue baodong lueji" ( A brief description of the October insurrection in Hai-Lu-feng) (Jan. 1927). HMHR, Vol. 2, p 78.

129. "Zhonggong dongjiang tewe guanyu Hailufeng junmin xiaomie Yang Zhuomei jundui qingkuang gei shengwei baogao" (A report from the ERSC to the Provincial Committee about eliminating Yang Zhuomei's army by the Hai-Lu-feng people and army) (Dec. 1928). Ibid, p 67.

130. "Zhonggong dongjiang tewe guanyu dongjiang nongmin daibiao dahui jingguo qingkuang de baogao" (ERSC's report about the Peasant Congress of the East River region) (Jan. 1928). Ibid, pp180-182.

131. "Xunshi yuan de baogao" ( A report from an inspector to the Party Center) (April 1928). Documents, p 137.

132. Studies of the Hai-Lu-feng revolutionary base. p 124.

133. Ibid, p 224.

134. "Zhonggong Haifeng xianwei guanyu erba shijian gei shengwei de baogao" (Report from the Haifeng County Committee to the Provincial Committee about the 'Twenty-eighth' Incident". HMHR, Vol. 2, p 170.

135. Ibid, p 171.

136. "Zhonggong dongjiang tewe guanyu baowei Hailufeng suweiai de chelue gei shengwei baogao" (Report from the ERSC to the Provincial Committee about strategies for defending the Hai-Lu-feng Soviets). Ibid, p 253.

137. " Zhonggong Guangdong shengwei guanyu zhanlin Hailufeng hou de gongzuo zhi Hailufeng xianwei han" ( A letter from the Guangdong Provincial Committee to Hai-Lu-feng County Committees directing work after the two counties were captured) (Nov. 1927). Ibid. p 55.

138. " Zhonggong Haifeng xianwei guanyu zhengzhi xingshi he tudi geming gongzuo baogao" ( A report from the Haifeng County Committee about the current political situation and the works of the land revolution) (Jan. 1828), ibid, p 178.

139. Chen Shaobai, p 45.

140. According to Peng Pai, an adult needed "at least" 15 fen (cents) a day in 1923 for food. See his HPM. HMHR, Vol. 1, p 133.

141. " Zhonggong Haifeng xianwei guanyu eryue zhi liuyue de douzheng qingkuang gei shengwei baogao" ( A report from the Haifeng County Committee to the Provincial Committee about struggles from February to June" (July 1928), HMHR, Vol. 2, p 342.

142. " Zhonggong dongjiang tewe guanyu baowei Hailufeng suweiai de chelue gei shengwei baogao" ( Report from the ERSC to the Provincial Committee about strategies for defending the Hai-Lu-feng Soviets) (Feb. 1928). Ibid. p 251.

143. Ibid. p 252.

144. Ibid. p 260.

145. "Zhonggong Hailufeng xianwei guanyu diren zhuangkuang he dang ge shiqi chelue deng gei shengwei baogao" (A report from the Haifeng County Committee to the Provincial

Committee about the enemy's situation and our party's strategies in various periods) (July 1928). Ibid. p 318.

146. Ibid. p 319.

147. "Zhonggong Lufeng xianwei guanyu eryue zhi liuyue de douzheng qingkuang gei shengwei baogao" ( A report from the Lufeng County Committee to the Provincial Committee about struggles from January to June"), ibid. p 351.

148. "Zhonggong Guangdong shengwei guanyu Hailufeng shibai de jiaoxun he jixu baodong de chelue zhi dongjiang tewei xin" ( A letter from the Guangdong Provincial Committee to the ERSC about the lessons of defeat and the strategy for continuous insurrection) (March 1928). Ibid, p 271.

149. "Zhonggong Hailuzhi tewei guanyu zhuijin xingshi he hongjun qingkuang gei shengwei baogao" (Report from the CCP Hai-Lu-Zhi Special Committee to the Provincial Committee on recent situation and the Red Army) (March 1929. HMHR, Vol. 2, pp 445-446; "Zhonggong Hailuzhi tewei guanyu zhuijin gongzuo zhuangkuang gei shengwei baogao" (Report from the Hai-Lu-Zhi Special Committee to the Provincial Committee on recent work) (May 1929). HMHR, Vol. 2, p 478.

150. Marks, p289.

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