

GREAT BRITAIN, HONG KONG, AND CANTON:
THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE
AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26

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ABSTRACT

GREAT BRITAIN, HONG KONG, AND CANTON: THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26

By

Earl John Motz

The Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26 marks a major turning point in the history of the Nationalist Revolution, a milestone in the development of the Chinese labor movement, and a crisis of massive proportions in the formulation of British policy toward the Kuomintang. Although, in general terms, Great Britain's China policy in the decade of the 1920's is now fairly well known, no study has succeeded in accurately delineating the full impact of this strike and boycott upon those British officials who found it an urgent necessity to deal with the followers of Sun Yat-sen. The attitudes of British observers perched on the southern rim of the Asian subcontinent at Hong Kong frequently found expression as official British policy. That policy was to have a decisive influence not only in China, but also upon each nation with interests in that troubled country.

The studies that have attempted to make Britain's China policy in the 1920's intelligible have too often defined that policy in the actions of the British Foreign Office and its representatives in Asia. The contribution of the Colonial Office and its officials in China is either discounted

or ignored. Moreover, these studies frequently have suffered from the inaccessibility of official British sources. Unable to make use of Foreign and Colonial Office records, these studies reveal much of what British policymakers were saying to their foreign counterparts without the disclosure of what they were saying to each other. While useful in describing Great Britain's China policy as an accomplished fact, they fail to fully illuminate the method and motivation that led to its creation.

This study attempts to accurately describe the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26 and assess its impact upon the formulation of British policy toward the Kuomintang. Where possible, it also attempts to clarify important KMT positions regarding the anti-imperialist struggle. Throughout this study the author has been concerned with British perceptions of Chinese realities; for among officials charged with the awesome task of determining and implementing a successful China policy, it was not reality but the perception of reality that proved decisive. The study is heavily reliant upon British archival material recently opened to scholarly investigation. In addition to the records of the British Foreign and Colonial Offices for the period here examined, the study has utilized a large collection of documents printed for confidential circulation within the British Cabinet. Efforts to determine specific regional and economic facets of public opinion have led the author to the use of a number of Chinese and Western newspapers and periodicals.

The study uncovers a radical alteration of British attitudes toward Canton and the Kuomintang in response to a devastating attack upon Hong Kong's interests. In the course of the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott, the initial British reaction of antagonism and hostility is shown to have been transformed to one of conciliation and support. Moreover, beginning in 1926, the search for a solution to the crisis at Hong Kong is identified as the dominant element in Britain's China policy.

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AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26**

**By
Earl John Motz**

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PREFACE

The Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26 marks a major turning point in the history of the Nationalist Revolution, a milestone in the development of the Chinese labor movement, and a crisis of massive proportions in the formulation of British policy toward the Kuomintang. Because there existed a paucity of sources, Hong Kong's struggle with Canton has not become the subject of an objective Western study. Although, in general terms, Great Britain's China policy in the decade of the 1920's is now fairly well known, no study has succeeded in accurately delineating the full impact of this strike and boycott upon those British officials who found it an urgent necessity to deal with the followers of Sun Yat-sen. The attitudes of British observers perched on the southern rim of the Asian subcontinent at Hong Kong frequently found expression as official British policy. That policy was to have a decisive impact not only in China, but also upon each nation with interests in that troubled country.

Those studies that have attempted to make Britain's China policy in the 1920's intelligible have too often defined that policy in the actions of the British Foreign Office and its representatives in Asia. The contribution of the Colonial Office and its officials is either discounted or ignored. Moreover, such studies frequently have suffered from the inaccessibility of official British sources. Unable to make use of

Foreign and Colonial Office Records, these studies reveal much of what British policymakers were saying to their foreign counterparts without the disclosure of what they were saying to each other. While useful in describing Great Britain's China policy as an accomplished fact, these studies fail to illuminate the method and motivation that led to its creation. Finally, it is apparent that studies of Britain's China policy remain for the most part either blind or indifferent to Chinese aspirations.

This dissertation will describe the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26 and attempt to measure its impact upon the formulation of British policy toward the Kuomintang. Where possible, it will also attempt to clarify important KMT positions regarding the anti-imperialist struggle. Throughout this study the author will remain concerned with British perceptions of Chinese realities; for among British officials charged with the awesome task of determining and implementing a successful China policy, it was not reality but the perception of reality that proved decisive.

The author has benefited in this study from the assistance and encouragement provided by a number of institutions and individuals to whom he here gives thanks. Research in the British Public Record Office, the Harvard-Yenching Library, the Hoover Institution Archives and Library, the Toyo Bunko in Tokyo, the collections of the Historical Archives Commission of the Kuomintang in Taiwan, the Library of the University of Hong Kong, the Probate Court Library and the University

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A Note Regarding Sources

This study is heavily reliant upon British archival material recently opened to scholarly investigation. These materials include the records of the British Foreign and Colonial Offices and documents printed for confidential circulation within the British Cabinet. While the bibliography provides information suitable for identification of these sources, it would

be impractical to attempt to provide full information on all documents examined or upon each of the 44 volumes in which they are contained for the period 1925-1927. These materials may be broken down into the following categories:

Foreign Office, General Correspondence, Political (FO 371).

Messages exchanged between the Office and its diplomatic and consular officials in China.

Internal correspondence among members of the Office.

Messages exchanged between the Office and other branches of government or commercial and other interested groups.

Throughout this study these materials will be cited as FO 371/ followed by the number of each specific document.

Foreign Office, Embassy and Consular Archives, Correspondence Series I (FO 228)

The more important classes of diplomatic correspondence among the archives of British missions and consular establishments in China.

These materials will most often be cited as part of the following class of documents among which most are included.

Foreign Office, Confidential Prints (FO 405)

Papers from all branches of government for distribution within the Cabinet.

Throughout this study these materials will be cited as FO 405/ followed by the number of each specific document.

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Messages exchanged between the Office and its representatives in China.

Internal correspondence among members of the Office.

Messages exchanged between the Office and other branches of government or commercial and other interested groups.

Throughout this study these materials will be cited as CO 129/ followed by the number of each specific document.

CHAPTER I

CANTON AND HONG KONG: THE SEEDS OF CONFLICT

Development of the Canton-Hong Kong Relationship

By the terms of the Treaty of Nanking of 1842 which ended the Opium War (for China the first in a series of costly and humiliating lessons on the superiority of Western naval firepower), Hong Kong was ceded in perpetuity to a victorious England. This rocky island off the south China coast, then uninhabited but for a few small fishing villages, encompassed an area of about thirty square miles. Between it and the mainland peninsula of Kowloon lays one of the world's best and most beautiful natural deep harbors. By the end of the nineteenth century, this tiny outpost of the British empire, from whose warehouses goods could be carried either ninety miles westward to Canton or up the coast to other Chinese markets, had become the chief port of call for ships of those nations seeking a share in the rapidly expanding China trade.

Canton, a prisoner of its own geography, remained barred from direct competition in this trade. This oldest center of China's western contact was situated on the delta created by the Pearl River from which, by twisting courses around the islands and sand bars which dotted it, a shallow and often dangerously narrow channel opened on the great bay

forty-three miles below the city. Only shipping of the shallowest draft could venture up this channel, and not without peril. Alluvial deposits and hidden shoals posed a constant challenge to wary Chinese and foreign pilots. Yet it was here at Canton that formerly all of the Celestial Empire's western trade had been concentrated.

In its long history as China's sole outlet to a trade-hungry west, Canton had acquired important advantages over potential rivals. Through it alone could access be gained to the markets and producing regions of the Chinese interior. Canton's citizens had through long acquaintance learned something of the ways of the foreigner. A labor force possessing the somewhat specialized skills required of a commercial port was always available. Manual labor, possessed by Canton in abundance, was swelled still further during periods of slack in the agricultural countryside. Despite all this, Canton, without a deep water harbor, could not take her rightful place in the expanded trade which characterized western relations with nineteenth century China.¹

Hong Kong, had it remained isolated from Canton, might well have become a scenic but forgotten island off the vast Asian subcontinent. Without access to the advantages which initially only Canton enjoyed, its

¹A survey of Canton's early relations with the west may be found in Fairbank, Reischauer and Craig, East Asia: The Modern Transformation (Boston: 1965), chap. 2. Development of the Canton system of trade as an extension of the older Chinese "tribute system" is described in Chou Ku-ch'eng, Chung-kuo t'ung-shih (Shanghai: 1939), Vol. I.

splendid harbor would have remained of little consequence. The colony's merchant community if left to itself, confronted with the difficulties of language, local custom, and the latent hostility of a people who felt themselves the victims of foreign exploitation, would in all probability have departed for other greener pastures of commercial endeavor. So, through nature's oversight and the early recognition in Canton and Hong Kong that each could not do without the other was created a relationship of mutual dependence.²

If this relationship is seen as a productive but not altogether happy marriage, the matchmaker or marriage broker was most certainly the comprador. Originally he was a Cantonese merchant who, under contract to western firms, handled all aspects of the Chinese side of his new employer's business. He hired and fired all Chinese employees under his own personal guarantee, and with his knowledge of the market, he bought and sold for his firm in the Chinese community. As his employer's exclusive agent in the China interior, he was often able to amass a fortune and take his place with others like himself in the growing Chinese business class of the treaty ports. Frequently, he adopted western dress and manners; and, if to his advantage, western citizenship. In instances where he performed some service of special benefit to the

²For an excellent if somewhat technical discussion of such relationships see Bert F. Hoselitz, "Generative and Parasitic Cities," in Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. III, 1954, p. 278-294.

foreign community, he might even aspire to important western rank and privileges.³

With the Cantonese comprador used as an entering wedge, the western merchants of Hong Kong pushed wide the door of commercial opportunity in Canton. So successful were they that by the end of the nineteenth century, Hong Kong emerged completely dominant in the south China trade. The relationship between Hong Kong and Canton by then had become one in which the British colony's enormous profits were, in large measure, being obtained at Canton's expense. This may in part be explained by Hong Kong's role in the south China trade.

Originally the Hong Kong merchants served as commission agents who obtained Chinese goods for clients in Europe and America. Carried in shallow draft vessels from Canton or other southern ports, these goods were collected in the colony's warehouses and ultimately shipped by ocean steamer to the world's major ports. Western goods arriving in Hong Kong were transshipped aboard coastal steamers to their Chinese markets. Increasingly, the Hong Kong merchants assumed control of the distribution of these goods by acquiring interests in the coastal shipping trade. As Hong Kong grew as a shipping center, its service industries flourished. The dockyards, where skilled Chinese workers outfitted and maintained

³The late Mary C. Wright aptly described the Cantonese compradores as the Chinese shock troops of western expansion. See her The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874 (New York: 1966), p. 242-243.

the carriers of the colony's prosperity under the watchful eye of their western superiors, were rarely idle.

As the trade of Canton became funneled to Hong Kong, the colony's firms moved to assume its complete control. The commercial houses of Hong Kong absorbed the soundest of the Canton banks and organized others as branches. Those less stable they drove out of business. So dominant did these banks become that, within a short period of time in Canton and throughout Kwangtung, the preferred currencies were either Hong Kong dollars or local issues tied to that dollar.⁴ By 1911, the Canton-Kowloon railway in which Great Britain held a dominant interest was completed. The Chinese section of ninety miles together with the British section of twenty-two miles forged still another strong link between Canton and Hong Kong. Goods and passengers from Canton, denied access to Hankow because the Canton-Hankow railway remained incomplete, were drawn instead to Hong Kong.⁵

⁴The position of the Hong Kong banks in the economy of Canton and much of south China is discussed in The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 254, January 2, 1926, p. 8-9. See also Chi-ming Hou, "External Trade, Foreign Investment, and Domestic Development; The Chinese Experience, 1840-1937," in Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. X, October, 1961, p. 21-41. An account of China's monetary difficulties as a result of foreign pressures is Chin Kuo-pao, Chung-kuo pi-chih wen-t'i (Shanghai: 1928).

⁵The Canton-Hankow railway in which foreign investors maintained a heavy commitment was begun in 1904. Important sections remained incomplete until 1937 in consequence of which Hong Kong was able to further control and profit on the Canton trade. See Chang Kia-ngau, China's Struggle for Railroad Development (New York: 1953). See also Sun, E-tu Zen, Chinese Railways and British Interests, 1898-1911 (New York: 1954).

Hong Kong's dominance of Canton may also in part be explained by what some writers concerned with the process of empire building have termed "cultural imperialism." The comprador class previously described may be cited as one case in point. Another is the Canton merchant who, finding his livelihood determined largely by the whim of the Hong Kong commercial class, moved to establish closer ties with his foreign counterparts. His children, as were those of most wealthy Cantonese, were sent to be educated in Hong Kong. In time of domestic disturbance his capital and, if the situation warranted it, he himself might be detected fleeing to the safety of the British colony. It should not, therefore, be surprising that the Canton merchant frequently placed the interests of Hong Kong above those of his place of birth. In the first decades of the twentieth century when China (and particularly Canton) was being swept by the aroused passions of anti-imperialism, the Canton merchant frequently became a party to the combative political schemes then being formulated in Hong Kong.

Political Environment of the Canton-Hong Kong Relationship

While geography, the nature of the south China trade, and the personal relationships developed between inhabitants of the two places, go far in explaining Hong Kong's dominance over Canton, the fundamental cause is found in what for China was a much wider disorder. That disorder was created by the pattern of events involving China and the West which had become apparent during the development of the Hong Kong-Canton

relationship. In the period encompassed by the last half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, China, despite momentous attempts at change, continued to fall prostrate before each successive drive undertaken by a commercially aggressive West.

Each Western campaign, backed by the power of foreign gunboats, ended with the wresting from China of additional economic and political concessions. These concessions, shared in equally by Western nations as a result of "most favored nation clauses," were obtained in a group of documents which taken together the Chinese have, with justice, termed the "unequal treaties." Through them, China lost the right in many important areas to manage her own affairs.⁶

Initially, China was forced to open five coastal ports to Western commerce. These "treaty ports" within the period of about twenty years after 1842 were greatly expanded in both size and number. In them Western consular jurisdiction was established by which foreigners could escape all forms of Chinese regulation. Extraterritoriality, the term given this privilege, applied not only to the foreigner and his property, but frequently to his Chinese staff and assistants as well. The trade for which the treaty ports had been created was facilitated by the fixing of

⁶There are many standard texts in Chinese and English which discuss the unequal treaties. An excellent investigation into their origins is John K. Fairbank's Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854 (Cambridge, Mass.: 1953). A useful Chinese study describing their impact is Ch'en Kung-lu, Chung-kuo chin-tai shih (Shanghai: 1935).

the Chinese tariff on foreign goods at a level much lower than any prevailing in the West. Collection of this tariff was entrusted to the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service which functioned under the administration of Westerners nominally in the employ of the Peking Government. In practice, the Customs Service frequently became yet another foreign policy instrument for Western nations, particularly useful to Great Britain whose nationals dominated it.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, the Western nations pursued a dual policy toward a powerless China. On the one hand, they propped up and maintained the crumbling Ch'ing administration, while on the other they continued to extract concessions from it. In the first decades of the twentieth century, however, this policy became progressively less workable. The growing dynamism of that strain of Chinese nationalism symbolized by Sun Yat-sen and his followers at Canton proved menacing. Sun, after repeated failures, finally saw the Ch'ing dynasty ended by the Revolution of 1911. Discouraged from participation in the new republic by the seemingly endless contests waged for its control by Chinese militarists, Sun withdrew his support and established a rival government at Canton in 1917. While not opposed to aid from the Western nations for the development of China; after 1924, Sun increasingly identified them as the exploitative allies of China's warlords. He then became convinced that his nation's weakness could only be overcome when both the Chinese militarists and the influence of their foreign sponsors was eliminated.

Despite these later convictions, Sun, without military forces of his own, remained a hostage to various militarists through much of the period from 1917 to 1925. During this period his Canton Government led a precarious existence which more than once was temporarily interrupted.⁷

For Hong Kong, the presence of Sun Yat-sen and his Kuomintang (KMT) adherents in Canton, first viewed as a minor inconvenience, became the cause for increasing alarm. Sun's alternate postures of friendship and hostility toward the British colony became, after mid-1923, consistent and centered on the latter.⁸ The schemes put forward by Sun for development of a deep-water harbor for Canton, which would free it from dependence upon Hong Kong, served to heighten apprehension among British and Hong Kong Chinese commercial groups. However, it was the Kuomintang leader's connections with the new breed of militant labor organizers then active in the southern capitol that created the greatest threat to Hong Kong's continued enjoyment of profit at Canton's expense.

Canton and the Chinese Labor Movement

The Chinese labor movement at the start of the twentieth century remained with few exceptions tied to the guild traditions of the past. The

⁷Sun Yat-sen's dependence on militarists for the maintenance of his Canton Government, and the fortunes of that government are discussed in Li Chien-nung, (trans. Ssu-yu Teng and Jeremy Ingalls) The Political History of China, 1840-1928 (Stanford: 1956), p. 375-377, and p. 384-388. This is a translation of Li's Chung-kuo chin pai-nien cheng-chih shih (Taipei, Taiwan: 1957).

⁸An excellent discussion of Sun's relations with Hong Kong may be

patriotic explosion of resentment against continued economic and political penetration of China by Japan, which in part characterized the May Fourth movement of 1919, stimulated a major change in this form of labor organization. Increasingly, China's commercial centers witnessed the birth of trade and industrial unions prepared to battle any new foreign encroachments on Chinese soil. Canton, although less influenced than other major cities by the May Fourth movement, was no exception.⁹

Foremost among the labor organizations of Canton was the Mechanics' Union (Kuang-tung chi-ch'i kung-jen) (frequently identified in both the Chinese and Western press as "The Canton Machinists"). This organization, with roots in the Ch'ing dynasty, was changed in 1921 from a union of skilled workers and their employers to one in which only the workers were represented. Successful in a strike against British firms in Hong Kong in 1920, the union in 1921 obtained yet another increase in wages by striking against Chinese employers in Canton. After adopting

found in Walter E. Goulay, "The Kuomintang and the Rise of Chiang Kai-shek, 1920-1924" (unpublished thesis, Dept. of History, Harvard University, 1967), p. 56-60 and 167-171.

⁹The history and transformation of China's guilds is analyzed in Ch'uan Han-sheng, Chung-kuo hang-hui chih-tu shih (Shanghai: 1934); Stewart J. Burgess, The Guilds of Peking (New York: 1928); and H. B. Morse, Gilds of China (London: 1901). An important study of the May Fourth movement and its impact is Chow Tse-tsung, The May Fourth Movement, Intellectual Revolution in Modern China (Cambridge, Mass.: 1960). For the impact of May Fourth on the labor movement, see Ma Ch'ao-chun, Chung-kuo lao-kung yun-tung shih (Taipei, Taiwan: 1958), Vol. I, p. 127-130.

the new name The Kwangtung Mechanics' Maintenance Society (Kuang-tung chi-ch'i kung-jen wei-ch'ih hui), this union absorbed the skilled workers in the mechanical workshops of Kwangtung, the arsenals of the provincial government, the railways of the province, and the British firms of Hong Kong. Conservative in nature, the union through its leader Huang Huan-t'ing developed strong ties to Sun Yat-sen and the Kuomintang.¹⁰

The Canton printers, unlike the mechanics whose organization was along craft union lines, represented one of the first industrial unions in Canton. Its membership consisted of compositors, printers, binders, and type-carvers. In 1921, it, too, launched a short but successful strike against Hong Kong for higher wages.¹¹

Among the most radical of the Canton labor organizations was the Seamen's Union (Hai-yuan hui). Its president, Ch'en Ping-sheng, was a friend of Sun Yat-sen since the days of that forerunner of the Kuomintang, the T'ung-meng hui. Other important members such as Su Chao-cheng and Lin Wei-min were to become members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and would open the union still further to that party's influence. The

¹⁰Li Po-yuan, Kwangtung chi-ch'i kung-jen-hui tou-shih (Peking: 1955), p. 57-64; and Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 143-145. See also, Lowe Chuan-hua, Facing Labor Issues in China (London: 1934), p. 60-61.

¹¹Jean Chesneaux, The Chinese Labor Movement, 1919-1927 (Stanford, Calif.: 1968), p. 165.

Seamen's Union could trace its history back to 1909 when, under a different name and possessing a looser organization, its members served as couriers for the revolutionary messages of Sun Yat-sen.¹²

The mechanics, printers, and seamen all shared important characteristics in their organizational structures which served to strengthen them during periods of strike. Each had established branch unions in the other cities of south China which had experienced significant industrial or commercial development. Consequently, any attempt by uncompromising employers to recruit strike-breakers could be disrupted. In addition, each (with the exception of the Seamen's Union which maintained headquarters there) had a strong branch in Hong Kong. Of the more than one-hundred unions in Canton in 1920, at least one-third had counterparts in the British colony with whom some form of communication was maintained. While this reaffirmed the relationship of dependence upon Hong Kong which beset Canton, it also provided important advantages. In periods of conflict with the colony, agitators on the scene could point to Canton as a safe sanctuary for those workers fearing the powers of the Hong Kong Government. If necessary, they could also intimidate the Chinese

¹²For a history of the Seamen's Union, the activities of its members, and its ties to Sun Yat-sen, the Kuomintang, and the Chinese Communist Party, see Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 97-98, and p. 149-150; Teng Chung-hsia, Chung-kuo chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih (Peking: 1949), p. 46; Nym Wales, The Chinese Labor Movement (New York: 1945), p. 209. See also William Ayers, "The Hongkong Strikes, 1920-1926," Harvard Papers on China, Vol. IV, (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 105-106.

laborers of the British colony by making hostages of their relatives who often continued to reside in the interior of Kwangtung.

In a period when labor organizations throughout much of China had to maintain a clandestine existence for fear that militarists who viewed their actions with suspicion might move to crush them, Canton provided what must have seemed an exhilarating environment. There labor unions not only had the freedom to function openly, but were inspired to do so by the government. This was largely because labor provided support for Sun Yat-sen and his followers. Events in Canton during the years 1919-1921 afford one example of the nature of this support.

Following the withdrawal of Sun from Canton in 1919, as a result of differences with leaders of the Kwangsi militarist faction who then controlled the city, Wu T'ing-fang, one of Sun's followers and a Cantonese, was nominated as civil-governor of Kwangtung. The Kwangsi group wished the post to go to one of its appointees despite, and in the face of, strong merchant and labor support for Wu. In protest the merchants, the Mechanics' Union, workers in the electric power plant, telephone employees, and the railwaymen, all went out on strike. The militarists responded by arresting Huang Huan-t'ing, executing a number of workers, and forcing other leaders of the movement such as Hsieh Ying-po (a militant Kuomintang labor organizer) to flee the city. Wu T'ing-fang, seeking to avoid further bloodshed in a lost cause, withdrew his name from nomination.¹³

¹³Ma Ch'ao-chun in Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 133-134 credits members of the Mechanics' Union with raising the slogan "Canton

Despite such repression at the hands of the Kwangsi militarists, the mechanics, printers, and railwaymen again struck in October, 1920. This action hampered the movements of the Kwangsi troops then engaged in a struggle for control of Kwangtung with a Cantonese army led by Ch'en Chiung-ming. Frequently depicted by Westerners in Hong Kong as a model governor, Chen, although a member of the Kuomintang, remained a champion of localism. He repeatedly stressed the importance of provincial reform over his party's goals of national revolution. Ch'en's victory over the Kwangsi forces, however, enabled Sun Yat-sen to return to Canton and re-establish his southern government in May, 1921.¹⁴

The Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of 1922:
Guidelines to Confrontation

The growing sense of cohesiveness experienced by China's workers in these years first found clear expression in the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of 1922. Had those in Hong Kong against whom it was directed possessed powers of foresight, they would have seen this action as but the first in a series of increasingly menacing anti-foreign confrontations

for the Cantonese!" during this incident. The slogan was later used by Ch'en Chiung-ming in his drive against the Kwangsi militarists in October, 1920. For a discussion of the causes of Sun's split with the Kwangsi faction in 1918, see Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 385-388. Li discusses the Wu T'ing-fang incident on p. 397-398. See also, Li Shou-kung, Chung-kuo tsui-chin ssu-shih-nien shih (Taipei, Taiwan: 1954).

¹⁴Jean Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 166. Sun's gratitude to the workers was demonstrated during May Day celebrations and on May 5th (the date of his inauguration as president of the southern government). See Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 161.

yet to come. For it was this strike which established the precedents that, with such devastating effect, would be employed by Canton in its all-out struggle with the British colony in 1925-26.

After repeated failures in attempts to open negotiations with the British firms of Hong Kong in the last months of 1921 (a period used by the Seamen's Union to strengthen its organization for the ensuing struggle), the workers of the colony's shipping concerns declared a strike. At issue were economic demands involving higher wages, shorter hours, improved conditions of work, and the abolition of the contract labor (pao-kung) system. The latter referred to the system by which a Chinese labor contractor in the employ of British firms hired and compensated Chinese employees. In exchange for granting a worker employment, the contractor frequently retained up to eighty percent of his salary.

Beginning January 13, 1922, the striking seamen abandoned Hong Kong and sought refuge in Canton where sympathetic labor unions and a tolerant government awaited them. Once there, the strikers were provided with housing and funds with which to carry on their struggle. The latter took the form either of grants from the Canton Government (these were termed loans), or voluntary contributions from friendly unions in Canton and throughout China. A corps of pickets recruited from among the strikers greeted each ship as it docked, and ushered its Chinese crew to strike headquarters in Canton for registration. When, on February 26th, Chinese workers in Hong Kong declared a general strike in support

of the seamen, the situation there assumed crisis proportions. By the beginning of March, as the strike approached its end, the number of Chinese who had left the colony reached 120,000.

At the height of the strike, ocean shipping to or from Hong Kong was severely disrupted, while the colony's coastal trade was brought to a complete halt. The costs of food and other needed provisions doubled, and ships dispatched to coastal ports to obtain supplies were greeted by a partial Chinese boycott. British firms tried unsuccessfully to hire substitute labor with which to break the strike by sending agents to Shanghai and other coastal ports. Their efforts, still to no avail, led them ultimately to the East Indies and the Philippines.¹⁵

The Hong Kong Government's response to the seamen's strike was a declaration of martial law. The Hong Kong Seamen's Union, together with others the government found troublesome, was declared illegal; and

¹⁵A Communist account of the strike is I Pin, Hsiang-kang hai-yuan ta-pa-kung (Shanghai: 1955); an account by a Kuomintang labor activist in Canton is in Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 177-195. For the activities of the labor contractors, see Ayers, op. cit., p. 103. Support provided the strikers in Canton, and the nature of their economic demands is discussed in Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 47-48, and Jean Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 181. The economic costs, the numbers involved, and the impact of the strike on Hong Kong shipping are presented in H. D. Fong, "China's Industrialization, A Statistical Survey," in Data Papers on China (Shanghai: 1931), p. 11-15. This work was largely based on Chen Ta's search of the following: The Canton Times, The South China Morning Post, The China Press, The Industrial Monthly, Shun pao, Labor News, and the Kuowen News Exchange. For the activities of British firms attempting to break the strike, see Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 55, and The North China Herald, Shanghai, January 28, and February 4, 1922.

after raids leading to the arrest of anyone found on the property, the union offices were boarded up and their equipment removed. Upon declaration of the general strike, the Hong Kong Government intensified its efforts to stem the flow of Chinese from the colony. These efforts, implemented by the colony's police, proved ultimately to be the government's undoing.

Shortly after the Hong Kong Government's closure of the Canton-Kowloon railway (for large numbers of Chinese, the main route of exit from the colony), a group of about 2,000 strikers set out on foot for points of embarkation to Canton. At Sha-t'ien, in the New Territories, the strikers were confronted by British police demanding the permits necessary for entering or leaving the colony while under martial law. After breaking through the police cordon and ignoring warning shots aimed in their direction, the Chinese came under fire. The three fatalities and eight wounded suffered by the strikers in that instant transformed the seamen's strike into a political struggle against what many Chinese viewed as the arrogant excesses that typified Hong Kong's treatment of its Chinese community. Fears among the colony's authorities that this incident would result in still greater economic losses and severe strains on Hong Kong's political stability led to a capitulation before the demands of the strikers. On March 5th, an agreement was signed between the strikers' representatives and the Hong Kong Government by which:

(a) salaries were to be increased in a range from fifteen to thirty percent,

(b) promises were given to abolish the use of labor contractors, (c) the Seamen's Union together with other outlawed transport unions was to be reopened, (d) imprisoned strikers were to be released, and (e) the strikers would enjoy reinstatement with back pay.¹⁶

As an economic victory over the dominant foreign firms of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of 1922 provided a great stimulus to further development of the Chinese labor movement. However, the significance of that struggle rested most importantly not in its economic or political consequences, but on its psychological impact. For Hong Kong, it demonstrated the bankruptcy of continued reliance upon notions that Chinese labor could be manipulated without regard to Chinese interests. No more could the colony rely upon the disunity and seeming lack of resolve which in the past had characterized its Chinese dependents. If the colony was to continue in the enjoyment of that prosperity obtained through its privileged status, it would have to prepare for other Chinese challenges directed toward modification of that status. The Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26 would illustrate the means through which the British colony met this new challenge.

For Sun Yat-sen and his Kuomintang, the seamen's victory brought a new awareness of labor's revolutionary potential; however, that potential

¹⁶For the steps taken by the Hong Kong Government to combat the strike and the final demands put forward by the strikers, see Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 48-51. The incident at Sha-t'ien and conditions by which the strike was settled are described in The South China Morning Post, Hong Kong, March 3 and 5, 1922; and in The North China Herald, Shanghai, March 11, 1922. See also, Hsiang-kang hai-yuan ta-pa-kung, p. 19-21.

remained relatively untapped. Although Sun moved to erase the anti-labor legislation inherited from the early Republic, he remained content to seek labor's support through the leaders of the Canton labor unions who enjoyed his friendship. There was, at this time, no concerted effort by the Kuomintang to organize and control a mass labor movement as its revolutionary ally. Sun Yat-sen, even on the eve of his departure from Canton in June, 1922 (a departure necessitated by differences with Ch'en Chiung-ming on the issue of a northern expedition to unify China), held to notions that labor required no separate class consciousness. The interests of labor, in Sun's view, could best be served through a policy of cooperation with all elements (including the merchant community), which shared his party's goals for China. Sun's friend Hsieh Ying-po had established the Laborer's Mutual Benefit Society in 1921 which, open only to Kuomintang members, sought to counteract the growing Communist appeal to labor on a class basis.¹⁷

The Chinese Communist Party, then still in its infancy, found in the Hong Kong seamen's strike an important opportunity for extension of its influence into the Canton labor movement. From the date of its formal

¹⁷For the annulment of Article 224 of Yuan Shih-kai's criminal code and repeal of legislation suppressing strikes, see Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 67. For Sun's attitudes regarding cooperation between labor and the commercial interests in 1922, attitudes adopted earlier and geared to making class warfare in China unnecessary, I refer to my notes of an interview with Mr. Ma Ch'ao-chun on December 13, 1970, in Taipei. Hsieh Ying-po's mutual benefit society is described in Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 158.

founding in Shanghai in July, 1921, that party, having accepted the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, saw itself as the champion of the Chinese labor movement. The small Communist group then active in Canton had, however, frequently failed in its efforts to penetrate the moderate labor unions tied to the Kuomintang.

The Chinese Labor Organizations Secretariat, an organ of the Chinese Communist Party created to organize strike agitation and encourage union development, continued to enjoy its greatest successes in Shanghai where it was conceived. The outbreak of the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike in 1922 enabled the Labor Secretariat to broaden the scope of its activities. With assistance from the Communist group in Canton, the Labor Secretariat disseminated propaganda calling for support of the striking seamen. This propaganda, meant to stimulate a national sense of labor solidarity, met with limited success. The schemes of the large British firms seeking to recruit strikebreakers in Shanghai and the smaller south China ports were defeated through the cooperative efforts of the Labor Secretariat and local branches of the Seamen's Union. These efforts in turn afforded a greater influence to Chinese Communists among the various seamen's organizations.¹⁸

¹⁸For the impact of Marxism in China before 1921 and creation of the Chinese Communist Party as a vehicle of proletarian aspirations, see Wang Shih, Chung-kuo kung-ch'an-tang li-shih chien-pien (Shanghai: 1959); Hu Hua, Chung-kuo ko-ming shih chiang-i (Peking: 1959); and Benjamin I. Schwartz, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao (Cambridge, Mass.: 1951). The failure of communist attempts to penetrate the Canton labor

In Canton, militants in the Seamen's Union such as Su Chao-cheng and Lin Wei-min gained valuable experience in organizing and directing the activities of the strikers. Their inclinations toward communism, which led them ultimately to party membership at a time when they headed the Seamen's Union, provided the Chinese Communist Party with skilled labor organizers in the Canton area. The influence of such men would later become the cause of much apprehension among moderates in the Kuomintang who had grown accustomed to labor's exclusive support. In 1922, however, while the propaganda efforts of the Chinese Communist Party had gained much notoriety, their attempts to gain an important place in the Canton labor movement continued to be repulsed. When, in May, the Chinese Communist Party's Labor Secretariat convened an "All-China Labor Congress" in Canton, it saw the chairmanship go to that staunch Kuomintang adherent Hsieh Ying-po. Rather than finding itself confirmed as leader of a revolutionary, country-wide coalition of union organizations, the Secretariat was relegated to the position of a coordinating body until such time as a proper and more truly representative organization could be created. This defeat was further underlined when the

movement is seen in the ejection of Party members T'an P'ing-shan and Feng Chu-p'o from the Kwangtung Mechanics' Union, and the failure of the Labor Secretariat's attempt to create a rival federation to counter the moderate unions. See Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 198-201; and Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 41. For the organization and activities of the Labor Secretariat, see Ko-ming shih chiang-i, p. 53-54; and Jean Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 177-180. An example of the communist propaganda circulated in Canton is discussed in The North China Herald, February 11, 1922.

Kwangtung General Labor Union (a Provincial federation which represented the more traditional handicraft unions formed in 1921-22) voted to limit its actions to issues of a purely economic nature.¹⁹

Canton Politics and the Kuomintang
First Party Congress

For Sun Yat-sen, the year 1922 was one of repeated failure. An alliance of convenience with the northern warlord Chang Tso-lin not only failed to gain power for Sun in Peking, but also turned some of his Cantonese allies against him. The hostility of Ch'en Chiung-ming toward a northern expedition which Sun undertook in 1922 as part of his obligation in the northern alliance led to a Canton coup by Ch'en in June, forcing Sun once more into exile in Shanghai. The Canton labor unions had rallied to Sun's support, but their actions were quickly nullified by Ch'en's Cantonese troops. The Canton merchants, already heavily taxed in support of Sun's northern adventure, came out openly for Ch'en Chiung-ming. Once in power in Canton, Ch'en courted Hong Kong and succeeded in negotiating a sizeable loan. Although the loan was not approved until after Ch'en was ousted from the city, his success must have been particularly galling to Sun whose efforts to that end had always met with either inaction or sharp rejection.

Despite such severe setbacks, Sun again launched plans for a victorious return. His brief exile in Shanghai was spent in casting about

¹⁹For the activities of Su Chao-cheng and Lin Wei-min in the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike, see Hsiang-kang hai-yuan ta-pa-kung, p. 16. Nym Wales, *op. cit.*, p. 209, maintains that Su Chao-cheng (Su Chao-jen) joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1925. The All-China Labor Congress held in Canton on May 1-4, 1922, is discussed in Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 69-73. For the background and activities of the Kwangtung General Labor Union, see Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 201-202.

once more for means with which to recapture his lost revolutionary base. These efforts were twice blessed, for, in addition to obtaining the support of Kwangsi and Yunnanese militarists which enabled him to recover Canton in February, 1923, Sun met in Shanghai with Adolf Joffe; from his Soviet sponsors the Kuomintang would ultimately derive massive support.²⁰

The activities of Sun Yat-sen and the Kuomintang in 1923 are of such complexity that they will only be briefly summarized here. In that year, after failing in efforts to attract other Western support, Sun welcomed the arrival in Canton of Michael Borodin as the forerunner of a Soviet political and military mission. Somewhat earlier, at the end of 1922, Sun had decided to admit members of the Chinese Communist Party into the ranks of the Kuomintang. The decision that they could enter only as individuals, but without renouncing other party memberships, did little to dispel opposition among important elements in either party. In 1923, Sun continued the preparations which he had discussed earlier with party leaders for reorganization of the Kuomintang.²¹

²⁰A survey of Sun's political fortunes in 1922-1923 is presented in Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 417-419, and p. 425-428. Canton labor's role in these events is analyzed in Jean Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 202-203. The Hong Kong loan to Ch'en Chiung-ming is discussed in The China Weekly Review, October 28, 1922. For Sun's meeting with Joffe, see Allen S. Whiting, Soviet Policies in China, 1917-1924 (New York: 1953), p. 201-204.

²¹Sun's actions in seeking Western support after his meeting with Joffe, and the activities of the Kuomintang in 1923 are subjected to careful analysis in Walter Gourlay, op. cit., p. 136 and p. 167. See also, The North China Herald, January 26, 1923, p. 215; and March 24, 1923, p. 787.

In January, 1924, the Kuomintang held its First National Party Congress. From that gathering in Canton emerged a reorganized and vastly strengthened Nationalist Party. The resolutions adopted by the Congress reaffirmed decisions reached in the previous year. The alliance with the Soviet Union, cooperation with the Chinese Communists, and increased support for the Chinese workers and peasants were emphasized. In addition, Sun Yat-sen's "Three Peoples' Principles" (San min chu-i) took on new meaning as China's disunity was laid squarely before the door of the imperialists and their militarist accomplices. Sun's "Nationalism" became synonymous with anti-imperialism, and, for those in Canton who had long suffered foreign abuse, anti-imperialism increasingly came to mean hostility toward the dominant foreign interests in south China--those of Great Britain. After January, 1924, there could be little further question as to whom the Kuomintang saw as its enemies.²²

In an attempt to overcome the military weakness which had plagued Sun and his followers since 1911, the Kuomintang issued directives which led to the founding of Whampoa Military Academy in May, 1924. With assistance provided by Russian advisers and material aid supplied from the Soviet Union, Whampoa, under its Commandant, Chiang Kai-shek, set out to train an officer corps for the Kuomintang's armies of revolution.²³

²²For the resolutions adopted at the First National Party Congress together with the Kuomintang "Manifesto of 1923," see Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 444-458.

²³Ibid., p. 461-462.

The Merchant Corps Incident and the Strike Against Shameen

While the accomplishments of the First Kuomintang Party Congress must have encouraged those who shared that party's revolutionary aspirations, they also energized the hostilities of those Cantonese to whom the Kuomintang's new orientation seemed to portend disaster. Foremost among the latter group were the Canton merchants. Already depressed as a result of the earlier demands on their financial resources made by Sun Yat-sen, the merchants now saw their economic security further threatened. The precarious base upon which the Canton government rested continued to consist, for the most part, of support by non-Cantonese militarists whose dominant concerns were centered on gathering the riches of the city into their own pockets. When, at the First Party Congress, the Kuomintang announced with renewed vigor its intention to pursue the goal of national revolution, those within its councils who had championed the localist aims of provincial reform saw their influence eclipsed. Deprived of a strong voice within the party and angered by Sun Yat-sen's continued reliance on Kwangsi and Yunnanese militarist "guests," the Canton merchants in the spring of 1924 prepared to safeguard their own interests.²⁴

In the Merchant Corps of Canton (Kuang-chou shang-t'uan), the commercial interests of the city had a powerful force for defense against those

²⁴For a description of the events leading up to the Merchant Corps Incident, see Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 464; and Jean Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 248-250.

who would prey upon them. This organization could trace its history back to the late Ch'ing period when, in emulation of a volunteer group in Shanghai, it had organized in Canton to protect merchant interests from criminal elements. In the period 1915-1924, under the leadership of Ch'en Lien-po (the chief comprador in Canton of the powerful Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation), the Canton Merchant Corps had experienced an impressive growth. Its troops, each having undergone a six-month period of military training, by the end of 1923 numbered in excess of 13,000. Already an important factor in Canton, the Merchant Corps also maintained a loose affiliation with other similar organizations which had sprung up throughout Kwangtung province.²⁵

The Canton Merchant Corps had met its first serious challenge successfully when, in 1922, it took the field against subordinates of Ch'en Chiung-ming who, in the course of driving Sun Yat-sen out of Canton, had begun looting the rich shops of the city. The following year, the Corps had also withstood Kuomintang attempts to curb its influence. In the first months of 1924, the Merchant Corps again came to the aid of those shopkeepers who refused to accept the worthless currencies of Sun Yat-sen pressed upon them by Sun's militarist allies.²⁶

²⁵A most useful account of the Merchant Corps Incident of 1924 in which the background of the Canton organization is described is Robert B. Oxnam, "The Kuomintang and the Merchant Corps Affair," (an unpublished paper, Dept. of History, Yale University, 1967).

²⁶For the activities of the Canton Merchant Corps in 1922, see The China Weekly Review, October 28, 1922, p. 320. Merchant Corps actions in 1923 and 1924 are discussed in Oxnam, op. cit., p. 27-28.

In an attempt to lessen the financial burdens which plagued his government, Sun Yat-sen in 1924 continued with his policy of increased taxation begun the year before and directed toward the Canton citizenry. In response, the merchant community launched a series of strikes which forced withdrawal of the hated taxes. Apprehensive that the Kuomintang might turn to the use of force to obtain needed revenues, the Canton merchant community, in May, 1924, organized the United Headquarters of the Kwangtung All-Province Merchant Corps (Kuang-tung ch'uan-sheng shang-t'uan-chun lien-fang tsung-pu). This organization, intended to establish a firm link between the many local merchant volunteer groups in the province and the Canton Merchant Corps, was to be formally established on August 13, 1924. With troops numbering in excess of 100,000, this expanded Merchant Corps posed a strong check on the continued financial exactions of the Kuomintang levied against Canton's commercial interests.

When, in May, 1924, the government announced a new tax for municipal improvements, the Canton Merchant Corps called a general commercial strike and mobilized its volunteers to thwart governmental interference. As a result, the new tax was withdrawn and the strike rapidly came to an end. In July, the Merchant Corps again came out in opposition to a 50 percent sales tax on all land transfers, and again the tax was rescinded. In an attempt to curb the growing influence of this strong Cantonese merchant coalition, the Kuomintang turned its efforts to bringing the

Merchant Corps under direct party control. When these efforts failed, Liao Chung-k'ai, as governor of Kwangtung province, issued a decree barring the planned inauguration of the United Headquarters of the Merchant Corps scheduled to take place on August 13. The merchants of Canton, in defiance of such authority, continued to insist that they were entitled to a self-defense force free of government interference.²⁷

The growing hostility of the Canton merchants and the Kuomintang government came to a moment of crisis in August, 1924. On August 10, a large shipment of arms arrived at Canton aboard the Norwegian steamer Hav. Although these arms were purchased by the Merchant Corps under a permit issued by the War Ministry of the Canton Government, they were not scheduled to be received until early November. Their arrival less than one week after the permit was issued roused Kuomintang suspicions and forced the party leadership to move against what was perceived as a serious threat to its position. On August 10, under orders of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek and Wu T'ieh-ch'eng (Canton Commissioner of Police) detained the Hav and confiscated its entire cargo of weapons. The arms were then moved to Whampoa Military Academy aboard the KMT gunboat Yung-feng. Despite this damaging blow, the Canton merchants ignored the earlier warnings of Liao Chung-k'ai and proceeded on August 13 with the inauguration of the United Headquarters of the Merchant Corps at Watermelon Garden

²⁷Oxnam, op. cit., p. 32-34.

(Hsi-kua yuan). Then, in the days that followed, the merchants repeatedly pressed the Canton Government to release the weapons and recognize the United Headquarters. Still fearful that the Merchant Corps was plotting the overthrow of his government, Sun Yat-sen refused to consider their demands.²⁸

On August 19, Sun branded the leader of the Canton Merchant Corps Ch'en Lien-po an outlaw and demanded his arrest. After making it clear to merchant leaders that the KMT intended to monitor the actions of the Corps very carefully, Sun agreed to return the seized weapons only on the condition that the merchants would pay an additional Ch. \$600,000 for their release. The merchant response made on August 23 was an ultimatum to the Canton Government that, unless their demands were met, another commercial strike would be instituted. When Sun ignored the ultimatum, the merchants struck, and despite Sun's threat on the 26th that he would bombard Hsi-kuan (the wealthy commercial and residential district in the heart of Canton), they refused to re-open their shops to business. While failing to cow the merchants into submission, Sun's threat brought an immediate and hostile foreign reaction. A joint resolution drafted by the respective consuls of the powers in Canton warned that any harm inflicted on foreigners or their properties would bring retaliation. The British Consul-General went even further by announcing

²⁸Ibid., p. 35-37; and Akira Iriye, After Imperialism, The Search for a New Order in the Far East: 1921-1931 (Cambridge, Mass.: 1965), p. 49-50. See also, Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 464-466.

that, should Chinese authorities fire upon the city, they would face the punishing salvos of the British naval forces assembled before Canton. Sun responded with a ringing indictment of British imperialism; but after withdrawing his threat, he turned his efforts to resolving the strike through negotiation. In what amounted to a surrender of the Merchant Corps to governmental control, the Canton merchants agreed to call off the strike with the understanding that, upon receipt of a substantial cash payment, the Canton Government would surrender the confiscated arms.²⁹

In September, Sun, despite opposition within the ranks of the KMT, quit Canton and at Shao-kuan gathered his forces for a northern expedition. Party leaders in Canton, meanwhile, continued to drag their feet on return to the merchants of the Hav weapons. The threat of another commercial strike finally gained for the merchants the return of a portion of the arms; however, dissatisfaction with both the quality and the quantity of the weapons and ammunition delivered on October 11 led to the calling of a second great commercial strike.

Sun Yat-sen's reaction to this latest merchant agitation, coupled with rumors that the forces of Ch'en Ch'iung-ming were about to attack Canton, led him to urge his followers to join him at Shao-kuan. When he met sharp opposition from Chiang Kai-shek, Hsu Ch'ung-chih, Hu Han-min and other party leaders on the issue of abandoning Canton as a

²⁹Oxnam, op. cit., p. 39-43. The text of the British Consul-General's note to the Canton authorities is in The South China Morning Post, September 5, 1924. See also, Iriye, op. cit., p. 49-50.

revolutionary base, he relented and agreed to suppression of the commercial strike by force of arms. On October 15, 1924, a combined government force made up of units of the Kwangtung Army (Yueh-chun), the Whampoa cadets, the Labor Corps (Kung-t'uan-chun), the Peasant Self-Defense Militia (Nung tzu-wei chun), and garrison troops under the command of Wu T'ieh-ch'eng, attacked the merchants then assembled at Hsi-kuan. By the evening of the next day, the combined KMT army emerged victorious and the power of the Cantonese merchant community was shattered. Deprived of both their arms and their unified organization, the merchants again fell victim to the demands of the Canton Government for additional money and supplies.³⁰

In June, 1924, while the incident involving the "Merchant Volunteers" was occupying the attentions of the Canton Government, another event occurred which was to test the anti-imperialistic stance adopted by the Kuomintang earlier that year. On this occasion the setting was Shameen, a small island housing the foreign concessions in Canton, which had been reclaimed from the Pearl River in 1859. The French Governor-General of Indochina, pausing there on his return from Tokyo, was wounded by a Vietnamese nationalist. Immediately afterward, a new set of police regulations geared to the careful screening of Chinese entering or leaving the island were put into effect. In protest, all Chinese

³⁰Oxnam, op. cit., p. 59-62; Iriye, op. cit., p. 49-50; and Li Chien-nung, op. cit., p. 466.

employees on Shameen, including Chinese policemen, went out on strike on June 16. The strikers left the island for refuge in Canton, and once there, demanded withdrawal of the new regulations together with apologies from the foreign consuls. An organization created to manage the strike assigned pickets to police the routes of access to Shameen and received subscriptions from the Chinese in Canton for maintenance of the strikers. In August, 1924, Sun Yat-sen intervened to bring the strike against Shameen to an end. Although sympathetic to the strikers' aims as expressed in slogans denouncing the concessions on Shameen as a base for foreign imperialism, Sun, in the face of renewed merchant hostility after the Hav incident, felt compelled to end the strike in the interests of saving his endangered government.³¹

The significance of the Shameen Strike of 1924 was accurately gauged by the American Consul-General in Canton who at the time, in a dispatch to Washington, said:

There is a general feeling here in Canton that this is merely the beginning of more not only here but possibly in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and elsewhere to embarrass the foreigners and secure political advantages for China. The strike is well managed. . . . If the Chinese succeed in this strike it seems reasonable to predict that there will soon be other strikes of a similar nature, not only here in Canton, but elsewhere in the treaty ports.³²

³¹For an excellent discussion of the Shameen Strike of 1924, see C. Martin Wilbur, "Forging the Weapons," an unpublished manuscript. See also Jean Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 247-248.

³²Decimal Files, Department of State, Washington, 893.5045/45, Consul-General Jenkins to Schurman, Canton, August 2, 1924. C. Martin Wilbur has appropriately referred to the Shameen Strike of 1924 as a

The Death of Sun Yat-sen

When Sun Yat-sen, in response to an invitation of China's most powerful northern warlords (Tuan Ch'i-jui and Chang Tso-lin), left Canton for Peking in November, 1924, he did so on the assumption that his presence there would facilitate the creation of a unified nation in which his Kuomintang would obtain an important place. Behind him in Canton, he left a party still struggling to make secure its revolutionary base. The Kuomintang, as it entered 1925, continued to rule in Canton under the threat of powerful enemies. The British interests of south China, which had come to such domination there that they were seen as an almost exclusive incarnation of foreign imperialism, continued in their hostility toward the followers of Sun Yat-sen. This hostility was further fueled by the attachments of the Kuomintang to Soviet Russia and the Chinese Communist Party. Ch'en Chiung-ming and other Chinese militarists, in control of much of Kwangtung province, continued in their efforts to dislodge the Canton regime. In Canton, members of the merchant community and other dissidents (some within the party itself) continued their opposition to the Kuomintang's political program and its methods.

Despite this potent combination of forces bent upon its destruction, the Kuomintang entered 1925 with a revolutionary potential unmatched in its previous history. The assistance provided by the Soviet Union enabled the Whampoa Military Academy to become an important military

'dress rehearsal' for the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26. See op. cit., 42-44.

asset. The Academy's cadets, in 1925, would find important opportunities to prove their worth against the forces of Ch'en Chiung-ming. The individual members of the Chinese Communist Party recruited under the Kuomintang's banners would find 1925 a year filled with opportunities for inducing others to join the revolutionary cause. The Canton labor movement, after experiencing an unprecedented growth as a result of its recent economic victories over the British in south China, would, in 1925, increasingly use its new-found influence to support the political aims of its protector--the Kuomintang.

In the spring of 1925, the Kuomintang launched its first Eastern Expedition against the forces of Ch'en Chiung-ming, and through it succeeded in temporarily thwarting that militarist's ambitions to retake Canton. In March, Sun Yat-sen, his dreams for China still unfulfilled, died in Peking. Alive, Sun, through the force of his personality and great revolutionary prestige, had succeeded in maintaining discipline among the many contentious elements which made up the Kuomintang. With his passing came the eruption of an intense struggle for leadership and power among those who considered themselves his revolutionary heirs.

The May Thirtieth Incident: A Call to Battle

Even as Sun lay dying, the agitation of Chinese workers in the treaty ports took on a new vitality. Already, in February, 1925, the death of a Chinese child laborer in a Japanese textile mill in Shanghai had led to

a strike. When, in April, the management of a Japanese mill in Tsingtao refused to recognize a Chinese labor union, the workers staged a walk-out. When these workers defied the company's representatives by occupying its factories, the Governor of Shantung, on May 28, arrested their leaders and disbanded their organization. In Shanghai, another strike begun in early May against Japanese mills gained prominence when, on the 15th, concession police killed a Chinese laborer.³³

The arrest of a number of students found to be circulating handbills protesting the killing, further inflamed Chinese passions in the following weeks. When on May 30 several hundred Chinese demonstrators marched on the Louza police station demanding the release of students imprisoned there, the moment of crisis arrived. The British inspector, fearing for his life and those of his men, ordered them to fire into the ranks of the advancing Chinese. Nine students and workers were killed and more than twenty were seriously wounded. On June 1, 100,000 Chinese workers in Shanghai went out on strike. To meet this emergency, more than twenty foreign warships entered the Whangpoo River. In addition, foreign troops were landed to reinforce those already assigned to the protection of Western commercial interests. The May Thirtieth incident quickly found an echo throughout China as clashes pitting Chinese

³³A comprehensive study which explores events leading up to the May Thirtieth incident, the incident itself, and its immediate consequences is Hsieh-hua et. al., Wu-sa yun-tung (Peking: 1956). For the role of Chinese workers in this incident, see Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 262-289. See also, Iriye, op. cit., p. 57-60.

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against Japanese and British residents and soldiers became commonplace in cities such as Shanghai, Nanking, Wuhu, Kiukiang, Hankow, Changsha, and Chungking. Beginning in late June, 1925, boycotts were directed against both Japanese and British goods; and, it was then that a loosely coordinated national movement aimed at eliminating foreign control became widespread. For the Western powers, the May Thirtieth incident marked a major turning point in relations with China. Thrown on the defensive, the powers found themselves doggedly defending the century-old prerogatives enjoyed in that country against the inevitable day of their extinction.³⁴

For the government at Peking, the May Thirtieth incident posed a dilemma. All too quickly it became apparent that the movement sparked by that incident was as much directed against China's warlords as it was against continued foreign imperialism. If the Peking Government were to give its enthusiastic support to the demands being voiced by the Chinese, it would risk losing foreign (particularly Japanese) support. On the other hand, accommodation to the foreign interests would most certainly strengthen that government's domestic enemies. A solution was found in the dual policy of posing as the champion of Chinese anti-imperialism and demanding revision of the unequal treaties. The first of these enabled the Peking Government to divert attention from the Japanese and concentrate Chinese economic attacks almost exclusively upon the British.

³⁴Iriye, op. cit., p. 60-62.

The second made it possible to retain Chinese support while attempting to further enhance its own position. While the first of these policies proved successful, the second was ultimately to fail.³⁵

In part, the failure of the Peking Government to achieve treaty revision was due to the actions of the Kuomintang and its allies at Canton. There the May Thirtieth incident was to spark a struggle of such intensity that, at its height, it threatened total eradication of all British influence in south China and the bastion of that influence--Hong Kong.

³⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-1926: THE OPENING PHASE

"Down Tools!" The Struggle Begins

In Canton, although sympathetic meetings of protest had occurred as early as June 2nd, the news of tragic events in Shanghai remained a secondary concern in the first weeks of June, 1925. There the Kuomintang was preoccupied with yet another struggle against its domestic enemies. In May of that year, party leaders, convinced that the Kwangsi and Yunnanese militarists Yang Hsi-min and Liu Chen-huan were plotting their overthrow, turned on their former benefactors by planning a military campaign designed to rid the city of their parasitic influence. When, on June 13th, Kuomintang forces succeeded in eliminating the threat of the "guest armies" at Canton, attention shifted dramatically to the plight of those Chinese who had fallen before imperialist bullets in Shanghai.¹

In meetings held throughout Canton in the days which followed, students, labor leaders, and many Kuomintang members urged a political

¹For a discussion of the KMT campaign against the forces of Yang Hsi-min and Liu Chen-huan in May and June, 1925, see Tung-fang tsa-chih, Vol. XXII, No. 13, July 10, 1925, p. 4-5. See also, Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. II, p. 401. For an official British view of this conflict together with a discussion of the attempts of the Kwangsi and Yunnanese militarists to secure aid from Hong Kong, see FO 371/10421, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, May 22, 1925.

strike against the strongholds of foreign influence in south China. A political strike against Hong Kong, Shameen, and Macao, they argued, could best give expression to the indignation and outrage felt by most Cantonese over the recent tragedy in Shanghai. Hong Kong and Shameen must have seemed particularly attractive targets--for the actions of recent years had shown both to be extremely vulnerable when confronted by a Chinese work stoppage. In the streets of Canton, agitators, anticipating a favorable Kuomintang response, recounted the "Shanghai butchery" and urged their listeners to prepare for action.²

Foreigners in Hong Kong and on Shameen, given over to rumors and nervous speculation concerning Chinese intentions, became daily more apprehensive. Many of their worst fears were soon realized. On the morning of June 18th, in an action which symbolized the beginnings of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott, the senior students of Queen's College, Hong Kong (numbering about 700) abandoned their dormitories and departed for Canton. Joining them were large numbers of household servants and other Chinese unnerved by the inflammatory contents of the pamphlets and handbills then circulating in the British colony. That day also, the Hong Kong Seamen's Union called out its membership, and again as in 1922 foreign firms in the colony found themselves in conflict with their most formidable adversary.

² See Kuo-wen chou-pao, June 21, 1925; and Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. II, p. 401. Representative of Hong Kong newspapers which devoted much space to the activities of agitators in Canton is The Hong Kong Telegraph, June 15, and 17, 1925.

As the Chinese crews of both ocean-going and coastal steamers fled Hong Kong, they were accompanied by newspaper compositors, pork butchers, and the drivers and conductors of the Electric Tramway Company. On June 20th, when the cargo-carrying coolies began leaving, Jardine, Matheson and Company, that powerful British firm with a history in China predating the Opium War, received word that its stevedores would go out the next day. As the exodus of Chinese workers to Canton continued to swell, many westerners in Hong Kong began to suspect what the events of June 23rd opposite the Shameen were to ensure--that this was to become a political struggle aimed at the very life of the British colony.

On Shameen, a strike began June 20th when Chinese servants left their foreign masters and crossed over into Canton. The following day, they were joined by the Chinese office employees on the island together with virtually all of the comprador staff. By June 22nd, all Chinese, with the exception of a few who continued to serve as part of an unarmed Chinese police force, had left Shameen. The suspension of all steamer traffic from Hong Kong on the 21st only served to heighten the sense of isolation always felt by the island's nervous foreign residents.³

³The anxieties of foreign residents in Hong Kong and on Shameen before the strike began is reflected in the three English newspapers--The South China Morning Post, The Hong Kong Daily Press, and The Hong Kong Telegraph. See each for the period June 15-18, 1925. The beginnings of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott are described in Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 196-200, Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. II, p. 401-403, and Shun pao, June 22, 23, and 27, 1925. For the views of

The Canton Strike Committee

As strikers fleeing Hong Kong and Shameen arrived in Canton, they were met by representatives of a powerful body charged with the task of providing organization and leadership in the workers' struggle against those two citadels of foreign domination. This body was the Canton Strike Committee. At the onset of the Chinese walkout in Hong Kong, a "Strike Congress" was organized in Canton with a membership consisting of one representative from among each group of 50 strikers. This Congress in turn elected 13 of its more than 800 members to the Canton Strike Committee. The Committee, as the workers' highest executive organ, faced a number of difficult tasks in its management of strike related activities. As a result, a number of subcommittees with responsibilities for finance, picket organization, propaganda, and strike administration were created. Others of lesser importance were charged with tasks in communication, recreation, or education. Once met by representatives of the Canton Strike Committee, Chinese workers who had fled Hong Kong or Shameen were taken to either Strike Headquarters in Tung-yuan (Eastern Garden), or to one of eight district offices created in various parts of Canton for purposes of registration. There the strikers were provided with the means for obtaining food, lodging,

British officials in south China on the origins of the strike and boycott, see FO 405/248, "Extracts From Hong Kong Monthly Intelligence Summary No. 7, 1925," p. 300-301; and FO 371/10943, Jamieson to Palaiet, Canton, June 22, 1925.

and a small daily allowance for the duration of their struggle.⁴

Although the Canton Strike Committee initially reflected the will of the Kuomintang which served as its protector, it quickly came to be dominated by Chinese Communists who had joined the party of Sun Yat-sen. Beginning in 1924 with the tacit consent of Liao Chung-k'ai, the Kuomintang leader entrusted with guiding that party's labor affairs, the Canton Communists began a concerted drive aimed at wresting control of the Canton labor movement from the hands of those stalwart organizers Ma Ch'ao-chun and Hsieh Ying-po. The strength of the latter, despite numerous Communist attempts to penetrate its ranks, remained concentrated in the Kwangtung Mechanics Union--without question the most powerful labor organization in the province. By the summer of 1925, the Canton Communists had, however, achieved some important gains.

Their most impressive victory was among the Cantonese seamen. When in 1922, Ch'en Ping-shan, that friend of Sun Yat-sen and leader of the Hong Kong Seamen's Union, had been banished from the British colony as a criminal following the murder of his wife, leadership of his union passed into the hands of younger and more radical members.

⁴The organization and activities of The Canton Strike Committee and The Strike Congress are described in Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. II, p. 411; Chi-ch'i kung-jen-hui tou-shih, p. 104-105; and The South China Morning Post, December 31, 1925. The Canton Strike Committee is also described by Teng Chung-hsia, one of its Communist members, in Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 227.

Among these young firebrands was Su Chao-cheng, who, having emerged as leader of the seamen, joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1925. When, at the start of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike, the Kwangtung Mechanics demonstrated a reluctance to participate or lend support, Su Chao-cheng, with the backing of Liao Chung-k'ai and others in the Kuo-mintang, became the leader of the Canton Strike Committee. Other Communists such as Teng Chung-hsia, Lo Teng-hsien, and Ch'en Ch'uan became its dominant figures.⁵

Hong Kong and Shameen: Girding for Battle

In Hong Kong, attempts to combat the strike were initiated on June 21st, when the Governor, Sir R. E. Stubbs, declared a state of emergency. Hoping to curb acts of terrorism and dispel the panic which had gripped many Chinese in the colony, the Governor ordered immediate reinstitution of the "Peace Preservation Ordinance of 1886" and the "Emergency Regulations Ordinance of 1922." In an effort to prevent incidents of bomb-throwing or sabotage, the "Hong Kong Volunteers," a force first organized during the Seamen's Strike in 1922 and patterned after the western militia of the foreign concessions in Shanghai, was mobilized for immediate action. Guards were posted in the Electric Light Works, the Water Works, and other vital points throughout the

⁵For the assistance provided by Liao Chung-k'ai to the Canton Communists in 1924, see Gourlay, op. cit., p. 204. The rise of Su Chao-cheng to prominence in the Hong Kong Seamen's Union is discussed in Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. I, p. 140; and in Wales, op. cit., p. 209.

colony. In the electrical installations and dockyards, naval ratings were charged with performing all essential services. Together with civilian volunteers, naval ratings also manned harbor launches and maintained an abbreviated schedule of harbor crossings on the "Star" ferries.⁶

Emergency regulations, introduced ostensibly to safeguard food supplies, placed a ban on the export of rice, flour, tinned and preserved foodstuffs, and currency to Canton. When, due to the non-arrival of Japanese ships, the price of coal in Canton jumped from \$8 to \$28 per ton, Governor Stubbs revealed the true purpose of these measures by forbidding the export of coal to Canton except under special license from the Colonial Secretary.⁷

Fearing a violent Chinese reaction, the Governor wisely chose not to commandeer labor as he had during other earlier labor disputes. Instead, he appointed a Labor Controller who sought to recruit substitutes from among Hong Kong's large pool of unskilled Chinese. Controllers for Food and Transport were also appointed; they encountered little difficulty in finding Westerners in the colony eager to provide voluntary

⁶These initial attempts to combat the strike were for the most part defensive and reflected a good deal of uncertainty with regard to the strikers ultimate aims. See FO 405/248, F 3668/194/10, Enclosure, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, June 26, 1925; and FO 405/248, "Extracts From Hong Kong Monthly Intelligence Summary No. 7, 1925," p. 300-301.

⁷Chinese Government Bureau of Economic Information, The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Peking, January 2, 1926, p. 4; and The Hong Kong Telegraph, July 6, 1925.

assistance. A Censor, charged with screening Chinese letters, telegrams, and newspapers, succeeded in enticing a few wealthy Chinese to assist in his tasks.⁸

Attempts to counter unfavorable propaganda and halt the intimidation of Chinese workers led the police department to publication of the following:

Whereas certain evil-disposed persons are endeavoring by speeches and pamphlets to disturb the peace and good order of the colony, and the Government is determined to take severe measures against such malefactors, it is hereby notified that a reward of \$250 will be paid for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person so offending. The Government further undertakes to keep silent the identity of the informer.⁹

Despite the assurance of anonymity, few Chinese came forward to make accusations, and the Government began casting about for stronger measures. A new notification was issued indicating that any person in Hong Kong found to be without regular employment would be arrested and deported. Remembering well the catastrophic consequences of his attempt in 1922 to restrict the movement of Chinese from the colony, Governor Stubbs made no move to restrict their new exodus.¹⁰

Beginning in 1923, Hong Kong had experienced a dramatic building boom. As a result, heavy overspeculation in both real estate and the

⁸FO 405/248, F 3668/194/10, Enclosure No. 51, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, June 26, 1925.

⁹The Hong Kong Telegraph, June 22, 1925; and The South China Morning Post, June 23, 1925.

¹⁰CO 129/488, C 36829, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 10, 1925; and Hong Kong Government, Government Gazette Extraordinary, Hong Kong, July 6, 1925.

shares issued by local firms had seriously weakened the market. When the strike against Hong Kong began in June 1925, the market collapsed, and the Governor was forced to close the Stock Exchange and grant a moratorium to Chinese banks in the colony.¹¹

On Shameen, the strike created fears among the small foreign enclave which were far different in nature from those expressed in Hong Kong. Separated only by a canal less than 100 feet across from the unfriendly inhabitants of Canton, Shameen's inhabitants nervously remembered the wave of anti-foreign resentment which had erupted throughout China in the wake of the May Thirtieth incident. Resentment such as that which surfaced at Hankow on June 12th when an angry Chinese mob, seemingly intent on slaughter, advanced against a British armory only to be repulsed by foreign bullets. In the first weeks of June, Shameen's defenders redoubled their efforts in military preparation. By mid-month, the tiny island had taken on the appearance of an armed camp. Barricades and barbed-wire defenses guarded the French and British bridges which served as routes of access from Canton. From windows and rooftops, sandbagged machine-gun emplacements faced out toward the Chinese city. Anchored nearby, ever-present foreign gunboats lay ready for action. When the last group of Chinese strikers left the island on June 22nd, for many Westerners there, news of a Chinese march of

¹¹ Governor Stubbs' efforts to avert a financial panic are reported in CO 129/489, C 40885, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8, 1925.

protest past Shameen scheduled for the next day took on an ominous significance.¹²

Already, the French Consul, reacting to warnings from the comprador of the Bank Industriale that the concession would be looted during the march, had ordered all valuables transferred to a waiting gunboat. An agitated Sir James W. Jamieson, the British Consul-General, sent a note to Canton officials stressing the need for strenuous Chinese efforts to preserve the peace. After repeating the rumor that students of the University of Kwangtung drawn by lot would be the first to storm Shameen's bridges, Jamieson concluded by warning--"any attempt to penetrate on to the British concession on Shameen will be resisted by force of arms."¹³

The Shameen Incident--June 23, 1925

At 11 a.m. on the morning of June 23, 1925, members of the Political Bureau of the Kuomintang together with the Soviet adviser Borodin addressed a large crowd assembled on the Eastern Parade Ground in

¹²The strike against Shameen is described in Tung-fang tsa-chih, Vol. XXII, No. 14, July 25, 1925, p. 4-5; Shun pao, June 22, 1925; and in FO 371/10943, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, June 22, 1925. A report on the island's defenses before June 23rd is in FO 405/248, "Extracts From Monthly Intelligence Report," Scott to Commodore, p. 301-304. A somewhat critical view of the Shameen defenses was expressed by James M. Henry, then president of Canton Christian College, in a letter to a colleague. See Lingnan Records (Canton Christian College), July-December, 1925, Box 44, Henry to Grant, Canton, July 15, 1925. These records are available in the Harvard-Yenching Library.

¹³Jamieson's warning to the Canton Minister for Foreign Affairs is in FO 405/248, F 4118/194/10, Enclosure No. 4, Jamieson to C. C. Wu, Canton, June 23, 1925. For the precautionary actions of the French Consul prior to June 23rd, see FO 405/248, F 3473/194/10, Enclosure No. 5, Jamieson to Hu Han-min, Canton, June 24, 1925.

Canton. Those in attendance heard once again of the abusive practices of foreign imperialists in China. Wang Ching-wei launched, as he had before a student audience a few days earlier, a heated attack against the unequal treaties; he concluded again with the demand that they be eliminated. Following this and other stirring exercises in oratory, a protest march formed and began winding its way through the city.

The various contingents, each carrying flags, posters, or anti-foreign banners, were separated by a few yards and consisted of middle-school and college students, boy scouts, members of peasant associations, members of labor unions, soldiers, and the cadets of Whampoa Military Academy. Including stragglers picked up on the line of march, the procession numbered approximately 20,000 persons.

At 2:30 in the afternoon, the marchers turned on to Shakee Road and began moving down the bund which faced Shameen across the narrow and then swollen canal. As they moved past the French bridge at one end of the island toward the British bridge at the other, each group of demonstrators hurled angry insults toward the Shameen spectators. On Shameen, amid increasing feelings of unease, the nervous military and civilian defenders with weapons ready watched from the shelter of their fortifications. Shortly after 3 p.m., much of the procession having already passed the British sector without incident, a sudden commotion broke out among those marchers directly opposite the island. When rifle shots rang out, many of the panicked marchers stumbled over their

comrades as they hurridly sought cover in the already spectator-clogged narrow alleys which emptied onto Shakee Road. The Chinese soldiers and military cadets quickly knelt, loaded their weapons, and began firing toward Shameen. On the island, their discipline shattered, the defenders poured a murderous and indiscriminate hail of machine-gun, rifle, and small-arms fire into the Chinese struggling to flee the bund. Nearby, a French gunboat firing two or three blank shells further contributed to the Chinese panic. Within ten minutes, all firing but that of a few persistent snipers had ceased. On the Shakee side lay 52 Chinese dead and 117 wounded. On Shameen, one noncombatant (a French merchant) was killed, and a few spectators and defenders were wounded.¹⁴

Immediately, each side began accusing the other of having premeditated the tragedy. Chinese in Canton insisted that foreigners had willfully fired upon peaceable marchers without provocation. The British and French Consuls countered by arguing that it was the Chinese who

¹⁴ Among the most useful accounts of the Shameen Incident (also termed the Shameen Affair or the Shakee Maccacre) found in the records of the Historical Archives Commission of the Kuomintang, Ts'ao-t'un, Taiwan, are Sha-mien shih-chien ti chien-shih (Canton: n. d.): Sha-mien ts'an-sha an-chien (Canton: 1925); and Sha-ki ts'an-sha shih (Canton: 1925). Newspaper accounts of this incident are Shun pao, July 4, 7, and 13, 1925; and Kuo-wen chou-pao, July 5, 1925. See also, "Sha-mien shih-chien," in Tung-fang tsa-chih, Vol. XXII, No. 14, July 25, 1925, p. 4-5. For official British accounts, see FO 405/248, F 3473/194/10, Enclosure No. 1, Jamieson to Palairat, Canton, June 25, 1925; and Enclosure No. 5, Jamieson to Hu Han-min, Canton, June 24, 1925. The report of the British Commander on Shameen is in FO 405/248, "Extracts From Monthly Intelligence Report," Scott to Commodore, p. 303-304.

fired first, and that British and French efforts to repulse the "attack upon Shameen" required no further justification. While tensions remained high, each side began gathering evidence from witnesses whose testimony could improve their case. The changing views of witnesses subjected to strong political pressures only served to heighten the controversy.¹⁵

¹⁵The Chinese claim that the British and French were prepared at the height of the incident to open the gates guarding the island's bridges and attack Canton appears unsound. It would have been foolhardy in the extreme for Shameen's defenders to expose themselves when they were so heavily outnumbered. The further claim that Shameen's defenders used soft-nosed bullets was proven false by the American doctor in Canton Hospital who treated Chinese casualties. Given the seriousness of wounds inflicted by machine-gun bullets fired at a range of less than 100 yards, however, to many Chinese observers this claim could easily have seemed true. See FO 405/250, F 4367/194/10, Annex VIII, Enclosure No. 1, Thompson to Jenkins, Canton, August 31, 1925; and Enclosure No. 2, Thompson to Lei Ying-lam, Canton, August 31, 1925. The issue of soft-nosed or "dumdum" bullets did not end here, for at a later date, the Governor of Hong Kong accused Chinese strike pickets of employing them against British police in the New Territories. The British and French use of the term "attack upon Shameen" seems highly inappropriate since no Chinese attempted to penetrate the concessions. The British claim that the firing was begun by Russian snipers concealed on rooftops in Canton lacks supporting evidence. Authorities in Canton found many Chinese witnesses prepared to testify that Shameen had fired first. In addition, they found a number of westerners to support their case. A declaration of 17 American staff members (actually there were only 15) of Lingnan (Canton Christian College) stated that the Shameen defenders had fired first. Their declaration was based, however, on reports given them by their students. See Lingnan Records, "Resolutions issued by 17 American Staff Members," Box 44, June 24, 1925. A German merchant in Canton, who took it upon himself to speak for his nation's commercial community, also denounced the actions of Shameen. See FO 405/248, F 3747/194/10, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, June 30, 1925. When the British vice-president of Lingnan was confronted with the American declaration in Hong Kong, he maintained that he had signed it under duress and repudiated its contents. Actually, he had signed another document composed by the Chinese staff at Lingnan. See Lingnan Records, Baxter

In its formal note of protest to each of the diplomatic representatives on Shameen, the Canton Government concluded:

Inasmuch as the recent massacre of Chinese subjects constitutes a complete abrogation of all the laws of humanity and cannot by universal law be tolerated, we make the following demands:--

- (1) Apologies will be made by High Commissioners appointed by the Powers interested to the Government of Canton.
- (2) The senior officers responsible shall be punished.
- (3) With the exception of two dispatch vessels, all naval units of the Powers interested shall be withdrawn.
- (4) Shameen shall be returned to the Government of Kwangtung and placed under the administration thereof.
- (5) The victims and their families shall be compensated.¹⁶

The British and French Consuls responded by rejecting all Chinese demands. Under instruction from their ministries in Peking, each countered with a demand for indemnity to cover casualties and the costs of repair to concession properties. In addition, each insisted that the

to Henry, Box 44, June 28, 1925. Some members of the American staff, on leave in Hong Kong, were subjected to harassment and continued abuse and, in consequence, altered their earlier views. See Lingnan Records, Graybill to Baxter, and Duncan to Baxter, Box 44, July 15, 1925. Consul-General Jamieson on Shameen stood by his own eye-witness account and that of a few other foreign observers. See FO 405/248, F 3473/194/10, Jamieson to Palairat, Canton, June 25, 1925; and Enclosure No. 5, Jamieson to Hu Han-min, Canton, June 24, 1925. See also, FO 371/10948, "Statement of Four Witnesses of the Attack on Shameen," Canton, June 23, 1925. Following meetings of a Chinese Commission of Investigation called by Hu Han-min, and described in Shun pao, July 13, 1925, the KMT published its official account of the Shameen tragedy. See June Twenty-third (Canton: 1925). The British responded with June 23rd--The True Facts (Hong Kong: 1925). Both documents were geared primarily to obtaining foreign support.

¹⁶See FO 405/248, F 3743/194/10, Enclosure No. 2, Fu P'ing-ch'ang to British Consul-General and French Consul, Kwangtung, June 26, 1925.

Chinese increase their efforts to safeguard the lives of foreigners in and around Canton.¹⁷

While passions remained inflamed because of the events of June 23rd, among the Soviet advisers to the Kuomintang in Canton, a minority favored an immediate armed attack against Shameen. Others, convinced that the British would soon launch a major attack, argued in favor of a raid upon Hong Kong and joined with Chiang Kai-shek in advocating a declaration of war against Great Britain. Aware of the probability, once hostilities began, that the Kuomintang would lose Canton as its revolutionary base, those who favored war kept faith in the belief that a new and greater revolutionary movement would emerge in the hinterland. While the view of men who favored a resort to arms failed to gain acceptance within the inner councils of the Kuomintang, many there shared in the belief that a British attack upon Canton was imminent. As a result, efforts were made to strengthen the forts guarding the approaches to the city. In the event a British flotilla left the harbor at Hong Kong, heavy stones and other bulky obstacles were to be sunk in the channel leading to Canton.¹⁸

¹⁷See FO 405/248, F 3743/194/10, Enclosure No. 5, Jamieson to Hu Han-min, Canton, June 24, 1925; and Enclosure No. 6, Leurquin to Hu Han-min, Canton, June 23, 1925. See also, FO 405/248, F 3914/194/10, Palairret to Chamberlain, Peking, July 5, 1925.

¹⁸See C. Martin Wilbur and Julie L. Y. How, Documents on Communism, Nationalism, and Soviet Advisers in China, 1918-1927, New York, 1956, p. 160-161, and 176. See also, The South China Morning Post, January 26, 1926.

The Impact of June 23rd

For the Canton Strike Committee, the "Shakee Massacre" occurred during a crucial period in its existence. Prior to the institution of the strike against Hong Kong and Shameen, influential groups in Canton had lobbied against such a work stoppage. Among the Prince Clique (a Western-educated group within the Kuomintang whose interests centered upon local reform), there were some like Wu T'ieh-ch'eng the Canton Commissioner of Public Safety (Chief of Police) who initially opposed all strike action. Other leaders of this group, men like Sun Fo (Sun K'o) the son of Sun Yat-sen, C. C. Wu (Wu Chao-chu) the Mayor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Fu P'ing-ch'ang the Provincial Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, had urged, while enroute from Swatow to Canton in June, 1925, that a strike be limited to a political demonstration of three days. A conservative bloc within the Kuomintang (later known as the Western Hills Group) remained unreconciled to the policies which had opened their party to Soviet assistance and the participation of Chinese Communists. For them the Canton Strike Committee seemed to represent a most dangerous ally, and at a later date they subjected it to bitter attacks.¹⁹

Most Cantonese merchants, then still recovering from disruptions to business incurred during the campaign to oust the Kwangsi and

¹⁹For the views on the strike expressed by Sun Fo, C. C. Wu, and Fu P'ing-ch'ang in Hong Kong (while enroute to Canton in June, 1925), see FO 405/248, F 3668/194/10, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, June 26, 1925. British assessments of opposition to the strike in Canton are in CO 129/489, C 45193, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, September 4, 1925;

Yunnanese militarists from the city, had also looked with disfavor on the institution of a strike. Among labor unions in Canton, a number of leaders insisted that, without direct financial assistance from the government, a strike would remain unsustainable. The costs of the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of 1922 together with those which attended the Shameen Strike of 1924 had, they argued, left their unions with depleted strike funds.²⁰

When the strike against Hong Kong and Shameen commenced on June 18, 1925, these groups began to coalesce in opposition. Before they could act, however, the tragedy of June 23rd occurred; and their influence was defused if not extinguished. The Shameen incident, by galvanizing the anti-imperialistic sentiments of Chinese in Canton, led not only to an extension of the strike; but also to the institution of an anti-British (at first anti-foreign) boycott.

Even before the incident opposite Shameen, the Canton Strike Committee had made some tentative steps toward the implementation of an anti-Western boycott. Most important among these was the organization of a picket corps. From the ranks of the many strikers in Canton pickets were recruited, armed, drilled, and formed into squads, companies, platoons, and regiments. Eventually they would total more than 2,000 members. Their primary function was to sever all contact between Canton and Hong Kong, Shameen, and Macao; and to prevent the landing

and The Hong Kong Telegraph, June 18 and 19, 1925. For the term "Princes' Clique" as well as much background regarding the actions of this group, I am indebted to Prof. Walter Gourlay, Michigan State Univ. For the actions of this group before 1925, see Gourlay, op. cit., p. 63-5.

²⁰Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 199-200.

of Western goods in the areas under their control.²¹

By the end of June, 1925, the picket corps (easily distinguished because of their blue uniforms with red armbands) were seen everywhere in the Canton area successfully carrying out their tasks. They examined all merchandise entering or leaving the city by whatever means, and monitored the movements of all persons arriving or departing Canton. Those found in violation of the strike and boycott regulations issued by the Canton Strike Committee were arrested, paraded through the streets, and tried before a special court established by the Committee. If found guilty, and most were, they were forced to pay heavy fines or face imprisonment in the jail created by the Strike Committee at its headquarters. All goods entering Canton from Hong Kong, regardless of their country of origin, were ordered confiscated and sold at public auction.²²

On Shameen, the days immediately following June 23rd remained suspenseful. The island's weary defenders continued to anticipate an

²¹For the organization of strike pickets in Canton, see Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. II, p. 411; and Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 230. See also, Chen Ta, The Chinese Economic Journal, Vol. I, No. 11, November, 1927, p. 951.

²²For the activities of the strike pickets, see J. C. Huston, notes dated July 28, August 6, and September 17, 1925, in the Huston Collection; and George Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," The North China Herald, May 1, 1926, p. 230-231, and May 8, 1926, p. 280. A detailed account of the effectiveness of strike pickets in Canton and on the frontier of the New Territories is provided by Sir C. Clementi (the successor to Sir R. E. Stubbs as Governor of Hong Kong) in FO 405/251, F 1775/1/10, Enclosures Nos. 2 and 3, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, February 18, 1926.

all-out Chinese attack at any moment. On the 25th, they welcomed a battalion of Indian troops dispatched from Hong Kong to reinforce their positions. All women and children were evacuated to the British colony, and British subjects in the vicinity of Canton were advised to limit their movements. With the arrival of two French warships and the French Commander-in-Chief, British Consul-General Jamieson advised London on the 29th that he saw no need for additional British ships or men. The Admiralty, aware of Chinese military preparations in the Bogue forts, nevertheless ordered the aircraft carrier Hermes to Hong Kong. Her arrival August 10th came well after the initial crisis had passed. When in July, 1925, rumors reached Hong Kong that suggested a Chinese gas attack using airplanes was about to be launched against Shameen, British authorities responded by sending a supply of gas-masks to the isolated British concession.²³

For the commercial community in Hong Kong, news of the Shameen incident created a deepening despair. In its initial phase, the strike against them had reflected few local grievances. The demands voiced in Canton had merely mirrored those expressed in Shanghai in the course

²³Precautionary measures taken on Shameen after June 23rd are reported in FO 405/248, F 3474/194/10, Enclosure No. 3, Jamieson to Palairet, Canton, June 25, 1925; and Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, June 29, 1925. An account emphasizing the physical deterioration of Shameen during this period is Lewis Gannett, "Why Canton is Radical Center of Asia," The China Weekly Review, June 12, 1926, p. 30. The rumored gas attack and the dispatch of gas-masks to Shameen are discussed in FO 405/248, F 4258/2/10, Enclosure No. 1, Jamieson to Palairet, Canton, July 24, 1925.

of the May Thirtieth incident. The 17 Shanghai demands, in addition to expressing usual labor concerns such as the right to strike, to form trade unions, to adopt the eight-hour day, and to abolish the contract labor (pao-kung) system, had also aimed at achieving a greater involvement for Chinese in treaty port affairs. Prominent among the political demands were those for freedom of speech, assembly, and publication for Chinese in the International Settlement. In addition, the Shanghai strikers had insisted upon the withdrawal of foreign troops, the abolition of extraterritoriality, and an end to consular jurisdiction in the foreign concessions. Before June 23rd, many of Hong Kong's merchants had become convinced that the political demands first voiced in Shanghai lacked local relevance for strikers in Canton. They remained optimistic that by granting those economic demands found least objectionable they could rapidly settle the strike against them, then less than a week old. When, immediately after June 23rd, the Canton strikers made the political demands of the Canton Government their own, that optimism dissolved.²⁴

²⁴A full list of the 17 demands of the Shanghai strikers is presented in Liu Li-k'ai and Wang Cheng, 1919-1927 Nien ti chung-kuo kung-jen yun tung (Peking: 1957) p. 37-38. See also, Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 197-198. For the view that the decision in Canton to launch an anti-foreign strike and boycott followed and closely paralleled that reached in Shanghai where the Chinese Communists dominated the labor movement, see Chung-kuo kung-jen yun-tung, p. 43. See also, FO 405/248, F 4118/194/10, Enclosure No. 3, Jamieson to C. C. Wu, Canton, June 22, 1925. Some of the early optimism displayed by Hong Kong merchants is discussed in FO 405/248, F 3668/194/10, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, June 26, 1925.

Many Chinese in Hong Kong who had at first opposed the strike, as a result of the events of June 23rd, became its adherents. Among the unskilled particularly, large numbers had refused to join in the initial surge of strikers to Canton. They had remained fearful that once the strike ended their former employers would ignore their pleas for reinstatement. Because there were always many unemployed Chinese in the colony, the services of the unskilled were never at a premium. Of the skilled workers in Hong Kong, most had gone out when the strike was first declared. One notable exception was the Chinese Engineers and Mechanics Union. Like the Kwangtung Mechanics Union in Canton, with which it maintained close ties, the Chinese Engineers and Mechanics Union in Hong Kong had remained staunchly opposed to the strike. After June 23rd, its leaders continued their attempts to restrain the membership. When it became evident on July 5th that a majority of its members had disregarded instructions to stay on; it, too, joined in the struggle against Hong Kong. So powerful was the impact of the Shameen incident in Hong Kong, that by the end of June more than 50,000 workers had downed tools and sought sanctuary in Canton. Ultimately their number would swell to more than 200,000.²⁵

²⁵The role of the Chinese Engineers and Mechanics Union and its ties to the Kwangtung Mechanics is discussed in Hsiang-kang ta pa-kung (Peking: 1956), p. 4-5. Attempts to keep the members of this union from joining the strike are also discussed in FO 405/248, F 3668/194/10, Stubbbs to Amery, Hong Kong, June 26, 1925. For the decision to join the strike on July 5th, see Hong Kong Government Administrative Reports, 1925.

For the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir R. E. Stubbs, the turn of events sparked by the incident at Shameen necessitated a renewed interest in extraordinary measures to combat the strike and boycott. An ex-pirate and former general in the armies of Ch'en Chiung-ming was found in the colony, and, for a price, he organized some of his former soldiers and clansmen into a corps of 100 special police and 50 detectives. Acting under his personal control, this corps was ordered to arrest all Chinese guilty of intimidation or other "political activities."²⁶

In an effort to present its actions in a more favorable light, the Hong Kong Government exerted pressure upon a hastily organized Chinese committee to edit and publish favorable propaganda. Printed in the jail or in the foreign missions which had lent their presses for that purpose, this material was meant to reflect a spontaneous Chinese groundswell of support for the colony's political and economic masters.²⁷

Further attempts to minimize acts of terrorism or intimidation against Chinese in Hong Kong included periodic marches which displayed the forces available for the colony's protection. In these marches, police pickets, naval units, army troops, and the "Volunteers" together with their armored car were each given a prominent place.

²⁶CO 129/488, C 38894, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 24, 1925; and CO 129/489, C 40885, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8, 1925.

²⁷FO 405/248, F 3668/194/10, Enclosure in No. 51, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, June 26, 1925.

The month of June, 1925, when strikers in Hong Kong were most active in persuading or coercing other Chinese to join their ranks, witnessed no street riots and few incidents of strike-related crime. Reported crime included one instance of bomb-throwing (the target was a Chinese home which suffered little damage) and two murders tentatively attributed to strike agitators. This very low level of violence, while surprising, may perhaps best be explained by the large number of strikers who had fled Hong Kong. By the end of June, in consequence of the regulation making those without regular employment liable to arrest and deportation, government authorities had been able to round up only about 100 Chinese.²⁸

In July, 1925, Governor Stubbs announced that Chinese guilty of violence, threats, or sedition would be flogged; and although flogging was not applied in practice, this decision brought wide-spread criticism outside Hong Kong and embarrassment to the Foreign and Colonial Offices in London.²⁹

While such efforts undertaken by Governor Stubbs to maintain essential services and provide internal security proved effective, his attempts to combat the anti-British boycott and revive the dwindling

²⁸CO 129/488, C 36829, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 10, 1925.

²⁹Ibid., and CO 129/488, C 36829, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 10, 1925. See also, Hong Kong Government, Government Gazette Extraordinary, July 6, 1925. London's embarrassment over the issue of flogging is evident in CO 129/488, C 34202, Minute by A. E. Collins, Colonial Office, July 30, 1925.

trade of Hong Kong either met with failure or became counterproductive. The ban on the export from Hong Kong of rice, flour, tinned and preserved foodstuffs, coal, and petroleum products which had been instituted in the hope of inflicting hardship upon Canton, instead further disrupted the trade of the British colony. Rice valued at \$6,000,000 which normally went to Canton was deteriorating in Hong Kong's warehouses while fresh supplies remained unavailable. When the embargo on this and other prohibited items was lifted, and attempts to re-open trade in exchange for foodstuffs were initiated, it was discovered that Canton had adopted other methods for obtaining these commodities. Merchants there organized The Association for Grain Supply and placed large rice orders with the Kang Yuan Sheng Company in Thailand and with many smaller firms in Indochina. The rice crop available in Kwangtung in 1925, considered by many the best in ten years, further eased Canton's reliance upon Hong Kong for grain imports.³⁰

Flour formerly obtained in Hong Kong was shipped directly to Canton from Shanghai aboard shallow-draft vessels. Although Canton could not accommodate ocean-going ships, it could receive vessels which drew less than 10-12 feet of water. As a result of the Canton Government's embargo on food exports, a surplus of fruits and vegetables (always available locally in large quantities) created a sharp reduction in prices. Coal, despite periodic interruptions in supply, continued to be obtained

³⁰See CO 129/489, C 40885, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8, 1925; The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 254, January 2, 1926, p. 3-5; and FO 405/248, F 4058/194/10, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, July 14, 1925.

either from Japan or Indochina. Prior to the start of the strike and boycott, the American Standard Oil Company together with the British Asiatic Petroleum Company had instituted an embargo on petroleum and petroleum products at Canton in protest to the levying of a special stamp duty on kerosene. Canton countered by importing large quantities of Russian oil and selling it at fixed prices under government monopoly. This practice was continued until June, 1926, when, no longer able to secure adequate supplies of oil, the Canton Government abolished its monopoly in favor of a tax of two dollars per ten gallons. The substantial profits which then accrued to the American Standard Oil Company were largely at the expense of the British Asiatic Petroleum Company whose trade was being displaced while the company remained under boycott.³¹

Goods bound for Canton in July, 1925, were carried in Russian, Norwegian, German, Dutch, and American ships whose captains had found favor with the Canton Strike Committee by avoiding contact with Hong Kong. When the censorship of telegrams in Hong Kong (Canton lacked suitable facilities) provided information concerning the movements of these ships and the financing of their cargoes, such telegrams were stopped in order to hamper this trade.³²

³¹See The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VII, No. 246, November 7, 1925, p. 271; G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," The North China Herald, May 1, 1926, p. 231; and FO 405/252A, No. 62, Brenan to Macleay, Canton, June 30, 1926.

³²CO 129/489, C 40885, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8,

In consequence of the moratorium granted to Chinese banks in Hong Kong at the start of the strike by Governor Stubbs, foreign banks in the colony suddenly began restricting credit. In July, many firms because of the boycott found themselves unable either to convert their imports into cash or to obtain exports for shipment to distant ports. Denied assistance from the financial institutions in Hong Kong, many were driven to bankruptcy. In its telegram to the China Association in London, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong provided this rather bleak assessment of the impact of the boycott in July, 1925:

. . . Canton-created blockade and boycott of entire trade between Hong Kong and South China still relentlessly continues, all steamship communication between Canton and Hong Kong being cut off and resulting loss from such blockade to Chinese and foreign business and shipping is enormous. The consequences must prove disastrous to Lancashire and Yorkshire export trade while in addition there is complete paralysis of very valuable raw silk trade and other exports from Canton in which British firms are largely interested. . . . (The Boycott is) increasing financial exhaustion and seriously threatens the continued existence of many old established firms and businesses in the Colony both British and Chinese.³³

So desperate was Governor Stubbs to end the unprecedented dislocations of Hong Kong's trade in July, 1925, that he sought London's approval for the expenditure of \$1,000,000 of the colony's money to finance a scheme put forward by wealthy Hong Kong Chinese to end the

1925; and The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 254, January 2, 1926, p. 3-5.

³³CO 129/489, C 36962, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8, 1925. That the Governor concurred in this assessment of the impact of the boycott is evident in CO 129/489, C 38894, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 24, 1925.

strike and boycott against them. Negotiations were then in progress with certain unnamed "anti-Bolsheviks" in Canton who, if properly compensated, were said to be prepared to eliminate the Communists and their supporters and resume normal relations with Hong Kong. The British Foreign Office when informed of this scheme became convinced that it could not succeed, and despite the best persuasive efforts of Colonial Office members and influential British merchants, quickly rejected it. When further pleas for reconsideration from Governor Stubbs and Hong Kong's Unofficial Members of Council failed to alter this Foreign Office conviction, the scheme was shelved.³⁴

Governmental Reorganization and the Canton Strike Committee:
To Whom the Power?

In Canton at the beginning of July, following the decision reached in a plenary session of the Central Executive Committee (Chung-yang chih-hsing wei-yuan-hui) of the Kuomintang, a reorganized "Nationalist Government" was inaugurated. With the institution of a committee system based upon the Soviet model, the post of Acting-Generalissimo held by Hu Han-min since Sun Yat-sen's northern departure in 1924 was abolished. Hu instead became the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Hsu Ch'ung chih, who continued to control a large Cantonese army, was appointed Minister of

³⁴This scheme was first mentioned in CO 129/488, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 27, 1925. For the views of the Foreign Office together with Colonial Office reaction, see CO 129/489, C 38168, Minutes on "The Situation in Canton," A. E. Collins, Colonial Office, August 21, 1925. The discontent of Governor Stubbs with the decision reached in London is apparent in CO 129/489, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 20, 1925.

War. The post of Minister of Finance went to Liao Chung-k'ai who retained direction of the KMT's labor activities. The Municipal Government of Canton remained in the hands of members of the Prince Clique; however, now their actions were to be subject to increased supervision by both the KMT and its Russian advisers.

In its inaugural declaration, the Canton Municipal Government adhered to the positions of the "National" and Provincial Governments which on July 1st and 3rd respectively had denounced the unequal treaties once again and promised their abolition. Arguing that the city remained under the economic and political domination of Hong Kong, leaders of the Prince Clique set as their paramount task the elevation of Canton to complete economic independence. To achieve this, they urged the city's citizens to construct harbors, railways, and roads so as to facilitate industrial development. While withholding specific mention of support to the strike and boycott, the declaration concluded by pledging to reduce taxes and remove all troops from the city. This last point had long been a major concern in the local reform program of Sun Fo. Despite the continued erosion of its influence, the Prince Clique was looked to by Hong Kong authorities, until the end of August, 1925, as their best hope for a strike and boycott settlement.³⁵

³⁵The governmental reorganization in Canton in the first week of July, 1925, is discussed in a voluntary report by J. C. Huston entitled "The Economic and Political Future of China," in the Huston Collection;

Although ultimate authority continued to reside in the innercouncils of the Kuomintang, the existence in Canton of a "National" government, a provincial government, and a municipal administration, each with important functions often duplicated by the others, led to frequent confusion among those western powers seeking a settlement of the strike and boycott. The creation of the Canton Strike Committee, specifically charged with the direction and control of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott and seemingly accountable only to the KMT, further complicated an already complex distribution of authority.³⁶

Assisted in its tasks by Michael Borodin and his corps of Russian labor advisers, maintaining ties to the Comintern, and most importantly, enjoying the support of powerful personalities in the KMT such as Liao Chung-k'ai, Wang Ching-wei, and (initially at least) Chiang Kai-shek, the Canton Strike Committee first defined its powers by encroaching upon those of the municipal administration. The creation of strike courts, a jail in Strike Headquarters, strike pickets, a strikers' treasury, and the publication of strike and boycott regulations were all

see also, FO 405/250, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum respecting Canton," by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926. The inaugural declaration of the Canton Municipal Government was published in The Canton Gazette, July 8, 1925, which is available in the records of The Historical Archives Commission of the Kuomintang, Ts'ao-t'un, Taiwan.

³⁶The confusion experienced by westerners attempting to deal with the appropriate government in Canton in order to bring about a strike and boycott settlement is discussed in FO 405/250, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum respecting Canton," by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926.

at the latter's expense. When, beginning in July and August, 1925, the strike and boycott spread into other areas of Kwangtung under KMT control, the Strike Committee began assuming powers nominally belonging to the Provincial government. Ultimately, in the course of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott, the Strike Committee would challenge even the authority of the Kuomintang--its sponsor and protector. Foreigners would come to regard the Canton Strike Committee as "a government within a government" and, none of their policies would be formulated without due regard to its influence.³⁷

A Spreading Boycott--But Against Whom?

With the boycott firmly established in Canton, the Strike Committee began in July, 1925, to advertise the need for its extension to those other regions of Kwangtung under Kuomintang control. The press in Canton published many articles which outlined the preparations then underway to effect a thorough boycott of all British, Japanese, and French goods throughout the province. In the second week of that month, organizers were sent to all the important commercial centers of Kwangtung, and working with the local unions they attempted to duplicate the success achieved at Canton. In Wuchow, the boycott became so complete that

³⁷See Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 227; and notes dated July 28, August 6 and 7, and September 17, 1925, in the Huston Collection. See also, Vera Vladimirovna Vishnyakova-Akimova, (trans. S. Levine), Two Years in Revolutionary China: 1925-1927, (Cambridge, Mass.: 1971), p. 231-232. This was first published as Dva Goda v Vosstavshem Kitae, 1925-1927 in Moscow, 1965.

on July 20th the British, unable even to maintain an adequate food supply, had to be evacuated. The foreign staff of the Asiatic Petroleum Company returned to Wuchow only after arrangements had been made by naval authorities in Hong Kong to dispatch a tug periodically with needed supplies. This return was based not on any false hopes regarding the revival of the extinguished trade there, but simply to protect company facilities from theft or destruction.³⁸

In Kongmoon and Tanshui, the foreign customs staff found themselves subjected to the same treatment which had been afforded their colleagues at Shameen between June 22nd and June 29th. The Chinese employees deserted them, and they were forced to rely upon Hong Kong for food and other basic necessities. So effective was the boycott at Kongmoon that the Customs Report for 1925 revealed a decline in revenue of 56 percent when compared with the previous year.³⁹

³⁸See in particular Min-kuo jih-pao, July 14, 1925; and The Canton Gazette, August 17, 1925. For British reaction to these articles, see FO 405/248, F 5564/194/10, "Memorandum Respecting the Boycott of British and Japanese Goods in Canton District," Palairet to Chamberlain, Peking, September 30, 1925. German firms had been established in Canton after World War I when that nation lost its special privileges in China; and with minor interruptions, the business of those firms flourished throughout the period of the strike and boycott. See FO 405/248, F 3745/194/10, Enclosure No. 1, Jamieson to Palairet, Canton, June 29, 1925, and G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," The North China Herald, April 24, 1926, p. 181-183. For the impact of the Boycott at Wuchow, see FO 405/248, F 4258/2/10, Enclosure No. 1, Jamieson to Palairet, Canton, July 24, 1925.

³⁹See FO 371/10924, Jamieson to Palairet, Canton, September 21, 1925. The Kongmoon Customs Reports, 1925, are cited in The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 281, July 10, 1926, p. 374; and are

At Swatow, a strike and boycott began on July 2, 1925, and rapidly brought all British commerce there to an abrupt end. Chinese in the employ of British subjects either struck voluntarily or were coerced into doing so. Theft from and destruction to British properties became common, and the local food supplies usually available to the British community were completely cut off. The pickets who patrolled the bund seized British merchandise as it arrived and imposed heavy fees on all ships (including Chinese) which attempted either to enter or leave port.⁴⁰

As July, 1925, came to an end, most foreigners with commercial interests in south China remained understandably confused as to the true nature of the Chinese strike and boycott which confronted them. To some it appeared that the boycott was aimed solely at British shipping; at Amoy, all British ships were boycotted while those of other nations, even if they had called at Hong Kong or intended to do so, were free to trade. To others, particularly those in Swatow, Nanning, Kongmoon, and Wuchow, it seemed apparent that the boycott was of a more general nature. There students and armed pickets enforced a strict boycott of all British ships, British goods, and the ships and goods of any nation whose vessels included Hong Kong as a port of call. Finally, to those with interests at Canton and Pakhoi, the boycott appeared to

reproduced in FO 405/250, F 1393/296/10, Enclosure No. 2, Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, February 22, 1926.

⁴⁰See FO 405/250, F 110/1/10, Annex XIII, Swatow; and The South China Morning Post, August 14, 1925.

have three clearly discernable targets. There all British ships and goods, all ships and goods which had touched Hong Kong or intended to do so, and many Japanese ships and goods were singled out for attack.⁴¹

The Strike and Boycott Defined:
Strike Committee Regulations

Confusion among foreigners attempting to determine the exact nature of the economic struggle being waged in south China was largely due to their inability to distinguish among their antagonists. In the coastal ports outside Kwangtung, where, in 1925, Kuomintang influence was still weak, the anti-British boycott born of the May Thirtieth movement continued despite gradually diminishing effectiveness. In those regions of Kwangtung where the Kuomintang was firmly entrenched, however, a loosely allied but radically different struggle was daily gaining in strength. At Canton, the strike and boycott begun in mid-June also took British imperialism as its target; but, from the first, that target was limited to British imperialism as expressed through Hong Kong. If they could isolate Hong Kong by denying it both foreign and Chinese contact, strike and boycott leaders remained confident that British imperialism in south China would suffer a death blow.

As early as June 30, Hu Han-min, then Civil-Governor of Kwangtung, met with the Japanese Consul in an attempt to bring about a divorce by

⁴¹A useful analysis of the boycotts arising out of the May Thirtieth movement and a less successful attempt to describe the boycott against Hong Kong is C. F. Remer, A Study of Chinese Boycotts, With Special Reference to Their Economic Effectiveness (Baltimore: 1933), p. 97-108.

that nation from British interests in south China. On July 12, 1925, a delegation of Chinese students returned from France met the French Consul on Shameen in a similar but equally unsuccessful attempt. In the second week of August, the Canton Strike Committee issued a notification which allowed non-British firms to open offices in Canton provided they registered with the Committee and agreed to rehire all former Chinese employees. The "New Navigation Rules" published by the Canton Strike Committee on August 12 declared:

1. Steamers of any nationality except British and Japanese are allowed to ply between various ports provided they do not call at Hong Kong.
2. On entering ports, all vessels must be subject to inspection of labor pickets of the anti-Imperialist Union.
3. Export of foodstuffs and raw materials prohibited.⁴²

Not until August 16, 1925, when additional regulations were published, did mention of Japan become conspicuous by its absence. In these regulations, a system of special permits was created which allowed entry into Canton "for any non-British goods which do not come by British steamers or via Hong Kong or Macao." The Strike Committee provided for travel

⁴²The meeting of Hu Han-min with the Japanese Consul is reported in FO 405/248, F 3747/194/10, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, June 30, 1925. Not only did the Japanese Consul inform his British counterpart of that meeting; but, as Akira Iriye has indicated, the Tokyo Government responded to a British request to prohibit the export of coal to Canton by giving consideration to the launching of an embargo against Canton. See Iriye, op. cit., p. 67. For Jamieson's views on the meeting between Chinese students and the French Consul, see FO 405/248, F 4058/194/10, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, July 14, 1925. The "New Navigation Rules" issued by the Strike Committee are in The Canton Gazette, August 12, 1925.

to Hong Kong or Macao by creating special travel permits. These could be obtained only under a personal and monetary guarantee, and were only valid for seven days.⁴³

Although the August regulations of the Canton Strike Committee proved effective in denying Hong Kong contact with some Western shipping, these regulations also proved disruptive to the Canton trade. Many of the non-British firms seeking to do business there viewed the system of "special permits" as a form of blackmail. Rather than comply, they chose not to trade. In the months that followed, the increasing agitation of Cantonese merchants disgruntled by their losses convinced members of the Strike Committee that the August regulations were in need of revision. When, in October, an open meeting of the Strikers' Congress was convened, its members, by formal vote, abolished the system of "special permits." On October 22, 1925, over the seals of The All-China General Labor Union, The Canton-Hong Kong Strike Committee, The Canton General Chamber of Commerce, The Associated Chambers of Commerce of All-Kwangtung, The Canton Municipal Chamber of Commerce, and The Canton Mercantile Co-operative Association, the following new regulations were adopted:

1. Goods via Hong Kong or Macao, of whatever country, shall not be permitted to come to Kwangtung; and goods exported from Kwangtung to whatever country consigned, shall not be allowed to go to Hong Kong or Macao.

⁴³The system of "special permits" begun on August 16, 1925, is discussed in CO 129/489, C 45193, Enclosure No. 6, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, September 4, 1925.

2. Any British vessel, and vessels of any country passing through Hong Kong or Macao, shall not be allowed intercourse with inland Kwangtung for discharge of cargo.

3. All non-British merchandise and non-British vessels which do not pass through Hong Kong or Macao shall have freedom to unload.

4. Within the borders of Kwangtung, provided neither goods nor vessels are British, all equally shall have freedom of trade and intercourse.

5. All goods stored in Canton, provided they are not British and not British-owned, shall equally be available for sale. (This regulation does not apply to Government monopolies and contraband articles.)

6. This regulation has been signed and promulgated by the four Chambers of Commerce, in association with the Canton-Hong Kong Strike Committee. From the date of publication until the Canton-Hong Kong Strike Committee is vested with official authority to blockade, anything which infringes the preceeding regulations will uniformly and entirely be confiscated. (Confiscation can be carried out only after being sanctioned by a strike committee.)

7. In the matter of chartering vessels to come to Canton, the charterer must first arrange, as supplementary item in the agreement, that when cargo has been discharged and she leaves port the vessel must not anchor either at Hong Kong or at Macao. Further, he must report to the Chamber of Commerce and to the Strike Committee for purpose of record. . . .⁴⁴

These regulations, with some minor alterations, were to remain in effect until the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott came to a formal end on October 10, 1926.

⁴⁴For merchant reaction to the issuance of the "special permits," see The South China Morning Post, Hong Kong, August 17, 1925. A full translation of the regulations issued October 22, 1925 is contained in FO 405/248, F 5914/194/10, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, November 2, 1925.

The Assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai:
The Moderates Retreat

On August 20, 1925, as he was leaving his car to enter Kuomintang Headquarters in Canton, Liao Chung-k'ai, the Kuomintang's Minister of Finance and Director of Labor Activities, was shot by a group of Chinese assassins. He died while enroute to a hospital. This event was to have a dramatic effect upon the struggle for dominance within the Kuomintang which had begun immediately after the death of that party's revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen in March, 1925. It was also to have a significant influence on the future of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott. Although Liao Chung-k'ai's murder was never actually solved, the investigation into his death launched by the Kuomintang was used to further incite Canton's hostility toward the British in Hong Kong. Amid reports which implicated Hu Han-min through the actions of his relatives, rumors gained currency which cast suspicion upon a number of Kuomintang notables. One maintained that two generals in the army of Hsu Ch'ung-chih had confessed to promises of \$2,000,000 from wealthy Hong Kong merchants for the liquidation of Liao, Wang Ching-wei, and Chiang Kai-shek. Another held that one of the accomplices in the assassination had admitted receiving \$20,000 from Chiang Kai-shek for the murder. Still another saw Sun Fo and members of his clique supported by overseas Chinese as the culprits.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Shun pao, August 22, 1925, p. 7; Ch'en pao (Peking, August 23, 1925, p. 3; and Tung-fang tsa-chih, Vol. XXII, No. 18, September 25, 1925, p. 4-5. See also, a voluntary report entitled "The Economic and Political Future of China," and notes dated August 21 and September 4, 1925, in the Huston Collection.

A number of labor organizations in Canton were also rumored to be responsible for Liao Chung-k'ai's death. Many had openly expressed dissatisfaction with the recent activities of Liao and his subordinates; activities which had stimulated the creation of rival organizations under the domination of Chinese Communists. Particularly incensed in this regard was the Kwangtung Mechanics Union which saw its attempts to further control railway workers threatened.⁴⁶

The consequences of the assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai were that those elements in Canton considered most moderate by observers in Hong Kong were discredited and forced into retreat. Following the expulsion of Hu Han-min, ostensibly sent on a mission to Moscow, effective control of the Kuomintang was lodged in an emergency council consisting of Wang Ching-wei, Chiang Kai-shek, and Hsu Ch'ung-chih, and assisted by Borodin and his corps of Soviet advisers. In September, 1925, the troops of Hsu Ch'ung-chih were suddenly disarmed by the Whampoa cadets acting on the orders of Chiang Kai-shek; and Hsu, relieved of his duties, was exiled to Shanghai. As these events occurred, the civil administration of Canton helplessly observed the continued erosion of its authority at the hands of the Canton Strike Committee.⁴⁷

⁴⁶See Shun pao, August 30, 1925, p. 10; and The North China Herald, August 29, 1925, p. 238. A view hostile to the Kwangtung Mechanics Union and common among the Soviet advisers is expressed in Vishnyakova-Akomova, op. cit., p. 233, who, however, does not accuse them of Liao's murder.

⁴⁷FO 405/248, F 4922/194/10, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, August 31, 1925; FO 371/10924, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, September

21 and 27, 1925; and A. Khmeloff, a report entitled "Journey to Canton in October 1925," p. 27-30, in the Huston Collection. See also, Kuowen chou-pao, October 4, 1925, p. 21.

CHAPTER III

THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26: THE STRUGGLE GROWS

Canton and Hong Kong, August, 1925: A Time of Hope and Desperation

As a result of their efforts in launching an intensive anti-British campaign in the Canton press in mid-July, strike leaders became confident that, in the months to come, their struggle would acquire still greater effectiveness by spreading rapidly throughout the province of Kwangtung. In Hong Kong, August, 1925, opened with a series of bombing incidents on the tramline and in the Taikoo Dockyards. However, authorities there had become so confident in their ability to protect the safety of the colony's inhabitants, that on the 5th the "Hong Kong Volunteers" were completely demobilized. On the 10th, the special police first recruited when the strike and boycott began were also excused from further duty. Although the policy of street searches for Chinese engaged in political agitation continued until September, such searches brought few new arrests. Only the increasing incidence of conflict between strike pickets and Hong Kong police along the frontiers of the New Territories seemed to require additional precautions. Strike pickets dispatched from Canton frequently mounted small raids across the border in search

of food and livestock. On occasion, they also engaged in the kidnapping of Chinese and the seizure of foreign goods.

As panic among Chinese villagers close to the frontier mounted at the beginning of August, the Hong Kong Government responded by sending two platoons of Punjabi troops to assist the local police. On the 20th, permission to fire across the border was granted in hopes of discouraging further Chinese attacks on the police launches patrolling the area. Earlier, the Hong Kong Government had withheld such permission for fear that another outrage such as that which occurred at Shameen might be provoked. Despite the added attention to safety along the colony's frontiers, the number of Chinese raids continued to increase throughout the winter of 1925. By mid-December, the Governor of Hong Kong would become so concerned that he contemplated sending air patrols over the borders of the New Territories on a regular basis.¹

While frontier incidents and mounting effectiveness of the Chinese boycott against Hong Kong in August continued to trouble the colony's inhabitants, they found comfort in the sudden collapse of the Chinese strike which became apparent by mid-month. Despite rigorous efforts by the Canton Strike Committee to bar their passage, strikers fleeing either impressment into the Kuomintang's armies or forced labor in the

¹CO 129/489, C 40885, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8, 1925; C 42959, August 21, 1925; and C 45193, September 4, 1925. See also, CO 129/489, C 56041, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, December 9, 1925; and FO 405/251, F 1775/1/10, Enclosures 2 and 3, Colonial Office to Foreign Office, London, April 27, 1926.

interests of municipal improvement began making their way back to Hong Kong. On August 21, Governor Stubbs was pleased to inform London that the Chinese strike, with the exception of that against shipping, was practically at an end. Americans of long residence shared in this view. When, earlier that month, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce had called a meeting of merchant groups and labor organizations (attended by both the Engineers' Institute and the Wo Yee Kok Seamen's Guild), it concluded by expressing the optimistic view that the colony's troubles might well be resolved without further attention to the wishes of strike leaders in Canton.²

Despite this optimism, which increased as a result of disturbances in Canton, by the end of August it was obvious that the boycott still within the firm control of the Canton Strike Committee was gradually strangling the economic interests of Hong Kong. When compared with the financial losses of previous months, those for August, 1925, proved far greater. Government revenues continued to decrease at the rate of \$500,000 per month, and drastic measures were adopted to reduce spending. The suspension of public works in progress brought some relief because it resulted in the reduction of staff within the Public Works Department; but, it was still found necessary to dismiss many teachers in the Hong

² See CO 129/489, C 42959, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 21, 1925; and, United States Decimal File, 893.5045/189, J. V. A. Mac-Murray to Kellogg, Peking, August 24, 1925. The meeting which brought together merchant and labor representatives in early August was reported in The South China Morning Post, August 17, 1925.

Kong Government's schools. Land values in the colony had continued to drop throughout August, often by 40 and in some cases even 60 percent. Investors anxious to cut further losses strongly supported the clamor of the colony's newspapers for re-opening of the Stock Exchange. Governor Stubbs, however, stood by his decision which had closed the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in mid-June. As business firms continued to fall into bankruptcy, he sought to alleviate the colony's economic distress by petitioning London for a loan of £3,000,000.³

At the start of the strike and boycott, the commercial interests of Hong Kong had openly proclaimed their view that the struggle against them was doomed to a short life. They remained confident that the dislocations in the Canton trade created by the avoidance of the British colony would compel their adversaries to sue for peace. Such views took on added validity when measured against the performance of the Canton silk industry in July, 1925. Measured by both volume and value, the manufacture and sale of silk had long been Canton's most important industry. In July, 1925, one picul (133 1/3 pounds) of raw silk could be purchased there for \$900.

³For the impact of the boycott in August together with reported attempts to reduce governmental expenditures, see CO 129/489, C 45193, Stubbs to Amery, September 4, 1925. The rapid fall in Hong Kong's land values is described in Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 232; and, in Lewis S. Gannett, "Why Canton is Radical Center of Asia," The China Weekly Review, June 12, 1926, p. 30. Displeasure over the refusal to re-open the Stock Exchange is evident in The Hong Kong Telegraph, August 18, and September 2, 1925. The request for a loan of £3,000,000 was granted, and an appreciative Governor Stubbs reported the immediate reaction among the colony's commercial interests in CO 129/489, C 49489, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, October 2, 1925.

Before the strike and boycott, however, that same quantity would have brought at least \$1,400. Of the more than 100 piece-goods shops in Canton, most had accumulated large stocks; and, in late July, they continued to lack a distribution outlet. A picul of mulberry leaves, which had formerly sold for \$4.00, could then be had for 80 cents. In the important producing districts of Namhoi, Heungshan, Shunteh, and Saichiu, between 80 and 90 percent of the silk filatures had been forced to temporarily suspend operations.⁴

In August, 1925, as a result of arrangements concluded between the Canton Government, the Strike Committee, the silk merchants, and representatives of the China Merchants Navigation Company, which transferred the distribution center to Shanghai, the Canton silk trade experienced a sharp revival. The Strike Committee issued regulations which facilitated the granting of export licenses for silk, and the Canton Government, in an effort to further promote that trade, made plans for the creation of a special silk bank. That same month, other products of Kwangtung destined for European or American markets were sent for transshipment to either Keelung (Taiwan) or to Manila.⁵

For Chinese firms long accustomed to a marginal share of the Canton market because they could not compete with foreign firms that

⁴See The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 254, January 2, 1926, p. 3-4; and The Hong Kong Telegraph, July 21, 1925.

⁵FO 405/248, F 4922/194/10, Jamieson to Palairret, Canton, August 31, 1925; F 6227/194/10, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, November 23, 1925;

enjoyed superior means of communication and financial support, the Chinese strike and boycott provided an excellent opportunity to shift the balance. In August, 1925, one such firm, the Nangyang Brothers Tobacco Company, moved quickly to absorb a dominant share of the Canton market by supplanting the trade of its major Shanghai rival the British-American Tobacco Company. Because Chinese firms were not subject to the 40 percent tax imposed on non-British companies to support the boycott, they also enjoyed an advantage over their Japanese, American, and other foreign rivals. In the course of the strike and boycott against Hong Kong, many Cantonese would, by founding Chinese firms to engage in the coastal trade, open the way to a new and greater prosperity.⁶

Like their parent institutions in Hong Kong, the commercial houses of Canton were severely affected by the economic dislocations created by the strike and boycott. Unlike their British counterparts, however, they were gradually able to adjust to the new conditions of trade; and during much of the period encompassed by the strike and boycott, the notes of the Canton banks were accepted at par or even at a premium while the currency of Hong Kong remained depreciated. Some of Canton's commercial institutions were openly political as in the case of the Hsing

and The Hong Kong Telegraph, February 9, 1926. See also, G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," The North China Herald, May 8, 1926, p. 280.

⁶FO 405/248, F 5564/194/10, "Memorandum Respecting the Boycott of British and Japanese Goods in Canton District," Palairret to Chamberlain, Peking, September 30, 1925; and G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," The North China Herald, May 1, 1926, p. 281.

Chung Commercial and Savings Bank which found its fortunes tied directly to its founder Sun Fo.⁷

As the trade of Canton continued to expand in August and the months which followed (there was a particularly sizeable increase after the system of special permits was abolished in October), the commercial and political interests in Hong Kong became increasingly alarmed. They looked to the British Government to forcibly reassert the fading dominance of Hong Kong over Canton.

The Shadow of the Washington Conference, 1921-1922:
A British Dilemma

In August, 1925, the British Foreign Office found itself confronted from many sides with pleas for some type of forceful action in China. Soon after publication by the Strike Committee of the "New Navigation Rules," the British Consul-General on Shameen, Sir James W. Jamieson, telegraphed his strong recommendation urging the institution of a blockade against Canton by the offended treaty powers. On August 16th, the Commodore at Hong Kong, largely in reaction to local opinion, seconded Jamieson's proposal. In his view, a blockade could stem the flow to Canton of munitions from the Soviet Union which, in turn, might lead to

⁷See G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," The North China Herald, May 15, 1926, p. 327; and The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 254, January 2, 1926, p. 8-9. In the course of the strike and boycott, the political fortunes of some Kuomintang leaders were strongly influenced by their ability to secure an independent financial base. Hsu Ch'ung-chih, shortly before his ouster from Canton, apparently attempted to implement a banking scheme similar to that created by Sun Fo. See The Hong Kong Telegraph, September 19, 1925.

the overthrow of the "Bolshevik elements" there. In London, commercial organizations with large interests in China, such as The Imperial Merchant Service Guild and the China Association, also pressed for forceful action at Canton.⁸

From the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office received a resolution, passed by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and supported by the leading British commercial houses, which requested an immediate ultimatum to be followed by military action at Canton. To lend urgency to this plea, the Colonial Office also passed along letters and telegrams from British and Chinese firms in Hong Kong, including a report from the Governor, which emphasized the point that the colony faced immediate ruin. On the 22nd, at the urging of Governor Stubbs, the Colonial Office went so far as to request reconsideration of the earlier scheme calling

⁸FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton" by F Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926. Jamieson's proposal involving an international blockade at Canton became widely discussed in London. His Majesty King George V, having read the proposal, wished to know what objections to its implementation existed in either the Colonial Office or the Foreign Office. See CO 129/489, C 37625, Stamfordham to Amery, Balmoral Castle, August 20, 1925. For a discussion between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office centered on the Commodore's plans in Hong Kong, see FO 371/10947, F 4085, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, August 22, 1925. The views of commercial bodies such as The China Association and The Imperial Merchant Service Guild coincided initially with those of Chinese commercial groups in Hong Kong; however, after discussions with members of the Foreign Office they favored the dispatch to Peking of a special envoy charged with the task of settling the anti-British boycotts in north China. See CO 129/489, Wilcox to Colonial Office, London, August 17, 1925; and FO 371/10947, F 4053, Landale to Foreign Office, London, August 18, 1925.

for the expenditure of \$1,000,000 in support of "anti-Bolshevik parties in Canton."⁹

From the British Admiralty, the Foreign Office learned that the Commander-in-Chief at Hong Kong favored an ultimatum to the Canton Government to be followed, if necessary, by bombardment and destruction of both the Whampoa and Bocca Tigris forts and the Whampoa Military Academy. By August 19, having been assured that the Canton Government was not a party to the issuance of the "New Navigation Rules," Consul-General Jamieson tempered his earlier views to include only the seizure of all vessels which conformed to the wishes of the Canton Strike Committee. The following day, British Charge d'Affaires at Peking, Michael Palairat, sought Jamieson's advice on a plan by which British difficulties at Canton would be placed before the League of Nations.¹⁰

⁹ For the resolution of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, see CO 129/489, C 36962, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 8, 1925. Members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, fearing reprisals against their relatives in Kwangtung, asked that their resolutions not be made public. Unfortunately, a leak to Reuters resulted in full publication in The Times (London). See CO 129/489, C 36962, Enclosure No. 5, Chow and Kotewall to Severn, Hong Kong, August 10, 1925. Attempts by the Colonial Office to convince the Foreign Office to take some form of action at Canton are discussed in CO 129/489, Minute by A. E. Collins, August 18, 1925, and Minute by S. Wilson, August 19, 1925. For Governor Stubbs' plea for reconsideration of his scheme to finance anti-Bolshevik elements in Canton, see CO 129/489, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, August 20, 1925. The Colonial Office enlisted support for the scheme by advocating it to British merchants known to have the ear of certain members of the Foreign Office. See CO 129/489, C 38168, Minute by A. E. Collins, Colonial Office, August 21, 1925.

¹⁰ FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton"

Although the British Foreign Office was to give each of the proposals described above its careful consideration, Foreign Office members, since well before the strike and boycott, recognized the serious difficulties which would attend any unilateral action by Great Britain in China. By both the terms and spirit of the treaties which had emerged from the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, they felt compelled to maintain a commitment to cooperative efforts with the other powers which had interests in China. To abandon such a commitment would be to risk both foreign and Chinese isolation of the sizeable economic interests of Great Britain in East Asia.¹¹

When, following an exchange of notes with other interested powers in July, 1925, the British Foreign Office determined that "any assistance from other foreign powers would be at best halfhearted," its members concluded that any plans for military actions at Canton must be abandoned. For the British Colonial Office charged with insuring the well-being of Hong Kong, and for British and Chinese interests which had much at stake there, the views of the Foreign Office appeared to represent the acceptance of a policy of inaction. The continued pressure exerted by the Colonial Office upon Foreign Office members would ultimately breed

by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p. 5.

¹¹For a discussion of the treaties which emerged from the Washington Conference of 1921-1922 and the limitations which they presented for action in the Far East, see Akira Iriye, op. cit., p. 13-22. See also, Warren I. Cohen, America's Response to China: An Interpretative History of Sino-American Relations (New York: 1971), p. 104-107.

dissension. In August, 1925, Colonial Office pleas for British action met with the following response:

Mr. Chamberlain (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) doubts whether a blockade would do more than provide anti-British propaganda in Canton and the rest of China, but any more drastic action than a blockade he is certain would have a most unfortunate reaction. It must be remembered too, that we are bound by the Washington China Treaty to full and friendly communication with other powers concerned before taking any steps affecting the sovereignty and independence of China. Any independent step, therefore, which His Majesty's Government may take at Canton will at once affect not only the rest of China but our relations with other Powers having interests in the Far East. The provocative attitude of the group of Extremists now in control at Canton may be deliberately calculated to provoke retaliatory measures whereby they hope to gain in popularity in their own country and to single out Great Britain as the oppressor of China. . . . Mr. Chamberlain will not hesitate to recommend strong action if and when it is considered that the situation would be permanently improved thereby. But he would prefer to take such action in concert with the other Powers whose treaty rights are equally at stake, and whom, as explained above, we are under an obligation to consult. He would be most reluctant to act alone except in circumstances where it would be clear to unprejudiced opinion that he had no reasonable alternative.¹²

The August proposals which involved either an ultimatum to Canton to be followed by a bombing expedition or the interception of vessels complying with the regulations of the Canton Strike Committee were found to be objectionable on the same grounds as those which ruled out a blockade. The Foreign Office also rejected the idea of British recourse to the League of Nations. While it was felt that such an act might well succeed in determining that Canton was in violation of existing treaties,

¹²Discussion within the Foreign Office of the July notes and the response directed to the Colonial Office on September 5, 1925, are presented in FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton" by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p.3, and 5-6.

as Consul-General Jamieson had pointed out, only the complete abrogation of such treaties could satisfy the Kuomintang in Canton and bring the strike and boycott to an end. Finally, with some irritation, the Foreign Office again dismissed the scheme of Governor Stubbs whereby funds would be provided to anti-Bolshevik groups in Canton. Although the Foreign Office labeled this scheme an unwarranted intrusion into Chinese domestic politics which held little promise of success, its irritation, as later revealed, was not that such a scheme had been contemplated, but that it had been put forward in a manner requiring official sanction.¹³

The irritation of the British Foreign Office over the Stubbs' scheme and the disappointment of those in Hong Kong who learned that it had been discarded were, no doubt, related to the political changes in Canton which occurred in the turbulent period following the assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai. Many in both London and Hong Kong fully expected to see the more moderate elements in Canton emerge victorious; and, as in all likelihood the moderates would expel the Russian advisers and their supporters, this could bring about the speedy settlement of the boycott against Hong Kong. By the end of the first week of September, it was dramatically clear that the expectations of London and Hong Kong had

¹³Ibid., p. 6-7. As revealed in an interview of late December, 1925, conducted by members of the Colonial Office, The Foreign Office view had consistently been that if Hong Kong truly believed that matters could be handled through the use of money they should do so without asking for official sanction. See CO 129/491, "Note of Interview with Mr. Moss F.O.," S. H. Wilson, T.A. Clutterbuck, and G. Grindle, Colonial Office, December 19, 1925.

been misplaced. On September 6, Consul-General Jamieson despondently reported:

The city is in the hands of cadets, labour and strike unions, and Russians, and is controlled by a Chinese triumvirate, whom it would be difficult to dislodge. A saner Chinese element would appreciate intervention, but I personally deprecate it as it would leave a legacy of hatred for the future. On the other hand, continuance of present state of things will bankrupt Hong Kong.¹⁴

On September 12, Governor Stubbs, aware of British diplomatic efforts undertaken at Peking in hopes of creating a reduction of anti-British activities in north China, again attempted to enlist the support of the Foreign Office in the salvation of Hong Kong. Editorials published in the Hong Kong newspapers in late August decried Foreign Office actions which involved negotiations with the Peking Government in order to alter events at Canton. Many in Hong Kong continued to believe that, despite their best persuasive efforts, the Foreign Office still viewed their struggle with Canton as but a part of the country-wide disorders which plagued British interests. They wished it understood that the struggle of Canton against Hong Kong was serious, separate from the rest of China, and outside the effective reach of the Peking Government. Governor Stubbs wished to extend the reach of that government.¹⁵

¹⁴FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton," by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p. 7.

¹⁵For an editorial which provides an excellent review of earlier efforts to alter Foreign Office thinking and is itself a part of that effort, see "Why is Hongkong Always Ignored," in The Hong Kong Daily Press, September 23, 1925.

In this instance, the Governor advocated the use of the Peking Government as a veil for British action against Canton. He first proposed that Chinese authorities at Peking be held fully responsible for Kuomintang activities in the south. To fortify their resolve, he suggested that they be supplied with money and materiel which could be made available by a generous use of the British share of Boxer Indemnity funds. Noting the preparations then in progress by Ch'en Chiung-ming and other KMT opponents for a military campaign in Kwangtung, Governor Stubbs then further proposed that the Peking Government be induced to prohibit the importation of arms and ammunition except by its nominees. Ch'en, of course, would be one of them. To prevent the passage of Russian ships carrying arms to Canton, the Governor advocated that Peking be given the use of Hong Kong as a naval base from which British armed launches flying the flag of the northern government could be dispatched. Finally, twice rebuffed by the Foreign Office for schemes which would have provided monetary help to anti-Bolshevik groups in Canton, Governor Stubbs asked that a portion of Hong Kong's munitions supply be made available to Ch'en Chiung-ming.¹⁶

Before responding to the imaginative proposals of Governor Stubbs, the British Foreign Office requested the advice of its representatives in Canton and Peking. Consul-General Jamieson remained opposed to financial assistance for Peking, felt that interference with Russian ships

¹⁶See FO 371/10949, F 40600, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, September 12, 1925.

could be equated with a declaration of war, and doubted the wisdom of efforts meant to prevent the movement of Chinese vessels in and around Canton. British Charge d'Affairs Palairret attacked the Stubbs proposals on the grounds that the Peking Government could not possibly accept such actions. Any attempt to move against Canton with British support would, he argued, cost the Peking authorities what little popularity they still possessed. Convinced that the northern government would not risk open hostilities against Canton, Palairret, nevertheless, believed them to be secretly subsidizing the forces of Ch'en Chiung-ming. These views coincided with those held by members of the Foreign Office in London, and once again the Colonial Office found itself burdened with the sad duty of informing Governor Stubbs that his proposals were unacceptable.¹⁷

Canton in September, 1925: The Financial Crisis

When, on September 28, Consul-General Jamieson reported that a meeting had been held a few days earlier between Kuomintang leaders

¹⁷See FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton," by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p. 8. Discussion of this proposal in the Foreign Office revealed a growing hostility toward Governor Stubbs. Again, as he had on numerous other occasions, the Governor had put forward a scheme affecting British interests throughout China without first consulting with either Consul-General Jamieson in Canton or Charge d'Affaires Palairret in Peking. See FO 371/110949, F 4582/194/10, S.P. Waterlow to S. Wilson, Foreign Office, October 5, 1925. The animosity which had developed between Stubbs and Jamieson was well known in both the Foreign and Colonial Offices. The two men had not met since well before the strike began in June, 1925. See FO 371/110949, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, September 15, 1925. Consul-General Jamieson was made the subject of an editorial attack for inaction in "Sir James Jamieson," The Hong Kong Daily Press, August 14, 1925.

and Strike Committee representatives to outline terms for a strike settlement, the ready optimism which typified the reaction of Hong Kong residents to any of Canton's misfortunes again became evident. Newspapers in the colony engaged in a lively competition designed to determine which could outdistance its rivals by depicting the greatest number of Cantonese calamities. Following the expulsion of Hsu Ch'ung-chih and the assimilation of his troops into other KMT armies, the Kuomintang continued with military preparations needed to meet the threat of Ch'en Chiung-ming and his allies in the East River District of Kwangtung. These preparations provided additional strains on constricted party coffers. Rumors quickly began circulating in Hong Kong which suggested that the monthly allowance provided by the Kuomintang to the strikers would be withdrawn. It was also rumored that party leaders were incensed because strike funds were being misused.¹⁸

From the onset of the strike and boycott against Hong Kong, it had been apparent that if such a struggle was to be prolonged it could succeed only if adequately funded. As a result, contributions were solicited from

¹⁸For Jamieson's report on the meeting between KMT leaders and strikers' representatives, see FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton," by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p. 8. Typical of the coverage provided by the Hong Kong newspapers reporting that meeting is "Is the Boycott Near its End?" The Hong Kong Daily Press, September 28, 1925. Events surrounding the expulsion of Hsu Ch'ung-chih are described in Shun pao, September 23, 1925, p. 6; and FO 371/10924, Jamieson to Palairat, September 21, 1925. For the rumor in Hong Kong which held that the KMT would withdraw its strike allowance because of misappropriations, see The Hong Kong Telegraph, September 29, 1925.

among a wide variety of sources. From labor organizations and wealthy Chinese outside Kwangtung, the Strike Committee had or would receive \$200,000; from overseas Chinese \$1,300,000; from selling confiscated goods \$400,000; from fines to strike and boycott violators \$200,000; from local gentry and merchants \$20,000; from miscellaneous sources \$200,000; and most important, from the Kuomintang Government \$2,800,000. Throughout the greater part of the strike and boycott, the funds administered by the Strike Committee would total more than \$5,000,000.¹⁹

Although the Canton Strike Committee did on occasion find itself hard-pressed for funds and had to resort to unusual schemes to raise additional revenues, there is little to suggest that such was the case in September, 1925. There were, however, persistent rumors which questioned the Committee's allocation of funds. Many of those strikers fearful of a forced draft into the armies of the Kuomintang had either returned to Hong Kong or had fled to their village homes in Kwangtung.

¹⁹See Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 272; Chen Ta, The Chinese Economic Journal, Vol. I, No. 11, November, 1927, p. 951; FO 405/248, F 6227/194/10, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, November 23, 1925; and FO 371/11624, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, March 15, 1926. The figures of Chen Ta in Chung-kuo lao-tung wen-t'i, Shanghai, 1949, as cited in J. Chesneaux, The Chinese Labor Movement, 1919-1927, p. 293, also accord more or less with the above. Lewis Gannett, in The China Weekly Review, June 12, 1926, omitted the contribution of the Canton Government, placed the amount received from overseas Chinese at \$400,000, and presented a total closer to \$1,000,000. The dollar unit in general use throughout China during this period was the Yuan, the exchange value of which was subject to much fluctuation but usually equaled approximately U.S. \$0.50.

However, their names, and those of less fortunate comrades who had begun military duties, continued to appear on the rosters of the Canton Strike Committee--rosters which determined KMT monthly allocations for support of the strike and boycott. Rumors circulating in both Canton and Hong Kong held that some funds acquired by this means were being pocketed by strike leaders. That there was some corruption seems certain, but that it reached the proportions suggested by many in Hong Kong is doubtful.²⁰

The apparent wealth of the Canton Strike Committee in September, 1925, provided a sharp contrast to the plight of that city's merchant community. Although the resurgence of trade begun the preceding month had brought some relief, Cantonese merchants continued to labor under the depressive influence of the system of special permits then still in effect. Accustomed to seeing more than 90 percent of their trade flow to Hong Kong in what were considered normal times, many Cantonese merchants began working toward a boycott settlement. Through an exchange of letters with interested parties in Hong Kong, they hoped to bring about the start of informal negotiations.

²⁰See The Hong Kong Telegraph, August 31, and September 29, 1925; The South China Morning Post, October 19, 1925; The Hong Kong Daily Press, October 20, 1925. Consul-General Jamieson later indicated that a Chinese whose judgment he valued remained convinced that the strikers had more money than the government. Jamieson reported the strike fund as being \$1,500,000 and maintained that a picket leader received \$700 per month. He later revised the earlier figure to \$150,000. See FO 405/248, F 5996/194/10, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, November 9, 1925.

In Hong Kong, rumors were also widespread which suggested that certain Kuomintang leaders were prepared to see the strike and boycott come to an end. Chiang Kai-shek was said to be concerned over the activities of Kuomintang elements in Shanghai and Peking which were being encouraged and abetted by Sun Fo and other Canton anti-Bolsheviks. Chiang's friction with, and inability to control, the Canton Strike Committee was taken in Hong Kong as clear evidence that he, too, favored a settlement. In the meeting of September 24, reported on by Consul-General Jamieson, Chiang argued in favor of negotiations prolonged until after the defeat of Ch'en Chiung-ming. In his view, such a course would prevent merchants in Hong Kong from financing the military activities of Ch'en, and would open the way to settlement terms which could be made far more drastic.²¹

The September Negotiations of 1925

Chinese merchant organizations in Hong Kong had begun their efforts at finding a strike and boycott settlement by initiating correspondence with the Canton Strike Committee in the first weeks of September, 1925. Upon receiving a favorable reply dated September 11, but reaching Hong Kong much later, plans were completed for dispatching a delegation to Canton. When that Chinese merchant delegation arrived on September 28, it was presented with the following terms:

²¹ See Hsiang-kang ta pa-kung, p. 34; Shun pao, September 26, 1925; Soviet Intrigues in China, p. 25; and The Hong Kong Telegraph, September 30, 1925.

Shameen Strikers' Conditions

1. Chinese laborers on Shameen shall have full rights to convene meetings, &c.
2. All former employees shall be reinstated.
3. Eight hours a day.
4. Only Chinese police be employed.
5. East and West Gates to be closed at 12 a. m.
6. Chinese be allowed to walk and sit on the Bund.
7. Intercourse be allowed between representatives of the laborers and the foreign officials.
8. The British and French Municipal Council shall abrogate all ill-treatment against Chinese.

Hong Kong Strikers' Conditions

1. Chinese in Hong Kong shall have full rights to convene meetings, &c.
2. Chinese in Hong Kong shall enjoy the same treatment as the foreigners. Deportation and criminal laws on Chinese shall be abrogated.
3. Chinese shall have the right of voting and of being voted in the Legislative Council.
4. Eight hours' day, favorable wages, abrogation of foreman system, reformation of woman and child labor system, &c.
5. Reinstatement of former employees.
6. Issue of back pay.
7. Release of those arrested during the strike. Freedom to those deported shall be restored.
8. Compensation of tenants who lost their belongings by auction by the Government or landlord on account of non-payment of rental during the strike.
9. New rental regulations of the 1st July, 1925, shall be abrogated. Effective decrease of 25 per cent of rental.
10. Intercourse be allowed between representatives of the laborers and the foreign officials.
11. Restoration of right of license, certification, &c., granted to Chinese prior to the strike.
12. Equal terms to Chinese employees of steamers, factories, companies, &c.
13. Licenses and certificates shall be issued to all, irrespective of their nationalities (e. g., Chinese should have the right to take out license or certification for commanders, mates, &c., on board passenger boats).²²

²²FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton,"

The Hong Kong delegation, which carried with it no powers from its government to effect a settlement, had arrived in Canton in the expectation of opening friendly talks. Presented with the strikers' demands, it informed the Strike Committee representatives that such terms would require referral to the Hong Kong Government. The delegation then suggested that pending a reply, and prior to further discussions, the boycott be lifted. This the Strike Committee flatly rejected, and negotiations were immediately suspended. When interviewed shortly thereafter, Su Chao-cheng, the chairman of the Canton Strike Committee, accused the Hong Kong delegation of employing delaying tactics meant to assist Ch'en Chiung-ming. Su concluded by indicating that negotiations would not be resumed until after Ch'en's defeat.²³

The Defeat of Ch'en Chiung-ming:
October-November, 1925

In September, 1925, when the forces of Ch'en Chiung-ming captured Swatow, the local strike committee there had to suspend its operations. Under the control of Ch'en, Swatow experienced a mild trade revival as the boycott restrictions in force since July were relaxed. Despite the

by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p. 8-9. It is noteworthy that settlement of the Shameen incident was left to the Peking Government at this time. See FO 371/10924, Jamieson to Palairet, Canton, September 27, 1925.

²³Ibid., and CO 129/489, C 53914, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, October 30, 1925. For the interview with Su Chao-cheng, see The South China Morning Post, October 16, 1925.

closing of many unions and the arrest of their leaders, the Swatow Seamen's Union, however, continued to interfere with British shipping. Its efforts proved so successful that those British firms seeking to maintain restricted and unprofitable contact along the coast had to employ scratch crews made up of "white Russians." Throughout September, Ch'en Chiung-ming used Swatow as a rallying point from which forces under his leadership would launch an expedition designed to wrest control of Canton from the hands of the Kuomintang.²⁴

Among Chinese commercial groups in Hong Kong there was much sentiment for Ch'en; if he proved victorious at Canton, the anti-British boycott would, they predicted, quickly come to an end. In an effort to assist the anti-KMT forces gathering at Swatow, these groups approached the Hong Kong Government to seek its approval of sizeable loans to Ch'en Chiung-ming. Governor Stubbs informed London to that effect whereupon he was instructed to indicate that such loans were of no concern to His Majesty's Government. When three cruisers nominally belonging to the Peking Government under the command of an "Admiral Li" appeared at Hong Kong, Governor Stubbs petitioned London for permission to assist his efforts in curtailing the shipment of arms to Canton. Despite the

²⁴Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 277; FO 405/248, F 5830/2/10, Palairret to Chamberlain, Peking, October 18, 1925; and The South China Morning Post, September 14, 1925. For the observations of the British Consul in Swatow, see FO 405/250, F 405/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Kirke to Macleay, Swatow, November 15, 1925. See also, CO 129/489, C 49489, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, October 2, 1925.

lobbying for this proposal undertaken by members of the Colonial Office, the British Foreign Office rejected it also. Stubbs, without seeking further approval, provided "Admiral Li" with intelligence reports on those ships suspected of carrying munitions to the Kuomintang. Although no ships were actually interfered with, Canton countered by mining the passages into the Pearl River.²⁵

In late September, Ch'en Chiung-ming, having recently acquired 5,000 rifles from Shanghai, completed his plans for action against Canton. His treasury contained \$2,000,000 which he hoped to more than double as a result of promised loans from Chinese merchants in Hong Kong and pledges from the Peking Government. The campaign against Canton called for military attack by 8,000 men from the direction of the East River, and 5,000 men (mostly Hunanese) from the North River. These were to be coordinated with attacks from Kongmoon and from the West River above Sanshui. Almost from the first, Ch'en's campaign went badly. The fall of Waichow before Kuomintang troops commanded by Chiang Kai-shek on October 11 found his armies beating a hasty retreat. Enjoying superiority in discipline, armament, tactics, and morale, the forces of the KMT's Second Eastern Campaign continued to press forward while those of Ch'en fell back toward Swatow. Despite the arrival of reinforcements

²⁵For the loan scheme to assist Ch'en Chiung-ming, see CO 129/489, C 43724, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, September 26, 1925; and CO 129/491, C 45200, Amery to Stubbs, Colonial Office, October 9, 1925. The attempt to capitalize on the appearance of "Admiral Li" (Li Ching-hsi) at Hong Kong is discussed in CO 129/489, C 51869, Stubbs to Amery, October 16, 1925.

on October 26, Ch'en's military position deteriorated still further, and as the month came to an end it was apparent that the end was near. On October 31, Hong Kong provided assistance in the form of an airplane sent to Swatow aboard a British steamer; but in view of the hopeless situation there, it was returned the following day. When a few hundred KMT soldiers reached Swatow on November 5, Ch'en's armies, their leaders safe in Hong Kong, fled in complete disarray to Fukien.²⁶

Amid the uncertainty which gripped Canton during the initial stages of the Kuomintang's Second Eastern Campaign, the boycott against Hong Kong became noticeably weakened. On October 22, as previously noted, the Canton Strike Committee abolished its system of special permits. On the 26th, however, when it was apparent that the KMT's most powerful antagonists were in retreat, new settlement demands presented to Hong Kong reflected a renewed confidence among strikers in Canton.

²⁶For the assessment of the British Charge d'Affaires that the Peking Government was subsidizing Ch'en Chiung-ming, see FO 371/10949, F 4711, Palairet to Chamberlain, Peking, September 24, 1925. Ch'en's military resources and plans are described in FO 371/10924, Jamieson to Palairet, September 27, 1925. See also Kuo-wen chou-pao, September 27, 1925, p. 24-25. For the military struggle between Ch'en and the forces of the Kuomintang, see Hsiang-kang ta pa-kung, p. 30-32; Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 277; and Tung-fang tsa-chih, Vol. XXII, No. 22, November 25, 1925, p. 4-5. See also, Shun pao, October 1, 1925, p. 10; and Kuo-wen chou-pao, p. 21. Teng Chung-hsia maintains that Hong Kong provided substantial aid to Ch'en in Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 276. The unofficial support provided to Ch'en by Hong Kong's naval forces is discussed in FO 405/248, F 5830/2/10, Palairet to Chamberlain, October 18, 1925. Consul Kirke acknowledges the arrival of the airplane from Hong Kong in Enclosure No. 1, Kirke to Palairet, Swatow, November 7, 1925, in FO 405/250, F 198/10/10, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, December 2, 1925.

In addition to a provision by which labor representatives would be appointed to the Hong Kong Legislative Council, the new demands insisted on the immediate abolition of extraterritoriality. Once again it was demanded that the island of Shameen be returned to Chinese jurisdiction. This last demand, first enunciated in the aftermath of the Shameen incident of June 23, 1925, had not been heard in more than two months. In Swatow, Chiang Kai-shek, in a speech commemorating the KMT victory there, further increased the severity of the new settlement demands. Chiang insisted that his party would settle for nothing less than abolition of the unequal treaties and the return of Chinese control over the Maritime Customs.²⁷

The entry of Kuomintang armies into Swatow on November 5 and 6 soon revived the boycott against Hong Kong which Ch'en Chiung-ming had attempted to destroy. The few goods of British manufacture which had appeared there in September and October were immediately confiscated. Domestic servants who had defied the local strike committee and returned to work during that period were either kidnapped by strike pickets or simply disappeared. As the boycott against British shipping achieved its former effectiveness, the trade of the British-American Tobacco Company and The Asiatic Petroleum Company were again

²⁷FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, "Memorandum Respecting Canton," by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, February 3, 1926, p. 9. For the speech by Chiang Kai-shek, see Enclosure No. 2, in FO 405/250, F 622/1/10, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, December 17, 1925.

extinguished. The appointment of Ch'en Ko-min, one of the principal organizers of the boycott in late June and early July, 1925, as mayor of Swatow left no doubt in the minds of British observers as to the dominant position enjoyed by the strikers in that city.²⁸

Hong Kong in November, 1925:
A New Face Views an Old Problem

As October came to an end in Hong Kong, so did the tenure of Governor Sir R. E. Stubbs. He had been scheduled to leave the colony at the end of June, 1925; but in view of the emergency created by the Chinese strike and boycott against Hong Kong, he had been asked to stay on. Within both the British Foreign and Colonial Offices there were some who had come to regret that decision. The new Governor, Sir C. Clementi, on taking office at the beginning of November, 1925, found the usual channels of communication among British officials disrupted. Consul-General Jamieson, fearing assassination if he were to venture into Canton, remained a virtual prisoner on Shameen. His sources of information on Kuomintang activities were the other foreign Consuls and the reports of his own subordinates. Although Jamieson maintained contact with both the British Charge d'Affaires in Peking and

²⁸Enclosure No. 1, Consul Kirke to Palairat, Swatow, November 7, 1925, in FO 405/250, F 198/10/10, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, December 2, 1925. For a detailed account of the activities of the strikers in Swatow after the arrival of the Kuomintang armies, see Enclosure No. 3, "Extracts from Recent Issues of the Swatow Native Press," in FO 405/250, F 408/1/10, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, December 7, 1925.

the Foreign Office in London, the animosity which had developed between him and former Governor Stubbs had prevented an exchange of information between Hong Kong and Shameen almost from the start of the Chinese strike and boycott. Governor Stubbs, apparently believing it unnecessary to ascertain the views of other British officials in China, had contented himself by communicating only with the Colonial Office in London.²⁹

Soon after assuming office, Governor Clementi invited Jamieson to Hong Kong in hopes of finding, between themselves, a means of moving the stalled negotiations with Canton. When, in December, a delegation of Cantonese merchants made a friendly visit to Hong Kong, Governor Clementi told them of his willingness to appoint "a strong deputation of merchants to visit Canton and to negotiate a settlement." Clementi made his offer on the condition that the Canton Government would appoint representatives of equal importance to meet them. Subsequently informed that the Canton delegation would consist of three members of the Strike Committee together with the chairman of the Canton General Chamber of Commerce, the Governor withdrew his appointment.³⁰

²⁹See FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, Annex XVI, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, December 23, 1925. As early as July, 1925, Stubbs had become the subject of criticism within the Colonial Office. One assessment of his then current proposal for intervention concluded: "In view of Stubbs' past attempts to interfere in Cantonese affairs present proposal regarded with some suspicion. Governor's language toward the end is so strong that he seems to have lost his sense of proportion." See CO 129/489, Minute by J. J. Paskin and A. E. Collins, Colonial Office, July 27, 1925.

³⁰FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, Annex XVI, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, December 23, 1925.

After additional correspondence between Clementi and Wang Ching-wei, Fu P'ing-chang, and C. C. Wu in which the issue remained one of selecting proper delegates (Canton insisted that Hong Kong appoint plenipotentiary delegates while members of the Canton Government would serve as mediators only), T. V. Soong (Sung Tzu-wen) the Minister of Finance arrived in the colony for settlement discussions. In meetings on December 19 with the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, A. G. M. Fletcher, the Attorney-General, J. H. Kemp, the Secretary of Chinese Affairs, E. R. Hallifax, and D. W. Tratman, Soong put forward the political demands outlined by the strikers at the end of September. In addition, he emphasized that without guarantees that substitutes would be dismissed and the strikers reinstated, and that compensation would be provided for the period of the strike and boycott, no settlement would be possible.³¹

On his return to Canton, Soong was accompanied by Colonial Secretary Fletcher, who, vested with full powers, met for further discussions with Soong, Wang Ching-wei, C. C. Wu, and Fu P'ing-chang. In the course of those discussions the political demands of the strikers were shelved, and the issue became clearly one of compensation. Fletcher maintained that while the Hong Kong Government could not negotiate on

³¹FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, Enclosure in Annex XVI, "Record of an Interview between His Excellency the Governor and Mr. T. V. Soong Finance Commissioner to the Canton National Government at Government House on Saturday, December 19, 1925."

such an issue, it would have no objection to a delegation made up of Hong Kong Chinese merchants doing so. The Canton representatives then agreed to exercise restraints on the strikers with regard to political demands provided the compensation question could be resolved.³²

On December 26, a delegation made up of eight Chinese merchants departed Hong Kong for Canton. On arrival, they were confronted by C. C. Wu, who, the previous agreement with Colonial Secretary Fletcher notwithstanding, informed them that the political demands remained paramount, and that they could only be resolved through direct negotiations between the Hong Kong Government and the strikers. As Governor Clementi later reported, "Wu defines the matter as not a bargain for compensation, but a political and patriotic contest with Great Britain in general and Hong Kong in particular."³³

On January 6, 1925, T. V. Soong again went to Hong Kong ostensibly to meet his sister, the widow of Sun Yat-sen, then enroute to Canton. While in the colony, he again met with the Governor and, apprised of C. C. Wu's role in the recent negotiations impasse, expressed surprise that such an attitude had been adopted. Governor Clementi then proposed that they consider a settlement by which, in exchange for a resumption

³²Colonial Secretary A. G. M. Fletcher, "Diary of a Visit to Canton, December 20 to 23, 1925," Enclosure in FO 371/11621, F 513/1/10, Annex XVI; and CO 129/489, C 58043, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, December 24, 1925.

³³FO 405/250, F 822/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, January 7, 1926.

of normal relations, the Hong Kong Government would finance a transportation scheme beneficial to both governments. This scheme would involve the construction of a loopline railway at Canton to connect the Canton-Kowloon and Canton-Hankow Railways, the completion of the Canton-Hankow Railway, and the construction of a branch line from Fanling via Sha-tau-kok, Mirs Bay and Bias Bay to Wai Chau. In the absence of a favorable response to this latest Hong Kong initiative, negotiations were once again suspended.³⁴

Canton and Hong Kong, December, 1925:
An Economic Appraisal

As 1925 drew to a close, it had become increasingly apparent that the strike and boycott launched against Hong Kong in June of that year had not only done serious damage to the economic interests of Great Britain in south China, but that it had also dramatically improved the position of an economically independent Canton. The statistics of the Canton Maritime Customs demonstrate the remarkable recovery made since the months of June and July when the old pattern of trade was shattered.

³⁴Ibid., and Enclosure No. 3, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, January 13, 1926.

REVENUE COLLECTION: CANTON MARITIME CUSTOMS*

<u>1924</u>	<u>Hk. tael</u> s	<u>1925</u>	<u>Hk. tael</u> s
January	370,061,919	January	257,541,199
February	276,990,604	February	285,852,166
March	395,107,614	March	309,847,574
April	319,758,261	April	251,959,454
May	401,217,818	May	274,832,372
June	322,488,074	June	173,616,699
July	229,523,129	July	70,711,026
August	281,816,088	August	150,180,026
September	289,632,629	September	232,407,822
October	242,078,625	October	306,125,853
November	319,835,595	November	362,605,223
December	292,564,013	December	333,297,604
		<u>1926</u>	
		January	463,162,749

*PRO, Confidential Prints (FO 405/250), F 1393/296/10, Enclosure No. 2, in Consul-General Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, February 22, 1926.

The enthusiasm generated in Canton by the issuance of new schemes for the dredging of harbors and waterways, and for the development of Whampoa as an ocean port created alarm in Hong Kong. In London, where memories of similar schemes announced by Sun Yat-sen remained vivid, assurances that such plans were either impractical or beyond Chinese capabilities brought lively debate. Articles in British and American periodicals, after questioning the basis of the economic relationship which had existed between Hong Kong and Kwangtung, concluded that Hong Kong's past prosperity was won at Canton's expense. In January, 1926, as he watched the large number of ships anchored in the Pearl River awaiting the discharge of their cargoes, Consul-General Jamieson reported to London that it appeared that Canton could carry on without

Hong Kong indefinitely.³⁵

British shipping to Canton in the last five months of 1925 was reduced from the 2,252,279 tons of the same period in 1924 to 266,930 tons. This last figure represents the commandeered river steamer Tung On sent from Hong Kong to maintain supplies for Shameen's few remaining inhabitants. The value of foreign goods shipped from Hong Kong to all Chinese ports in 1925 was reduced by 28 percent when compared with the previous year. Chinese goods from Hong Kong were diminished by more than 35 percent over the same period. The number of ships entering and clearing at Hong Kong in 1925 was 379,177 vessels, 52 percent fewer than those of the previous year. A comparison of statistics for these two years also indicates a 45.4 percent reduction in the number of foreign river steamers and a 43 percent reduction in the number of British river steamers touching at Hong Kong. While these figures indicate the magnitude of Hong Kong's shipping losses in the first five months of the strike and boycott, they do not measure losses due to the failure of banks and other businesses, lost wages and

³⁵The figures provided by G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," in The North China Herald, May 8, 1926, p. 280, also taken from the Maritime Customs Reports are unreliable. Not only are the last three digits of revenue figures for each month omitted, but also, misprints such as "October-1925-26 -- 806,125" instead of October-1925-26 -- 306,125,853 appear throughout. For discussion of Canton's harbor improvement schemes, see FO 371/10957, F 5210, Minutes on Hong Kong and Canton, Foreign Office, October 26, 1925. See also, The New Leader, London, August 28, 1925; and The New Republic, New York, September 9, 1925. For the views of Consul-General Jamieson regarding Canton's prosperity in January, 1926, see FO 405/250, F758/1/10, Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, January 18, 1926.

working days, and the ruinous drop in the value of land and shares.

Estimates have indicated that throughout the most severe periods of the strike and boycott Hong Kong suffered losses amounting to \$2,000,000 Chinese currency (approximately U.S. \$1,000,000) per day. When interviewed on January 14, 1926, L. N. Leefe, Chairman of the China Association and a Director in Jardine, Matheson and Company, had this to say:

British prestige and British trade in Southern China are going to be ruined unless the boycott is brought to an end. Trade in Hong Kong had been brought to an absolute standstill. British shipping companies are not trading with Canton and Swatow, and they will have to go out of business altogether unless the British Government does something about it.³⁶

³⁶The economic losses of Hong Kong are discussed in Lewis S. Gannett, "Why Canton is Radical Center of Asia," The China Weekly Review, June 12, 1926, p. 30; CO 129/488, C 38894, Stubbs to Amery, Hong Kong, July 24, 1925; and Chen Ta, The Chinese Economic Journal, Vol. I, No. 11, November, 1927, p. 951. For statistics less dependent on the Chinese Maritime Customs than those of Chen Ta, see The Hong Kong Telegraph, January 21, 1926; and G. Sokolsky, "A Visit to Hong Kong and Canton," in The North China Herald, May 15, 1926, p. 327. Hong Kong's losses were often expressed in Haikwan taels, a term for an uncoined weight of silver utilized by the Chinese Maritime Customs in its collections and statistics. The Hk Tael was 583.3 grains of silver 1.000 fine and equaled \$1.50 Chinese currency. For a listing of the principal Taels then current in China, and the rates of exchange prevailing in Shanghai in December, 1925, see The Chinese Economic Bulletin, Vol. VIII, No. 254, January 2, 1926, p. 12. For the interview with L. N. Leefe, see The Morning Post (London), January 14, 1926.

CHAPTER IV

THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26: THE STRUGGLE FRAGMENTED

The Kuomintang Second Party Congress, January, 1926

In the last weeks of December, 1925, as delegates to the Kuomintang's Second Party Congress began arriving in Canton, Hong Kong observers remained preoccupied with fears generated by the enhanced position of political power and influence acquired by the Canton Strike Committee. Since the onset of the strike and boycott, these observers had viewed with mounting distress the efforts of some individuals in Canton to bolster their own political fortunes by association with and concessions to the many strikers' organizations. The unsuccessful attempts to curb the activities of strike pickets in November and December, undertaken by those Chinese in Canton who had come to view the Strike Committee as a growing menace, further undermined the confidence of British officials in Hong Kong. By the end of the year Governor Clementi, whose assessment brought concurrence among other foreign officials, began terming the Strike Committee the de facto government in Canton.¹

¹Jay C. Huston noted the assistance rendered the Strike Committee by Chiang Kai-shek which took the form of arming and training strike pickets under the leadership of Whampoa cadets. See notes dated August

The influence of Chinese Communist members upon the Canton Strike Committee, the Committee's reliance on Russian advisers and its attachments to the Comintern had aroused an early hostility among that group within the Kuomintang which remained bitterly opposed to its party's "Soviet orientation." In the turmoil which surrounded the assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai in August, 1925, however, many members of this group found the political climate at Canton unhealthy; some fled hastily to Shanghai and Peking. In November they met outside Peking at the tomb of Sun Yat-sen where, after swearing loyalty to his principles, the Western Hills Group (as they were thereafter known) pledged themselves to purification of the Kuomintang. Their political philosophy remained that expressed by Tai Chi-t'ao at Canton in August, 1925--an anti-communistic nationalism wedded to the memory of Sun Yat-sen. Disturbed by political developments in Canton since their departure, the Western Hills Group, on the eve of the second KMT Congress, called for the ouster of Wang Ching-wei and support for Chiang Kai-shek. Wary of the reception

6 and 7, and September 17, 1925, in the Huston Collection. See also, FO 371/10924, Jamieson to Palairat, Canton, September 21, 1925. Among the attempts to limit the power of the Strike Committee was that of Wu T'ieh-ch'eng in November, 1925. Wu as Chief of Police and Garrison Commander in Canton had become increasingly displeased by the actions of pickets engaged in making many non-strike related arrests. His unsuccessful attempt to disarm the pickets may well have contributed to an early departure for Shanghai in order to attend to his mother's funeral arrangements. See The South China Morning Post, November 25, 1925. For the efforts of Wu to control the actions of the Strike Committee after his return to Canton, see Lao-kung yun-tung shih, Vol. II, p. 513-514. For the views of Governor Clementi and others on the Strike Committee, see 129/488, C 58043, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, November 20, 1925;

they might receive, they ignored the urging of those in Canton who summoned them to resolve outstanding political differences. Instead, the Western Hills Group convened a separate congress in Shanghai.²

The resolutions passed by the 176 delegates to the Kuomintang Second Party Congress convened at Canton reflected the strength of those elements within the party which foreign observers had come to call the "Leftists." The platform adopted in 1924 which emphasized the acceptance of Soviet assistance and the participation of Chinese Communists and Russian advisers in party affairs was re-affirmed once again. In addition, the Kuomintang pledged its continued support to labor's struggle against Hong Kong and renewed its support for the leadership of Wang Ching-wei. Although the Western Hills Group was rebuked by denial of participation or membership on all Kuomintang committees, Tai Chi-t'ao, first elected in 1924, was returned to the Central Executive Committee (C. E. C.). Sun Fo, like Tai, while not a member of the Western Hills

and Fletcher, "Diary of a Visit to Canton, December 20 to 23, 1925," in FO 405/250, F 439/1/10, Colonial Office to Foreign Office, February 3, 1926.

²For the views of Tai Chi-t'ao, regarded by many as the spiritual leader of the Western Hills Group, see his Chung-kuo tu-li yun-tung ti chi-tien (Canton: 1925.) Of the many articles devoted to the subject in the Chinese press of early January, 1926, most maintained that differences between the Western Hills faction and the Kuomintang in Canton were not of philosophy but of method. See, for example, Chung-kuo kuo-min, January 1, 1926, p. 2. For unsuccessful attempts to maintain party unity and discourage the Shanghai meeting, see Wang Ching-wei, "How Should We Use Our Efforts," in Chung-kuo kuo-min, January 7, 1926, p. 1-3; and Wah-tsz yat-po (Hua-tzu jih-pao), January 15, 1926, p. 3.

faction, had frequently expressed that group's sentiments. In January, 1926, as he returned from north China, Sun was met at Shanghai by Ch'en Tu-hsiu and other Communists intent on preventing a KMT split. They insisted that they had no desire to dominate events at Canton. When he arrived there, Sun found that he, too, had been elected to the CEC of the Kuomintang.³

For those in Hong Kong aware of the dissensions which existed among Kuomintang members in Canton and Shanghai, the second KMT Congress came as a great disappointment. Officials in the British colony had hoped that the rightists in Canton and Shanghai would succeed to power and end the struggle against Hong Kong. Not only had the rightists failed, but as it was becoming increasingly apparent, those in Canton who desired a resumption of normal relations with Hong Kong, regardless of their political persuasion, could only bring the struggle to an end by promising a great strikers' victory. Anything less would jeopardize their own political positions.

³For the activities of the KMT Second Party Congress, see Hsiang-kang ta pa-kung, p. 34-35; Chung-kuo kuo-min, January 10, 1926, p. 4, and January 22, 1926, p. 4; Kuo-wen chou-pao, January 10, 1926, p. 34, and January 17, 1926, p. 23; Shun pao, January 10, 1926, p. 9; and Wah-tsz yat-po, January 12, 1926, p. 3. Teng Chung-hsia, in his discussion of the KMT Second Party Congress, maintains that Hong Kong was actively pursuing a policy at this time of using the rightists in Canton against those who continued to support the boycott against Hong Kong. See Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 278-279. Sun Fo's return to Canton is discussed in Shun pao, January 8, 1926, p. 13. For a background on Sun's return and his meeting with members of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai, see Chang Kuo-t'ao, The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party 1921-1927, Lawrence, Kansas, 1971, p. 463-465. A speech given by Sun Fo to a group of overseas Chinese in which he supports the strike and boycott against Hong Kong appears in The Canton Gazette, January 13, 1926. For Sun Fo's meeting with Governor Clementi while enroute to Canton, see FO 405/250, F 758/1/10, Enclosure No. 2, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, January 8, 1926.

Great Britain and the KMT:
The Continued Search for a Forward Policy

The failure of the December negotiations to bring about a settlement of the boycott against Hong Kong and the decisions reached at the second KMT Congress in January, 1926, created an atmosphere in which, for the first time, British officials began to place their interest in the political affairs of the Kuomintang above their interests in the rest of China. On January 10, Consul-General Jamieson, believing that the KMT was prepared to end the struggle against Hong Kong if the foreign powers would recognize it as the Central government of China, suggested that the Foreign Office give serious consideration to the recognition question. In the interim, Jamieson could see no hope for a boycott settlement unless the foreign powers with the concurrence of the government at Peking agreed to institute a blockade at Canton. In the view of members of the British Foreign Office there could be no question of recognition for Canton. Although recent events in north China had once again involved contests for control of Peking, the Foreign Office felt compelled by their agreement at the Washington Conference to continue the fiction that there was only one government in China, ruling at that capital. Recourse to a blockade against Canton was once again rejected. The inability of British officials to secure the participation of other powers for such action during the previous summer was recalled; and it was agreed that, because foreign ships and merchants were realizing substantial profits at Canton, international participation in a blockade against that city in January, 1926, remained

impossible. Anticipating the possibility, that when Parliament convened in February it might be charged with either negligence or weakness, the Foreign Office requested suggestions for action at Canton that would have the concurrence of the British Minister in Peking, the Governor of Hong Kong, and Consul-General Jamieson at Canton.⁴

Correspondence between Governor Clementi and the British Minister in Peking, Sir R. Macleay, undertaken in the first weeks of January, 1926, provided the Foreign Office with clear evidence that both remained strongly opposed to any war-like action against Canton. Jamieson shared this view but recognized that, in the absence of other successful initiatives for a settlement, the use of force might still be necessary as a last resort. On January 13, Governor Clementi convened a conference the purpose of which was to discuss the recent political activities in Canton. In attendance were Consul-General Jamieson, General Luard, the Military Commander of Hong Kong, Admiral Sir E. Sinclair the British Naval Commander-in-chief, and the Governor together with immediate members of his staff.

At the onset, it was agreed that the possibility of any Chinese force outside Kwangtung launching an attack against the Kuomintang remained remote. The only threat to the Canton Government appeared to be the

⁴Consul-General Jamieson's views are presented in FO 371/11620, F 95/1/10, Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, January 10, 1926. For discussion of these views within the Foreign Office, see FO 371/11620, F 95/1/10, Minutes by G.S. Moss, F. Ashton-Gwatkin, and G. Mounsey, Foreign Office, January 11, 1926.

disruptive forces within the ranks of the KMT. While these were seen as posing no serious menace to the continued existence of that government, it was hoped that dissensions in Canton would lead to the expulsion of the Russians and the dismantling of the Strike Committee. Of particular interest were the attitudes of Sun Fo and Chiang Kai-shek. Sun, despite his recent anti-British speech to overseas Chinese while enroute to Canton, was believed to be working for the expulsion of the Russians and the elimination of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang, on the other hand, supposedly unaware of a revolt alleged to be planned by large numbers of officers within his army, was believed in Hong Kong to be ready to move against the anti-communist members of the Canton Government.⁵

The conference in Hong Kong of January 13 concluded with a discussion of a possible blockade against Canton undertaken either internationally or by Great Britain acting alone. Once again there was complete agreement that such action could not bring a satisfactory end to Hong Kong's problems. The suggestion was then made that, with the assurance of a positive attitude on the part of Chinese leaders in Peking, the British difficulties at Canton might be brought before the League of

⁵ For the views of British officials in China opposed to military action at Canton, see FO 371/11623, Clementi to Macleay, Hong Kong, January 11, 1926. The conference of January 13, is described in FO 405/250, F 758/1/10, Enclosure No. 7, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, January 14, 1926. The view in Hong Kong regarding Sun Fo and Chiang Kai-shek was based largely on a confidential report submitted by a Chinese who identified himself as the brother-in-law of Sun Fo. According to this report, Sun's activities included convincing many of Chiang's officers to revolt. The report concluded, not surprisingly, with a request

Nations. As in the previous summer when this proposal had first been put forward, there was no hope that a League censure would bring a stop to the boycott, but it might prove a moral blow to the government in Canton. When the conference ended, its participants were agreed that there was no practical means of defeating the boycott beyond holding out until the leaders at Canton were overthrown through internal dissension.⁶

At the suggestion of the British Foreign Office, the arrival in Hong Kong of Owen O'Malley, the newly appointed counsellor to the British Legation at Peking, became the occasion of another conference at Government House. Aware of the desire within the Foreign Office to have ready a policy of action with which to rebut parliamentary critics, the participants at this conference on January 25, 1926 could do no more than to put forward a plan whose component parts were already subject to grave doubt. The plan called for a censure of the Canton Government by the League of Nations which would almost certainly be ignored. The British Government would then be expected to obtain the cooperation of the major powers for a blockade against Canton until the boycott was terminated. Because the Soviet Union in all likelihood would refuse to cooperate, the

for financial assistance in the amount of \$1,000,000. See FO 405/250, F 758/1/10, Enclosure No. 9, Clementi to Amery, January 15, 1926.

⁶Apart from the difficulties anticipated in any further attempts to secure international cooperation, a blockade of Canton was opposed on the grounds that it would spread anti-British sentiment throughout China, and would leave a legacy of hatred which could prove devastating to Hong Kong. See, FO 405/250, F 758/1/10, Enclosure No. 7, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, January 14, 1926.

Chinese navy would be required to prevent the passage of Russian and Chinese ships to Canton. The agreement among those at the conference that the principal cause of the boycott was the presence of Soviet advisers in Canton led to the final component of the plan--action by British representatives at Moscow geared to obtaining the recall of Borodin and his Russian comrades.⁷

The sponsors of this plan were well aware of the objections it would raise in London, objections they themselves shared; but short of an actual declaration of war against Canton, they could envision no other active policy. They concluded their deliberations by putting forth the same views which had emerged from the conference of January 13, views which implied a passive policy of waiting for some Chinese leader to alter the composition of the Canton Government.⁸

As pressure mounted in the British press and among influential business leaders for some form of action at Canton, the Foreign Office

⁷See FO 405/250, F 1024/1/10, Enclosures Nos. 1-3, Colonial Office to Foreign Office, March 10, 1926.

⁸Ibid. Of the objections raised to the various components of this plan, those surrounding the first two were aired at the conference of January 13. The involvement of the Chinese navy, a few vessels operating off the south China coast without regard to the wishes of Peking, would have required British assistance. This the Foreign Office could not provide unless it was willing to disregard the restraints imposed at the Washington Conference which forbade interference with Chinese domestic politics. Action at Moscow could not go beyond the threat to withdraw the British mission; an act which held little prospect for success. See FO 405/250, F 242/1/10, Annex XVIII, Sir W. Tyrrell to Macleay, Foreign Office, January 29, 1926; and FO 405/250, F 1191/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, February 2, 1926. See also, FO 405/250, F 439/1/10, Foreign Office to Colonial Office, February 17, 1926.

hurriedly sought the advice of the British Minister at Peking. Sir Ronald Macleay, unfortunately, could not improve upon the suggestions offered earlier at Hong Kong. Macleay clung to the unwarranted and somewhat exaggerated belief that either Wu P'ei-fu or Sun Ch'uan-fang would soon launch a major military expedition against Canton that would eliminate the last vestiges of Bolshevik intrigue and influence in Kwangtung. Assuming that such a campaign would require foreign support, Macleay suggested that the Foreign Office reconsider its policy of non-involvement in Chinese internal affairs. In the interim, he joined the chorus of other official voices in advocating a policy of inaction.⁹

When Parliament convened beginning February 2, the British Foreign Office had just completed an assessment of the desirability of offering recognition to the Canton Government in return for an end to the boycott against Hong Kong. Some members felt that the time had either come or was fast approaching when the Foreign Office would have to give up the fiction of one government at Peking nominally in control of all China. They held that such action would pose no conflict with Article I of the treaty signed at Washington on February 6, 1922, by which the powers agreed "to respect the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial and administrative integrity of China." Opponents of granting

⁹See FO 405/250, F 242/1/10, Sir W. Tyrrell to Macleay, Foreign Office, January 26, 1926; and Enclosures (C-E), Macleay to Chamberlain, January 30 and February 1, 1926. See also, FO 405/250, F 1191/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, February 2, 1926.

recognition to Canton agreed that it was most difficult to respect something that no longer existed because of China's internal weakness, but they noted that Article I also pledged them "to provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government." Although the question of recognition to Canton, first raised by Consul-General Jamieson in January, 1926, did not then attract important support, it was to remain a major topic of discussion among policy makers in London anxious to come to terms with the Kuomintang.¹⁰

On February 10, 1926, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Austen Chamberlain, faced the critics of a continued policy of inaction in the House of Commons. In response to questions requiring a justification of the Foreign Office's failure to adopt forceful initiatives in China, Chamberlain, in language which had been suggested by Sir Ronald Macleay, reviewed the unsuccessful settlement negotiations between Hong Kong and Canton that had taken place in December, 1925. He expressed satisfaction with the reduction of anti-British sentiment and the revival of trade that had occurred in the Yangtze Valley, and insisted that it had been won through a British policy of patience and moderation. Perhaps unduly influenced by the views of Macleay, Chamberlain maintained that Chinese feeling against the extremist faction at Canton

¹⁰See FO 405/250, F 364/364/10, "Note respecting attitude of His Majesty's Government towards Canton Government," F. Ashton-Gwatkin, H. W. Malkin, and M. W. Lampson, Foreign Office, January 28-30, 1926.

was spreading and that, in the absence of British interference which could only serve to unite all China against the foreign aggressor, the Chinese themselves might move to extinguish the power of those who clung to Russian influence. Thus, in the first months of 1926, after which the boycott against Hong Kong would continue for yet another eight months, British policy was essentially what it had been at the start of the struggle with Canton.¹¹

Great Britain and the Tariff Conference at Peking:
A New View of the KMT

Although British policy in south China had undergone no formal change since the troubled days of June, 1925, attitudes toward the Kuomintang in Canton at the beginning of 1926 were being gradually transformed. The suggestion by Sir James W. Jamieson that the Foreign Office consider the experiment of offering Canton some form of jurisdictional recognition is indicative of that transformation. The Kuomintang had always regarded Jamieson as an implacable foe, and Sir James accepted and even relished that posture. Yet, impressed by the efforts of the KMT at local reform, and convinced that its tenure in Kwangtung was secure, Jamieson had suggested a form of conciliation.

When, as a result of agreements reached at the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, a conference was convened at Peking on October

¹¹For the questions asked of Sir Austen Chamberlain, some of which were motivated by little more than partisan politics, and his responses, see FO 405/250, F 561/1/10, "Questions asked in the House of Commons, February 10, 1926."

26, 1925, to consider the question of the Chinese tariff, Great Britain stood ready to go beyond those agreements by favoring a grant of complete tariff autonomy to be acquired by stages. With the Conference less than one month old, the assembled powers agreed that on January 1, 1929 a Chinese national tariff law would become effective. They could not agree, however, on the rates to be allowed in the interim. British representatives favored an increase of up to 12.5 percent which proved most unsatisfactory to the Japanese. Attempts to find an acceptable formula for an increase in the Chinese tariff continued until late December when the Conference recessed. Throughout these deliberations, the British delegation had ignored the opposition of the Kuomintang to the Tariff Conference.¹²

Kuomintang opposition to the Tariff Conference convened at Peking rested on the assumption that any increase in customs collections would go to the Central Government whose treasury would quickly become subject to the raids of various northern warlords seeking to enlarge their own war chests. In December, 1925, the British Foreign Office moved to meet this objection. It instructed Macleay to announce to his foreign colleagues that the British Government could acquiesce no longer in a policy by which the customs revenues collected throughout China reached

¹²For the activities of the British, American, and Japanese delegates at the tariff conference together with the response of the Chinese delegates appointed by the Peking Government, see Iriye, op. cit., p. 63-80. For American attitudes toward the conference, see Cohen, op. cit., 113-116.

the hands of the Peking Government only because the foreign powers were prepared to use force to that end. Instead, the British Minister was to indicate that his government was prepared to see the customs revenues collected at each port turned over to local Chinese commissioners. Such a policy would mean automatic provincial allocation. If those in power at Peking wished the situation otherwise, they would have to conclude their own arrangements without the usual recourse to the power of foreign gunboats.¹³

But in the view of Sir Ronald Macleay, "the best Chinese opinion" favored not only maintenance but even a strengthening of the customs administration under foreign control. In addition, the British Minister appeared convinced that the new Foreign Office proposal could not possibly be meant to apply to Canton. It remained for the British Foreign Office to inform him that the entire proposal had been inspired precisely because Canton's boycott of Hong Kong threatened to ruin the shipping trade and foreshadowed similar occurrences elsewhere in China. In its telegram to Macleay the Foreign Office replied:

We are not convinced that Canton is merely Bolshevik and therefore alien to the rest of China and not amenable to the same treatment. Though boycott is prompted by Bolsheviks does its root not lie rather in past refusal to allot due shares of customs to Canton? Would not concession in matter of customs revenues tend to promote settlement by strengthening hand of Right or even Left Kuomintang who are uneasy under Soviet domination? And if Conference persists in present course is there not real danger of ultimate seizure of customs revenues

¹³See CO 129/495, F 17/2/10, Foreign Office to Macleay, London, December 31, 1925.

or establishment of rival local custom house at Canton and reproduction of Canton situation elsewhere? Present policy of Conference seems to us to be direct descendant of policy of interference that has been largely responsible for present position at Canton. . . .

Nor could the Foreign Office resist an attempt to correct the myopia which seemed to affect Macleay's assessments of internal Chinese politics. Its telegram concluded:

. . . Now how far is "best Chinese opinion" really representative of China or how far merely of Peking? How far is it qualified to speak for and guarantee the acquiescence of nationalists and provinces? Viewed from this end we seem to be face to face with a strong widespread and growing nationalist movement, not confined to a few students but embracing Chinese of diverse classes and opinions, and aiming at total elimination of foreign interference. It has every appearance of being the real force of the future in China. Do we overestimate its influence? ¹⁴

Although the Tariff Conference was to reconvene in February, 1926, continued warfare among the northern militarists seeking to occupy Peking and the inability of the representatives of foreign powers to find further agreement doomed it to failure. Formal meetings continued until April after which the commissioners met infrequently until the Conference withered and died in July.

The Customs Seizure Incident, February, 1926

The power of the Canton Strike Committee to influence Kuomintang politics reached its zenith at the second KMT Congress; thereafter, its inability to command sufficient revenues and its involvement in activities that threatened KMT security in Kwangtung led to a rapidly accelerating

¹⁴See CO 129/495, F 52/10/10, Foreign Office to Macleay, London, January 13, 1926.

decline. In January, 1926, amid reports of sharp increases in the price of kerosene and luxury items in Canton, rumors gained currency in Hong Kong which suggested that the boycott would be relaxed during Chinese New Year so that merchants could settle outstanding accounts. British authorities in Hong Kong noted, however, that among Chinese commercial interests in the colony vigorous attempts were being made to forestall financial settlements that could only lead to bankruptcy. On January 16, Consul-General Jamieson observed that the Strike Committee had laid to rest this and other rumors concerning a relaxation of the boycott by publishing its intention to dispatch 400 additional pickets for frontier duty.¹⁵

The visit to Canton in January of 280 self-proclaimed Chinese merchants from Hong Kong resulted in many of them joining the Kuomintang, and their return later that same month made Governor Clementi apprehensive. The Governor's fears, which proved to be valid, were that the "fraternity party," as this group was termed, would be used to incite disturbances during Chinese New Year (the week surrounding February 13); a period set aside by the Canton Strike Committee for attempts to launch another general strike in Hong Kong. The strike, despite careful preparations,

¹⁵FO 405/250, F 758/1/10, Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, January 18, 1926. Typical of the rumors regarding a boycott relaxation are those found in The Hong Kong Telegraph, January 7, 1926, and The Hong Kong Daily Press, January 9, 1926.

failed to attract many adherents and proved damaging to Strike Committee prestige. Undoubtedly, the widespread belief among Chinese in Hong Kong that the Committee's strike fund was being rapidly depleted dissuaded many whose sympathies were with Canton from again downing tools.¹⁶

While the financial distress of the Canton Strike Committee in late January and early February was real, it was not yet acute. Although many of the sources from which large sums had been gathered earlier were no longer available, the Kuomintang continued its regular, if somewhat reduced, monthly contribution to the strikers. A circular telegram sent by the KMT and intercepted in Hong Kong revealed that efforts had not been abandoned to re-stimulate overseas Chinese support to the strikers in Canton. When the Strike Committee in February threatened to extend the boycott to include the goods of Japan, merchants of that nation fulfilled its expectations by contributing \$250,000. Throughout the month of February interference with foreign shipping and the seizure of some vessels for ransom continued.¹⁷

¹⁶See FO 405/250, F 758/1/10, Enclosure No. 3, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, January 13, 1926; and FO 405/251, F 1757/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, February 23, 1926. See also, Wah-tsz yat-po, December 29, 1925.

¹⁷For a British translation of the intercepted KMT telegram which bore the signatures of Wang Ching-wei, C. C. Wu, and Sun Fo among others, see FO 405/250, F 1766/1/10, Enclosure No. 2, "Translation of Circular Telegram from Canton, dated February 22, 1926." The date of this telegram is interesting in that it coincides with the beginning of the customs seizure incident. The contribution of Japanese Merchants to avert a boycott and the continued interference of the Strike Committee with foreign shipping are discussed in FO 405/250, F 1246/1/10, Enclosure

When strike pickets in search of additional funds began seizing cargoes and either selling them or holding them for ransom before their examination by the Maritime Customs authorities, they precipitated a major crisis. The Canton Commissioner of Customs, F. Haley Bell, responded to these acts by refusing any further clearance of cargoes until those confiscated were returned. From February 22, 1926, until the 26th when this incident was settled, the customs house, although open, suspended operations and the ports at Canton and Whampoa remained in effect blockaded. Initially, British authorities were divided in their suggestion of methods by which the "customs seizure" incident might be resolved. Governor Clementi saw in the incident an excellent opportunity not only to uphold the sanctity of the customs administration but also to defeat the Chinese boycott against Hong Kong. He urged that British pressure be brought to bear on the other foreign powers involved to keep the issue open until the Strike Committee and its boycott organizations were disbanded. In Peking, Sir Macleay noted that while American Minister MacMurray believed the United States Government ready to support the customs against attacks by the Canton Strike Committee, it would strongly object to any attempt that would lead to American involvement in the anti-British boycott. The British Foreign Office clearly recognized the suspicions of those powers that feared a plot to embroil them in the boycott.

No. 1, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, February 15, 1926. See also, FO 405/250, F 527/71/10, "Weekly Summary of Events in China."

As a result, the two issues were separated for fear that, in the absence of international support, the customs would be overthrown.¹⁸

When it became apparent to the Canton Government that the support anticipated by Commissioner of Customs Bell might endanger its struggle against Hong Kong, it moved quickly by issuing and enforcing a proclamation requiring rigorous compliance with all customs formalities. By so doing, it dispelled the convictions held by many in Hong Kong that the Canton Government was powerless to control the Strike Committee. Immediately after the settlement of this incident a steamer left Hong Kong for Canton to test the effectiveness of the anti-British boycott. Although she was allowed to carry away Chinese passengers who had acceded to demands for payment by strike pickets, the steamer could neither land nor secure cargo. As they had before this incident, strike pickets in Canton resumed their examination of cargo after it had passed through the customs. On February 23, shortly after the start of the customs crisis, Wang Ching-wei, apparently unnerved

¹⁸For the actions of Commissioner F. Haley Bell, see FO 405/250, F 1392/1/10, Enclosures Nos. 2 and 3, Bell to Jamieson, February 20, 1926. The suggestions of Governor Clementi are in FO 371/11622, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, February 26, 1926. The attitudes of American Minister MacMurray as expressed to the British Minister at Peking are in FO 371/11622, F 801/1/10, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, February 25, 1926. British fears that the Chinese might ignore the Canton customs administration and establish their own collections are expressed in FO 371/11621, F 418/1/10, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, February 19, 1926; and FO 405/250, F 857/71/10, "Weekly Summary of Events in China," Foreign Office, February 26, 1926.

by this event, wrote to the two Chinese members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council and offered to re-open the negotiations for a boycott settlement.¹⁹

The Wang Ching-wei Negotiations: March, 1926

In response to the letter of Wang Ching-wei of February 23, the Hong Kong Government sent the two Chinese Members of Legislative Council, Sir Shou-son Chow and Dr. R. H. Kotewall to Macao, where, meeting with the Kwangtung Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Fu P'ing-ch'ang, they were to initiate unofficial talks meant to lead to formal negotiations for an end to the anti-British boycott. This meeting, which lasted from March 2-4, revolved around two central issues--the question of compensation by Hong Kong to the strikers and the attitude of the Canton Government concerning its own role in future negotiations. The issue of "strike pay" had been met by a delegation of Chinese merchants

¹⁹For the actions of the Canton Government and the attitude of Hong Kong authorities to that action, see FO 371/11622, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, February 26, 1926. Wang Ching-wei's letter is presented in FO 405/251, F 1758/1/10, Enclosure No. 4, "Translation of Letter from Mr. Wong Ching Wai to the two Chinese Members of Legislative Council," February 23, 1926. According to Consul-General Jamieson, Chiang Kai-shek's anger over the capitulation to the British during the customs seizure incident led to his retirement to Whampoa. See FO 371/11624, F 1563/1/10, Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, March 8, 1926. The dismissal of T. V. Soong as Commissioner of Commerce (he continued as Minister of Finance) and the departure of Sun Fo from Canton on March 4, 1926, may also have been related to the customs incident. American Consul Jenkins had noted in early February that Soong's eagerness to end the boycott was well known, and that he did not agree with the views of C. C. Wu. See U.S. Decimal File, 893.5045/315, Jenkins to MacMurray, Canton, February 9, 1926.

from Hong Kong to Canton in late 1925 with an offer of \$300,000. Rejecting this, the Strike Committee pressed claims for \$14,000,000 to be paid as a lump sum. At Macao, on March 2, Fu P'ing-ch'ang observed that in light of the distance between these two figures further discussion would be impossible were it not for the fact that his government was prepared to make large concessions. He recalled the earlier offer of the Hong Kong Government to make available loans to Canton for the construction of railways and noted that, if the offer were renewed and a portion of such funds could be used to pay off the strikers, the issue of compensation might be resolved. The Hong Kong representatives agreed that their government might again offer loans, but it would probably require rigid conditions affecting their disposition.²⁰

The attitude of the Canton Government since the start of the strike and boycott had been that, because the struggle with Hong Kong was a patriotic contest between workers there and in Canton against the government of that colony, any settlement would require negotiations between the strikers and British authorities. In the interests of peace and justice, however, the Canton Government stood ready to offer its services as a mediator. The Hong Kong Government, with equal consistency, had insisted from the first that the initial step in any formal negotiations

²⁰ The meeting at Macao is described by the two participants from Hong Kong in FO 405/251, F 1758/1/10, Enclosure No. 5, Chow and Kotewall to Hallifax, Hong Kong, March 5, 1926, p. 61-69. See also, Enclosure No. 3, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, March 8, 1926.

would require the Canton Government to appoint delegates to meet with its own nominees. At Macao, Fu P'ing-ch'ang, lacking definite instructions on this issue, ascribed the intransigent attitude of the Canton Government to the influence of C. C. Wu and intimated that here, too, his government was presently disposed to making an important concession. It was agreed that a meeting of Fu P'ing-ch'ang with the Governor at Hong Kong and one of Chow and Kotewall with Wang Ching-wei would help to clarify these outstanding issues. After further agreeing that such an exchange of visits would be suggested to each government, the conference at Macao was terminated.

Governor Clementi, informed of the discussions at Macao, saw no need for further informal conversations and requested Canton to immediately appoint official delegates to begin settlement negotiations. While awaiting a reply, he renewed his proposal to the Foreign Office, first made in December, 1925, that it approve loans to Canton for railway development. Recalling British consortium obligations with respect to completion of the Canton-Hankow Railway, the necessity of obtaining the consent of the Peking Government for railway construction in Kwangtung, and the dependence of bondholders upon Peking for service of the Canton-Kowloon Railway loans, the Foreign Office urged upon Governor Clementi a policy of delay. Within the Foreign Office, however, it was agreed that "Hong Kong must give Canton something, and that must involve a certain amount of free money, i. e., a subsidy." So anxious

²¹Ibid.

was the Foreign Office to lure Canton away from Russian influence and achieve a revival of British trade in south China that it accepted this "further step towards recognition of the independence of Canton" despite the protests of Peking which were certain to follow.²²

Wang Ching-wei initially attempted to confine the settlement discussions to private talks between himself and the two Chinese members of the Legislative Council, but was thwarted by Governor Clementi's insistence that formal delegates be appointed prior to any further semi-official exchanges. The appearance in Hong Kong of a Chinese merchant, who maintained that C. C. Wu wished a private meeting with Governor Clementi in Macao before the start of formal negotiations, created immediate confusion. In Canton this same merchant informed C. C. Wu that such a meeting was at the Governor's request. From Consul-General Jamieson on March 16, Governor Clementi received the following:

Strike leaders have let me know through a third party that they are prepared to give in, if sufficiently remunerated. Can you please send up capable Chinese negotiator to conduct conversations? He should have authority to pay 2,000 dollars down and go to a limit of 300,000 dollars for the final settlement? All demands will then be

²²For Clementi's insistence that Canton appoint delegates before undertaking further talks, see FO 405/251, F 1897/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Chamberlain, Hong Kong, March 24, 1926. Clementi's proposal for loans to the Canton Government for railway development is outlined in FO 371/11622, F 1051/1/10, Foreign Office to Macleay, London, March 20, 1926. For Foreign Office views on the loan proposal, see FO 371/11623, F 1051/1/10, Foreign Office to Macleay, London, March 20, 1926. The willingness of the Foreign Office to arrange a boycott settlement by offering Canton a cash subsidy is stated in FO 371/11623, F 1312/1/10, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, March 27, 1926.

abandoned. They are acting quite independently from the Government. The political situation is most obscure and there are signs of a break up of the Government.²³

Consul-General Jamieson had also observed that since the beginning of March the Canton Strike Committee had allowed large numbers of strikers to return to Hong Kong. He interpreted this as a clear evidence that it anticipated the rapid approach of a boycott settlement. When the misunderstandings related to the various proposed meetings in advance of formal negotiations were finally cleared away, and as both governments prepared to announce their choice of official delegates, attention shifted dramatically to an explosion of political and military activity in Canton.²⁴

²³Wang Ching-wei's wish that the Chinese representatives meet with him in Canton is expressed in Fu P'ing-ch'ang's letter to them after his return from Macao. See FO 405/251, F 1758/1/10, Enclosure No. 8, "Mr. Foo Ping-sheung to Sir Shou-son Chow and Mr. Kotewall, " Canton, March 12, 1926. The incident of the Chinese merchant lobbying for a meeting between Governor Clementi and C. C. Wu in Macao is discussed in FO 405/251, F 1958/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, March 27, 1926. Consul-General Jamieson's message to Clementi is repeated in FO 405/251, F 1758/1/10, Enclosure No. 7, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, March 18, 1926.

²⁴For Jamieson's observations on strikers returning to Hong Kong in mid-March, see FO 371/11624, F 4670/1/10, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, March 15, 1926. Following his expulsion as Provincial Minister for Foreign Affairs at the end of May, 1926, Fu P'ing-ch'ang, enroute to Shanghai, paused in Hong Kong and had a candid conversation with Dr. R. H. Kotewall. Commenting on the attempts to reach a settlement initiated by Wang Ching-wei in late February, Fu maintained that this was part of a plot by Wang, the Chinese Communists, and the Russian advisers to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek. He insisted that Sun Fo's return to Canton in January was motivated by the desire to end the boycott. Sun's attempt, according to Fu, to gain the confidence of the strikers by direct appeals which ignored their leadership was detected by the Russians who advised

Great Britain and "The March 20th Incident"

When, during the period March 18-22, Chiang Kai-shek took for ceful action to destroy what some observers saw as a threat to his position in Canton, British officials became convinced that the political composition of the Kuomintang would soon undergo important changes that would lead to a speedy settlement of the boycott against Hong Kong. According to one theory widely accepted at the time, the unauthorized movements of the KMT gunboat Chung-shan from Whampoa to Canton apparently confirmed suspicions harbored by Chiang that certain Russian advisers, Chinese Communists, officers and soldiers of his own army, and labor units including the leaders of the Canton Strike Committee planned to kidnap him and assume political and military control in the city. Chiang reacted quickly by disarming the Chung-shan, surrounding the headquarters of the Strike Committee, and arresting those he believed to be implicated. Subsequently, a number of those arrested were released and Chiang claimed that the entire affair had been created by misunderstandings. To many observers, both then and now, this incident was seen as a deliberate and bold attempt by Chiang to stage a military "coup" (cheng-pien) against the Chinese Communists and their allies the Russian advisers together with the Canton Strike

Wang Ching-wei to open negotiations in an effort to undermine the position of Sun Fo. Fu's proposed visit to Hong Kong following the meeting at Macao was sabotaged by C. C. Wu who, because he was being carefully watched by the Russians, feared that an attempt at boycott settlement would cost him his own position. See FO 405/252A, F 2992/1/10, Enclosure No. 2, "Memorandum," by R.H. Kotewall, June 4, 1926.

Committee. The "coup," according to this view, made Chiang the unrivaled political and military power within the Kuomintang.²⁵

The initial reaction of Consul-General Jamieson to the "March 20th Incident" was one of confusion and incomprehensibility. On March 22, he observed:

The air in the city continued to be full of suppressed excitement and rumors, there are movements of troops and gunboats here and at Whampoa, but no one has an inkling of what is happening. My American and French colleagues who have lately seen C. C. Wu and Fu P'ing-ch'ang can get nothing out of them. The French Bishop and usually well-informed Chinese are equally ignorant. What is certain is that C. C. Wu's family left for Hong Kong yesterday morning. As strike headquarters were in the forenoon surrounded by troops, it would seem likely that a story to the effect that the Government were demanding the handing over of their books and accounts for inspection is true. By the afternoon all on the surface was quiet again . . .

With what was to become an important piece of information to British policy-makers, Jamieson concluded:

I learn very confidentially that last evening C. C. Wu, Wu T'ieh-ch'eng and Fu P'ing-ch'ang despatched an urgent telegram to Sun Fo at Shanghai, stating that it is imperative, in the interests of the party, that he return to Canton by the first available steamer.²⁶

²⁵For KMT versions of the "March 20th Incident," see Kuo-wen chou-pao, March 28, 1926, p. 36; and April 4, 1926, p. 31. See also, Shen Yu, "Canton Political Turmoil," in Kuo-wen chou-pao, April 11, 1926, p. 7-9. For newspaper accounts which viewed Chiang's actions as a "coup," see Shun pao, March 24, 1926, p. 5; March 25, 1926, p. 6; March 28, 1926, p. 6; and Chen pao, April 8, 1926, p. 5. Among the Chinese Communist sources which depict Chiang's actions as a "coup" are Hsiang-kang ta pa-kung, p. 35-36; and Chih-kung yun-tung chien-shih, p. 280. See also, Hsiang-tao, Vol. IV, No. 166, August 6, 1926, p. 1658. For Western accounts, see Wu Tien-wei's "Chiang Kai-shek's March Twentieth Coup d'Etat of 1926," in The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, May, 1968, p. 585-602; and Wilbur and How, op. cit., p. 218-219. See also, Chang Kuo-t'ao, op. cit., p. 494.

²⁶See FO 405/251, F 1764/1/10, Jamieson to Macleay, Canton, March 22, 1926.

On March 23, Consul-General Jamieson pieced together what evidence he could obtain and sent to London what was to become the official British version of the "March 20th Incident." According to Jamieson, certain Russian advisers and Chinese Communists in Canton had plotted to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek, but Chiang had learned of their plans and struck first. As a result, he would, Jamieson maintained, soon attract a majority of those generals and politicians who wished to see the Russians and Chinese Communists eliminated from Canton by force. When that happened, Jamieson believed that the strike and boycott against Hong Kong would quickly come to an end. In Hong Kong, Governor Clementi, whose information regarding Canton was largely that provided by Jamieson, quite naturally came to the same conclusion. He informed London that the incident in Canton presented an unparalleled opportunity to rescue Hong Kong, provided that an immediate and determined effort was made to settle the boycott and substitute British for Russian influence in Canton.²⁷

When, on March 29, Sun Fo, enroute to Canton, conferred with Governor Clementi in Hong Kong, British hopes for a boycott settlement

²⁷For Jamieson's interpretation of the "March 20th Incident," see CO 129/496, Jamieson to Chamberlain, Canton, March 23, 1926. When questioned concerning this incident on March 29, Sir Austen Chamberlain, in the House of Commons, reiterated the Jamieson version. See FO 371/11624, F 1370/1/10, "Parliamentary Question, March 29, 1926." Clementi reported that Chiang Kai-shek first became suspicious when he learned from Hu Han-min, then in Moscow, that 60,000 rifles had recently been shipped to Whampoa. Able to account for only 20,000 of these weapons, Chiang moved against his enemies and found the remainder secreted aboard gunboats, hidden at strike headquarters, or in the hands of strike pickets and rebellious soldiers. See FO 405/251, F 1897/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Chamberlain, Hong Kong, March 24, 1926.

were further heightened. Sun Fo professed his opposition to the policy of employing Russian advisers at Canton and his conviction that the Strike Committee posed a serious threat to the Canton Government. Although he pledged his efforts toward finding a means to end the boycott, Sun reminded Clementi that it would prove most difficult to disband the many strike pickets in the city together with their organizations. Clementi responded by indicating that the Hong Kong Government would under no circumstances enter into negotiations with the Strike Committee; nor would it honor any claims on the part of Canton for compensation in the form of "strike pay." The Governor did concede, however, that his government stood ready to assist the Canton Government in any project for local development that would provide employment to the large number of idle workers in the city. When the conversation turned to a discussion of the state of lawlessness that seemed to plague Kwangtung, Sun Fo reiterated his opposition to the plan of a northern expedition to militarily unify China that had been ratified at the second KMT Congress. Sun concluded his visit with Clementi by emphasizing that it was his aim to give Kwangtung good government, and to make it, by its prosperity, "an object lesson to the rest of China."²⁸

²⁸ Among many British observers, it was believed that Sun Fo's return to Canton meant that he would assume the political leadership of the Kuomintang which had been vacated when, in the course of the "March 20th Incident," Wang Ching-wei had contracted a "diplomatic illness" which forced him to step down. See FO 371/11623, F 1312/1/10, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, March 27, 1926. For Sun Fo's meeting with Clementi, see FO 405/251, F 1958/1/10, Enclosure No. 4, "Memorandum of a Conversation with Mr. Sun Fo at Government House," Sir C. Clementi, Hong Kong, March 29, 1926.

The efforts of Wang Ching-wei to open negotiations with Hong Kong, interrupted by the events of the "March 20th Incident," were revived on April 2, 1926, when the Kwangtung Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Fu P'ing-ch'ang, informed Hong Kong that the Canton Government was prepared to announce the appointment of delegates to a boycott settlement conference. Whereas Wang Ching-wei had wished to appoint C. C. Wu, T. V. Soong, and Fu P'ing-ch'ang to represent Canton, in April Governor Clementi was informed that the former two were to be joined by Ch'en Kung-po. Ch'en then held the post of director of Kuomintang labor affairs that had been occupied by Liao Chung-k'ai up to his death. The Kuomintang through Fu P'ing-ch'ang again informed Hong Kong that it desired informal conversations at Canton prior to the opening of negotiations, but now C. C. Wu rather than Wang Ching-wei was to host the Hong Kong representative dispatched for those talks.²⁹

Upon arrival in Canton on April 7, Hong Kong's Attorney-General, J. H. Kemp, visited Consul-General Jamieson on Shameen from whom he learned that his wish to see Chiang Kai-shek would be frustrated. Chiang, it seems, had withdrawn to Whampoa and was seeing no one. The following day, Kemp accompanied by vice-Consul Fitzmaurice, met

²⁹See FO 405/251, F 2097/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, April 6, 1926; and Enclosure No. 2, "Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Canton, to His Majesty's Consul-General," Canton, April 2, 1926. Observers in Hong Kong noted that Wang Ching-wei, after the "March 20th Incident," was a "spent political force." Wang departed Canton for Paris on May 9, 1926. See FO 405/252A, F 2992/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, June 8, 1926.

C. C. Wu and began boycott settlement discussions. At the onset, Wu brought up the strikers' terms and suggested that, while he was prepared to discuss them, his government would accept no responsibility for the actions against Hong Kong. Again, as he had in December, 1925, Wu insisted that the Canton Government would only enter negotiations as a mediator. With this point unresolved, Kemp proceeded to the issue of "strike pay" only to discover that here there was even less chance of agreement. Hong Kong, according to Kemp, would neither provide compensation to the strikers or the Canton Government, nor would it allow others in the colony to do so. Wu insisted that without some form of payment by Hong Kong the boycott could not be settled. After further discussion concerning the size and scope of proposed loans to the Canton Government for railway development, which were facilitated by Kemp's avoidance of any mention of safeguards or conditions, the meetings adjourned, with each side expecting the other to make a concession enabling the talks to be reopened.³⁰

³⁰The inaccessibility of Chiang Kai-shek suggests what only one British observer saw as possible. F. Ashton-Gwatkin, whose views carried great weight within the Foreign Office, had earlier noted: "The position at Canton is rather disappointing. Either General Chiang Kai-shek is too weak or otherwise reluctant to take strong measures against the extremists or the Canton Government realizing that the boycott is their strongest bargaining counter in dealing with Hong Kong have no intention of stopping it as yet." See FO 371/11623, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, March 29, 1926. For Kemp's meetings with C. C. Wu in Canton, see FO 405/251, F 2097/1/10, Enclosure No. 7, "Memorandum of certain Informal Conversations at Canton between C. C. Wu and J. H. Kemp, on April 8 and 9, 1926," Hong Kong, April 10, 1926.

When it became apparent to the Colonial Office that Governor Clementi had closed the door to a boycott solution by refusing to spend either British or Hong Kong Chinese money, there was much displeasure. In his message to Clementi on April 13, Colonial Secretary Amery noted that it had been previously agreed that some form of compensation to Canton would probably be required to reach a settlement. Referring to Clementi's apparent change of policy, undertaken without the prior knowledge of the Colonial Office, Amery concluded:

It would appear however from the statement now made to the Canton Government that the door has been finally barred to a settlement by payment of compensation and if so I should be glad to receive an explanation of this change of view and further information as to the tactics which you now consider could most advantageously be employed in negotiations with Canton.³¹

Governor Clementi, after reviewing his own consistent opposition to any form of payment to Canton, (an opposition not shared by all major interests in Hong Kong) attempted to justify his current stance on the compensation issue. He noted that Sun Fo, since his return to Canton in January, had worked continuously for the elimination of the communist elements within the Kuomintang. Sun's departure for Shanghai, scheduled for the following day (April 16) was, Clementi maintained, for the purpose of convincing the leaders of the Western Hills Group to return to Canton to assist in that task. Clementi then characterized the "coup" of Chiang Kai-shek as weakening the position of the Canton Strike Committee, the

³¹See FO 371/11624, C 7990, Amery to Clementi, Colonial Office, April 13, 1926.

Chinese Communists, and the Russian advisers. He believed Chiang to be preparing to expel the Russians, suppress the Strike Committee, and drive the Chinese Communists out of the party; actions he said that Chiang would have taken in late March but for the opposition of leaders such as Wang Ching-wei. Clementi concluded that the next great struggle between the Communists and anti-Communists in the Kuomintang would take place in mid-May at the meeting of the Central Executive Committee. Anticipating a victory for the "Rightists," Clementi argued that the Strike Committee would cease to exist and the boycott would thus be ended. As a result of these views, the Governor proposed to stall negotiations until after May 15.³²

May 15, 1926: The Beginning of the End

The approaching meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang scheduled to convene on May 15, 1926, gave British officials in south China a renewed optimism that their troubles would soon end. Newspapers in Hong Kong had noticed a dramatic rise in the number of arrests carried out by strike pickets in Canton since the start of the year. They were pleased to note that, beginning in late April and continuing into May, authorities in the city were carrying out

³²Governor Clementi also noted that, according to Consul-General Jamieson, leaders of the Strike Committee (including Su Chao-cheng and Teng Chung-hsia) were so certain that the boycott would soon end that on March 20 they proposed to call it off if paid 2,000 dollars each. See FO 405/251, F 2097/1/10, Enclosure No. 9, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, April 15, 1926.

a policy of disarming strike pickets who engaged in illegal arrests.

Soon after he replaced Consul-General Jamieson in mid-April, J. F.

Brenan visited Canton Chief of Police Wu T'ieh-ch'eng who remained unalterably opposed to the continuance of the boycott against Hong Kong.

Wu told Brenan that the dominant sentiment in Canton regarding a settlement was that Hong Kong would have to offer some form of compensation.

Subsequent visits with T. V. Soong and C. C. Wu convinced Brenan that

Wu T'ieh-ch'eng had correctly assessed the mood of Canton. While

Soong had proven most hospitable, Brenan found C. C. Wu enraged at

Hong Kong newspaper accounts stating that the colony would offer the

Strike Committee no compensation. Wu insisted that the question of payment was still open to negotiation. From the evidence gathered in

the course of these visits, Brenan concluded that, although the Canton

Government wished the boycott to end, authorities would not allow the

strikers to be dispersed empty handed.³³

The efforts of authorities in Canton to curb the activities of the strike pickets in late April brought a spirited response from the Canton Strike Committee. When it was discovered that some Chinese fishermen had once again begun supplying fresh-water fish for the Hong Kong market,

³³For an example of the attention paid by Hong Kong's newspapers to the illegal arrests conducted by strike pickets in Canton, see The South China Morning Post, April 16, 1926. Their sense of pleasure over the apparent policy of disarming the pickets is revealed in The South China Morning Post, April 27 and May 15, 1926. For a report of Brenan's visits with Wu T'ieh-ch'eng, T. V. Soong, and C. C. Wu, see FO 405/251, F 2175/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brenan to Macleay, Canton, April 19, 1926.

armed strike picket boats intensified their river patrols. On April 22, the crew of a Japanese steamer was persuaded to go out on strike; and, when a new crew recruited in Hong Kong arrived, it was arrested by the strike pickets. That same day, as the Canton Commissioner of Customs, Colonel F. Haley Bell, returned to Shameen from his office in the city, he was physically assaulted by strike pickets patrolling near the entrance to the island's bridges. As labor unrest continued to mount in Canton various foreign controlled institutions such as hospitals, schools, and the post office were also subjected to attack. While most were left to deal with the strikers without assistance, Wu T'ieh-ch'eng did dispatch a police squad to prevent a shut down of the post office. On April 24, without notifying C. C. Wu who continued to serve as Mayor of Canton, Chiang Kai-shek forced Wu T'ieh-ch'eng to resign.³⁴

When a minor official of the Canton Government arrived in Hong Kong on April 26 for pre-negotiation discussions, officials in the colony saw it as little more than a test of their posture on the compensation issue. Representatives of the Hong Kong Government insisted that the colony would not alter its position on the question of a payment to the strikers and that it was still expected that Canton would appoint delegates to take part in any negotiations as principals. As in the case of Brennan's

³⁴For the activities of strike pickets in Canton in late April and the dismissal of Wu T'ieh-ch'eng, see FO 405/251, F 2246/1/10, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, April 26, 1926. See also, FO 405/251, F 2385/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, April 29, 1926.

talks with C. C. Wu in Canton earlier that month, the issues remained unresolved and the talks were terminated. On April 29 observers in Hong Kong noted that Sun Fo had returned to Canton from Shanghai. His return coincided with that of Hu Han-min from Moscow and that of Michael Borodin who had left Canton for Peking in early February.³⁵

As the meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the KMT opened on May 15, observers in Hong Kong and on Shameen became convinced that its outcome would be determined by the attitudes of Chiang Kai-shek. Several days before the first meeting, Chiang had reacted to rumors of labor disturbances and of attempts by the Chinese Communists to seize control of the city by bringing soldiers from outlying districts to patrol the streets of Canton. On the day of the first session, these soldiers lined the main thoroughfares which were dotted with machine-gun posts. In that meeting, Chiang Kai-shek proposed resolutions which were adopted, severely limiting the freedom of action of the Chinese Communists within the Kuomintang. The Communist Party was required to register all members who had joined the KMT, was denied leadership in the central departments of the party, and was instructed to submit for approval before a joint party council all orders or directives

³⁵ Canton's attempt to discover any change in the attitudes of Hong Kong regarding a boycott settlement is described in FO 405/251, F 2385/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, April 29, 1926. For Clementi's observations on the return to Canton of Sun Fo, Hu Han-min, and Borodin, see FO 405/251, F 2385/1/10, Enclosure No. 5, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, May 3, 1926. See also, FO 371/11626, F 2439, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, May 3, 1926.

issued by it or the Comintern to members affiliated with the KMT. On the second day of the meetings of the CEC, an additional resolution was adopted which limited Communist members of the Kuomintang to one-third membership in all higher organizations of the party. At their conclusion on May 22, Acting Consul-General Brennan greeted the accomplishments of these meetings with much less enthusiasm than did his countrymen in Hong Kong. Brennan concluded that the blow suffered by the Chinese Communists, while serious, would not prove fatal. He believed they would await a more favorable time and then attempt to reassert their considerable influence. At the same time, the CEC of the KMT had passed resolutions to advance plans for a northern expedition; these meant, according to Brennan, that the Kuomintang would not be able to relax its reliance upon Russian help in the form of money and munitions of war.³⁶

British observers who were encouraged by the apparent victory of the "Rightists" at Canton in mid-May became convinced by the end of

³⁶The movement of troops into Canton at the time of the meetings of the CEC of the KMT is described in Shun pao, May 15, 1926, p. 6; and in FO 405/251, F 2555/1/10, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, May 17, 1926. Labor unrest in Canton at this time was largely due to the gathering of workers in the city, beginning in April, in order to attend the Third Labor Congress and the meetings of those labor organizations opposed to the unions which supported it. See Chesneaux, op. cit., p. 306. On Labor Day (May 1) and other holidays celebrated in early May such as the anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx (May 5), there were a number of processions and demonstrations organized by unions in Canton. For the resolutions adopted at the meetings of the CEC of the KMT between May 15-22, see Kuo-wen chou-pao, May 23, 1926, p. 29-30; and May 30, 1926, p. 22. The meetings were also reported in Chen pao, May 18, 1926, p. 2; and Shun pao, May 22, 1926, p. 9. Brennan's attitudes concerning the probable outcome of these meetings is revealed in FO 405/251, F 2634/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, May 24, 1926.

that month that power had gravitated back into the hands of those least sympathetic to a boycott settlement. They were surprised to find, therefore, that, at the end of the month, with the "Rightists" seemingly in full retreat, the Kuomintang wished to enter into settlement negotiations. Gradually, these observers learned that, for party leaders in Canton, the boycott against Hong Kong was no longer a primary concern. Instead, KMT leaders were devoting their attentions to the proposed northern expedition through which they hoped to re-unite China. As a result of what was described by some as a bargain between Borodin and Chiang Kai-shek, Borodin agreed to support a northern expedition with Russian arms and advice if Chiang would deprive the "Rightists" in Canton of their newly found powers. The bargain between Borodin and Chiang Kai-shek become known in Hong Kong through Fu P'ing-ch'ang. Fu paused there enroute to Shanghai and discussed the recent political changes which had taken place in Canton with Dr. R. H. Kotewall. Fu's contention that C. C. Wu had been accused by the Russians of preparing to take a bribe from Hong Kong is most interesting. In December, 1925, an interview conducted by the members of the British Colonial Office with a Foreign Office official revealed that, in preparation for the negotiations which were then contemplated, a fund of \$500,000 had been subscribed in Hong Kong to bribe useful officials in Canton. C. C. Wu's name had been specifically mentioned in this regard. On May 30, Wu T'ieh-ch'eng, who had already lost his post as Chief of Police, was arrested by order

of Chiang Kai-shek. C. C. Wu and Fu P'ing-ch'ang, also deprived of their positions, fled Canton for Shanghai in the first days of June. Hu Han-min, who was perhaps the first to sense the direction of events at Canton, had departed even before the meetings of the CEC begun on May 15. On May 28, the Political Bureau of the Kuomintang ordered the newly appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Nationalist Government at Canton, Eugene Ch'en (Ch'en Yu-jen) to reopen negotiations with Hong Kong for a boycott settlement.³⁷

³⁷For Fu P'ing-ch'ang's views expressed in Hong Kong, see FO 405/252A, F 2992/1/10, Enclosure No. 2, "Memorandum," by Kotewall, Hong Kong, June 4, 1926. For discussions between the Foreign and Colonial offices concerning a bribe to C. C. Wu, see CO 129/491, "Note of Interview with Mr. Moss F.O.," S.H. Wilson, T.A. Clutterbuck, and G. Grindle, Colonial Office, December 19, 1925. The arrest of Wu T'ieh-ch'eng and the flight of C. C. Wu and Fu P'ing-ch'ang from Canton are discussed in FO 405/252A, F 2992/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, June 8, 1926; and FO 371/11626, F 2258, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, June 3, 1926. In an effort to create an atmosphere favorable to a settlement, the KMT sponsored the formation of what Brennan described as a "Cooperative Union of Peasants, Workers, Merchants and Students," which broadcast a demand in Canton that negotiations be immediately started with Hong Kong. See FO 371/11628, F 2307, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, June 19, 1926. The KMT's order to Eugene Ch'en to open negotiations together with its proclamation favoring a settlement is reported in Shun pao, June 9, 1926, p. 10.

CHAPTER V

THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26: THE FINAL PHASE

The June-July, 1926, Negotiations

When the Kuomintang's new foreign minister Eugene Ch'en proposed to reopen negotiations for a boycott settlement in June, 1926, British officials in both London and China found it necessary to re-examine their posture regarding recognition of the Canton Government. Ch'en's letter to Acting Consul-General Brenan of June 4 made it clear that the Kwangtung Bureau for Foreign Affairs had been abolished; and that in its place, he, as a representative of the "Nationalist Government at Canton," would conduct all future official exchanges with British representatives in south China. Brenan's response to Ch'en was delayed until June 16 while members of the British Foreign Office debated its proper form. British Minister Macleay at Peking, who incidentally regarded Eugene Ch'en as "a dangerous and unscrupulous adventurer," cautioned against any British move which might be interpreted by its opponents as recognizing the Canton Government's independence. Macleay continued to champion the cause of Wu P'ei-fu who, in his view, would soon suppress the supporters of Feng Yu-hsiang and establish a conservative and "anti-Bolshevik" government at Peking. Fearing the implications that might be drawn if Brenan

took part in negotiations between Canton and Hong Kong, Macleay further urged that the Acting Consul-General's role be confined to acting as a medium of exchange between Chinese and British negotiators.¹

Within the British Foreign Office the views of Macleay were once again discounted. Its members continued to view the role of the Kuomintang in the future of China as far outweighing that of Wu P'ei-fu. Moreover, a settlement with Canton over the issue of the boycott against British interests in south China had, since the beginning of 1926, become the dominant concern of British foreign policy in that country. The Kuomintang was already privately acknowledged as the de facto government in Kwangtung, and there was a growing sentiment to offer it regional recognition de jure. Because the anti-British boycott at Canton involved issues outside the diplomatic jurisdiction of Hong Kong, the Foreign Office concluded that Acting Consul-General Brenan should take an active role in settlement negotiations. While awaiting Brenan's response, Eugene Ch'en wrote directly to Governor Clementi offering to open negotiations with the Hong Kong Government. Clementi replied through Brenan that he welcomed this Chinese initiative. On June 16, Brenan informed Ch'en that he had been instructed to participate in negotiations as part of the Hong Kong delegation, but that he would also be empowered to represent Imperial interests. Throughout the remainder of the month in what appears

¹Ch'en's letter to Brenan is reported in FO 405/252A, F 2790/1/10, Enclosure No. 4, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, June 7, 1926; and Enclosure No. 5, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, June 6, 1925. For Macleay's views, see Enclosure No. 6, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, June 7, 1926.

to have been little more than diplomatic sparring, Ch'en was assured that Clementi's reply through Brennan was not meant as an affront, and Brennan was assured that the Kuomintang Government at Canton desired no change in the matter of recognition. The date for the opening of formal negotiations was set at July 15, 1926.²

When it had become apparent that obstacles to negotiation had been cleared away and that those negotiations would be held in Canton, British Minister Macleay at Peking came forward with new objections. Macleay feared that Hong Kong, in its anxiety to find a boycott settlement, would make loans available to Canton which would be used to pay off the strikers and partially finance an anticipated military expedition against the north. He argued that such an act would overturn the British policy of non-interference in China's domestic squabbles, and that it could only benefit "a group of bolshevised extremists who throughout the past year have treated His Majesty's Government and colony of Hong Kong with the most violent hostility." Although there were some in the British Foreign Office who shared Macleay's fears, a continued boycott by Canton

²The attitudes expressed in the British Foreign Office and its directives to Macleay and Brennan are in FO 371/11626, Minutes by M. Patrick, Foreign Office, June 8, 1926; by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, June 9, 1926; and by G. Mounsey, June 9, 1926. For Ch'en's letter to Clementi and the latter's response, see FO 405/252A, F 2790/1/10, Enclosure No. 8, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, June 10, 1926; and Enclosure No. 9, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, June 10, 1926. Brennan's response to Ch'en on June 16 is in FO 405/252A, F 3049/1/10, Enclosure No. 3, Brennan to Ch'en, Canton, June 16, 1926. For the exchange of correspondence throughout the remainder of June, see FO 405/252A, F 3128/1/10, Enclosures Nos. 1-8, Colonial Office to Foreign Office, August 3, 1926.

presented even greater fears. Macleay was informed that, in spite of his objections, if the boycott could be ended by promising Canton loans, the British Foreign Office would agree to such a procedure. In Hong Kong, Governor Clementi, seeking to accommodate rather than antagonize the Kuomintang, put forth the view that Canton should be offered regional recognition; and that, in an effort to displace Russian influence, it should also be promised assistance in the form of British advisers and war materiel. For the British Foreign Office in late June, 1926, this would require a radical shift from earlier policies--a shift it was not then prepared to endorse.³

When, on July 15, Attorney-General Kemp and Secretary for Chinese Affairs Hallifax joined Acting Consul-General Brennan for negotiations with Canton, they were met by Eugene Ch'en, Minister of Finance T. V. Soong, and Ku Meng-yu. Ku, first elected to the CEC of the Kuomintang in January, 1926, was a replacement for Ch'en Kung-po who had just resigned as Director of KMT Labor Affairs. The initial meetings were dominated by Eugene Ch'en who read speeches advertising the aspirations of the Kuomintang and outlining the Chinese view on the origins of the anti-British boycott. The British representatives responded with

³ For Macleay's objection regarding loans to Canton and the Foreign Office response to these objections, see FO 405/252A, F 2790/1/10, Enclosure No. 15, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, June 13, 1926; and Enclosure No. 16, Chamberlain to Macleay, Foreign Office, June 17, 1926. For Clementi's proposal involving regional recognition and the supply of British advisers and arms to Canton, see FO 405/252A, F 3179/10/10, Enclosures Nos. 1 and 2, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, June 27 and 28, 1926.

their own assessment of the boycott's origins. On July 19, Ch'en in private talks with Brennan indicated once more that a settlement without compensation to the strikers would prove most difficult. Brennan characterized compensation as a form of blackmail which Hong Kong would refuse to pay under any circumstances. As a means for saving the "face" of the Canton Government and assisting in the development of Kwangtung, he then proposed a loan in the amount of 10 million dollars for construction of the port of Whampoa and a loop line connecting the Canton-Hankow and Canton-Kowloon Railways. Although Ch'en made no concession on the compensation issue, he was, according to Brennan, impressed with the British loan proposal. In meetings on July 21, Ch'en caught the British delegates completely off guard with the demand that a commission of inquiry be established to look into the Shameen Incident of June 23, 1925. As a result, the negotiations were suspended so that Ch'en could consult with his government regarding the loan proposals while Brennan and the Hong Kong delegates sought London's advice on an investigation into the events that had occurred at Shameen.⁴

⁴For a description of the two delegations, their initial statements of position, and a discussion of the subsequent negotiations, see Hsiangkang ta pa kung, p. 37; and FO 405/252A, F 3473/1/10, Enclosures Nos. 1-4, Brennan to Chamberlain, Canton, July 20, 1926. See also, CO 129/493, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, July 26, 1926. The resignation of Ch'en Kung-po is discussed in The South China Morning Post, July 10, 1926. For the instructions of the Colonial Office to the Hong Kong delegation on the issue of loans to Canton for railway development and a port at Whampoa, see CO 129/492, Amery to Clementi, London, July 23, 1926. The immediate reactions within the Foreign Office to Ch'en's proposal for a commission of inquiry into the Shameen Incident are presented in FO 371/11628, F 2999, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, July 26, 1926.

Governor Clementi, convinced that a commission of inquiry into the Shameen Incident could bring no boycott settlement, and that such a commission might further damage British prestige, urged London to offer counter proposals to Canton. He suggested that, in return for a complete cessation of the boycott, Great Britain could offer a grant from the Boxer Indemnity funds for railway construction and the development of a port at Whampoa. In addition, Clementi favored the offer of de facto and de jure recognition to the Canton Government in the areas where it actually exercised undisputed control. He noted that recognition of regional governments in China had received overwhelming support among representatives of major British commercial interests throughout the country who had met to discuss such a proposal in Shanghai during the last week of June.⁵

After much deliberation within the British Foreign Office, it was agreed that a refusal to endorse a commission of inquiry into the Shameen affair would create a strong impression of guilt. Therefore, it was considered better tactics to accept the inquiry on the following conditions:

1. The boycott to be first removed.
2. The French Government to participate (the French own a part of the Shameen Concession and have troops stationed there who took part in the firing).

⁵Clementi's views on a commission of inquiry into the Shameen Incident and his proposal for counter offers including recognition to the Canton Government are in CO 129/493, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, July 26, 1926. For evidence that Clementi's recognition proposal was in part a response to fears that the Kuomintang's northern military campaign might make a boycott settlement still more difficult, see CO 129/493, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, July 31, 1926.

3. Adequate precautions to be taken for complete impartiality.
4. The presiding judge to be a national of a Power not represented at Canton.
5. Full facilities to be given by foreign Governments to enable their nationals to give evidence.
6. The inquiry to be confined solely to ascertaining all the facts of the Shameen incident, and to be conducted under terms of reference strictly drawn up for this purpose.

While this approach proved acceptable to Macleay at Peking, Brennan at Canton, and Governor Clementi, it was further agreed that the response to Canton be delayed pending clarification of the military situation in south China. In the view of Macleay and a few of his supporters within the Foreign Office, it was possible that Canton's campaign against the north might fail; in which case, the Canton Government would prove more conciliatory.⁶

Despite the difference of opinion regarding recognition to Canton that had been evident within the Foreign Office in late June, Clementi's recognition proposal of July 26 failed to attract supporters. Members of the Foreign Office were then willing to concede that in dealing with Canton they had already practically accorded that government *de facto* recognition. *De jure* recognition, however, required prior consultation with both Peking and the Washington Treaty powers; an act almost certain to bring criticism from the latter and raise further suspicions in the former. The Peking Government had already questioned British intentions toward Canton regarding recognition. Apparently, because a growing

⁶See FO 405/252A, F 4326/1/10, "The Canton Boycott," a record of events between July 15-October 13, 1926, by W. Strang, Foreign Office, October 13, 1926.

sense of exasperation could be detected in Clementi's messages to London, he was cautioned to take no action affecting British interests without first obtaining the consent of Colonial Secretary Amery. In Canton, Acting Consul-General Brennan reflected on the recent negotiations impasse. He perceptively concluded that because Canton had been denied a cash payment it had deliberately adopted the idea of an inquiry in order to delay further discussions. With the settlement talks delayed, it was no doubt anticipated that the military successes of the Kuomintang in Hunan coupled with the promise of speedy victories elsewhere would enhance the Canton Government's negotiative position.⁷

The Boycott Revival of August, 1926,
and the British Response

When Eugene Ch'en had offered to open settlement negotiations in June, 1926, British observers were convinced that Chiang Kai-shek, the Russian advisers, and moderate elements in Canton such as Sun Fo, all favored a rapid boycott settlement. Following the announcement launching the Kuomintang's Northern Expedition (Pei-fa) in the first week of

⁷For discussion of recognition to Canton within the Foreign Office in late June, 1926, see FO 371/11626, F 2502, Minutes by M. Patrick, F Ashton-Gwatkin, and G. Mounsey, Foreign Office, June 26, 1926; and FO 371/11626, F 2577, Minutes by M. Patrick, F. Ashton-Gwatkin, and G. Mounsey, Foreign Office, June 30, 1926. For discussions in July, see FO 371/11627, F 2836, Minutes by M. Patrick, J. T. Pratt, H. W. Malkin, G. Mounsey, and F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, July 22-28, 1926. Rejection of Clementi's proposals and Amery's words of caution are in FO 405/252A, F 3228/1/10, Amery to Clementi, Colonial Office, August 4, 1926. For Brennan's observations on Canton's reasons for suspending negotiations, see FO 405/252A, F 4326, "The Canton Boycott," W. Strang, Foreign Office, October 13, 1926.

July and the suspension of settlement discussions on the 24th, these same observers concluded that the opportunity to bring the boycott to an end had slipped by. Again it had become apparent that political leaders in Canton, regardless of their ideological position, shared the view that the boycott could not be terminated without a cash payment to the strikers.

With the KMT's armies moving northward and the departure of Chiang Kai-shek for the front at the end of the month, the Canton Strike Committee began to reassert its influence. Early in August, it recruited, armed, and drilled 2,000 new strike pickets and turned them loose on the city. Immediately the number of illegal arrests in Canton began to climb. In their effort to obtain funds to take the place of those formerly available through the Kuomintang, the strike pickets launched a new campaign of harassment and intimidation upon Canton's boycott weary citizens. Ships and goods that had enjoyed a limited freedom of movement during the July negotiations were again subjected to heavy fines or were held for ransom. In addition, the Strike Committee levied a tax of \$15 on every bale of silk exported from the city.⁸

⁸For discussion of the Northern Expedition and the formal announcement that launched it in early July, see Shun pao, July 11, 1926, p. 9; Min-kuo jih-pao, July 12, 1926, p. 2-3; and The South China Morning Post, July 9, 1926. For Chiang's views on the Northern Expedition before his departure on July 27, see Chen pao, August 9, 1926, p. 5. For the observations of Acting Consul-General Brenan on the activities of the Strike Committee in August, see FO 405/252A, F 3932/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brenan to Macleay, Canton, August 16, 1926; and FO 371/11629, F 3508, Brenan to Chamberlain, Canton, August 26, 1926. The Kuomintang in preparation for the Northern Expedition cut off its

Attempts by the Canton Strike Committee to arouse public support began on August 7 when it published a ringing denunciation of the British role in the recent settlement negotiations. The following week, despite the absence of British ships calling at Canton other than the two daily passenger boats from Hong Kong, the Strike Committee issued new regulations calling for the confiscation of British ships and goods and punishment for their owners. It also designated the last week of August as "strike support week" (Pa-kung yung-hu hsing-ch'i); a period in which it organized speeches, processions, a sale of strike badges, and other demonstrations of support for the boycott against Hong Kong.⁹

British irritation and concern over the Kuomintang's interference with the Canton-Kowloon Railway begun in June, 1926, and fears that the customs administration in Canton might be overthrown led to a resurrection by Governor Clementi of his July recognition proposals. These proposals had apparently been infectious; because, in early August, Acting Consul-

monthly allocation to the strikers, and converted the daily expropriation of \$1,000 taken from the profits of the Canton-Kowloon Railway into a military tax. See CO 129/493, C 17965, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, August 16, 1926.

⁹For the Strike Committee's denunciation of the British and their position during the July negotiations, see The Canton Gazette, August 7, 1926. The Strike Committee's new regulations are discussed in FO 405/252A, F 3932/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brennan to Macleay, August 16, 1926. For the activities undertaken by the Strike Committee during "strike support week," see FO 405/252A, F 4211/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, August 29, 1926. For a Chinese Communist view of the July negotiations and the activities of the Strike Committee in August, see Hsiang-tao, Vol. IV, No. 166, August 6, 1926, pp. 1659-1660. See also, Hsiang-tao, Vol. IV, No. 167, August 15, 1926, p. 1683-1684.

General Brenan began advocating a formal offer of de facto recognition to Canton. Clementi persisted in his advocacy of both de facto and de jure recognition not only for Canton; but also for those regions, such as the provinces dominated by Sun Ch'uan-fang, where one warlord maintained seemingly effective control. By mid-August, Clementi had succeeded in obtaining the support of Brenan for a proposal by which Great Britain was to seek the consent of the United States, Japan, and France for joint action leading to regional recognition in China. On the 16th, Foreign Secretary Chamberlain moved to eliminate further proposals of this type. In his telegram to Brenan, who was instructed to so inform Clementi, Chamberlain noted that there could be no offer of recognition to Canton until that government requested some change in its status. He concluded by pointing out that such a request, if made, would require international agreement involving much deliberation and delay; and that such agreement, if obtained, could not come in time to assist Hong Kong in its negotiations with the Kuomintang.¹⁰

¹⁰For Foreign Office discussion of the KMT's interference with the Canton-Kowloon Railway, see FO 371/11643, F 3235, Minutes by W. Strang, and G. Mounsey, Foreign Office, August 12, 1926. Brenan favored a grant of de facto recognition to Canton in a private letter to his personal friend O'Malley who continued to serve as counselor to the British legation at Peking. See FO 371/11631, Brenan to O'Malley, Canton, August 3, 1926. Clementi's proposal, supported by Brenan, for both de facto and de jure regional recognition throughout China is presented in CO 129/493, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, August 9, 1926. This same proposal is repeated more forcefully in CO 129/493, C 17965, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, August 16, 1926. For Chamberlain's somewhat caustic response to this proposal, see FO 405/252A, Chamberlain to Brenan, Foreign Office, August 16, 1926. The

Rebuffed in his efforts to find a boycott settlement through an offer of recognition, Governor Clementi began, in late August, to favor belligerent activities at Canton reminiscent of the actions that had frequently been put forward by his harried predecessor Sir R. E. Stubbs. After calling a conference of naval and military authorities at Hong Kong, Clementi dispatched officers to Canton to report on the feasibility of naval warfare against picket boats in the harbor and a combined naval and military assault against Strike Headquarters in Canton. Following their return, these officers drew up a list of alternate plans of action that included:

- (a.) Seize all strike picket boats and boats used by strikers and disable them.
- (b.) Place gunboats alongside strike examination station and strikers' headquarters and entirely prevent them functioning.
- (c.) Close the port to Chinese shipping and stop all purely Chinese business on the harbour, allowing foreign business to continue.
- (d.) Land an armed force and wreck strike headquarters.
- (e.) Blockade Canton.

The first two plans were viewed as most attractive by their naval and military authors, Governor Clementi, and Acting Consul-General Brennan. All agreed that, at the first sign of serious disturbances created by the strike pickets, these plans should be put into operation. It was further agreed that the other three plans should be held in reserve because they would require the prior evacuation of Shameen.¹¹

Colonial Office also responded negatively and with severe language to Governor Clementi's proposal. See CO 129/494, C 15649, Amery to Clementi, Colonial Office, August 16, 1926.

¹¹Brenan reported these activities of Governor Clementi with

Acting Consul-General Brennan, who described the increasing number of labor disturbances in Canton as "organized brigandage," soon matched and then surpassed the new attitudes of belligerence expounded by Governor Clementi. In the Foreign Office, labor's "reign of terror" at Canton in late August was viewed as the logical result of the departure of Chiang Kai-shek and his troops from the city. These London observers concluded that the Canton Strike Committee, aware of an impending boycott end, was having its last fling; a fling likely to result in the murder of Westerners and followed by foreign intervention. In Canton, Brennan, who remained impatient for some form of militant action against the pickets, attempted to force events. He argued that British action at Canton, if clearly identified as an attack upon the Strike Committee and not the government, would find favor with the Cantonese merchants, would bring no involvement with other foreign powers, and would run little risk of anti-British repercussions elsewhere in China. He proposed that the owners of British coastal steamers be induced to send one or two of their vessels to Canton with the avowed purpose of seeking trade. Convinced that the Strike Committee, in view

which he agreed in FO 405/252A, F 3932/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, August 16, 1926. For the list of alternate plans of action contemplated against Canton, see FO 405/252A, F 3932/1/10, Enclosure No. 3, Commander J. U. P. Fitzgerald, Senior Naval Officer, West River, to the Commodore at Hong Kong, Canton, August 13, 1926. For a detailed plan involving an attack on strike headquarters, see CO 129/493, C 7969, Enclosure, "An Examination of the Proposal to send a detachment of troops from Hong Kong to attack and destroy Strike-Picket Headquarters, in Canton," General Staff, China Command, August 16, 1926.

of its recent anti-British regulations, would either send pickets to board these vessels or would condone firing on them, Brennan concluded that such an "incident" would justify British reprisals.¹²

When, on August 28, strike pickets fired upon an American and a British subject engaged in the business of transporting Chinese passengers by motorboat to the Hong Kong steamers, Brennan and his supporters had their "incident." With the motorboat forced to return to the customs wharf in Canton, the Britisher made good his escape to Shameen under gunfire. The less fortunate American was arrested and taken to Strike headquarters. On September 4, 1926, following the unsuccessful efforts of Brennan and Macleay to secure American participation, the British West River Flotilla proceeded down the Pearl River under instructions to seize and disable all strike picket boats, place armed launches before picket stations on the river front, anchor gunboats alongside British wharves, and eject all strike pickets active on Canton's waterways. At Swatow, similar actions were carried out by the British warship Magnolia.

¹²Brennan's description of strikers' activities as "organized brigandage" is presented in FO 371/11629, F 3508, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, August 26, 1926. For the views on Canton expressed in the Foreign Office in late August, see FO 371/11629, Minute by F. Ashton-Gwatkin, Foreign Office, August 27, 1926. Brennan's attempt to provoke an incident at Canton is put forward in FO 405/252A, F 3932/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brennan to Macleay, Canton, August 16, 1926. In his private conversations with Eugene Ch'en in late August, Brennan responded to the suggestion that KMT victories might lead to a spreading boycott with a threat of British naval action at Canton. Ch'en indicated that his government was attempting to curb the activities of the strike pickets in order to avoid any serious incidents. See FO 405/252A, F 4211/1/10, Enclosure No. 1, Brennan to Clementi, Canton, August 29, 1926.

Of particular concern to the Canton Strike Committee was the British action of anchoring an armed launch before its boycott examination shed which adjoined the Customs House property in Canton. This act denied access to all shipping seeking to put in there and created serious disruption of the cargo inspection procedures normally carried out by strike pickets. Following protests registered by Canton's Acting Foreign Minister Eugene Ch'en, British forces were withdrawn and the Canton Government assumed the duties of policing the wharves and preventing any further strike picket interference. In what must have been a particularly damaging blow to its prestige, the Canton Strike Committee was forced to remove its pickets from the entrances of the French and British bridges to Shameen--a post they had manned since the events of June 23, 1925.¹³

The British Diplomatic Offensive of
September, 1926

The success achieved through naval action against the strike pickets at Canton and Swatow in September, 1926, convinced many British

¹³For the incident involving the firing by strike pickets upon the American and the British subject, see FO 405/252A, F 4257/1/10, Brenan to Macleay, Canton, August 31, 1926; and Enclosure No. 2, Brenan to Ch'en, Canton, August 28, 1926. For discussion of proposed British action in this incident, see FO 371/11630, F 13607, Minutes by J. T. Pratt and W. Strang, Foreign Office, September 3, 1926. British actions at Canton and Swatow are reported in FO 371/11630, F 13656, Brenan to Chamberlain, Canton, September 6, 1926; and FO 405/252A, F 4399/1/10, Brenan to Macleay, Canton, September 9, 1926. For Eugene Ch'en's protest and British observations on the removal of strike pickets from the entrances to the bridges leading to Shameen, see FO 405/252A, F 4399/1/10, Enclosure No. 3, Ch'en to Brenan, Canton, September 7, 1926;

observers that, at last, they were in a position to force an end of the 15-month old strike and boycott that had crippled their economic interests in south China. Among these observers, however, the accumulated frustrations brought about by earlier failures to make Canton come to terms led to sharp differences concerning the adoption of a proper course of action. When Acting Consul-General Brenan reported on September 12 that Eugene Ch'en had hastily offered to re-open settlement negotiations, Governor Clementi, convinced of Ch'en's insincerity, insisted that the offer was a thinly disguised attempt to forestall further British action. Clementi shared the concern of other British authorities over what appeared to be the increasingly belligerent attitudes of the Kuomintang.

In Canton, the speeches of Sun Fo in the first weeks of September had called for renewed support to the strikers and a commitment to spread the anti-British boycott along the paths opened by KMT victories in the Northern Expedition. While Sun's attitude is somewhat puzzling, (he had long been a consistent opponent of the anti-British boycott), it may be that he had grown accustomed to the large pool of free labor for municipal improvement provided by strikers in Canton. Early in their struggle with Hong Kong, these strikers had begun work on a dirt road from Canton to Whampoa named in honor of Sun Yat-sen. Their labors had also been profitably utilized in projects to widen Canton's

FO 371/11630, F 13767, Brenan to Chamberlain, Canton, September 12, 1926; and FO 371/11631, F 4023, Brenan to Chamberlain, Canton, September 25, 1926.

thoroughfares, to repair houses and shops, and to improve Whampoa's port facilities.¹⁴

To Governor Clementi, a cause for alarm even greater than that created by the speeches of Sun Fo was, what he described as, "the indiscriminate firing by Kuomintang forces upon British vessels on the Yangtze." There, both above and below Hankow, the KMT had established war zones and had cautioned foreign shipping to avoid such areas. British officers chose, however, to ignore the struggles being waged on the river and disregarded the repeated Kuomintang warnings. In their efforts to maintain the treaty rights of free access on China's inland waterways, these officers frequently sailed into the line of fire laid down by KMT rifles and artillery. On September 10, under the instructions of British Minister Macleay, Acting Consul-General Brennan sent a note to the Canton Government requesting it to order a halt to the firing upon foreign vessels on the Yangtze. That same day, at the request of Governor Clementi, Brennan sent a second note to Eugene Ch'en that questioned whether the attitudes expressed in the recent speeches of Sun Fo were shared by the Canton Government.¹⁵

¹⁴Brennan's report on Ch'en's proposal to resume negotiations is in FO 371/11630, F 13767, Brennan to Chamberlain, Canton, September 12, 1926. Governor Clementi's reaction to this proposal is in CO 129/494, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 13, 1926. Sun Fo's speeches in favor of continuing and spreading the anti-British boycott met with opposition by Chiang Kai-shek, Eugene Ch'en, and Soviet adviser Borodin. See Wah-tsz yat-po, September 25, 1926. For the observations of Hong Kong newspapers on the municipal improvement projects undertaken by strikers in Canton, see The South China Morning Post, March 23, 1926, p. 5.

¹⁵For the assessment of Governor Clementi concerning KMT actions

Because he saw in these events a unique opportunity to bring about a rapid boycott termination by independent warlike action, Governor Clementi proposed that, in the absence of an immediate reply to the two notes of Brennan, the British Government present an ultimatum to Canton. Said Clementi:

We should demand within twenty-four hours an undertaking that all British ships on the Yangtze and elsewhere would be respected by Cantonese troops, and that all anti-British manifestations on territory controlled by the Cantonese Government should cease forthwith; failing which we should take such action as might seem to us proper.

Clementi remained convinced that the threat implied in such an ultimatum would be enough to force an immediate capitulation; but if it failed to bring Hong Kong's enemies to terms, he advocated closing the ports of Canton and Swatow by British naval action.¹⁶

At Peking, British Minister Macleay had anxiously noted the speed with which the forces of the KMT's Northern Expedition had reached the Yangtze. His concern was heightened by the seeming reluctance of Sun Ch'uan-fang to take the field against his enemies. By endorsing the

on the Yangtze together with his views on Brennan's two notes to the Canton Government, see CO 129/494, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 13, 1926. The attitude of British officers on the Yangtze is well typified by that of Sir Ronald Macleay. On learning that the Kuomintang had issued subsequent warnings to foreign vessels to avoid anchoring in the vicinity of the war zone at Wuhan, Macleay observed, "I have not so far received any information, confirmation or comments on this impertinent message from British Commander-in-chief, but presume it will merely be ignored." See FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 138, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, September 22, 1926.

¹⁶See CO 129/494, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 13, 1926.

warlike actions at Canton implied in Clementi's ultimatum proposal, Macleay saw an opportunity to stiffen Sun's resolve. Convinced of the urgent need for Great Britain to ally itself with the forces hostile to the Kuomintang, the British Minister reverted to advocating policies he had first suggested in January, 1926. He urged the Foreign Office to modify its policy of non-intervention in Chinese internal affairs to one of assistance for the "anti-Bolshevik" coalition he then saw forming in the north. Specifically, Macleay desired a suspension of the arms embargo in that coalition's favor, and a generous grant of British arms, ammunition, and money.¹⁷

In London, following a careful examination of each of these proposals, members of both the Foreign and Colonial Offices concluded that they could not be adopted. The opposition to military actions at Canton that had emerged in a conference between the Foreign Office and the Committee of Imperial Defense in March, 1926, remained the dominant sentiment. Moreover, the suggestion of assistance to Sun Ch'uan-fang was viewed as exposing the interests of Great Britain to foolish risks. Not only would such assistance overturn long-standing British policy and bring foreign criticism; but even more important, there was no assurance that aid to Sun Ch'uan-fang or any other KMT foe would bring victory. The Foreign Office also observed that the objections upon which Governor Clementi's

¹⁷ Macleay attempted to justify this policy by pointed references to the continued Soviet support in both arms and advisers that had strengthened the south. See FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 135, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, September 20, 1926.

proposed ultimatum rested were no longer valid. Acting Consul-General Brennan had reported that Eugene Ch'en, despite the use of inflammatory language, had responded satisfactorily to the two British notes of September 10. In an attempt to placate those British representatives in China who continued to favor warlike action, the Foreign Office closed its messages to them with the assurance that military experts in London would continue to study the feasibility of actions short of a blockade at Canton and Swatow.¹⁸

On September 18, Acting Consul-General Brennan reported from Canton that Eugene Ch'en had announced a date for the boycott's termination. For British officials who had suffered through a seemingly endless barrage of shattered settlement hopes since June, 1925, Ch'en's announcement that the boycott would end on October 10, 1926, arrived with numbing impact. The initial reaction was widespread disbelief. In Hong Kong, Governor Clementi quickly became convinced that Canton was about to practice a new deceit. In Peking, Sir Ronald Macleay independently

¹⁸Clementi's ultimatum proposals repeated to London on September 16 were supported by the British Senior Naval Officer, West River. See CO 129/494, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 16, 1926; and CO 129/494, No. 716, Commodore to Admiralty, Hong Kong, September 13, 1926. The initial enthusiasm of Colonial Secretary Amery and members of the Colonial Office for a blockade was overcome when the Foreign Office view received the support of the Admiralty. See CO 129/494, Minute by G. Grindle addressed to Amery, Colonial Office, September 17, 1926; and CO 129/494, Minutes by G. Grindle and T.A. Clutterbuck, Colonial Office, September 16, 1926. See also, CO 129/494, Copy of a draft telegram (sent September 20), Foreign Office to Macleay, London, September 16, 1926; and FO 405/252A, F 4326/1/10, "The Canton Boycott," by W. Strang, Foreign Office, October 13, 1926.

came to the same conclusion.¹⁹

October 10, 1926: Defeat in Victory or
Victory in Defeat?

Governor Clementi, suspicious of Ch'en's message to Acting Consul-General Brenan, continued to press London in late September for military action at Canton. His belief that Hong Kong's struggle with the Kuomintang could only end under the punishing fire of British gunboats was enthusiastically endorsed by the colony's military leaders. They insisted that the Admiralty, in supporting the recent Foreign Office position, had misunderstood their military intentions and overestimated the potential strength of Chinese resistance. At Peking, Sir Ronald Macleay, who seemed intent on linking British fortunes to those of Sun Ch'uan-fang and Chang Tso-lin, remained sympathetic to Hong Kong's call to arms. Among British officials in China, only Brenan seemed to take Eugene Ch'en's pronouncements seriously. He urged the Foreign Office to hold military action in reserve while waiting for Canton to carry out its stated intentions.²⁰

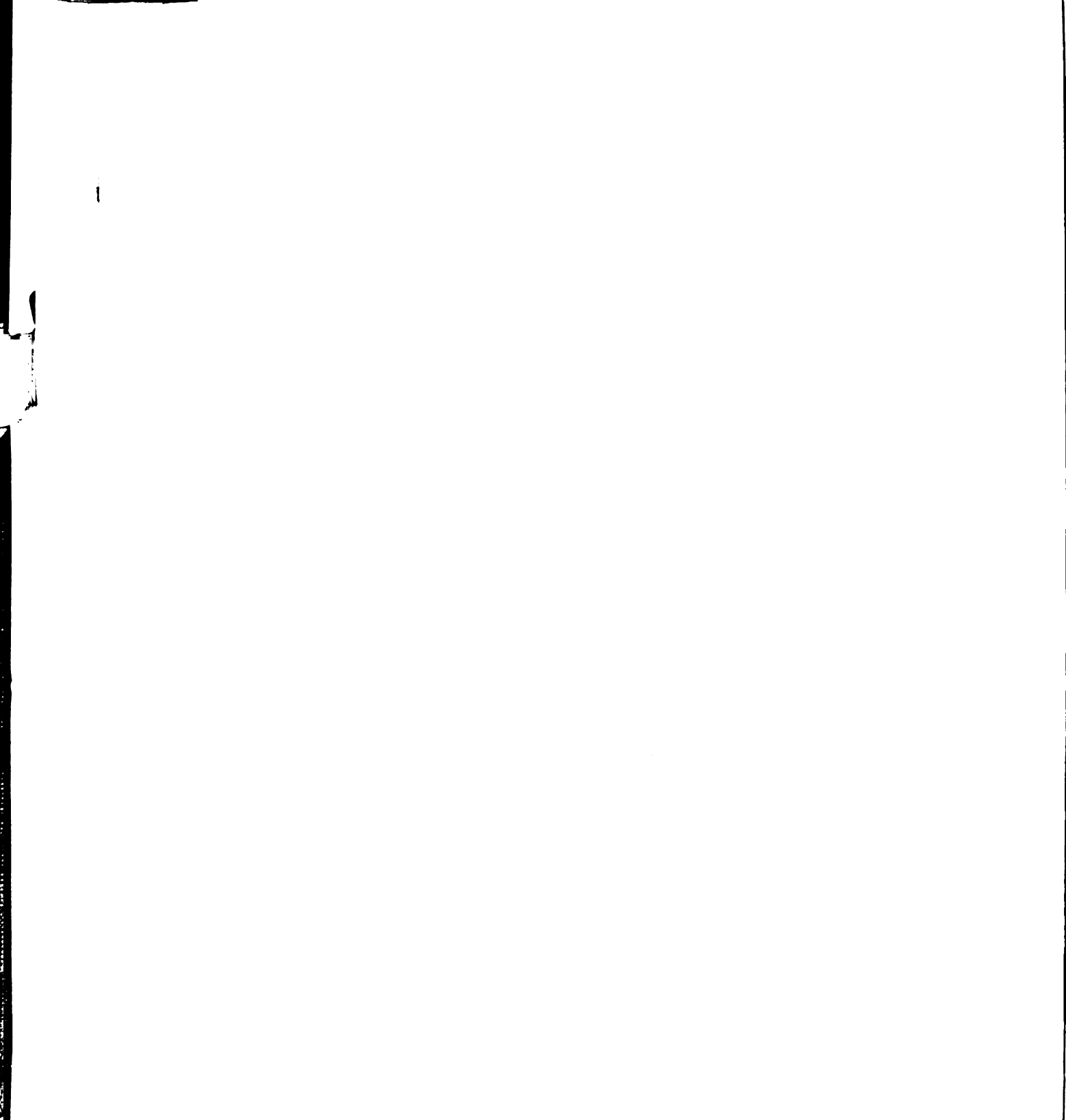
¹⁹For Brenan's report of Eugene Ch'en's announcement, see FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 125, Brenan to Chamberlain, Canton, September 18, 1926. Clementi's suspicion of Canton's intentions is apparent in FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 128, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 20, 1926. The views of Sir Ronald Macleay are in FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 138, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, September 22, 1926.

²⁰For the views of Governor Clementi and military authorities in south China, see FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 129, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 20, 1926. Macleay, who continued to hope for a smashing KMT defeat, presented his views in FO 405/252A, Telegram

Among members of the Foreign Office in September, 1926, the views of Acting Consul-General Brenan carried great weight. His skillful activities at Canton were seen as largely responsible for the Chinese decision to end the boycott. However, Colonial Secretary Amery's suspicions, which mirrored those of Governor Clementi, meant that Hong Kong's views could not be ignored. Despite misgivings concerning independent British military action, the Foreign Office conceded that, in the event the boycott continued after October 10, it would prepare its support to warlike actions at Canton. The Admiralty held to its conviction that forceful action beyond that which had been carried out against strike pickets on September 4, would prove most dangerous. In the past it had consistently noted that any large-scale action in south China would require the prior evacuation of British interests at Swatow and Shameen. In September, 1926, however, it accepted the view of those who pointed out the difficulties anticipated in any attempt to restore British concessions once they had been abandoned.²¹

No. 138, Macleay to Chamberlain, Peking, September 22, 1926. For the attitudes of Brenan, see FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 125, Brenan to Chamberlain, Canton, September 18, 1926.

²¹The high regard within the Foreign Office for the actions and opinions of Acting Consul-General Brenan is apparent in FO 371/11630, F 13896, Minutes by J. T. Pratt, W. Shearman, G. Mounsey, and W. Tyrrell, Foreign Office, September 21-22, 1926. For the views of Colonial Secretary Amery as expressed in a message to Clementi which committed the Foreign Office to action after October 10, see CO 129/494, Amery to Clementi, Colonial Office, September 22, 1926. The Admiralty views were based on those which had emerged from two conferences of the British Service Departments held on September 20 and October 4,



The belligerent attitudes of Governor Clementi and Sir Ronald Macleay toward Canton in September were partially motivated by the news that the Kuomintang was not prepared to end the boycott without exacting a significant concession from the British Government. In his message to Brennan of September 18, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Eugene Ch'en had made it clear that the KMT was preparing to institute an important set of new taxes. These would include a special consumption tax of 2 1/2 percent on ordinary imports and 5 percent on luxuries together with a special production tax of 2 1/2 percent on exports. The taxes were to be levied on the goods of all nations; but in return for ending the boycott, the British were expected to acquiesce without protest. In addition, Ch'en made it clear that the assistance of the Maritime Customs Administration in the collection of these taxes was expected. To Governor Clementi this scheme suggested that the Kuomintang planned, under the cover of thin disguise, to force Hong Kong to provide a cash payment to the Canton strikers. Although other nations would also have to pay, Clementi remained convinced that the loss of prestige to Hong Kong and Great Britain would be enormous.²²

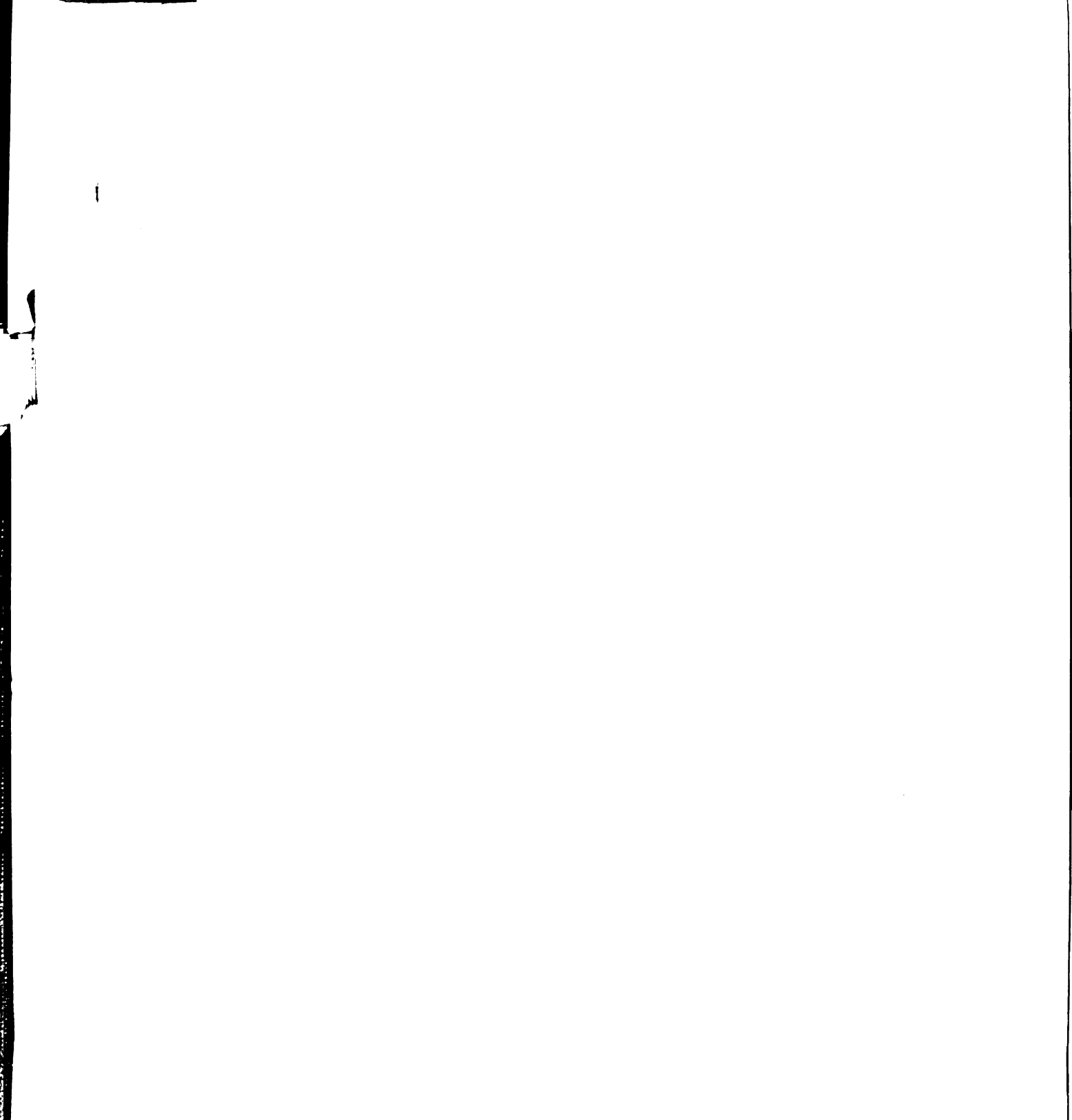
1926. See FO 405/252A, F 4326, "The Canton Boycott," by W. Strang, Foreign Office, October 13, 1926.

²²For a discussion of the taxation proposal made by Ch'en to Brennan, see FO 405/252A, F 4326/1/10, "The Canton Boycott," by W. Strang, Foreign Office, October 13, 1926. The reaction of Governor Clementi to this scheme is in FO 405/252A, Telegram No. 137, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, September 22, 1926.

The objections of Sir Ronald Macleay to acceptance of the taxation scheme outlined by Eugene Ch'en, although shrouded in the rhetoric of preserving essential elements of British policy, were motivated by his intense displeasure with the growing power of the Kuomintang. Macleay noted that British acquiescence to Canton's new taxes would probably lead to provincial or regional tariff autonomy. As an important member of the British delegation to the Tariff Conference at Peking which had withered away in July, 1926, he was well aware, however, of the official view in London which had favored provincial or regional tariff collections in China since December of the previous year. Macleay was, no doubt, also aware that the Foreign Office stood ready to abandon its insistence upon Chinese removal of the likin transit tax if, by so doing, it could obtain relief from the boycott at Canton. The British Minister at Peking presented a much stronger argument when he noted that acceptance of the Canton taxes would appear to the other foreign powers as a British bargain with the Kuomintang at the expense of their rights and obligations under the Washington treaties. Macleay's greatest fear, one shared with Governor Clementi, was that the KMT, which already posed a major threat to the north, would divert the new revenues collected at Canton directly into its war chest.²³

In the Foreign Office, where it was observed that Canton's proposed

²³Sir Ronald Macleay's objections to Canton's taxation scheme are in FO 371/11631, F 4068, Macleay to Tyrrell, Peking, September 27, 1926.



taxes bore a strong resemblance to the surtaxes agreed to in principle at the Washington Conference of 1921-22, a consensus favoring British acceptance emerged. Foreign Office sentiments were accurately reflected in the view of one member who said "it is obvious that we ought to jump at this offer." Subsequent discussions centered on the adoption of a method by which any charge that Great Britain had made a deal with the KMT might be answered. It was anticipated that Japan, which had consistently opposed the granting of the Washington surtaxes without conditions, could prove particularly troublesome. As a result, the Foreign Office instructed Acting Consul-General Brennan to restrict his formal reply to Eugene Ch'en to an expression of satisfaction with the news that the boycott would be terminated. In the event that he could arrange a private meeting with Ch'en, however, Brennan was instructed to give verbal assurances that Great Britain would accept Canton's new taxes without protest; provided these taxes were applied equally to all nations, and provided the boycott would at last come to an end. Foreign Office instructions to Brennan concluded by cautioning him to bear in mind that "the one overriding consideration is that we must get the boycott called off and that we are willing to pay the price asked."²⁴

²⁴For discussions within the Foreign Office concerning Canton's new taxes and the instructions sent to Brennan, see FO 371/11630, F 3896, Minutes by J. T. Pratt, W. Shearman, G. Mounsey and W. Tyrrell, Foreign Office, September 21-22, 1926. See also, FO 371/11631, F 4005, Minutes by J. T. Pratt and G. Mounsey, Foreign Office, September 24, 1926; and FO 405/252A, F 4437/1/10, "Memorandum respecting the Tariff Conference and the Canton Taxation Proposals," by J. T. Pratt, Foreign Office, October 18, 1926.

To British observers it was apparent that, since the action against strike pickets at Canton and Swatow on September 4, there had been mounting apprehension within the Kuomintang concerning their intentions. It was believed that party leaders were convinced that any further incidents created by the strikers would lead to an all-out British attack upon the revolutionary base at Canton. Such an attack could seriously jeopardize the success of the Northern Expedition. The anxieties of Eugene Ch'en, which had been heightened by the threatening language of Acting Consul-General Brenan in the first two weeks of September, may have been further inflated by a leak in official British communications. Governor Clementi had adopted the habit of reading unparaphrased telegrams of British authorities in China and London to his Executive Council in Hong Kong. Among those with whom the Governor shared such information was the head of Jardine, Matheson and Company in Hong Kong, a Mr. Bernard. In addition to serving as an unofficial member of the Executive Council in Hong Kong, Bernard represented the colony's commercial leadership on the Shanghai China Committee--a prominent British merchant interest in south China. It was most probably through this organization that "British official opinion in China" became the property of the Kuomintang. It is certainly conceivable that through this channel Governor Clementi may have deliberately made public the discussions between British Minister Macleay and the Foreign Office concerning assistance to the northern warlords and an ultimatum to Canton.

Although members of the British Foreign Office deplored Clementi's actions, deliberate or otherwise, they had to concede that the leak had had a beneficial effect.²⁵

On October 6, in a report to the municipal departments of the Kuomintang in Canton, Sun Fo observed that the strike pickets in the city were expected to suspend their activities on October 10. He insisted that the KMT was not abandoning the economic struggle and that it would not do so until imperialism was overthrown and the unequal treaties were abolished. The change of policy which required a relaxation of boycott activities at Canton was described by Sun as the first step in an attempt to carry the battle into other parts of China. He acknowledged that the boycott against Hong Kong had not been fully supported in Canton and that, as a result, it had been necessary to force compliance. Sun argued that in the future, the people, as a part of the patriotic movement, would be expected to control the economic struggle by themselves. Sun Fo concluded by indicating that Canton's new taxes would be employed to relieve the strikers, to facilitate the opening of Whampoa as a commercial port, and to facilitate completion of the Canton-Hankow Railway. On October 10, the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, in a declaration addressed to the strikers in Canton, unilaterally announced that the strike and boycott were at an end. The CEC justified its decision

²⁵For a discussion and report on this leak of "British official opinion in China" within the Foreign Office, see FO 371/11632, F 4354/1/10, Minute by W. Strang, Foreign Office, November 15, 1926.

with reference to Kwangtung by declaring:

. . . If it keeps on advancing against the enemy, while the rest of the country is not yet in a position to advance, then we shall find ourselves in armed conflict with the imperialists, with the danger of being cut off and destroyed.²⁶

Although sharply reduced anti-British boycott activities without the official sanction of the Kuomintang were to continue until the end of the year; in Hong Kong, where for the first time since 1911 Chinese could celebrate "double-ten" as a legal holiday, the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott came to a formal end at noon on October 10, 1926.²⁷

²⁶For the speech of Sun Fo of October 6, 1926, see Min-kuo jih-pao, October 6, 1926, p. 11. The declaration of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang is in The Canton Gazette, October 10, 1926. Also on October 10, the Canton Strike Committee, its power and discipline shattered, published its own announcement declaring the strike and boycott at an end. See Min-kuo jih-pao, October 10, 1926, p. 3. For a message of congratulations to the strikers in Canton from the Chinese Communist Party, see Min-kuo jih-pao, October 10, 1926, p. 5.

²⁷An excellent description of the level and effectiveness of unofficial boycott activities in Canton after October 10 is provided in FO 405/252A, F 5505/1/10, Brenan to Macleay, Canton, November 6, 1926. For observations by British officials in Hong Kong on the end of the boycott there, see CO 129/494, C 19473, Clementi to Amery, Hong Kong, October 16, 1926. See also, Remer, op. cit., p. 109.

CHAPTER VI

THE CANTON-HONG KONG STRIKE AND BOYCOTT OF 1925-26: CONCLUSION

The immediate response of British observers in south China to the strike begun by Chinese workers in Hong Kong on June 18, 1925, differed little from that with which they had greeted earlier Chinese work stoppages. They assumed, despite the rhetoric linking that action to the events of May Thirtieth in Shanghai, that the strike could be ended quickly by the granting of a few minor economic concessions. Although these observers remembered well the impact of the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike of 1922 and recognized the importance of Canton as a strikers' sanctuary, they failed to understand the threat posed to their interests by the assertive nationalism expressed by the Kuomintang. The two dominant British personalities in south China, Consul-General at Canton Sir James W. Jamieson and Governor of Hong Kong Sir R. E. Stubbs, remained committed to the maintenance of British prestige regardless of cost.

At Canton, where the followers of Sun Yat-sen in 1925 continued their attempts to secure the Kuomintang's precarious revolutionary

base, the strike against Hong Kong generated little initial enthusiasm. Cantonese merchants, overtaxed and financially exhausted by the KMT's recent military campaign against the Kwangsi and Yunnanese militarists in their midst, desired a return to peaceful commercial conditions. Among the labor unions in Canton there was no strong sentiment for the strike. Even within the ranks of the Kuomintang, there were many who opposed this action against Hong Kong. Nevertheless, in an attempt to service the anti-imperialist and anti-militarist position adopted at the First Party Congress in 1924, the Kuomintang, capably assisted by the individual members of the Chinese Communist Party admitted into its ranks, launched the strike against Hong Kong as a political protest over British actions in Shanghai.

Hong Kong, because it was linked to Canton by bonds of economic interdependence, was particularly vulnerable to the influence of events in Kwangtung. Its position of dominance over the commercial interests at Canton, built up during more than three quarters of a century, had alienated many Chinese. The strike begun at Hong Kong in the third week of June, 1925, however, had been launched with little assurance of success. Even the future of its sponsor the Kuomintang remained open to question. Obviously, the contention of Kuomintang and Communist leaders that the strike against Hong Kong was initiated as

part of a life or death struggle with British imperialism came after the fact.

The single most crucial element in the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott of 1925-26 was the Shameen Incident of June 23, 1925. Although this event did not begin the strike and boycott against Hong Kong, had it not occurred, the strike would most probably have been dissipated and the boycott ended even before it had begun. It has not been the author's purpose in this study to attempt to determine responsibility for the tragedy at Shameen, but rather to assess its impact. Readers desirous of an objective account of this incident might wish to consult Thurston Griggs, "The Anti-Imperialist Theme in Chinese Nationalism, 1919-1926," an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1952. Griggs finds the evidence on the question of who fired first inconclusive. To this author it seems apparent that British actions, whether initiated or provoked, were excessive. As a result, they inflamed Cantonese opposition and provided a sharp stimulus to the intensification of Canton's anti-imperialist struggle.

Among British officials in south China, the Shameen Incident revived an earlier cause for alarm. Following the arrival in Canton, late in 1923, of Michael Borodin as the forerunner of a Soviet military and political mission, British observers became convinced that Kwangtung was about to be "bolshevized." Consequently, by 1925,

all but a few official voices decried the Soviet domination of Canton. The Shameen Incident was seen as a Soviet plot meant to capitalize upon Canton's anti-British hostility. In late June and early July, 1925, British commercial interests in south China appeared intent on surpassing the assessments of British officials regarding the Russian role in events at Canton. In both official reports and newspaper accounts that voiced the sentiments of commercial leaders, it was not uncommon to find KMT notables such as Liao Chung-k'ai, Wang Ching-wei, Chiang Kai-shek, and Hu Han-min all labeled as communists. Within the Foreign Office, the few voices of dissent were stifled and the characterization of the Kuomintang as a haven for bolsheviks became the dominant element in policy considerations. While this British view of Russian influence in KMT affairs was greatly distorted, it was not without some basis in fact. The view that KMT leaders were communists may, of course, be dismissed. The belief that the incident at Shameen formed part of a Soviet plot, while understandable, lacks all but the flimsiest sort of evidence. The contention that Soviet involvement in the affairs of the Kuomintang was part of a deliberate policy meant to discredit the British is not to be discounted. In its attempt to combat the cooperative "spirit of the Washington Conference," the Soviet Union adopted a China policy that emphasized attacks on British interests coupled with the avoidance

of conflict with Japan. This no doubt reflected fears of a renewed Anglo-Japanese Alliance or, even worse, one expanded to include the United States. In this regard, it is well to note that the KMT decision in August and September, 1925, to concentrate the strike and boycott against the British alone was not without Soviet influence.

The intensification and extension throughout much of Kwangtung of the strike and boycott against Hong Kong in July and August, 1925, brought a slowly growing awareness among British observers of the power of the Canton Strike Committee. Although the assessment of its influence came rather late, in the view of this author, the British contention that the Canton Strike Committee was a "government within a government" appears to be valid. Despite its role in launching the struggle against Hong Kong, the Kuomintang initially remained content with the management of the strike and boycott firmly in the hands of the Strike Committee dominated by the Chinese Communists. The Committee rapidly usurped a number of important powers of the Canton Municipal and Kwangtung Provincial Governments, and ultimately challenged even the authority of the Kuomintang. Its Communist members on occasion also demonstrated contempt for the authority of their own party leaders in Shanghai.

In the first three months of the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott, it seems clear that leaders in London remained unable to

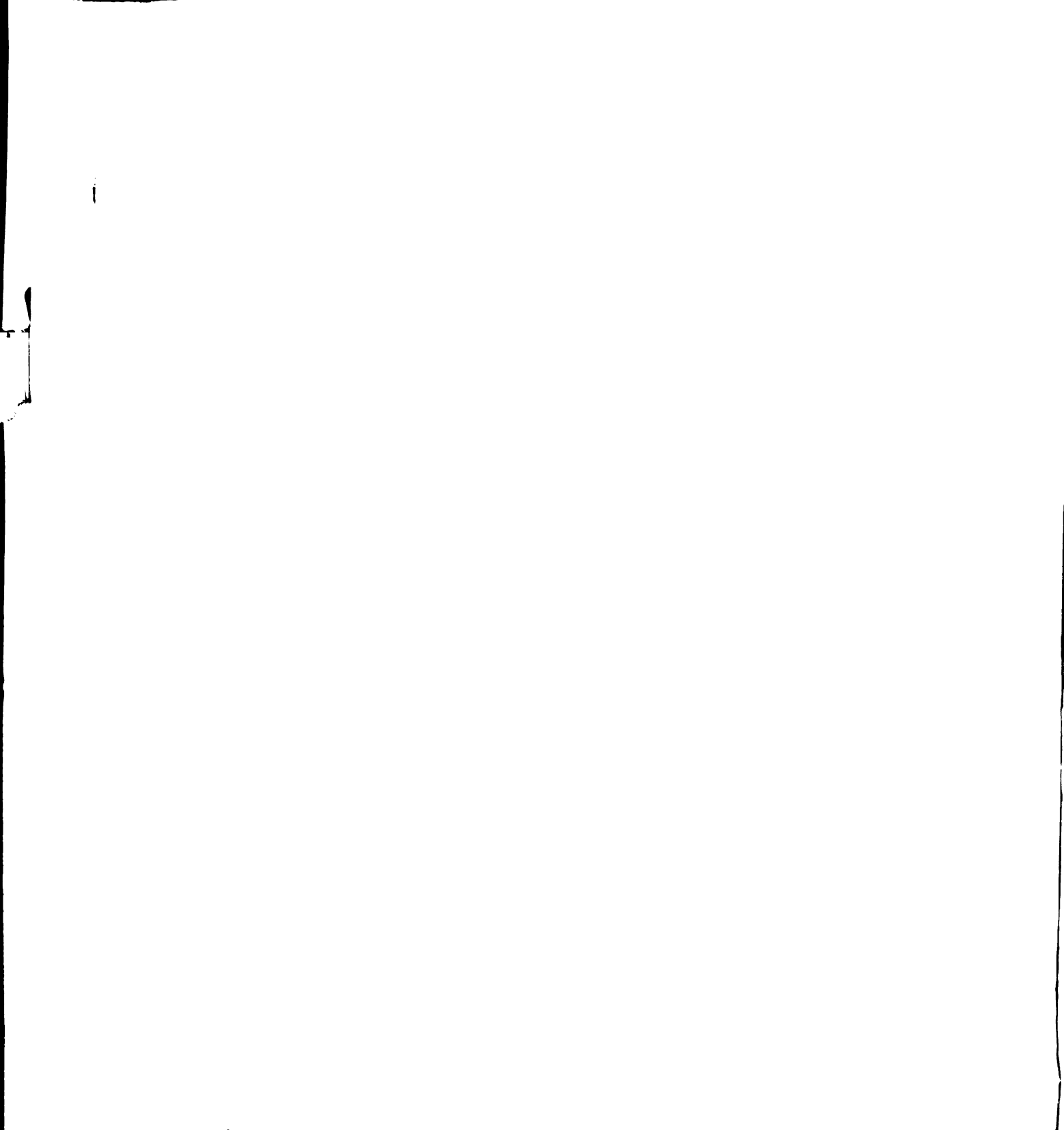
distinguish between the threat posed to their interests by the Kuomintang and that created by the wave of anti-British strike and boycott agitation in other parts of China that had come in the wake of the May Thirtieth Incident. Despite the continued plea raised in Hong Kong that the struggle with Canton was separate and far more serious, the Foreign Office continued to subordinate the interests of the British colony to its own larger interests throughout China. When the Tariff Conference was convened at Peking on July 26, 1925, the Foreign Office ignored the hostile protests of the Kuomintang that saw the conference as damaging to Canton's interests.

The contention has been made by some with an interest in Britain's China policy that, because it was no longer effective, Great Britain abandoned, at the beginning of 1925, the spirit of accord that had emerged at the Washington Conference. This author believes that the present study demonstrates otherwise. Throughout the last half of 1925, as it struggled to defeat the strike and boycott against Hong Kong, Great Britain adhered faithfully, if without profit, to both the letter and the spirit of the Washington Conference treaties. The inability of British officials to gain acceptance among the other Washington powers for a policy of cooperative action against Canton led the Foreign Office to a rejection of attempts at military solution.

Although its position was strongly supported by the Admiralty, the Foreign Office was not without influential critics. The advocacy of a blockade at Canton or some other form of forceful action to be undertaken by the British Empire acting alone was first put forward by Governor Stubbs. His proposals, which gained the endorsement of the Colonial Office, led to mounting friction among British officials in London. The personal antagonism between Stubbs and Consul-General Jamieson that lasted until Stubbs was replaced in November, 1925, did little to assist officials in London who continued to wrestle with the problem confronting Hong Kong.

Until the end of August, 1925, Hong Kong continued to look to Sun Fo and those in Canton who shared his sentiments for a solution to the problem of the strike and boycott. Although Sun and his supporters continued to oppose the struggle against Hong Kong, their waning influence was further damaged by the assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai. Responsibility for Liao's death, still a mystery today, was never determined, but in the wake of a Kuomintang investigation at the time many moderates and rightists in the KMT fled Canton for Shanghai or Peking. Their departure further enhanced the influence of the Strike Committee and its supporters in Canton.

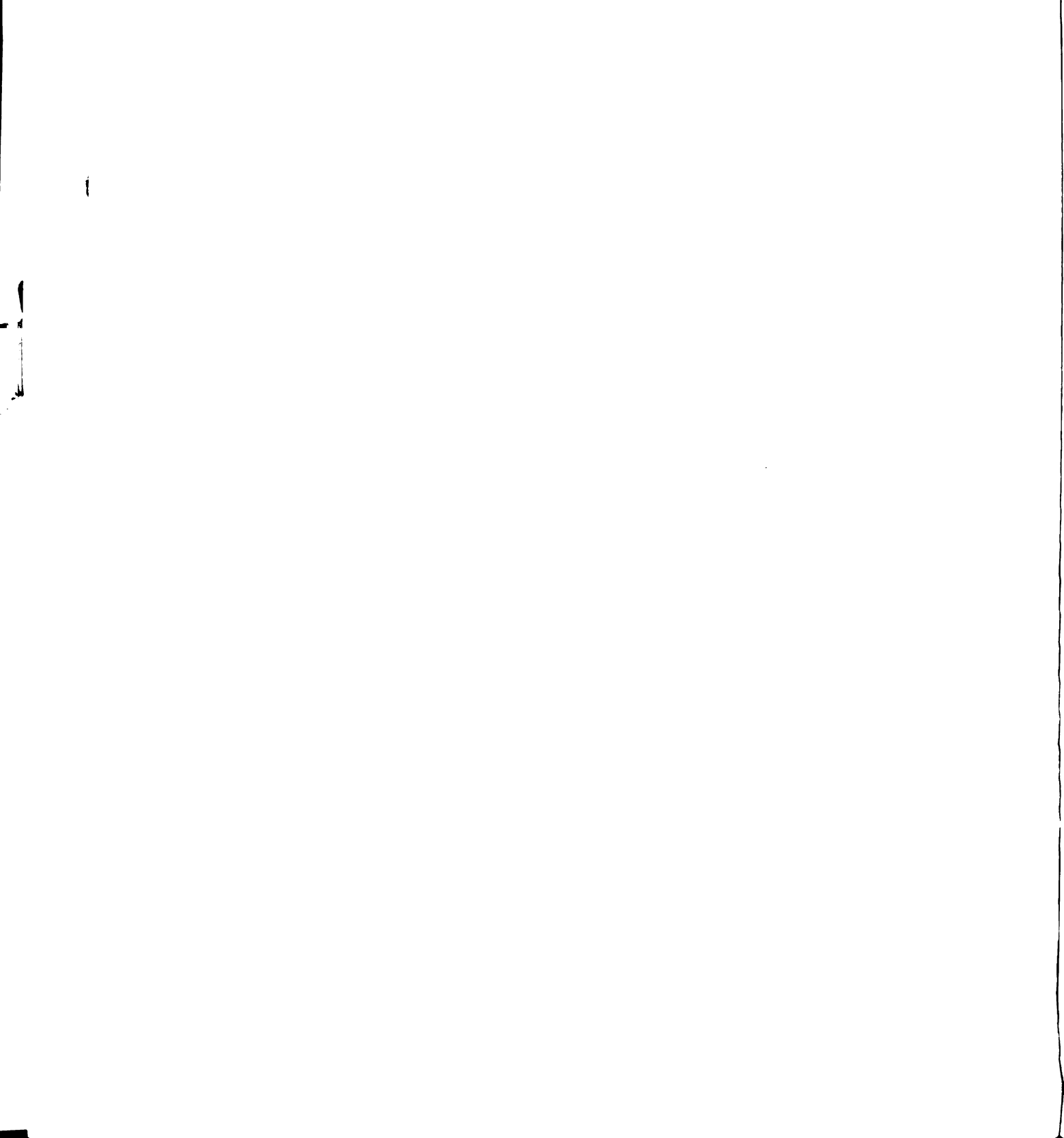
As 1925 came to an end, British officials began an important reappraisal of their policy toward the Kuomintang. This reappraisal reflected both the changing conditions and the modified attitudes of British officials who responded to those new conditions in China. Although the instability of the Peking Government had long been chronic, at the end of 1925, it appeared acute. Among British observers in London, the appearance of each new warlord at Peking served to further confirm the view that China would soon, at best, become a loosely federated collection of independent or semi-independent provinces. The tarnished appeal of the fiction that one government ruled in China; and that that government resided at Peking, was about to be rejected. British officials in south China, and particularly Sir James W. Jamieson, had begun to accept the view that the Kuomintang was something more than merely a vehicle for Soviet aspirations. Jamieson, who was certainly no friend of the KMT, was so impressed by Canton's efforts at local reform that, in December, 1925, he urged the Foreign Office to adopt the experiment of offering the Kuomintang regional recognition. In the view of this author, Jamieson's proposal was inspired more by Hong Kong's distress and the danger to British interests there than by Canton's improvements in municipal and provincial administration.



Within the Foreign Office at the end of 1925, the efforts of Hong Kong officials and their supporters in London finally bore fruit. At last, the Foreign Office had acknowledged that Hong Kong's struggle with Canton was indeed separate from, and far more serious, than other anti-British manifestations in China. The Foreign Office assessment of the strike and boycott in December, 1925, was that it had done perhaps irreparable damage to British interests in south China and that, if it were to continue, Hong Kong would be lost.

In the first months of 1926, although British policy was slow to change, the coming of change was apparent. In London, it was agreed that for China the Kuomintang was the wave of the future. British policy toward it began moving away from a position of antagonism and hostility toward one of conciliation and support. The Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott was seen as expressive of the Kuomintang's revolutionary aims and, as such, that struggle became the primary and dominant consideration in Britain's China policy.

At the Tariff Conference reconvened at Peking in February, 1926, the British delegation was instructed to continue with earlier efforts designed to bring about a regional or provincial allocation of China's customs revenues. It was hoped that by offering Canton a share in these funds, formerly enjoyed exclusively by Peking, the strike and



boycott against Hong Kong might be brought to an end. When it became apparent that the Kuomintang remained opposed to regional allocation, because it anticipated obtaining all of China's customs revenues upon completion of its campaign against the north, the British delegation adopted obstructionist tactics that furthered the disintegration of the Tariff Conference. Although its actions aroused the suspicions of the other foreign powers, the Foreign Office then had no desire to further antagonize the Kuomintang.

The Customs Seizure incident at Canton in February, 1926, demonstrated with finality the bankruptcy of continued British reliance upon the "cooperative spirit" of the Washington Conference powers. Although this incident was not truly a customs seizure, but rather an interference by strike pickets with goods before they had cleared the customs, the other foreign powers were reluctant to lodge even a protest. They correctly shared the belief that British interests wished to involve them in the struggle between Canton and Hong Kong.

Throughout the abortive negotiations that formed a part of the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott, the Kuomintang insisted that it could serve only as a mediator between the strikers and the government of Hong Kong. The British position as expressed through Governor Clementi was that any settlement negotiations would require

the appointment of representatives empowered to speak for the government of Canton. Clearly, at issue was the question of responsibility for the actions of the strikers. The Kuomintang characterized its involvement in the strike and boycott against Hong Kong as one of sympathy for, and interest in, the welfare of Chinese workers who had launched a patriotic struggle against the outrageous abuses of British imperialism. The Hong Kong Government countered with the argument that the strike and boycott had been artificially induced, that the strike had been over since August, 1925, and that the boycott continued only through the coercion practiced by the Strike Committee for which the Canton Government bore full responsibility. The role of the Kuomintang in launching this struggle has been discussed; its actions in ending it require further comment. With the beginning of the Northern Expedition in July, 1926, the KMT began its own efforts toward a boycott settlement. It abandoned the fiction of non-responsibility for the strikers in Canton and attempted to negotiate a settlement with the government of Hong Kong. When these efforts failed and it saw a serious British threat to the revolutionary base at Canton, the Kuomintang unilaterally ended the struggle. This action made it obvious that the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott was a KMT responsibility.

The issue of compensation to the strikers is particularly revealing with regard to the policies of Great Britain, Hong Kong, and Canton. Throughout the first three months of 1926, the Foreign Office, in its anxiety to reach a settlement, stood ready to make a sizable payment to Canton. When it learned that Governor Clementi had disregarded its wishes and those of the Colonial Office by rejecting such an overture, the Foreign Office expressed its considerable displeasure. At Hong Kong, Clementi attempted to justify his stance against a payment to Canton by pointing to an imagined resurgence of influence among the rightists there. However, not only did those in Canton who opposed the strike and boycott fail to take power but, more important, they joined their opponents in demanding compensation from Hong Kong.

A resumption of negotiations in March, 1926, re-introduced the compensation issue in another form. Hong Kong was then prepared to offer Canton substantial railway and port development loans. In Canton, it was assumed that a large portion of those loans would be used to pay off the strikers. When Hong Kong insisted on rigid conditions that would prevent any such allocation, the negotiations were suspended and another important opportunity to end the strike and boycott was lost. By September 18, 1926, when the Kuomintang's

Minister for Foreign Affairs Eugene Ch'en announced a date for the boycott's termination, the compensation issue had assumed its final form. That same day, Ch'en informed Acting Consul-General Brennan that the Kuomintang would institute new production and consumption taxes. Although the Foreign Office officially viewed Canton's new levies as the Washington surtaxes, its members privately acknowledged that the Kuomintang had succeeded in forcing Hong Kong to compensate the strikers. If one were to accept the rather narrow view that the important political issues that provided content to the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott were ultimately reduced to a battle over the issue of compensation, it would be a simple matter to conclude that the Kuomintang had achieved an important economic victory. There were, however, other important issues at stake in this struggle.

The question of recognition to the Kuomintang has occupied an important place in this study. It will be recalled that Sir James W. Jamieson had first raised this issue in December, 1925. In the first months of 1926, as British officials searched for a means with which to supplant the Russian influence at Canton, a growing sentiment emerged in both the Foreign and Colonial Offices that favored regional recognition to the Kuomintang. In London, it was

acknowledged that in practice de facto recognition had already been accorded to Canton. Although proposals to offer de jure recognition were then defeated, they subsequently reappeared with notable regularity. Only the British Minister at Peking, the conservative Sir Ronald Macleay, remained consistently opposed to any form of recognition being offered the KMT. Why, then, were these proposals not implemented? The position of the Kuomintang on the question of recognition had long been consistent. It sought to be recognized as the legitimate and sole national government of China. Although an offer of regional recognition might strengthen its authority in the south, such an offer would also strengthen the KMT's enemies. Thus, throughout the negotiations with Hong Kong in mid-1926, the Kuomintang adhered to its earlier position. As the boycott against Hong Kong neared its end and the forces of the Northern Expedition occupied positions along the Yangtze, the sentiment in favor of national recognition for the KMT grew among British officials. Although Great Britain was not to grant formal recognition to the Kuomintang until the armies of the latter occupied Peking in mid-1928, in the autumn of 1926 it was privately acknowledged in London that the Foreign Office was preparing to do so. A number of powers, including Japan and the United States, had come to the realization that Great Britain

in 1926 had begun an independent policy aimed at the establishment of friendship with the KMT. In December of that year, a "Christmas Memorandum" presented by Sir Austen Chamberlain formally acknowledged the new policy, then almost one year old, of British conciliation toward the Kuomintang.

Although Great Britain's attitude toward Canton emphasized the prevention of any new antagonism, in September, 1926, the policy of conciliation was briefly modified by one of force. Despite the continued urging of British officials in south China that the Foreign Office reconsider proposals for military action against Canton that had been rejected in 1925, officials in London exercised restraint. The departure of KMT troops from Canton in July, 1926, when the Northern Expedition began, placed the security of that city as a revolutionary base once more in jeopardy. The Foreign Office recognized, however, that military action resulting in serious damage at Canton might bring a resurgence of anti-British boycott activities. The fear expressed in London that attacks upon British interests and prestige would accompany the KMT's Northern Expedition was justified. It will be recalled that the settlement negotiations of June and July, 1926, were suspended following Canton's demand for an inquiry into the incident at Shameen. Dissatisfied with the inflexible position

of Hong Kong during those negotiations, Canton introduced the inquiry demand as a stalling tactic. It believed that spreading boycott activities against the British in the wake of the Northern Expedition would quickly make Hong Kong more reasonable. When the Foreign Office decided to test the self-assurance of both the government and the Strike Committee by sanctioning the dispatch of naval units against strike pickets at Canton and Swatow, it did so most cautiously. Nevertheless, this action, as previously noted, created a deep sense of alarm within the Kuomintang and led ultimately to the unilateral termination of the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott of 1925-26.

Another important cause for alarm on the part of the KMT has not been illuminated in this study. Throughout the course of the Canton-Hong Kong strike and boycott, the labor movement in Canton was beset by serious internal strife. The continued friction between unions that gave their allegiance to the Kuomintang and those organized under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party was intensified as the strike and boycott approached an end. A sharp increase in the number of armed battles between unions in Canton in August, 1926, was celebrated in the newspapers of the British colony. The impact of the struggle that dominated the labor movement in Canton upon the strike and boycott and upon the politics of the Kuomintang forms an

important subject for future scholarly inquiry. Finally, the role of the Kuomintang in the Canton-Hong Kong Strike and Boycott of 1925-26 has only been intimated in this study. It, too, requires careful future investigation.

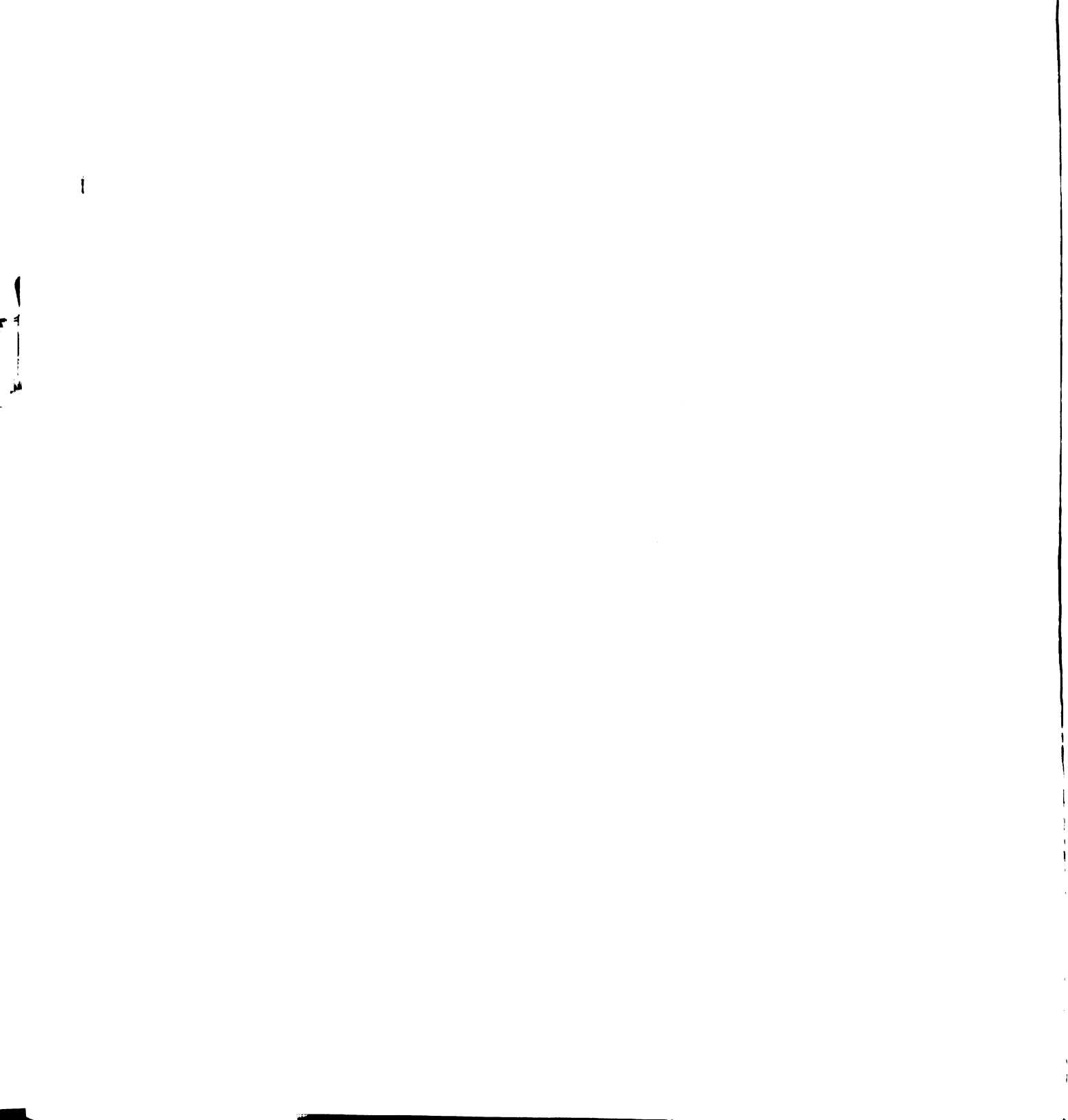
GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Chang Tso-lin	張作霖
Ch'en Chiung-ming	陳炯明
Ch'en Ch'uan	陳權
Ch'en Ko-min	陳哥民
Ch'en Kung-po	陳公博
Ch'en Lien-po	陳廉伯
Ch'en Ping-sheng	陳炳生
Ch'en Yu-jen (Eugene Ch'en)	陳友仁
<u>cheng-chih</u>	政治
<u>cheng-pien</u>	政變
Chiang Kai-shek (Chiang Chieh-shih)	蔣介石
Ch'ing	秦
Chung-kuo kung-ch'an-tang	中國共產黨
<u>Chung-shan</u>	中山
<u>fan ti-kuo-chu-i</u>	反帝國主義
Feng Chu-p'o	馮菊波
Feng Yu-hsiang	馮玉祥
Fu P'ing-ch'ang	傅秉常
Fukien	福建
<u>hai-yuan</u>	海員

Hankow	漢口	
<u>hsi-kua yuan</u>	西瓜園	
Hsi-kuan	西關	
Hsiang kang	香港	
Hsieh Ying-po	謝英伯	
<u>hsin-kung</u>	新工	
Hsu Ch'ung-chih	許崇智	
Hu Han-min	胡漢民	
Huang Huan-t'ing	黃煥廷	
k'o-chun	客軍	
Ku Meng-yu	顧孟餘	
Kuang-chou shang-t'uan	廣州商團	
Kuang-tung chi-ch'i kung-jen wei-ch'ih-hui	廣東機器工人維持會	
Kuang-tung ch'uan-sheng shang-t'uan-chun lien-fang tsung-pu	廣東全省商團軍聯防總部	
Kuangchou	廣州	
<u>kung-hui</u>	工會	
<u>kung-t'uan-chun</u>	工團軍	
Kuomintang	國民黨	
Kwangsi	廣西	
Li Ching-hsi	李景西	
Liao Chung-k'ai	廖仲愷	
Lin Wei-min	林偉民	
Liu Chen-huan	劉震寰	

Lo Teng-hsien	羅 登 賢
Ma Ch'ao-chun	馬 超 俊
<u>mai-pan</u>	買 辦
Nan-yang hsiung-ti	南 洋 兄 弟
<u>nung tzu-wei chun</u>	農 自 衛 軍
<u>pa-kung yung-hu hsing-ch'i</u>	罷 工 擁 護 星 期
<u>pang-k'ou</u>	幫 口
<u>pao-kung</u>	包 工
Pei-fa	北 伐
San-min-chu-i	三 民 主 義
Sha-t'ien	沙 田
Shaokuan	小 關
Su Chao-cheng	蘇 兆 徵
Sun Ch'uan-fang	孫 傳 芳
Sun Fo (Sun K'o)	孫 科
Sun Yat-sen (Sun Chung-shan)	孫 逸 仙 (孫 中 山)
Sung Tzu-wen (T. V. Soong)	宋 子 文
Swatow	汕 頭
Tai Chi-t'ao	戴 季 陶
T'ai-tzu pai	太 子 派
T'an P'ing-shan	譚 平 山
Tuan Ch'i-jui	段 琪 瑞
T'ung-meng-hui	同 盟 會
Tung-yuan	東 園
Teng Chung-hsia	鄧 中 夏



Wang Ching-wei	汪	精	衛
Whampoa	黃	埔	
Wu Chao-shu (C. C. Wu)	伍	朝	樞
Wu P'ei-fu	吳	佩	孚
Wu T'ieh-ch'eng	吳	鐵	城
Wu T'ing-fang	伍	廷	芳
Yang Hsi-min	楊	希	閔
Yueh-chun	粵	軍	
<u>Yung-feng</u>	永	芳	
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