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**A MOVEMENT WITHOUT VITALITY:  
COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN FUJIAN, 1924-1934**

presented by

**Bixin Huang**

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in History

Major professor

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**A MOVEMENT WITHOUT VITALITY:  
COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN FUJIAN,  
1924-1934**

**Volume I**

**By**

**Bixin Huang**

**A DISSERTATION**

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

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of History**

**1994**

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## ABSTRACT

### A MOVEMENT WITHOUT VITALITY: COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN FUJIAN, 1924-1934

By

Bixin Huang

This comprehensive study of the activities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in China's Fujian Province between 1924-1934 uses newly-published contemporary documents to challenge some previous assessments of the socio-economic background of the Chinese Revolution and assumptions about the effectiveness of the CCP's politico-military methods.

Previous works have suggested that the CCP used some combination of ideological appeals, organizational skill and/or the prospect of fundamental socioeconomic reforms to recruit masses of discontented Chinese peasants to their cause. Party historians and Western scholars have also generally agreed that the rural base-building strategy whose origins are attributed to Mao Zedong played a significant role in the long-term success of the revolutionary movement. This study suggests that these explanations for revolutionary success need reevaluation and modification. The pre-revolutionary Fujian rural economy was not sharply declining; some important sectors may actually have been expanding. Moreover, many aspects of the revolutionary movement were not entirely new, but rather represented continuations

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and/or reworkings of established patterns of collective action, rural militarization and intra-elite conflict. Also, Fujian peasants were far from being dependable CCP allies; divergence between the perceived interests of both sides meant that the CCP-peasant relationship was as confrontational as it was cooperative, and that the CCP's much-celebrated organizational mobilization was much less effective than hitherto believed. In addition to these problems, the Maoist base-building strategy was undercut by the incompatibility of various demands and interests of local and regional/central authorities.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would never have been possible without the assistance of Professor Stephen Averill, who not only provided me with advice, inspiration, and encouragement, all of which I needed to accomplish my work, but also generously let me use materials he collected over years in his own studies of Chinese revolutionary history. I am also grateful for his patient and arduous efforts in editing my manuscript.

I would also like to thank all the other professors for their help.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Communist revolution in China has been an important subject for historians in the West since 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) took national power. Compared to the cases in Russia and many other countries where Communist regimes were set up after the World War II, the way in which the CCP came to national power was rather unique: the Communist takeover did not happen through a single act of armed insurrection (as in the case of Russia) or with help from foreign Communist powers (as in the cases of Eastern Europe and North Korea). The CCP fought its way to national power independently with protracted, arduous military struggles against enemies that seemed much stronger than itself. This is probably why studies on the revolution have revolved around the basic question of how and why the CCP succeeded, although the focus and approaches have changed since the 1950s. The CCP itself attributes its victory to Mao Zedong's "rural strategy." The strategy emphasized that rural China was where the revolutionary momentum was and where the anti-revolutionary strength was the weakest. Therefore, the CCP should establish revolutionary bases in the countryside through armed struggle, encircle the cities with those bases, and finally occupy the cities.

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The gist of the strategy was the idea of so-called "base-building" (*genju di jianshe*). In practice, "base-building" basically meant first of all to take control of certain areas through armed struggle; then to establish a Communist government regime, which was usually called a soviet, in the area; carry out land redistribution, expand CCP membership and the Communist-led armed forces; establish all kinds of organizations as a means to "mobilize the masses"; and finally, if possible, to "develop the economy" in the base. "Base-building" was heavily interdependent with "land revolution" (featuring land redistribution) and "armed struggle": the strategy assumed that the revolution in China could only succeed through revolutionary wars, and that only through the land revolution would the peasants support the revolutionary wars so that the bases could be consolidated and expand; on the other hand, without setting up secure bases, there could be no land revolution and consequently no enduring popular support for the revolutionary war.

Mao's advocacy of "base-building" was based on his belief in the "historical conditions" which made it possible for the rural bases to exist, and in the "necessity" for the bases to be set up. The "historical conditions" were the "protracted splits and wars among white [i. e., anti-Communist] political powers" which were encouraged by China's "local, agricultural economy" [in contrast to a "unified capitalist economy"], and by the imperialist powers' policy to "disunite and exploit China" by, among other things,

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dividing the country into "spheres of influence." The necessity was that only setting up the rural bases could "create a belief for the revolutionary masses in the whole country just like the Soviet Union has done for the whole world, create a considerable difficulty for the reactionary classes, shaking their ruling foundation and promoting their splits." Besides, only "base-building" could "really create a Red Army which will serve as the main tool in the future great revolution."<sup>1</sup> Thus, as official-scholars in China often state, armed struggle, base-building, and land revolution constituted Mao's concept of "armed occupation of areas by workers and peasants" (*gongnong wuzhuang geju*) which was the only correct path through which the revolution in China could succeed.<sup>2</sup> Through establishing armed control of rural areas and expanding them gradually, the CCP and the "revolutionary people" under its leadership could accumulate more and more strength, and the cities in the country would be isolated and finally captured.

Another characteristic of the Communist revolution in China was that the Chinese peasants constituted the main agents of the revolution. Naturally, the CCP-peasant relationship has come to the fore in the search for reasons for the CCP's success. The question of how the CCP "mobilized" the peasants to join the revolution, for example, has been explored by many scholars.<sup>3</sup>

The decade from 1927 to 1937--the "agrarian revolution period," as the CCP itself calls it--has been one of the



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most dramatic and eventful decades in the CCP's history before 1949. In July 1927 the First CCP-GMD (the *Guomindang*, i.e., the Chinese Nationalist Party) United Front finally broke up and the CCP's organizations all over the country were mostly destroyed by the GMD. After the great setback, some surviving CCP cadres such as Mao Zedong, then a member of the party's Central Committee, shifted their attention from launching workers' strikes and armed insurrections in the cities to establishing "revolutionary bases" in rural areas in southern and central China. This new strategy worked very well and brought great success to the CCP in the first few years. By the early part of 1930, the CCP had established fifteen revolutionary bases, big and small, in more than ten provinces, leading a Red Army with about 100,000 soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

However, the tide changed its direction in the following years. By 1934, all the major revolutionary bases in southern and central China had been crushed by the Nationalist government's military suppressions and the main force of the Red Army had to retreat north-westward, thus beginning the famous Long March. The Communist revolution in China thus suffered the second major setback since the CCP was founded, and the low ebb lasted till 1937 when the so-called Second CCP-GMD United Front was formed in the face of the Japanese aggression against China.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore the CCP experienced two *debacles* and one great success in the decade. And it was during this period

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that the party began to borrow the force of the Chinese peasants and developed its strategy of "base-building" and "encircling the cities with villages and finally occupying the cities" which was exalted by Mao and the CCP as the only correct strategy leading the Communist revolution in China to the final victory in 1949. For these reasons, the decade has attracted much attention from scholars who are interested in the history of the CCP and the Chinese Communist revolution. A lot of studies of the Communist movement in certain locations during the period have been carried out. For example, the Communist-led peasant movement which occurred in the Hai-lu-feng area, Guangdong province, in the late 1920s has become the subject of at least three monographs in the West.<sup>6</sup>

The so-called Jiangxi (Kiangsi) soviet period has also been one major interest of many scholars in the field of the Communist revolution in China, although the period is paradoxically also still said by some scholars to be "one of the most obscure" in the CCP's history.<sup>7</sup> In 1931, Chinese Communists headed by Mao Zedong set up the Soviet Republic of China (often referred to in Western literature as the Jiangxi Soviet Republic) in an area straddling Jiangxi and Fujian provinces in south-central China. From 1931 to late 1934, the CCP called this area the Central Revolutionary Base. The term meant that it was the most important revolutionary base, one which played a leading role in the CCP-led agrarian revolution. It is logical that the revolution in the area

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has attracted much scholarly attention, considering the prominent position of the revolution in the history of the Communist movement in China. Large amounts of literature have been generated on the period.<sup>8</sup> However, as Philip Huang noted in 1978, studies of the Jiangxi soviet period up to that time had concentrated mainly on top-level power struggles and line disputes.<sup>9</sup> This is understandable. Since the period is "obscure," the first thing historians need to do is to find out "what happened." Therefore, many works have been devoted to understanding issues such as Mao's role in the party power structure, the Communist governmental and administrative structure, the process of the development of the CCP's organizational concepts and behavioral patterns, and the growth of its organizational techniques of "mass line" politics which are often believed to have been the leverage Mao used to secure the support of the peasants for the revolution.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, many aspects of the history of the Communist revolution during this period and especially information about the relationship between the revolutionary movement and its social environment remained unexplained by these historians.

Beginning from the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the "social history" approach has been applied to the China field by Western historians.<sup>11</sup> More recently, as Stephen Averill points out, in the studies of CCP history and Chinese Communist revolutionary history, a considerable number of scholars have begun to shift their attention away from

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the focus on peasants and their conditions to explore the nature and significance of the complex, multi-sided interrelationships that existed among peasants, elites, and local CCP organizations.<sup>12</sup> Averill's own studies on the relations between the stratification of the local elite and the rise of the Communist movement in Jiangxi's hill country is one reflection of this new trend. However, it is a fact that in general, despite these new trends and the availability of much new documentary information, the study of the Jiangxi period has not attracted much scholarly attention in the last ten or more years, as scholars have concentrated on other periods and areas--most notably on the Anti-Japanese Resistance War period (1937-1945) and the areas of northern and central China where the CCP was most active during the war years.

In addition, past studies of the Jiangxi period have usually dealt mainly with what happened in Jiangxi and have basically omitted what happened in those portions of the base located in the adjacent province of Fujian. Actually the Central Revolutionary Base was composed of two major areas: the southern part of Jiangxi and the western part of Fujian. Although the political center of the base was located in the Jiangxi part, and the Jiangxi part was relatively larger in terms of area (in 1932, the area controlled by the CCP in western Fujian accounted for two-fifths of the Central Revolutionary Base centered in Ruijin, and nearly one half of its population), the Communist movement in the

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Fujian part should not have been omitted in the studies of the Central Revolutionary Base.

This part of western Fujian, usually referred to in Chinese as the Minxi area, consisted mainly of twelve counties with a population of 2,500,000 at that time. Communist activities began in the area as early as 1926, and the first Communist regime was set up there in 1928, followed by a communist land redistribution. In March 1930, the Minxi Soviet Government was founded. Not until September 1930 was the soviet area in Minxi incorporated into the Central Revolutionary Base. As Gregor Benton says, although Minxi eventually became one part of the Central Base, its soviets preceded southern Jiangxi's, as did its CCP Special Committee. Its Communist movement probably started out with more local cadres than southern Jiangxi, and it began land revolution sooner.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the experience of Communist revolution in the Minxi is too important to be ignored in studies of the Central Revolutionary Base.

In addition to the weight the Minxi area bore in relation to the Central Revolutionary Base, the Communist revolution in that area itself can serve as an excellent case for the study of many general issues concerning the Communist revolution in China, issues such as the social momentum of the revolution and how the CCP mobilized the peasants, and the reasons why the Communist revolution ebbed and flowed.

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different from those in the provinces where important Communist revolutionary bases were once set up and lasted, and which have, to a much greater extent (compared to Fujian) been studied by historians. Unlike those inland provinces such as Jiangxi, Hunan and Shaanxi where agriculture was the dominant form of economy, Fujian was a coastal province with a highly developed commercial economy before the advent of Communism. Commerce prospered even in Fujian's mountainous, inaccessible western and northern parts, while all the elements looked at by scholars in their studies of the Communist revolution in China--peasants, elites, Communist intellectuals, clans and lineages, secret societies, peasant collective actions, imperialist economic invasion--were also active in the province. In addition, the development of a commercial economy since the Ming dynasty (beginning in 1368) influenced Fujian's social structure and relations to develop their own characteristics.

Communist revolution also took place in some other parts of the province. The Communist movement in Fujian from 1926 to 1934 went through the "full" process any movement may have: to originate, develop, and decline. All of these features suggest that studying the Communist revolution in Fujian will certainly provide new insight into the understanding of Communist revolution in China as whole.

A large quantity of newly-published documentary material and reminiscences in mainland China in the last ten years or more have made possible a closer and more intensive probe

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into the Communist revolution in Fujian. Before the 1980s, due to the CCP's strict control over materials about the party's history, the studies of the Chinese Communist movement in the West had to rely heavily upon materials available from the Nationalists in Taiwan. For the studies of the Jiangxi period, the *Ch'en Ch'eng Collection*, which is composed of CCP documents seized by the Nationalist troops under General Ch'en Ch'eng when the Central Revolutionary Base was crushed in late 1934, became the most important source of materials in the studies of the Jiangxi period. Unhappily, a considerable amount of the items in this precious collection are CCP propaganda materials and "public" materials such as newspapers which were openly circulated inside the soviet areas. Only a portion are the sorts of "internal" party documents which are most revealing of what was happening inside the party and government organs. The limitations of these available materials formerly made it quite difficult to study certain interesting aspects of the revolutionary movement, and hindered the studies of the Jiangxi period, as well as of the Communist agrarian revolution in China as a whole.

The situation has changed since the end of the 1970s. With the adoption of relatively liberal and flexible political and economic policies by the CCP leaders after Mao's death, the party loosened its restrictions on publishing materials on its history. One of the results of this new course has been the publication of large quantities of his-

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torical party documents which had been confidential. Among the most useful of them, as far as studies of the Jiangxi period are concerned, are the three-volume selection of "revolutionary documents" of the Central Revolutionary Base and the twenty-volume collection of documents of the same kind concerning Fujian province. These formerly-unpublished party documents, many of which are reports, instructions and communications among party organizations, reveal a great many facts concerning the revolution as experienced by this part of the CCP. A scrutiny of the documents immediately challenges images of the revolution as shaped by the existing literature produced both in the West and in China.

Mainly based on these newly-published materials, this dissertation will study the Communist revolution in Fujian during the period from 1924 to 1934. The paper has two main purposes: first, to present an accurate account of the Communist revolution in Fujian in the period in question, for no such work has been done in the West so far; and second, to explore issues such as the momentum of the revolution, the CCP-peasant relationship, the interactions between the existing social institutions and the Communist organizations, the conflict between the CCP's ideology and social reality, and the reasons for the regional revolution's collapse. It will find that the existing social condition of rural Fujian was one of the factors shaping the revolution. Since the Communist movement in the Minxi area was the most prominent one in Fujian in terms of its scale,

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duration and influence, this paper will mainly focus on this area, while secondarily examining the movement in the rest of the province.

This study will also explore the interaction between the local elite in Fujian and the Communist revolution. Much has been written on the role of the Chinese local elite in a changing society during the late Imperial period. Scholarship on the role of the Chinese local elite in the 1911 Revolution has also been generated.<sup>14</sup> However, extending the study of the Chinese local elite into the twentieth century revolutionary movement has scarcely been done, although Averill has broken new ground with his studies on the relationship between the economic stratification within the local elite and the emergence of Communist intellectuals in the hill country in Jiangxi.<sup>15</sup> Local elites in Fujian had been a dominant social force in pre-Communist times. It would certainly be of academic interest to find out what the local elites experienced, and how they helped or hindered the Communist rural revolution in the case of Fujian. As we shall see, the CCP's radical policy toward the local elite was to cause serious problems for the revolution.

Using the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian as a case study, this work will also explore two more basic issues about the Communist revolution in China: to what extent the CCP were successful in mobilizing the peasants and to what extent "base-building" was in fact a successful strategy for agrarian revolution, as the CCP has claimed and

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Western scholars have never doubted. It should be noted here that the CCP's assertion that "base-building" was the only correct strategy leading the CCP to victory has been taken for granted by Western scholars, despite the fact that all the bases in middle and southern China met great difficulties shortly after their establishment, and finally collapsed in 1934. (The base in northwest China area was in serious trouble too at that time, as CCP documents admit).<sup>16</sup> It is time to re-examine this established concept, and the revolutionary bases in Fujian provide us with a very good window through which we can probe into the reality of these Communist rural base-building efforts. As will become clear in the following pages, beginning from mid-1930, the base in western Fujian met great problems which seemed to be insurmountable to the CCP, and which sapped the vitality of the Communist regimes there.

This examination of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian will be organized by topics. However, in order to provide a relatively complete picture of the unfolding of the revolution, and the context of the events which will be examined in the topical chapters, the first chapter will be devoted to giving a summary of the history of the Fujian revolution. The second chapter will explore aspects of Fujian's economic and social background, against which the revolution took place. The local elites and the peasants were the two most important social groups involved in the revolution. Therefore, the third and the fourth chapters of

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the dissertation will discuss their respective roles in the revolution. Their relation with the CCP will of course also be one important issue in these two chapters. The last two chapters will focus on exploring the internal causes of the regional revolution's final failure and the elimination of Communist regimes in the province, although the vitality of the CCP revolutionary bases in Fujian is also a theme going through the whole dissertation. The interaction between the existing social institution and the Communist ideology will also be a theme going through the whole paper.

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## CHAPTER 1 THE SUDDEN RED TIDE IN THE "LAND OF MIN"

The Communist movement in Fujian developed relatively late in comparison with some other parts of China. Guangdong, a neighboring province of Fujian, was one of the few provinces in which "Communist groups" had been set up before the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) convened in Shanghai in early July, 1921. But no Communist activist was in action in Fujian at that time.<sup>1</sup> Until as late as early 1927, the CCP in Fujian still did not have its own provincial committee. The party members there were attached at first to the provincial committee of Jiangsu, then to the provincial committee of Guangdong, and finally to the Southern Bureau; by contrast, in Guangdong an independent party committee was set up to lead the Communist movement in the province as early as in 1921, and the Third National Congress of the CCP was held in Guangzhou in 1923.<sup>2</sup>

The late arrival of Communism, however, does not mean that the Fujian Communist movement was insignificant in the history of the Chinese Communist revolution. During the period from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, quite abruptly, communist storms swept over the countryside in many areas of the province. In western (including the southern tip), northern and a coastal strip of eastern Fujian, Communist-led peasant insurrections were staged and Communist-

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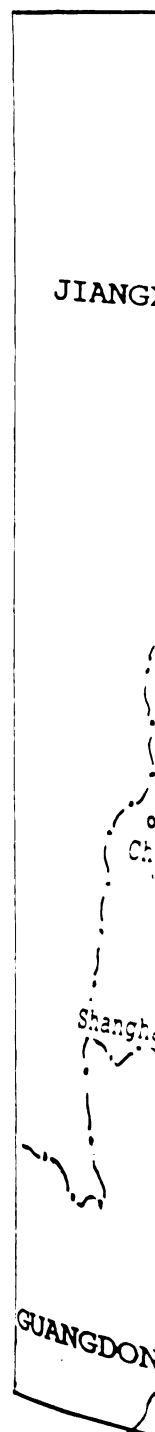
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controlled "red areas" surfaced. Among these areas the most conspicuous one was the Minxi Revolutionary Base in the western area bordering Jiangxi province on the west and Guangdong on the south. The word *Minxi*, literally the "western part of *Min*", is a geographic expression referring to twelve counties with a population of over 2,500,000 in the 1920s. The twelve counties were Longyan, Zhangping, Ningyang, Yongding, Shanghang, Changting, Liancheng, Wuping, Guihua, Ninghua, Qingliu, and Pinghe.<sup>3</sup> In November 1931, the base gained more significance in the history of the Communist revolution in China by joining the base in southern Jiangxi province and thus becoming one of the two components of the CCP's Central Revolutionary Base.

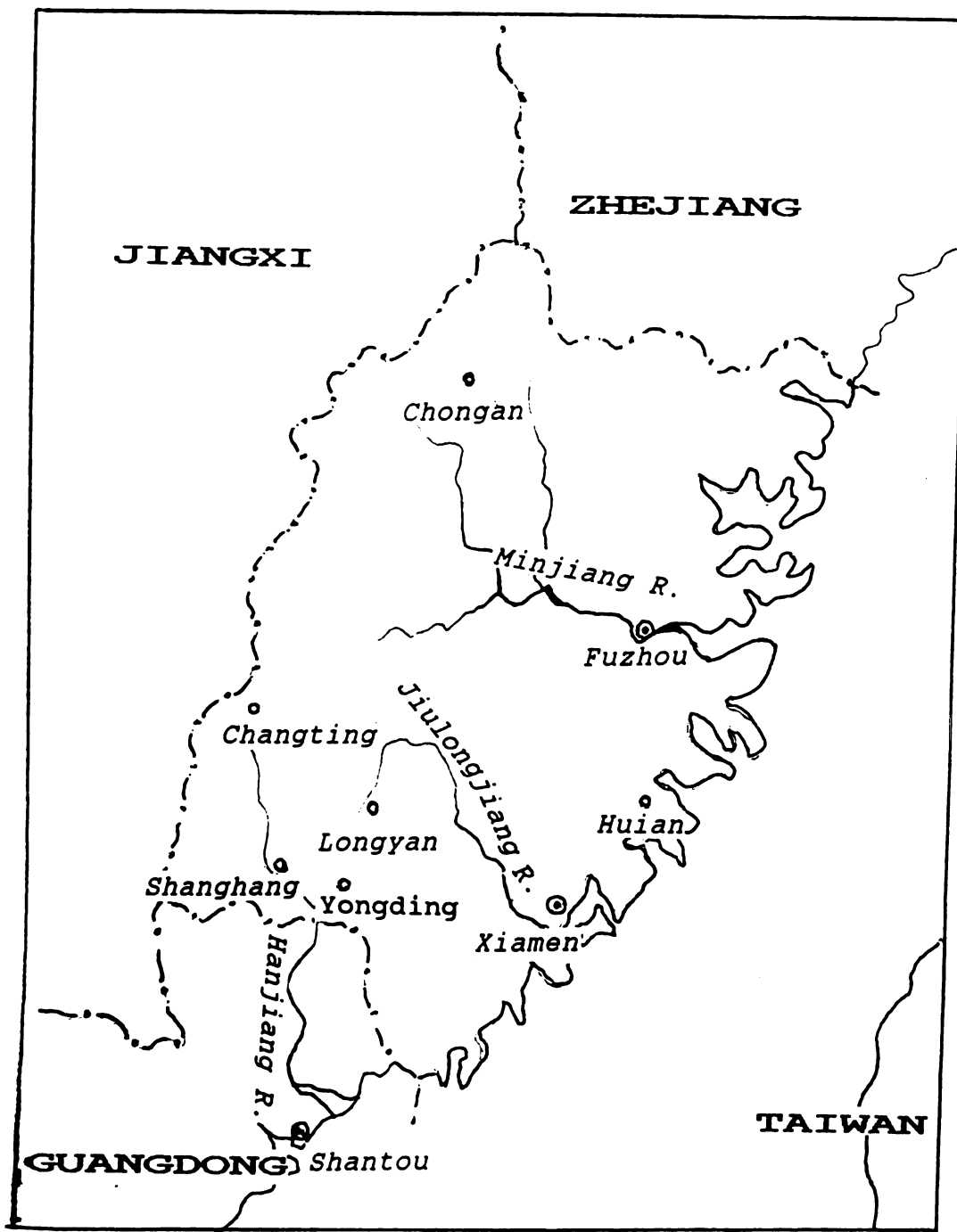
The Communist upsurge in rural Fujian, however, ebbed as quickly as it rose. From 1932, the Communist movement in the province began an irreversible decline. After the main force of the Red Army left Fujian to start the Long March in October 1934, the once tempestuous red tide in Fujian quickly dwindled, becoming nothing but sporadic guerrilla struggles in the following three years.

To better discuss the mechanism of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian, it is first necessary to gain some familiarity with the overall narrative history of the revolution in the province. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to providing such a narrative overview.

Map 1. Fujian



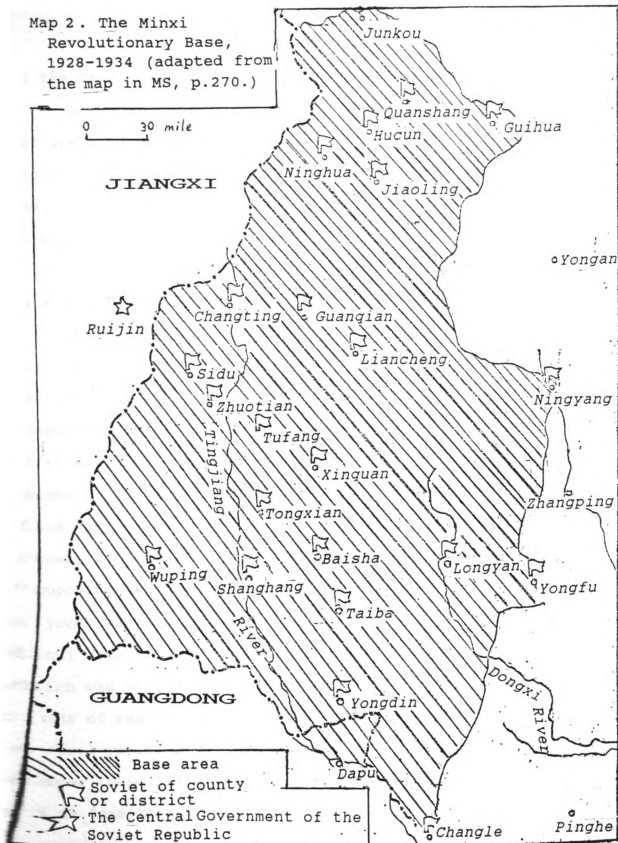
Map 1. Fujian Province



Map 2. The Minx  
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Map 2. The Minxi  
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## **1 The Origin of Communist Activities in Rural Fujian**

Although it was the Communist movement in the peripheral areas of Fujian that brought the province to the attention of the world, the cradle of communism in Fujian was in major cities such as Xiamen, a port city, and Fuzhou, the provincial capital. And in its very first stage, the Communist movement in the province was one of intellectuals instead of peasants.

The burgeoning of Communist activities in Fujian began with the Nationalist Revolution. In January 1924, the First National Congress of the GMD under Sun Yat-sen was held in Guangzhou. Some CCP leaders became members of the GMD Central Executive Committee at the convention, and many CCP members joined the GMD organizations at different levels, thus marking the beginning of the First CCP-GMD United Front, and the GMD-led Nationalist Revolution which took "opposing imperialism and feudalism" as its aim.<sup>4</sup> Luo Ming, a young man born in Dabu, a Guangdong county neighboring the Minxi area, in 1921 went to the Jimei School in Xiamen, which was to become a hotbed for Communism and all other kinds of radical thinking in the early years of the 1920s. Several years later, Luo became a pro-communist student leader there. Taking instructions from the Guangdong District Committee of the CCP, which was in charge of the

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party's affairs in Guangdong, Guangxi, southeastern Fujian, and even Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Luo led more than one hundred radical students in the Jimei School. According to the instructions of the CCP leadership in Guangdong, Luo's main task was to recruit leftist students into GMD organizations, and he led the students to "oppose imperialism, warlords, and the school authorities which suppressed the student movement."<sup>5</sup>

At the suggestion of Luo, the Guangdong District Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League (the CYL) directed that a branch of the League should be set up in the school. This was done in June 1925. Again with Luo's introduction, the Guangdong District Committee admitted a member of the Jimei School CYL to the party. In February 1926, the first party branch was set up in Xiamen University with three party members. In several months, the number of party branches in Xiamen had increased to seven.<sup>6</sup>

Luo was dispatched to Xiamen in February 1926 by the Peasant Bureau of the GMD Central Committee to recruit students for the Whampoa Peasant Movement Institute (PMI), then presided over by Mao Zedong (then a CCP cadre and a alternative member of the GMD Central Executive Committee) in Guangzhou. Luo helped set up many GMD district branches staffed with CCP members and leftist nationalists who actually controlled the newly-established GMD Provincial Committee of Fujian.<sup>7</sup>

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enroll students from the whole province and its vicinity, over two-thirds of the one-hundred-odd leftist students were from the Minxi area, for reasons which will be explored in the next chapter.<sup>8</sup> What needs to be noted here is that it was these local young students returning from Xiamen who brought the Communist seeds to the remote countryside.

The first thing those returning intellectuals wanted to do in their hometowns was to set up party branches in each county. The first CCP branch in Minxi was set up in Yongding county in April 1926 by Lin Xinyao and a group of other returned intellectuals. By early 1927, party branches were set up in the counties of Shanghang, Longyan, and Pinghe, all in the Minxi area.<sup>9</sup>

There was another source of the seeds of Communism in Minxi. When Luo came to Minxi to look for students for the PMI, he found nine recruits, all of whom joined the CCP in Guangzhou when they were being trained in the Institute.<sup>10</sup>

In September 1926, the forces of the Northern Expedition, launched from Guangdong by the National Revolutionary Government under the GMD, marched towards Fujian. All the Minxi students in the PMI were ordered to follow the Expedition forces so as to provide help and to push the revolution in their hometowns. The expedition forces defeated the Northern Warlords' army in Fujian without difficulty, and thus brought the whole province into the domain of the GMD. The Minxi area was "liberated" in October and GMD party bureaus were set up in each county occupied.<sup>11</sup>

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However, the swiftest foot arrived first: the CCP activists were already there. Joined by those Communists following the army, the act performed in Xiamen was repeated in Minxi: GMD county bureaus were set up openly to lead the local national revolution in Minxi, but CCP members and the pro-Communist leftist Nationalists simply took control of all of them.<sup>12</sup>

Now the revolution was ready to begin. However, there seemed not too much the Communists could do at this stage. Although the CCP center instructed its party members to seize the leadership of the revolution, in the meantime the basic lines of the GMD's national revolution had to be followed, or at least not ignored too much. The things the GMD wanted its local bureaus to do were to "appeal to the people to support the Northern Expedition," to "wipe out the corrupt officials" and to "oppose the local tyrants and evil gentry." To fulfill the tasks, what the GMD bureau did in Longyan county was to detain a former congressman of the Northern Warlord government and "parade him through the street and expose him to the public": a traditional way to humiliate someone in China.<sup>13</sup>

But the Communists wanted to do more than that. The graduates from the PMI applied themselves to peasant movements, since this was what they had been trained for. It was also generally required by the resolution of the Fourth National Congress of the CCP to set up peasant unions, to mobilize the peasants to oppose local tyrants and evil

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Peasants in Minxi showed only apathy to newfangled devices such as peasant unions. In Longyan, although great efforts had been made by graduates of the Peasant Movement Institute, by the end of 1926 peasant unions were set up in fewer than ten villages. Except for getting some exorbitant taxes abolished, the unions achieved nothing, not even the reduction of rent. In March of the following year, a people's congress of Longyan county (most of the congressmen were local elites) was convened by the GMD county bureau and the control bureau supervised work in three counties in Minxi. After fierce argument, the Communists finally got passed in the congress their motions advocating a twenty-five percent reduction of rent and a ban on polygamy. However, these resolutions were never implemented. On the other hand, the head of the Control Bureau, a leftist Nationalist, led some revolutionary-fanatic youth and student representatives to "do away with superstitions" by smashing idols in temples. This action--the only practical move of the congress--angered the peasants greatly.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most significant CCP achievement in Minxi in this period was the establishment of the Institute of Social Workers in Ting's Eight Counties (The *Tingshu Baxian Shehui Renyuan Yangchengsuo*; "Ting" was another name for the western part of Fujian). The establishment of the school to train revolutionary cadres was a decision made by a joint meeting of the people's congress and the GMD county bureaus

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of some of the counties in Minxi, but actually it was an idea of the CCP Special Committee of Minnan (literally "southern part of Fujian"), which was set up to lead the Communist activities in Minxi and Minnan in February 1926. The school was opened in a former Catholic church in Shanghang county in March 1926. It was dominated by Communist instructors and teachers. All the 160 students were young CCP or CYL members and pro-Communist activists picked out by CCP county branches. These students would play an important role in the later Communist upsurge.<sup>16</sup>

These activities plus some gatherings participated in by students, and the publication of some magazines circulated among intellectuals, were almost all the Communists accomplished in this period. It can be said that what they had done was basically verbal, and was limited to the circle of students and intellectuals. Although there were some peasants among the newly-recruited party members, the revolution in Minxi was not yet really a rural one.

Communist activities germinated in the Minbei area (the northern part of Fujian) in exactly the same way as in Minxi. Minbei was another center-to-be of the Communist rural revolution in Fujian, although compared to Minxi the Communist upsurge to come there was much less significant and on a much smaller scale. A person by the name of Chen Geng, who went to school in the city of Fuzhou, participated in radical student unrest and joined the CCP. In 1927 he went back to his home county Chongan to recruit party mem-

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Many fewer Communist intellectuals came back to Minbei than to other areas of Fujian. Besides, it is evident that communism came to Minbei even later than it did to the rest of the province. The National Revolution came and went with the arrival and departure of the Northern Expedition forces, which stayed in that mountainous area for only several months. The revolution subsided quickly before communism had grown strong enough to make use of it. Ironically, the CCP's organizations there remained intact after Jiang Jieshi's coup in the spring of 1927, for the Communist activity there was so invisible that the Nationalists and other opposing forces had not even paid attention to it.<sup>18</sup>

Communist activities in the eastern coastal region, another center-to-be of the Communist rural revolution in Fujian, developed even later. The earliest CCP underground activity began in 1927, and not until 1931 did the Communist revolution take shape in that area. Soviet regimes were not set up until 1934.<sup>19</sup>

However, although the Communists in rural Fujian in the National Revolution had dominated the movement in Minxi, and although they had not done anything which could really be identified with a "revolution," when Jiang Jieshi, the conservative Commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army, launched his anti-Communist coup on 12 April 1927, the CCP in Minxi suffered its first great setback.

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After the coup in Shanghai, Jiang ordered his followers in Fujian to "purge" the GMD. On the fifteenth, Jiang's followers in Longyan county, including the county magistrate, organized a parade participated in mainly by peasants who resented the CCP's destruction of the idols. The fierce peasants encircled and smashed the Communist-controlled offices of the GMD county bureau and the control bureau for the three counties. On the following day, troops loyal to Jiang arrested many CCP and leftist GMD members. Those who fled became wanted men. Labor unions in the towns and peasant unions were disbanded.<sup>20</sup>

In Shanghang county, things were even worse. Troops encircled and stormed the offices of the GMD local control bureau, the county party bureau, the office of the county peasant union, and the Institute of Social Workers and other leftist organizations. Communist activists were either arrested and executed, or fled. Similar things happened to other counties in Minxi such as Changting and Yongding.<sup>21</sup>

Thus ended the first bit of the Communist revolution in rural Fujian. The hubbub raised by the Communists quieted easily and quickly. Communist organizations crumbled. Their activists disappeared from the scene. To "arouse the masses" was emphasized by the CCP from the beginning. Unfortunately, the only case in which the masses had been aroused in rural Fujian had not been what the CCP wanted to see: a angry mob storming the revolutionary apparatus.

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the Communists had achieved nothing. Party branches had been established. Although they collapsed at this point, when the time came later it would be much easier to restore them than to start from nothing. A certain number of devoted Communist activists and party cadres were nurtured through the National Revolution Movement, particularly by the Institute of Social Workers In Ding's Eight Counties. Half a century later, the Communist domination of the institute in the 1920s was lamented by a native Nationalist of Yongding county as one of the most deplorable and regrettable things which had happened in that period.<sup>22</sup>

The first stage of the Communist movement in Fujian was not really a part of the upcoming Communist agrarian revolution, because the Communists' activities at this stage were taken under the name of the GMD-led Nationalist revolution, and it basically involved only a small group of intellectuals. However, many of the Communist intellectuals were still alive although the organizations they had set up were totally crushed. When the time came, they would start the revolution over and in a new pattern.

## 2 "Rebel! Rebel!"

The real Communist agrarian revolution began when CCP-led troops passed through Minxi on their way to Guangdong. This was the unit retreating from Jiangxi province after the failure of the Nanchang Mutiny staged on 1 August 1927,

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which marked the beginning of the Communist-led armed struggle against the GMD.

The force arrived at Shanghang in early September. The fugitive leader of the CCP Special Committee of Minnan, Luo Ming, as well as some other heads of former county committees, gathered at Shanghang to meet their party superiors, including Zhou Enlai, who was then the head of the CCP Battle Front Committee. With the help of the troops, to some extent the party organization was restored in Minxi. On 7 August, the CCP Central Committee held an emergency convention in Wuhan, Hubei province, which decided to launch armed insurrections and stage "land revolution." According to the convention's decision, the party leaders of the troops instructed the party members in Minxi to stage "armed struggle and land revolution." To encourage such activities, the troops left about fifty rifles for the local party.<sup>23</sup>

But the force stayed in Minxi for only ten days or so, and then moved to Guangdong, where it was routed. Although the local party in Minxi had fifty rifles now, staging an "armed struggle" was still too daunting a task for them. Armed struggle, however, was now a must. The CCP Southern Bureau ordered the Special Committee of Minnan to organize peasant insurrection also.<sup>24</sup> In November, the CCP Central Committee sent an instruction to the Special Committee in west and south Fujian, asking it to "organize the peasants to revolt," and to "seize political power through armed insurrections." Also, the instruction said, the local party

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should "resolutely, actively lead the peasants in struggles to reduce rent, to resist the collection of rent and taxes, to overthrow the local tyrants and evil gentry, and to confiscate the land of larger landlords."<sup>25</sup>

Being urged by its superiors, but understanding that the time was not right for armed insurrection in rural Fujian, the local party in Minxi and Minnan decided to instigate the peasants to "peacefully" resist paying exorbitant taxes and levies, and to demand a reduction of rent, in the hope that in so doing the peasants would be ushered gradually onto the road of armed insurrection. The strategy proved workable. During the later part of 1927, peasant unrest featuring anti-rent and anti-taxes struggles was fanned by the Communists in many counties in Minxi. Conflicts between the peasants and the local tyrants and evil gentry, and warlords who demanded unreasonable taxes, were escalating. Peasant unions were restored or expanded. Actually in Changle village, Pinghe county, the peasant unions had driven away the guards of the county government, detained gentry, and even bought machine guns with their own money. In Yongding, a 200-man armed peasant force called the "League of Iron and Blood" had been formed, and exchanges of fire between the peasant armed force and Nationalist army had taken place. The peasants in Minxi were warmed up for a further attempt.<sup>26</sup>

The same strategy was adopted by the local party in Minbei. Influenced by the peasant insurrections occurring in

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the southern part of Jiangxi province, and ordered by the Provincial Committee of Fujian, the local party in Minbei stirred up peasant unrest and formed underground peasant armed forces called the "Populace Association" in early 1928. In Huian, a county on the eastern coast, owing to the efforts of those returning Communist students, some peasant unions had been formed during the National Revolution. Now they were recovering from the coup of Jiang Jieshi. Under the guidance of two cadets of the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou, who were dispatched by the Special Committee of Minnan, peasant self-defence corps were formed. However, the corps and peasant union as well as party organizations were suppressed again at the end of 1927.<sup>27</sup>

Beginning from March 1928, rural Fujian entered a period of Communist-led peasant armed insurrection. The Minxi area was engulfed in a surge of peasant riots. The most significant peasant insurrections took place in the counties of Longyan, Pinghe, Shanghang and Yongding.

In Longyan, a dispute over debt between a village peasant union and a landlord developed into violence in early March. The local CCP decided to push the affair into a peasant armed revolt. The peasants were mobilized to attack the landlord's armed force, seizing its guns. Riot quickly spread to the villages nearby. Well-to-do families' land deeds were seized and burned. A Communist-called "red curfew" was enforced in the area where the revolt was staged. Five days later, a regiment of the Nationalist army arrived

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to restore order. The Communists led about one hundred armed peasants to resist, but were routed quickly. The remnants of the peasant forces fled to the neighboring county and were re-organized into the first guerrilla force in Minxi.<sup>28</sup>

In Pinghe county, in early 1928 the party had formed many branches and peasant unions, most of them in the areas surrounding the county seat. On 8 March, armed peasants organized or abetted by the Communists stormed the walled county seat. The town weakly guarded by less than 200 peace preservation corps members was given up to the peasants, and the guards and rich people escaped from the south gate. The county prison was broken into and inmates were released. The offices of the county government and county education bureau, as well as some gentry houses, were burned to the ground. However, the enemy army rolled back in just a couple of hours, while the peasants were busy looting. The peasants fled from the town through the north gate. Several days later, the Nationalist army chased the peasants to Changle village, from where most of the peasants had started to attack the town, and devastated the village and its vicinity.<sup>29</sup>

The insurrection in Shanghang began in a slightly different way. Before the so-called revolt, under the leadership of Fu Baicui, a local elite who joined the CCP during the National Revolution, the power of the peasant union in Fu's home village, Jiaoyang, had expanded to the extent that a area centered on Jiaoyang and inhabited by 20,000 people

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had actually become an independent Communist enclave defying the rule of the official authorities, surrendering no tax and levies to the Nationalist government. While the Nationalists were planning a crackdown by force, the CCP Provincial Committee was urging Fu to stage an armed insurrection and realize the land revolution. The urge was continuously resisted by Fu on the ground that an isolated armed revolt and land re-distribution could not succeed. However, when the Nationalist army finally launched an offensive against the enclave with 1,000 soldiers on 26 August, Fu had to lead his peasant self-defense army to resist. But the 2,000 strong peasant army turned out to be no match for the regular army. It was routed in less than half an hour, and the Jiaoyang area was occupied by the enemy. The remnant of the peasant army retreated to the mountains and became a guerrilla force.<sup>30</sup>

The revolt in Yongding was led by Zhang Dingcheng, a native of Jinsha village in the same county. In late June, 1928, a plan of operation was made by the CCP county committee. The main goal of the insurrection was to capture the county seat, but they started the revolt in the suburbs to lure the enemy forces out of the town. The trick worked. On the thirtieth, Zhang led a peasant force of 1,000 to march towards the county seat from Jinsha. The town was stormed and its defence was broken. However, as in Pinghe, the peasants were driven out of the town when the enemy forces launched a counterattack several hours later.<sup>31</sup>

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Thus all four major insurrections failed. On 6 August, commanded by Fu Baicui, the remnants of the armed peasants from Yongding and Shanghang joined their counterparts in Longyan to make another attempt to capture the county seat of Longyan. But the offensive lasted for only half an hour and the peasant army retreated with losses. Two days later, another attempt to capture a town in Yongding was made by the united force. This time it was even more ill-fated. The attack proved to be disorganized and the force was repelled with heavy casualties. Morale dropped, no more attempts was made to capture towns thereafter,<sup>32</sup> and this last failure marked the end of the armed insurrection upsurge in Minxi.

It was during the period of the insurrections that the CCP Provisional Provincial Committee of Fujian, which was established in December 1927, decided to set up the CCP Minxi Special Committee.

While the tide of peasant insurrection was subsiding in Minxi, in the Minbei area it was just developing. A plan was worked out by the CCP County Committee of Chongan in April 1928, and a village called Shangmei was chosen as the first site to stage an insurrection. But the plan was delayed in execution until the end of September. Since Shangmei was merely a village and had no target other than a timber mill whose boss had been at odds with local peasants, when the revolt happened, Chen Lujun, the secretary of the county committee, led about twenty armed peasants to destroy the office of the mill, and to commandeer some granaries of

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landlords. The revolt spread to the nearby villages and a "People's Bureau" (*Minzhong Ju*) was declared established by Chen to exercise political power in the revolt area. However, the local garrison and the local corps quickly cracked down on the revolts. Chen shot himself when he was cornered.<sup>33</sup>

But momentum gathered again by the end of the year. After drinking liquor mixed with rooster blood, the newly-appointed party secretary led heads of armed peasant forces to launch the insurrection for the second time, in the same place, by capturing and killing "local tyrants". Again the insurrection spread to many villages. In April 1929 the scattered armed peasant forces were reformed into the Independent Regiment of the Red Army in Minbei, although this "regiment" had only 300-odd men and 100-odd rifles. Chongan county was developed into a guerrilla warfare zone, and some of its villages even set up their soviets and re-distributed the land. In the meantime, the CCP center ordered the local party in Minbei to be under the leadership of the Special Committee of Northeast Jiangxi, and the Independent Regiment to join the Red Army in Northeast Jiangxi headed by Fang Zhimin. After this, the Communist movement in Minbei was more connected to northeast Jiangxi than to Fujian.<sup>34</sup>

Some other sporadic peasant revolts were also organized in counties like Zhangping to the east of the Minxi area, and Huian, in the middle of the province's coastline. But they were on a much lesser scale and of less significance.

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In Huian, the revolt did not come until late 1930.<sup>35</sup>

Except for helping the Communists to form some guerrilla forces in the mountains, the insurrections gained nothing for the communists and the peasants. Instead, they incurred heavy losses and terrible suffering. Many CCP cadres and peasant activists were killed. In the case of Longyan, it was estimated that the loss of peasants' property was over 100,000 yuan owing to the reprisals from the enemy army. Villages involved in the revolts were usually burned and pillaged when the nemesis came. Yet the heaviest loss was the loss of faith. In Yongding, after the failure of the insurrection, the peasants were thrown into great panic.<sup>36</sup> Zhang Dingcheng and his comrades retreated to his home village, Jinsha, and set up a district soviet in Minnan exerting political power over more than ten villages with a population of several tens of thousands. Land redistribution was even practiced in the district. However, facing the military pressure from the Nationalist troops, the peasants sent their representatives to sue the enemy for peace, defying the CCP's threat with execution. Seeing that even assassination of the peasants could not deter their resolution to capitulate to the Nationalist authorities, the Communists finally had to face reality, abandon the soviets, and move the Communist activities underground.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, the peasants everywhere in Longyan were demoralized after the failure of the insurrection, and they were so fearful of the enemy that it became very difficult to mobilize them

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The party county committees and branches which had just recovered from Jiang's purge collapsed again. This was true in all the counties where major insurrections were staged, both in Minbei and Minxi.<sup>39</sup> An extreme case was provided by Chongan county, where the peasants blamed the party for the failure of the revolt and the losses of life and property they suffered. Sensing the fierce resentment of the peasants, and feeling guilty for the failure, the chief of the local party committed suicide and most of the party cadres dispersed.<sup>40</sup>

The armed insurrections in Fujian, as were those in other provinces in the same period, were the outcomes of the CCP's August Seventh Emergency Convention which resolved that the "general policy of the party at present" was to "prepare and organize armed insurrections in those provinces which have been the center of the peasant movement."<sup>41</sup> Fujian had not been the "center of the peasant movement" in the previous stage. However, owing to the effort of the local CCP cadres, peasant armed insurrections were realized. The insurrections usually followed the same pattern: the CCP activists got the peasants into some kind of organizations while inciting peasant-landlord confrontations or anti-tax unrests, and finally led them to "revolt." Without exception, all the armed insurrections failed. Open armed revolt was both the peak and the end of the first stage of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian.

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### 3 The Heyday of the Soviet

From the end of the four major insurrections to March 1929, the Communist activities in Fujian were at a low ebb between two peaks. The second peak came with the arrival of the Fourth Red Army led by Mao Zedong and Zhu De. Mao was then the secretary of the CCP Battle Front Committee of the army, and Zhu was the army commander.

On 11 March, for strategic reasons, Mao Zedong and Zhu De led the Fourth Army of the Red Army into Changting county from Jiangxi. This 4,000-strong army was the most battle-tested regular force among the Red Army units then existing in China. It entered the Minxi area quite abruptly. Local garrisons in Minxi, which were re-organized with bandits and local peace preservation corps, were not a match for it. Therefore, the Red Army occupied Changting without much difficulty.<sup>42</sup>

It is said that during his short stay in Minxi, Mao came up with the idea that the CCP should first turn the eastern and southern parts of Jiangxi and the whole province of Fujian into Communist-dominated areas before the Communist "land revolution" could succeed in the whole country. To serve this purpose, guerrilla warfare should be staged by the Fourth Army and other units in the twenty-odd counties in the southern Jiangxi-Minxi areas, the populace should be mobilized, and then a soviet regime should be set up. This

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was the idea which finally led to the establishment of the Central Revolutionary Base. The Red Army left Minxi for Ruijin in Jiangxi for military reasons on 1 April. In the middle of May, it marched into Minxi again, at the invitation of the CCP Special Committee of Minxi, to help the local party establish a red regime in the area.<sup>43</sup>

Having come to Minxi for that purpose, the Fourth Army in Minxi took eliminating the enemy force and propping up Communist regimes as its main task. The war between Jiang's Nanjing government and the Guangxi Clique headed by Li Zongren, then ongoing in southern China, helped Mao and Zhu's force greatly by weakening the Nationalist defence in Fujian. From March to July, the Fourth Army routed two regiments of the Nationalist garrison, occupied many towns including the county seats of Changting and Longyan, and created a zone of guerrilla warfare. Centering at Shanghang and Longyan, the so-called Minxi Revolutionary Base came into existence. In the meantime, backed by the Red Army, "revolutionary committees" or soviets were set up in most of the townships and districts in each county of Minxi. In terms of its membership, the local party expanded in an explosive way. In early May, the total number of local party members in the Minxi region had reached 1,400. By September 1929, the county of Longyan alone had 1,000 party members, as compared with merely a dozen or so in late 1928.<sup>44</sup>

Starting from June, land redistribution was carried out in areas under Communist control, and was basically finished

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by the end of August. About 80,000 peasants gained their shares of land confiscated from landlords. Guerrilla forces in each county were reorganized into the Fourth Column of the Fourth Army, while Red Guards were formed in each county. In the single county of Yongding, there were twenty-four Red Guard brigades totalling 2,000 men. By the middle of September, combining forces from all counties, the local armed forces in Minxi, including the Fourth Column, had 3,650 rifles and 100-odd pistols, a sharp increase compared to 700 they had had before March.<sup>45</sup>

From June 1929 to January 1930, more significant military victories were achieved by the Red Army. During the period Jiang Jieshi, with Nationalist armies from Fujian, Jiangxi and Guangdong, organized two "joint suppressions" against the Minxi area. Mainly owing to the civil strife among the factions of the Nationalist armies and the Red Army's mobile tactics, the two offensives collapsed. In August 1929, with the aid of the local Communist forces, the Fourth Army also captured the county seat of Shanghang, which had been known as "iron Shanghang" because of its extremely high and strong city walls built on a hill difficult to access. Historically peasant rebellion forces, including the Taiping Army in the 1860s, had never succeeded in capturing it. Now the Red Army finally did so. This victory sharply boosted the morale of the Communists.<sup>46</sup>

After the second "joint suppression" was defeated, the First Workers-Peasants-Soldiers Congress of Minxi was held

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in Longyan in March 1930, at which the Minxi Soviet Government was founded. Around the time it was founded, the area it controlled included the whole counties of Longyan, Yongding, Shanghang and Changting, and parts of Pinghe, Wuping and Liancheng, with a population of 850,000, accounting for more than one half of the total population of Minxi. By July, the number of party members increased to 10,000, accounting for ninety percent of the total number of party members in Fujian.<sup>47</sup>

Communist armed forces expanded rapidly, too. While the Red Guards in each county were concentrated and reformed into regular Red Army units, three local Red Army forces totalling 8,000 men were recruited. Hundreds of thousands of adults and children were organized into the Red Guards and the Young Pioneers, armed basically with spears and sticks. The First Branch of the Red Army Military Academy was also set up in Minxi.<sup>48</sup>

All kinds of "mass organizations" were formed or expanded, including the Communist Youth League, peasant unions (both open and--in guerrilla zones--underground), and even "labor unions," although no local people could be identified as "workers" in the Marxist definition. Actually all poor peasants were organized into the peasant unions, and many handicraftsmen and shop assistants in villages and towns were organized into "labor unions."<sup>49</sup> In Chongan, Minbei area, the CCP-led guerrilla force was re-formed into the Minbei Independent Regiment of the Red Army, with 300-plus

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men and 100-plus guns. Learning from the CCP in eastern Jiangxi, the independent regiment set up soviet regimes where it was possible. More soviets were set up and the Red Army expanded there in early 1930 because the warlords' war was underway and the Communist activities in Minbei were supported by their comrades in the eastern Jiangxi area.<sup>50</sup>

Thus the first half of 1930 became the heyday of the Communist agrarian revolution in Minxi and Minbei. It is evident that the revival and rapid growth of the revolution in the province was brought by the Fourth Red Army. In the last stage, in the case of the Xinan district, the establishment of the soviet regime followed the mode of "peasant organization--insurrection--soviet." But in this stage, the mode generally became "Red Army--soviet--peasant organization." That is, the Red Army's military occupation came first, then a Communist regime was set up, and then the peasants were organized into all kinds of organizations. This change of mode should be noted in studying the CCP's mobilization of peasants. The meaning of the change will be discussed in later chapters.

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#### 4 Trekking to Failure

Although, looking at the surface, the revolutionary bases in Fujian managed to survive and even sometimes thrived from late 1930 to the final collapse of the Chinese Soviet Republic in late 1934, at a more fundamental level the general CCP's political, military, and economic situation in Fujian, as well as in Jiangxi, was in fact declining during this last stage of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian.

While it is correct to say that the burgeoning of Communist revolution in Fujian around 1930 was brought about by the military triumph of the Red Army, it is also correct to say that the triumph of the Red Army in Fujian was to a great extent enabled by the internal strife in the Nationalist camp. As mentioned before, in the spring of 1929 the Jiang-Gui war was rumbling over southern China. Towards the end of the year, wars between Jiang and the warlord Feng Yuxiang erupted, while the Jiang-Gui war resumed. From April to November 1930, Jiang, then the commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army, was bogged down in a greater war with warlords Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan. Although the war (which involved more than one million soldiers and caused 30,000 casualties) was fought mainly in Henan and Shandong in North China, it attracted many Nationalist troops from the south. The rampant "Communist bandits" in

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Fujian and in Jiangxi had to be ignored for a while by Jiang. However, as soon as he was released from the strife, it was clear to all that he would try to wipe the "red areas" off of his map without mercy. And this was what he really did right after he won the war against Feng and Yan in October. Between then and 1934, five well-known "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaigns were organized against the "Central Revolutionary Base" in the southern Jiangxi area and Minxi.

On the other hand, some CCP leaders did not underestimate the role of the conflict in the opposite camp as a contributor to the Communist successes in Fujian from 1929 to 1930. Mao emphasized on many occasions that one of the reasons enabling the Minxi base to consolidate and expand was the "enemy's internal contradictions."<sup>51</sup> The "Political Resolution" of the CCP First Congress of Minxi held in June 1929 also admitted that the ruling classes' internal conflicts, "disorder, disunity and lack of means" provided a great opportunity for the revolutionary forces to develop.<sup>52</sup> Opportunity would not last forever, and it must not be missed. The Communist leaders knew they should make the most out of the opportunity in consolidating and expanding their Minxi base. The attempt to wipe out the red area in Minxi and the red area's attempt to survive and expand clashed head-on in the period from late 1930 to late 1934. Although the trial of strength was a seesaw, and in the four-year period the situation can be described as a stalemate, the

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sources of strength for the Communist side were drying up, culminating in the total collapse of the Communist movement in rural Fujian.

At first sight, the clash of the two sides during the period took the form of military struggle. In fact, it was also a trial of politics, economics, and popular support. The Communists lost gradually in every aspect in the four-year process.

Actually the first strategic military mistake was made as early as the spring of 1930 by the CCP Center and its Fujian Provincial Committee. The temporary ascendancy of Communist revolution in Minxi and some other areas was viewed by the provincial committee as the prelude to a Communist upsurge in the whole province, while the chiefs of the CCP believed that a nationwide revolutionary upsurge was coming, and that the Communist revolution would first triumph in Hubei and Guangdong provinces. Based on their beliefs, the Twelfth Army of the Red Army, which was reorganized with the Red Guards of each county in Minxi, was ordered to advance towards the East River area in Guangdong. Joining the Communist armed forces there, the CCP leaders believed, they would occupy Guangzhou and realize the goal of the "first Communist triumph in Guangdong."<sup>53</sup> But the ineffective Twelfth Army, 3,000 strong, was quickly routed as soon as it stepped out of the province, and its remnants fled back to Minxi in June.<sup>54</sup>

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Guangdong, the Twenty-first Army was formed with local Red Guards to defend the Minxi base. This army was even more ineffective in doing its job. Many parts of the base were occupied by the local corps loyal to the Nationalist government.<sup>55</sup>

Fortunately the Fourth Army came back to Minxi from Jiangxi province, and the declining situation was reversed to some extent. However, it and the reformed Twelfth Army were ordered to attack the provincial capital of Jiangxi, Nanchang, in early July, while the also-reorganized Twenty-first Army was also ordered to advance to the East River area. It suffered a defeat worse than that of the Twelfth Army. When it retreated to Minxi in mid-September, morale was so poor that even the commanders and the political commissars of its regiments wanted to desert. This defeated army was ordered to attack the Shanghang county seat in spite of its poor condition. This time it was almost annihilated and even its commander-in-chief wanted to desert.<sup>56</sup>

As a result of this series of military defeats, the "revolutionary base" shrank and the situation continued to deteriorate. By the time Jiang Jieshi's second "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaign ended in the spring of 1931, the Minxi base shrank further. Chased by the enemy, the Minxi Soviet Government could not even find a safe place to stay.<sup>57</sup>

During the third "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaign, the local Red Army in Minxi did a little better.

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Although more land was lost in Longyan and Yongding, the Red Army gained some new areas on the northern edge of the Minxi area, and this new gain made it possible to link closely the two bases in southern Jiangxi and Minxi.<sup>58</sup>

The Minxi base's survival of the first three "Encirclement and Suppression" campaigns was due to a great extent to the successful operations of Zhu-Mao's troops in defending the southern Jiangxi base, which was the main battlefield of Jiang's campaigns, and again, to the internal strife among Jiang and other Nationalist cliques. With the Red Army's military occupation of northern counties like Qingliu, Ninghua and Guihua, soviet regimes were set up there, and land redistributions were staged in the fall of 1931. Mao's troops re-entered Minxi in spring 1932. This brought new hope to the Minxi base, as well as to the Communist movement in the whole province. The force commanded by Mao and Zhu was now called the "Central Red Army," because the "Soviet Republic of China" was declared to be established in Ruijin, Jiangxi province in November 1931, with Mao as the chairman of its provisional central government. Mao's force recaptured much lost land, and even once occupied Zhangzhou, a highly commercialized city in the eastern part of Fujian. As it had done before, Mao's force set up soviet regimes and conducted land re-distributions wherever it occupied.<sup>59</sup>

By the eve of the Jiang's Fourth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign, the Minxi Revolutionary Base, including its northern and southern extensions, accounted for two-

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fifths of the Central Revolutionary Base centered in Ruijin, and nearly one half of its population. In March 1932, The "Soviet Government of Fujian" was established in Changting with Zhang Dingcheng as its chairman.<sup>60</sup>

Now the communist revolution in Fujian, particularly the one in Minxi, was tied more closely than before to the fortune of the Central Base, and to the performance of the Central Red Army. The result of the Fourth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign was a stalemate again in the middle of 1933, and the Minxi base survived without significant change in terms of its territory. However, this three-year-long seesaw was about to end.

The development of Communist rural revolution in Fujian was unbalanced. While it had passed its peak and was losing its momentum in the Minxi and Minbei areas, in the Mindong (eastern Fujian) area by 1933 it was still growing. Peasant movements in the area had not begun until the winter of 1929. Then the CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian sent Deng Zihui to Mindong to work with the local party members, who were all returned students and had not thought of organizing the peasants. Deng copied the experience in Minxi. Peasant unions were set up, anti-tax struggles were promoted, peasant armed forces were formed, and even scattered Communist-led guerrilla attacks were carried out. However, until late 1933 there had been only isolated armed peasant revolts. No Communist regime was set up there. The so-called Communist-led guerrilla force in each county had only thirty to forty

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men.<sup>61</sup> As for the other parts of Fujian, the Communist movement seemed to have missed them so far.

While local CCP forces were being tired out by wars against the Nationalists, crises began to surface and develop irreversibly. The red areas in Fujian were plagued by financial and economic difficulties. Since 1930, owing to the Communists' unreasonable economic policies, the economy in the base declined constantly: grain output declined dramatically, production of traditional export goods such as paper, tobacco and timber almost completely stopped, and many mills and shops in towns went bankrupt.<sup>62</sup> The economic blockade against the red area by the Nationalists deepened the difficulties, causing a so-called "price scissors." Food supply for the local Red Army became a serious headache.<sup>63</sup> Facing serious financial problems, the CCP leaders had no choice but to extort money and grain from the general public in the areas under the CCP's control, and in so doing alienated the party from the general public, most of whom were peasants.

Entering 1930, recruiting soldiers for the army became an increasing problem too. Deception, threats, drawing lots, and kidnapping were used more and more commonly to "expand the Red Army."<sup>64</sup> The loss of popular support for "revolutionary warfare" was of course one reason for the difficulty in recruitment. As a result of the coercive recruiting, in 1930, ten percent of the soldiers in the Twelveth Red Army in Minxi were children. Party members took the lead in

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Laxity and corruption quickly spread in party organizations and local government institutions. The provincial soviet of Fujian had been accused of being "passive" and "perfunctory" in doing most of its jobs in the early part of 1933, while defection had become a serious problem.<sup>66</sup>

For example, at the time the Minxi base was suffering from economic difficulties in late 1930, most of the party members in Longyan county liked to wear golden rings and fancy clothes to distinguish themselves from the populace. "fearing death, fearing bitterness, and seeking pleasure" (*pasi, paku, zhuiqiu xiangle*,) became a common phenomenon among the party members in the local Red Army, while the cadres in lower-level soviets did almost nothing except for picking up their daily stipends.<sup>67</sup> Attempts had been made by party leaders to crack down on these "bad phenomena" from time to time, but the cure had never been found.

Internal strife occurred at all levels of the party organizations. Fights among cliques in the local party intensified whenever the situation got better. This was recognized by the party as one thing hindering the revolution from further development.<sup>68</sup>

Another factor that aggravated the developing crises in the period from 1930 to 1933 was the campaign of *sufan*, "elimination of counter-revolutionaries inside the camp." In Minxi it took the form of *sushedang*, the "campaign to elimi-

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nate the Social-democratic Party". Beginning in January 1931, this campaign lasted for about eighteen months. At the end of the campaign 6,352 local party members in Minxi had been executed as members of the Social-democratic Party, which apparently did not in fact really exist as a significant force in Minxi at that time. Among those executed were key local party leaders, Red Army commanders and ordinary soldiers, and leaders of the soviet governments. The campaign turned the Minxi base into a disaster area. Party organizations were paralyzed, morale plunged, Red Army units lost their fighting capability, and the average people became so fearful of the CCP that they wanted to keep as far away as possible from the party and the Red Army.<sup>69</sup>

Similar things happened to other CCP-controlled areas in Fujian. In the Min-Zhe-Wan-Gan (Fujian-Zhejiang-Jiangsu-Jiangxi) Soviet Area, to which the Minbei base was now attached, several thousand cadres and members, even average people who were not involved in party organizations, were executed as counter-revolutionaries. Some units of the armed forces were executed collectively.<sup>70</sup>

All of these problems added together to sap the energy and vitality of the Communist movement in rural Fujian, and during the three-year process there was no sign that things would get better. On the contrary, all the problems were increasing. Although after the Fourth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign the red areas still remained in Fujian, the Communist mansion had rotted from inside and its

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final collapse in front of a wind gust was only a matter of time.

And the time finally came. In September 1933, Jiang Jieshi began his Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign against the CCP Central Revolutionary Base. From the beginning of the campaign the Central Red Army found that this was not the campaign it had encountered and won before. The military situation turned worse and worse for the Red Army and the CCP top leaders in Ruijin had to abandon the Central Base and retreat westward in October 1934, marking the collapse of the Central Base (which included part of the Minxi and Minbei areas). The CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian was destroyed by the Nationalist army soon after the main force of the Red Army left the base, marking the end of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian. The remnant Red Army units in Fujian were routed quickly and CCP activities in Fujian from the end of 1934 to the formation of the Second CCP-GMD United Front in 1937 consisted solely of sporadic guerrilla warfare.

### **Summary**

By and large the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian can be divided into two phases: the insurrection phase and the Soviet phase. The latter can be further divided into two stages: the ascendant stage up to early 1930 and

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the descendant stage beginning from later 1930. The Communist activities in the rural areas before Jiang Jieshi's coup can be viewed as a prelude of the agrarian revolution.

One of the most significant differences between the two phases was that the CCP changed from a party in opposition to the existing political authorities to a power holder in the areas it ruled. Accompanying this change was a change in the party's relation to the peasants: in the first phase both it and the peasants were in subordinate political and social positions; but in the second phase the party became the ruler while the peasants remained the ruled. The modes of establishing soviets, as pointed out earlier, were different in the two phases too. Keeping these differences and changes in mind will help one to understand better the issues in the revolution which will be further examined in the later chapters.

The Communist rural revolution in Fujian from 1924 to 1937 showed a sharp regional imbalance. All three Communist revolutionary bases were established in the peripheral areas around the border of the province. The wave of communism never reached central Fujian (which was by no means the core area). The developments of the Communist movement in the three Communist revolutionary bases--Minxi, Minbei, and Mindong--were not synchronous either. While the Communist movements in the first two areas had begun their decline, in the last area it was just about to reach its peak.

The development of the agrarian revolution in Fujian

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was to a great extent indebted to the CCP military force from outside the province, namely the Fourth Red Army led by Zhu De and (most of the time) Mao Zedong. The army played a key role in promoting the Communist movement in Minxi. The flourishing of revolution in Minxi in turn encouraged Communist activities elsewhere in the province. The history of the Communist movement in Minxi clearly shows that the visits to that area by the Northern Expedition Force, the troops that participated in the Nanchang mutiny, and the Fourth Red Army, all brought breakthroughs to the Communist movement in the area. It is not a coincidence that the scale and depth of the Communist movement in Mindong and Minbei, where the Fourth Red Army had engaged in many fewer operations, fell far behind Minxi.

The energy of revolution exploded in the first phase, and then the momentum of the revolution seemed to exhaust itself during the second phase. From the final military crackdown by the Nationalists to the eve of the Second CCP-GMD United Front, Communist forces in all three areas could just keep surviving. The reasons for this pattern of the revolution in Fujian will be explored in the next chapters.

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## CHAPTER 2 FUJIAN BEFORE THE COMING OF COMMUNISM

The natural and social setting of a locality is always a subject in studies of historical events, particularly rebellions and revolutions. Associations between the social, political, and economic conditions of a locality on one hand, and the eruption of a rebellion or revolution on the other, are often identified by scholars. For example, in his study of the Communist-led peasant movement in the Hai-lu-feng area of Guangdong province in the late 1920s, Robert Marks examines the land system and peasant-landlord relations in the light of imperialist economic invasion and finds an intensified class conflict between the peasants and landlords of the area. It was this intensified class conflict, Marks believes, that led to the eruption of the Communist-led peasant movement in that part of China.<sup>1</sup>

Some scholars even contend that local ecological conditions could be a factor shaping the pattern of peasant collective action. E. Perry's book, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*, is a representative example of this argument. Due to the region's ecology, Perry believes that the peasants in the Huaipai [Huaibei] area were indolent and resigned to the dictates of nature, lacking initiative, and reluctant to tamper with the natural environment, while they were much less passive in social inter-

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action. They were "fierce and truculent" in nature, and quick to fight for the slightest material advantage. Therefore, the unfavorable geographical conditions in the region are directly responsible for the historical peasant unrest there.<sup>2</sup>

To understand the causes, the course, and the outcome of the Communist agrarian in Fujian, a comprehensive study of the province's natural and social conditions before the coming of the revolution is of course necessary. It is all the more necessary because the interaction between the Communist ideology and the established social institutions is one of the foci of this study, and because there has been no such study conducted in the West. Besides, in China, Marxist historians and the veterans of the revolutions in Fujian always emphasize the deteriorating economy and the increase of tenant peasants in Fujian as the factors prompting the Communist revolution. The accuracy of these statements needs to be clarified too.

# **1 "The Remote Land at the End of Sea"**

As a province on the southeastern coast of China, Republican-era Fujian had an area of 28,738.2 square kilometers. According to Nationalist government statistics, in the middle of the 1930s the population of the province was 11,888,287 people, composing 1,999,211 families.<sup>3</sup> As has

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been mentioned before, Fujian was bordered by Zhejiang in the north, Jiangxi in the west, and Guangdong in the south. The eastern side of the province, which was very long, was a section of the western rim of the Pacific ocean, separated from the island of Taiwan by 146 sea miles.

In very ancient times, the area under the jurisdiction of today's Fujian province, located on the southeastern coast of China, was called *mindì*, "the land of *Min*". (Until today, "Min" is still the nickname of the province.) Not until the late Yuan dynasty, about six hundred years ago, was the title of "province" bestowed on it for the first time. Before that point, this "land of *Min*" was attached to either the province of Zhejiang or the province of Jiangsu. The area was divided by the central government of the Song dynasty, about one thousand years ago, into eight districts called *fu* or *zhou*, or in some cases, *jun*. By the Yuan dynasty, the eight districts were called *lu* (literally "routes") by their Mongolian rulers.<sup>4</sup> In later times, the province was often referred to by degree holders of the imperial examinations, local gentry, and even by Communist intellectuals trying to show their erudition as *Min* or *Bamin*, literally the eight *mins*.

This "land of *Min*" was famous for its mountainousness. It was believed to be the most hilly province in southeast China. Mountain area accounted for seventy-five percent of the total area of the province. Except for the narrow strip along the coast in the east, the whole province was occupied

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by mountains and rapid streams, leaving very limited land to be tilled and making overland transportation extraordinarily difficult. In the north, the Xianxia mountains, about 3,000 meters high, isolated Fujian from the province of Zhejiang and the world further north. The Wuyi mountain chain, extending from the south to the north along the western border, separated the province from Jiangxi.<sup>5</sup> Only the border between Fujian and Guangdong was easier to pass. Although the Shenshan Mountains lay in between, the two provinces were connected by the Tingjiang River which originated in the Minxi area and ran into the eastern part of Guangdong, finally joining the Pacific via the Chaoshan plain. Because of the river, the Minxi area and the very eastern part of Guangdong had relatively close economic and cultural connections.<sup>6</sup>

Mountains not only separated the province from the outside world, but also isolated regions and counties in the province from each other. The Minxi, Minnan and Minbei areas were divided by mountains too. The geological disunity of Fujian was considered by some people as one of the main reasons for the province's economic and political disunity. "The bandit bands, big and small, have divided Fujian into bits and pieces, creating a disintegrated jurisdiction. Nobody can rule Fujian as a whole. This is really because of the geographical features of the province," a CCP leader remarked in 1928.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the Tingjiang river system, there were

also the Minjiang River in the north-eastern part, and the Jiulongjiang river system in the south-eastern part of the province. Although the three river systems covered a vast area, owing to the rapidity of their streams and the abundance of dangerous shoals, the rivers did not help transportation in the province very much. Only their very lower streams were navigable. The other parts of the rivers were only good for rafts. The difficulty in transportation had earned for Fujian the title of "a remote place at the end of the sea." Even today, overland transportation is still a problem.<sup>8</sup>

If the province had a "core" area, then it was the narrow coastal strip. All the major cities appeared in this strip, or rather, at the very mouths of the three rivers. Fuzhou at the mouth of the Minjiang River and Xiamen at the mouth of the Jiulongjiang River were the only two "cities" defined by the Nationalist government in 1945, although Quanzhou and Zhangzhou on the Jiulongjiang River were also well-commercialized cities. Beyond the coastal strip, there had developed county seats but not cities.

It is believed that the mountain area at the northern end of the province was the first region to be populated and cultivated, since Neolithic sites have been found in the area. But until the early Tang dynasty (in the eighth century), Fujian was still a sparsely cultivated land compared to other parts of China, as was reflected by the density of population: there were only 90,000-plus households with

410,000 people in Fujian--only slightly more than the population of the city of Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.<sup>9</sup>

During the Tang, owing to the influx of immigrants from central China, Fujian's mountain area speeded up its economic development. The population boom came during the Northern and the Southern Song dynasties. During the period, population in Zhangzhou ("the prefecture of Zhang", an area east of Minxi) increased 418.5 percent, while in Tingzhou ("the prefecture of Ting", basically the Minxi area in later days,) it increased 339 percent. The population of Fujian in 1223 was 1123 percent of the population in 806.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike other parts of China, where people increased their numbers mainly by local propagation, the population growth in Fujian was mainly caused by migrations from the central or northern parts of China. The population swelled each time major wars or chaos occurred in inner China. The influx of people certainly promoted the cultivation of Fujian. However, the rapid growth of population also created the problem of the shortage of arable land. In the reign of Yuanfeng, Northern Song dynasty (1076-1085), the average amount of land owned by each family in Fujian was only one half of the amount in Zhejiang, and less than one third of the amount in Jiangsu.<sup>11</sup> According to statistics compiled in the late 1930s, the area of arable land in Fujian accounted for merely 13.5 percent of the total area of the province. On average each person could have 2.22 *mu* of arable land.<sup>12</sup> The shortage of land was to be one of the key factors shap-

ing historical events in modern Fujian.

Contrasting sharply with the extreme difficulties of transportation in most parts of the province, the coastal area enjoyed exceptional advantages in sea-borne traffic. Foreign trade in Fujian can be traced down to as early as the Eastern Han dynasty, in the first century A.D. During the Sui and the Tang dynasties, Yuegang port and Quanzhou city became two of the most important port cities. Ships departing from these two ports sailed on the Indian Ocean.<sup>13</sup> After the First Opium War which ended in 1842, Xiamen and Fuzhou eclipsed Yuegang and Quanzhou and became the most important port cities in Fujian. Traffic of goods with other provinces such as Zhejiang and Guangdong was also carried out by sea. The long history of overseas trade also encouraged Fujianese to go abroad as merchants or laborers. The coastal port cities had long been valves releasing the population pressure of the province, making Fujian the province which had the highest proportion of overseas Chinese in its population.<sup>14</sup>

It is believed by Chinese scholars that Fujian was the region where the Chinese traditional clan and lineage system was most prevalent and developed.<sup>15</sup> From the later Ming to the end of the 1940s, clans and lineages were prominent organizations in the social structure of Fujian. Entire villages were often occupied by the members of a single lineage. Strict, written lineage rules were the best-known laws guiding the lives of the members. Headed by a group



composed of the most senior members of the lineage and the elite (who in most cases were intellectuals drawn from the lineage members), a lineage became a closed, blood-based, and to a great extent autonomous social unit fighting for the common benefits of its members, regardless of their economic status.

A lineage might become an economic entity engaging in a certain kind of business. In Minxi, there were markets set up and managed by a single lineage. Rules governing trading of goods were set up and commercial activities in those markets were well administered. Or a lineage could form a bandit gang. When the members of a lineage came home with their booty from collective looting, they were cheered by their neighbors.<sup>16</sup> A lineage was also a military unit. Its armed forces, usually in the form of *mintuan* (local corps), fought against bandits, other lineages, or any invaders from outside the lineage. Lineages were also organizations that defended the members' interests against infringement from the government, or more often, helped the members to evade the government land tax by reporting the amount of common and individual land as much less than it really was.<sup>17</sup>

The prominent role of lineages in Fujian was closely linked to the demographic characteristics of the province. As has just been mentioned, Fujian was a province of immigration. Historically there had been three surges of migration to Fujian, occurring in the Yongjia period (307-312) of the Western Jin dynasty, the Gaozong reign (650-683) in the

Tang dynasty, and the Five Dynasties period (907-960) respectively. Until the last surge of migration, the clan and lineage system was still prevalent in central China. Therefore, lineages were a common organizational form when people immigrated to Fujian. After they arrived in the new territories, in their struggle against all natural and social adversities, the function of clans and lineages as forms of people's cooperation was strengthened over time, while it was declining in central China. Beginning from the middle of the Ming, due to factors such as the decline of state power, the development of a commercial economy, and the rampancy of banditry in the mountain areas and piracy along the coastline, the society of Fujian experienced more turmoil than before and the function of lineages as organizations for the civilians became more important.<sup>18</sup> The influence of the prevailing lineage system on the Communist revolution will be discussed further in the coming chapters.

## **2 The Thriving Economy**

It would require a tremendous effort to study and make an iron-clad conclusions about the many aspects of a province's rural economy in a given period. Such a study is not the task of this dissertation, owing to time limits and the lack of historical records. However, based on the statistics available, although incomplete, a useful sketch of the rural

economy in Fujian in the decades right before Communist upsurges can be attempted. The intention of the following study is not to draw firm conclusions about the details of the economy, but to indicate the broad trends of the province's economy. Such a sketch will challenge the black-and-white picture of rural oppression and peasant desperation which some people still assume to have been a vital factor in explaining CCP success.

After the Sino-Japanese war which ended in 1895, foreigners began to set up all kinds of modern mills in Fujian, making ships, machines, paper, tea and even opium. During the Self-Strengthening Movement in the later nineteenth century, the Qing government also established shipyards and factories. After the outbreak of the First World War, Chinese entrepreneurs became the most active force in developing modern industries and businesses in Fujian. The enterprises they engaged in included mining, printing, machine-manufacturing, textiles and food processing. However, all these did not change the economic pattern of Fujian. Almost all the modern factories and mills were concentrated in Fuzhou and Xiamen. In the 1920s, the rest of Fujian was still a traditional agrarian society inherited from the Ming and Qing dynasties, without modern industry. In the whole Minxi area, nothing could be considered as "modern industry" except for a small power station. There was not even animal-powered transportation, let alone automobiles.<sup>19</sup>

Rice was the staple grain grown in Fujian. It was grown

mainly in the mountain valleys in the Minxi and Minbei areas, and in the lowermost valleys of the three major rivers. The way it was grown was basically the same as it had been in the Ming and the Qing dynasties, except that now the peasants knew that some kinds of "white powders" (i.e., chemical fertilizers) imported from foreign countries could increase the output. The first tractor used in Fujian did not appear until 1946. It was bought from the United States by a Chinese engineer, and was a walking tractor. In the 1920s, the average annual yield of rice per *mu* (approximately one-sixth acre) was only about 150 kilograms. It was even lower in the Minxi and Minbei areas--only seventy-five kilograms, as compared to 200 in the lower Jiulongjiang valley.<sup>20</sup>

One thing which made Fujian distinctive was that many of its peasants grew large quantities of yams and used them as their main food. It is believed by Chinese historians that yams were first introduced into China from the Philippines by Fujianese as early as the sixteenth century. Most of the poor peasants in Fujian had yams as their main food all the year round. According to statistics compiled by the Republican government, there were five counties in which yams were the main food, in another thirteen counties they were as important as rice; and in the rest, yams were still auxiliary food. Yams can only grow in warm weather, and they provide much less nutrition and fewer calories than rice does. The Chinese people would take yams as their food only

if they could not find enough rice or other better kinds of grain. What should be noted here is that neither Minxi nor Minbei were among the "yam" areas. Only the Mindong area contained some half-yam-half-rice counties.<sup>21</sup>

In short, agricultural efficiency in Fujian appears to have been relatively stagnant in the period from the Ming dynasty to the 1930s. Owing to the reduction of farm land and the increase of population entering modern times, the shortage of grain in the province became worse. During the Republican period, counties in the Minxi area like Shanghang, Yongding and Changting were on the list of grain shortage areas, while some other counties in the Minbei area, like Chongan (the future center of the Minbei revolutionary base) had a grain surplus. But overall, the gap between grain supply and demand was more than 2,500,000 *dan* (125,000 tons). As a solution, a large quantity of grain was imported from other provinces like Taiwan, Guangdong and Zhejiang, and even from foreign countries. During the Republican period, more than 500,000 *dan* (one *dan* was equal to fifty kilograms) of rice plus an even larger amount of flour were imported from abroad each year.<sup>22</sup>

To exchange for grain, the Fujianese produced a variety of money crops, of which tea was on the top of the list. Following the lifting of the ban on civilian sea-borne trade in the late Qing, export of tea to foreign countries stimulated the production of tea leaves in Fujian. Large areas on hills and slopes in the mountain regions were cultivated to

grow tea bushes. Many fields growing grain were also shifted to tea-growing. However, owing to the backward farming and processing technology, Fujian's teas had begun to lose in the competition for international markets by the very late Qing. Nevertheless, according to an investigation conducted in the Republican era, ninety-five percent of the peasant households still grew tea as a sideline, while the rest (five percent) were specialized in producing tea leaves. Several counties in Minbei and Mindong were important in tea production. Chongan in Minbei was one of Fujian's most famous "tea counties" producing some popular tea varieties. However, except for Pinghe county, Minxi was not prominent in Fujian's tea production.<sup>23</sup> At any rate, tea-growing was still profitable until the 1930s. Actually, tea exports from Fujian regained their strength in the first decades of the twentieth century. According to customs statistics,<sup>24</sup> the value of tea exports in 1905 was 8,194,000 yuan. (The quantity in that year was 254,000 dan.) It increased steadily and reached 11,088,000 yuan (276,000 dan) in 1915. In 1920 the figure dropped to 6,012,000 yuan. However, after that point, it grew fast and reached as high as 20,085,000 yuan in 1929. Tea exports from Fujian began to decline after 1930 mainly due to the world economic recession. But still, the annual value remained above 15,000,000 yuan.<sup>25</sup> This was why as soon as the Communist-led peasant unions were set up in Minxi, in an effort to do something good for the peasants they encouraged the peasants to grow tea.<sup>26</sup>

Another money crop which was of equal importance with tea was tobacco. Like yams, it was first introduced into China via Fujian in the Ming dynasty. The profit a peasant could gain from growing one *mu* of tobacco was ten times as much as growing grain, although growing tobacco required more labor and fertilizer. It was believed by the Chinese that smoking tobacco could expel miasma, and it was also enjoyable. Tobacco consuming quickly became a fashion in Fujian and throughout China, and more and more land was used to grow it. By the Qing dynasty, Minxi, particularly Shanghang and Yongding counties, became a most famous tobacco-producing region. About forty percent of their population engaged in tobacco-planting, and the best quality tobacco produced in China was from Minxi. Shanghang, Yongding and Pinghe, three counties in Minxi, produced high-quality tobacco. Many former rice fields were now growing things to be burned and inhaled. Chongan in Minbei also became famous for producing a large amount of high-quality tobacco.<sup>27</sup>

Entering the early decades of the twentieth century, tobacco-growing further prospered while tea-growing was in decline. Tea-growing fields were now used for tobacco. In 1914, 92,000 *mu* of land in the province were used to grow tobacco. By 1934, the amount doubled. From then on, it revolved around 150,000 *mu*. Minxi remained the leading region in tobacco-growing. Tobacco produced in Yongding county became the most popular brand in the country.<sup>28</sup>

Export of tobacco from the province increased from the

first year of the Republic to 1928. In 1912, the total value of export was 984,396 yuan. The amount reached 2,490,021 in 1928. The peak was in 1921 (2,918,116). In 1930, it was 2,577,417. Only after 1930 did exports of tobacco began to decline.<sup>29</sup>

Timber was also an important product of Fujian. In the early decades of the century the province was listed with Hunan and Northeast China as the nation's three chief timber-producing regions. Most of the counties in Minxi and Minbei were main producers of timber. As in the case of tobacco, the export of timber from Fujian increased dramatically in the period from 1912 to 1929, jumping from 2,736,293 yuan to 22,475,229 yuan in value. Again, the production and export of timber declined after 1930.<sup>30</sup>

Black mushrooms were another speciality of Fujian. Export of black mushrooms tripled during the period from 1912 to 1929. The value of exports in 1912 and 1929 were 200,608 yuan and 768,468 yuan, respectively.<sup>31</sup>

One other speciality produced in Fujian was opium. Unlike tea and tobacco, poppy-growing did not prevail very early in Fujian, but by the turn of the century, it began to compete with other crops for space. Poppy-growing was popular in the whole province since it could bring a good profit to the peasants. At the end of the first decade of the century, the total area of poppy-growing fields in Fujian was 37,500 mu. Longyan in Minxi was one of the counties prominent in poppy-growing. Because of the ban of poppy-



growing near the end of the Qing, the growing area reduced dramatically, but in the first two decades of the Republican period poppy-growing revived and poppy flowers blossomed everywhere in Fujian.<sup>32</sup> Evidently growing poppy was quite profitable to the peasants. In 1902 and 1903, the government in Putian county decided to forbid opium smoking and growing, but the order was defied by the peasants. At last the government sent soldiers to the countryside to destroy poppies in the field and incurred violent resistance from the peasants.<sup>33</sup> Of course, things were often complicated. While opium-growing was generally profitable to the peasants, it might not be so in certain areas or at certain times, or under some specific situations (for example, if it was over-taxed). This was probably why during the early Republican years some warlords in Fujian tried to force the peasants to grow poppy and the peasants refused to do it. While opium-growing could bring great profit to the one who grew poppy and the one who taxed it, the rampancy of opium production and consumption in Fujian was one of the sources of the social turmoil in the later period.

Besides tea, tobacco, timber, black mushrooms and opium, the Fujianese also grew other money crops, ranging from fruits to Chinese medical herbs, bamboo shoots and even flowers like narcissus. Production of all of these products kept doing well until the early 1930s.<sup>34</sup>

In the coastal area, fishery and salt-making were well developed too. Although fishing techniques were not devel-

oped compared to the Qing period, production did increase in the early decades of the Republican period.<sup>35</sup> Accompanying the development of money crops, handicraft industry had prospered in Fujian, particularly in the mountain areas, since as early as the Ming dynasty.

The most prominent industry was paper-making. It was at first engaged in by family-based mills. When the production expanded, the family might hire people from outside the family or even outside the province. Shanghang and Changting were well-known paper-producing counties from the Ming on. During the Ming dynasty, in Shanghang alone there were more than 10,000 mills making paper. In some cases, the mills developed on a huge scale, some of them hiring more than 1,000 people, most of whom were fugitives or laborers from other provinces.<sup>36</sup>

Instead of using wood, paper produced in Fujian was made of bamboo. The processing was labor-intensive and time-consuming. Although water power was used in some cases, most of the work was manual. The over-supply of labor due to the shortage of farm land made necessary and possible the labor-intensive handicraft industries, such as paper-making. From Ming through the Qing, paper-making in Fujian was a constantly growing industry. Entering the twentieth century, the development accelerated.<sup>37</sup> Almost all the counties in Minbei and Minxi were paper-exporting counties in the early decades of the century. Statistics show that the production of paper in the province was also increasing from 1910 to

1926, jumping from 8,910,000 yuan in value to 13,135,000 yuan. After 1926 it began to decline, but not significantly until 1930. In that year the amount was still as high as 12,225,000 yuan. Paper-making industry in Fujian declined dramatically only after the Japanese invasion of China in the early 1930s, for its market in Northeast China was closed by the Japanese. Civil wars fought between the CCP and the GMD, as well as among the GMD factions, also affected the production negatively.<sup>38</sup>

Tea-processing was also a traditional business in Fujian, but entering modern times it did not have as good luck as paper-making did. The turmoil in southern China caused by the Taiping Rebellion in the early 1850s helped the export ports for tea shift from Guangzhou to Fuzhou, which gave tea production in Fujian a big boost. However, by the late 1880s, Chinese teas confronted strong competition by Indian teas in the international market, and the production began to decline. More blows came in the first decades of the twentieth century when the United States banned colored teas from importation and the London tea market closed. In the meantime, however, Fujian tea mixed with flowers was gaining popularity in China as well as in the world, and this development offset the negative factors in the international market to a great extent, as indicated by the figures shown above. Particularly after 1925, owing to the resumption of Sino-Russian trade and the opening up of the market in North Africa, tea production in Fujian exceed-

ed the level of 1900. The industry mainly concentrated in Mindong and Minbei during the Republican period.<sup>39</sup>

There were some other traditional handicraft industries, but they were of less importance and were concentrated only in coastal areas. Among these products were textiles, iron, lacquerware, paper umbrellas, sugar, and porcelain. Although confronted with the strong competition of foreign goods, production of most of these items increased in the period from the late Qing to the end of the 1920s. For example, the family-based weaving industry reached its peak in the early years of the Republican period, when large amounts of foreign cotton yarns were imported to Fujian. Exportation of paper umbrellas reached its peak in 1926.<sup>40</sup> Since these industries were concentrated only in the coastal area, particularly in cities like Fuzhou and Zhangzhou, their ebb and flow did not significantly affect life in the vast hinterland of Fujian.

Products of handicraft industry were mainly for exchange for other necessities, and that required development of a commercial system. Actually, although owing to the mountainous landscape transportation in Fujian was difficult, an extensive marketing network had developed in the province during the Ming-Qing period.

As has been indicated above, Fujian needed grain while producing huge amounts of tea, timber, tobacco, opium, and fruits. At the same time, surrounding provinces such as Guangdong, Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Hunan were rich in

grain, silk, and cotton. Therefore, busy commercial interaction between Fujian and its neighbors was inevitable. Since the Song period, Fujianese had been stereotypically regarded as more "profit-oriented" than people in other provinces. One reason for this was the economic situation in Fujian. Another reason was that immigrants to Fujian during the Ming and Qing were not peasants but mostly merchants and artisans from Guangdong, Jiangxi and Zhejiang. These people took the lead in promoting the entrepreneurial ethos in Fujian.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the traditional Confucian contempt for merchants was not observed very much in Fujian during and after the Ming-Qing period. Many imperial examination degree-holders abandoned their scholarly careers and applied themselves to business.<sup>42</sup> It was not uncommon either that some bureaucrats and landlords encouraged their children to seek money by engaging in commercial activities.

Commercialization was not balanced in Fujian. Seaborne transportation was much more convenient than overland transportation. As a result, some coastal cities developed into entrepôts for international and domestic trade, even before the Ming. Fuzhou was the central market for the entire region of Mindong and Minnan (south Fujian), and for part of the Minxi area. At the peak of its development, Fuzhou had 150,000 individual businesses. Between 1934 and 1937, there were 9,328 businesses in the city, while there were 5,202 in Xiamen and 1,963 in Chuanzhou.<sup>43</sup> From 1919 to 1929, the value of commodities exported from those port cities each

year tended to increase. In 1929 it was 29.22 million yuan, about three times as much as it had been in 1919. At the same time, imports also increased greatly. In 1931, the value of imports was 61.13 million yuan, also three times as much as it had been in 1919.<sup>44</sup> The top export commodities were tea, paper and timber, exports of all of which increased in the 1920s. Detailed information such as what percentage of imports/exports went in/out through other ports, and what percentage of imported goods were transported to other provinces via Fujian, are not available. However, the sharp increase of foreign trade indicates the economic boom in Fujian in the same period, although the trade deficit might indicate that the economy was not healthy in the long run.

One of the side-effects of the seaborne trade was the exodus of Fujianese to foreign countries. According to statistics from the early 1930s, there were 2,830,000 Fujianese living in foreign countries, accounting for thirty-four percent of the total number of overseas Chinese. Most of them lived in Southeast Asia, particularly Singapore.<sup>45</sup> Among those overseas Fujianese were rich merchants and poor former peasants who had gone abroad to seek a better fortune. The relatively easy access to the sea and the lack of arable land in the province encouraged the people to go abroad, and *chuyang*, going abroad, became a tradition. The tradition even lasts today: most of the Chinese illegal immigrants coming to the United States nowadays are Fujianese.

Regional trade inside the province had also been highly prosperous in the Ming-Qing period. Markets mushroomed in rural Fujian. For example, although there was only one market in Shanghang county in the Hongzhi period of the Ming dynasty (the late 1480s), by the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty (the mid-late eighteenth century) the number had jumped to twenty-nine. In that period the county had 429 natural villages with 4,826 households. Therefore, on average every fifteen villages and 160 households shared one market. This was a high ratio in the country.<sup>46</sup>

Minxi during that period had become one of the places which generated a host of merchants, and Longyan was the county producing the most. Merchants from the county were active all over the country. While the Fujian Guilds established all over China was one of the most important among China's merchant organizations in the nineteenth century, Longyan as well as Shanghang merchants also established their own guilds in many cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, and Foshan (in Guangdong).<sup>47</sup>

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the commodity economy in Fujian accelerated its development. According to statistics compiled in Lianjiang, a county on the eastern coast, in the period from 1921 to 1925, 64.5 percent of the agricultural products were marketed. The purchasing power of the peasants also expanded to a great extent. To cater to their power, new markets were established, and in some cases fair days of those periodic mar-

kets were increased. For example, in some counties in Minxi, the fair days in many markets were doubled. All of the county seats shifted from periodic fair sites to typical modern (i.e., everyday) markets, and stores mushroomed in both Mindong, Minbei, and Minxi areas. Statistics compiled in 1933 show that in some counties there were over 1,000 businesses. There were 200 stores in the county seat of Yongan, Minxi area. In Longyan 400 of the county's stores were in the county seat. In Ningde, Mindong area, there were more than 1,900 businesses, among which more than 600 were in the county seat. Even insurance companies appeared in that county in the early 1920s.<sup>48</sup>

Trading in local markets was usually busy and hectic. Longmen in Longyan county was one of these places. In the early decades of the twentieth century, there were eighty-plus stores there. Every date ending with the number one or six in the Chinese calendar was a fair day when peasants and peddlers came by foot from as far as twenty kilometers away. Merchants from other counties and Jiangxi and Guangdong provinces also came. The shop owners and employees could usually speak several southern Chinese dialects.

Products from Changting and Shanghang, mainly paper, were shipped to Longmen on the shoulders of *jiaoli* (porters), and then transferred eastward to Xiamen and the East River area in Guangdong, also by porters; while clothes, salt, seafood and imported goods like kerosene were shipped on the reverse course. Usually about 300 porters were hired



each fair day to carry paper. Wholesale businesses and inns were prosperous in Longmen, with specialties like liquor and refreshments attractions to all kinds of people. Some products such as roasted peanuts were even sold to Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. There were twenty periodic markets like Longmen in Longyan during that period.<sup>49</sup>

People living in highly commercialized regions such as Longyan seemed to have a relatively good life, at least by comparison with many other parts of China. In 1927 the value of goods exported to foreign countries from Longyan was 1,915,000 yuan, while imports totaled 3,355,000 yuan.<sup>50</sup> The ability to afford a 1,440,000 yuan deficit was a plausible indication of the county's relative wealth (although there is no way of knowing how this deficit was financed, how long it had existed, or how long it would continue). Actually, most of the women in Minxi had gold or silver jewelry before the establishment of the Communist regime.<sup>51</sup> Yet Longyan was not the richest county in the Minxi area; Yongding, Shanghang and Liancheng held that honor, while Changting was listed as the county next to the top three ones.<sup>52</sup>

### **3 Landlords and Peasants**

All the memoirs by the former leaders of the Communist movement in Fujian assert that one of the main factors driving the peasants to revolt was the concentration of land in the hand of landlords. Most of the peasants did not have

land, they say, and this was why a "land revolution" was fervently supported by the peasants. Deng Zihui, for example, recalls in his memoir that when he was a child in Longyan, owner-peasants were still a majority in the peasantry. But by the time he became an adult, "large numbers of farmhands and poor-peasants had appeared."<sup>53</sup> "The Resolution of the First Congress of the CCP in Minxi" in July 1929 also asserted that in the area, "eighty-five to ninety percent of land is owned by landlords, the land the peasants have is less than fifteen percent," and "on average, more than eighty percent of the peasants in six counties in Minxi are farmhands and poor-peasants."

However, other statistics do not support these allegations. According to the figures compiled in 1935 by the Nationalist government, 75.8 percent of the households in Fujian were peasants. Among them owner-peasants accounted for twenty-seven percent, thirty-two percent were semi-owner-peasants, and only forty-one percent were tenants. More importantly, among the tenants, 20.7 percent were "permanent tenants." In some counties, the percentage of permanent tenants was as high as eighty percent.<sup>54</sup>

During the Ming-Qing period, land in Fujian could be divided into two categories: *quantian* and *mintian*. The former meant land owned by the state and managed by prefecture (*zhou*) or county governments; the latter meant land owned by people, or in other words, private land.

The purpose of *quantian* was to create income to support

the governmental staff, army, or education and disaster relief. The land was usually rented out to poor people or *tunjun* (garrison troops) who could inherit the right of tenancy generation after generation. According to statistics compiled in the Ming dynasty, Fujian's *quantian* accounted for 8.35 percent of the total land area. Compared to the situation in other southern provinces of China, this ratio between *quantian* and *mintian* was pretty low. During the Qing, the amount of *quantian* declined. After the 1911 Revolution, part of the remaining *quantian* became *mintian*.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, this category of land in Fujian was insignificant in the study of the Communist agrarian revolution.

*Mintian* accounted for more than ninety percent of the total area of arable land in Fujian. It could be further divided into two types: *sitian* (private land) and *gongtian* (common land). Common land could be owned collectively by a lineage, a village, a Buddhist temple, or a charitable association, but land owned by lineages and villages was the dominant form of common land.

It is said that during the Ming and the Qing dynasties all the lineages which had members living in the same village had their common land. Land owned by a lineage was usually donated or purchased by the members of the lineage. In Minbei area, it had been a custom among the landlords that each time a landlord family split its properties among its members, a certain amount of land would be retained as the common asset of the lineage. As a result, the amount of

common land increased steadily over time. By the late Qing, all the lineages in Minbei had their common land, with amounts ranging from several hundred to several thousand *dan* of rent (in rice) per year.<sup>56</sup> Most of the common lands were rented out. The sub-divisions of the lineage would take turns to collect the rent, which was to be used on ancestor-worship, philanthropy, education and the maintenance of roads and bridges. The rent would also be used to pay for the lineage's expenses on lawsuits and *xiedou* (armed feuds among lineages or villages), and so on.<sup>57</sup> Although usually it was the head of the lineage who would be elected to manage the common land, no individual of the lineage had the right to sell it, unless an agreement was reached among the members or the households of the lineage. In 1927, a Communist activist organized peasants in his home village into a semi-underground association called the "Iron and Blood League," and instigated the peasants to sell their lineage land for guns. Although a few persons who were in charge of the management of the common land opposed the plan, the land was finally sold because most of the members of the lineage wanted to.<sup>58</sup>

Similar to common land of the clans or lineages, common land of villages was kept for the purpose of supporting education, ritual ceremonies, philanthropy, and the maintenance of roads, bridges and irrigation works. The difference was that common land of villages served the need of the villages but not the lineages. Also like the common land of

lineages, common land of villages came mainly from the donations of the local landlord-gentry class.

Unfortunately, it seems that no statistics on the amount of common land in Fujian in the Ming-Qing period and the Republican period were ever compiled. As is pointed out by a Chinese scholar, the data about the amount of the common land was too scattered and incomplete to be counted up.<sup>59</sup> In 1950, as a preparation for the land redistribution, the Communist Fujian Provincial Government investigated the distribution of common land in some villages all over the province, and found that the amount varied greatly with villages, ranging from 75.8 to 7.98 percent. Generally speaking, the percentage was higher in the western and northern parts than in the coastal areas. For example, in the Minxi area, the percentage was over fifty. The investigation also found that most of the common land belonged to lineages. It was hard to find any other province in which common land of lineages accounted for such a high percentage of the total land area.<sup>60</sup>

After the 1911 Revolution, *mintian's* structure of land ownership remained basically the same.<sup>61</sup> When the land redistribution began in the revolution, although the CCP land policy changed frequently, common land was always ordered to be confiscated.

In the reminiscences of revolutionary veterans, common land is said to have been one of the sources of class tension between the landlords and the peasants. When the

Communist movement began in Fujian, some Communists tried to encourage "class struggle" by instigating the peasants to check the records of their common land, which was usually managed by the heads of the lineages or local elites. However, there is no record showing that the ordinary peasants had found significant fraudulent practices or that the encouragement to investigate had been successful.<sup>62</sup> Even Chinese historians argue in their recent works that common land was more a means to pacify class conflict than a source of conflict. As an article points out, common land to some extent impeded the concentration of land by individuals, and provided funds for common undertakings, thus helping to mitigate class antagonism.<sup>63</sup> It is wrong to consider that the right of management of, and the income from, the common land were always the privileges of the upper tiers of the society, another scholar contends. The distribution of the profit from the lineage common land was reasonable and equal, and this was correspondent with the purpose for setting up the common land: to strengthen the centripetal force of the lineage, but not to weaken it. To guarantee that this purpose of the land would be served, in almost all of the cases in Fujian, each lineage had concrete written rules stipulating the management of the land and its income, and a well-developed managerial system featured by a board of trustees. All these rules and systems which had been developed over several centuries made very difficult any abuse of the managerial right, and infringement of the

common interests.<sup>64</sup>

Landlord-tenant relations in Fujian in pre-Communist times seemed to be peaceful too. According to statistics compiled in the mid-1930s, landlords in the whole province owned 30.62 percent of the total amount of land, and the peasants owned the rest (there is no clue suggesting in what way the common land was treated in the statistics. Probably it was included in the amount of land owned by the peasants). There is no reason to think that the Communist agrarian revolution had affected the situation of land ownership in Fujian significantly, because first, the Communist land redistribution was carried out only in a limited area and part of the result of the land redistribution was reversed after the Communist revolution failed; and second, the figures presented by the statistics collected in the late 1930s were basically identical to those presented by statistics collected in 1920 by the Republican government in Beijing.<sup>65</sup>

Although sometimes disputes between tenants and landlords occurred for various reasons, no anti-rent riot records are found in modern historical documents. Not even the reminiscences written by local Communist veterans cite any instance of anti-rent riot to vindicate the inevitability of the Communist agrarian revolution, although they usually claim that "about sixty to eighty percent of the land was in the hands of the landlords" and that the landlords' exploitation of the peasants was "extremely cruel."<sup>66</sup>

Rather than an intensification of conflict in landlord-peasant relations, the relations were actually eased by some new trends in land ownership in Fujian. One of them was that since the Qing land trading had become more common and active. Land ownership was transferred frequently in those regions where the commodity economy was well developed. Accompanying the development of land trading was the development of folk laws and customs governing the procedures for land trading. As a result, land purchase became more and more the sole means through which people acquired their land, while dishonorable and illegal means such as acquiring land with political privilege or violence became more and more unpopular. Through land-purchase, many owner-peasants expanded their land.<sup>67</sup>

A trend toward a permanent tenancy system also developed in Fujian in modern times. Under this system, the amount of rent was fixed, and the tenant had the right to use the land forever, provided the rent was paid on time.

The system germinated in the mid-Ming dynasty, and kept growing from then until the Republican period. As is pointed out by some Chinese scholars, the development was enabled only by the prevalence of a commodity economy and rent in money. There were many ways in which a peasant could obtain permanent tenancy. One of them was to open up waste land for a landlord. Once the land was cultivated into fertile soil, the peasant could become a permanent tenant.

If a peasant family rented land for generations and was



never behind in the rent, it could also be granted permanent tenancy. A tenant could purchase the right with money, too. In some cases, landlords offered the right to their tenants on their own initiative, because this was a better way to secure a stable income without worrying about the ownership of the land. The final way to achieve the right was by force. Some peasants refused to give up their rented land and thus became permanent tenants. But this could only happen during social turmoil such as the period of the Taiping Rebellion.<sup>68</sup>

The permanent tenancy system meant less strained relations between the landlords and the tenants. More importantly, a tenant in the system could sub-rent the land to another person and hence become a "secondary landlord." Some owner-peasants also sold the ownership of their lands at a low price, and made themselves tenants. More interestingly, gentry, merchants and government officials, when they had the money, also sometimes bought the permanent tenancy of lands instead of ownership, as this category of people would do in many other parts of traditional China.<sup>69</sup> In this way, the prevalence of permanent tenancy blurred the boundary between "landlords" who were regarded by the CCP as the targets of the revolution, and "tenants" who were the agents of the revolution. The system also provided the tenants freedom to leave the land, creating a mobile human resource. Together with other developments in Fujian such as commercialization and immigration, the permanent tenancy system

helped to make the province a more dynamic society. More importantly, the development of the system, which separated the ownership and the use of land completely, made the ownership of land a less important issue for the peasants in Fujian.

The statistics show no linkage between the effect of the Communist movement and the percentage of permanent tenancy. Among the counties in the Minxi area which were engulfed by the Communist blaze, Longyan had sixty percent of tenants who became "permanent," while Yongding had thirteen percent and Shanghang had only five percent. Zhenghe, a county in the north which was basically aloof from the Communist movement, had eighty-three percent, while Qingliu, to which the Minxi Revolutionary Base once expanded, had only one percent.<sup>70</sup>

Another characteristic of Fujian's land-ownership was that the amount of land possessed by each landlord was relatively even. This had also been the case during the Ming-Qing period. There were very few "super rich" people. In Minxi, "even the rich people have not many good fields and spacious houses." In the coastal area, very few people had more than fifty *mu* of land.<sup>71</sup> According to an investigation conducted in the mid-1930s, this was still the case. There were only 150 landlord families in the whole province which owned more than 100 *mu* of land. On average each landlord family owned twenty *mu* of land while each peasant family owned an average of six *mu*--the gap was not very

wide.<sup>72</sup> A CCP leader also reported in 1928 that in Yongding county, there were not many landlords. Among those landlords only a few collected yearly more than 1,000 *shi* (1 *shi* equals about 111 kilograms) of grain as rent, and all of them were either overseas Chinese or tobacco merchants. This was also the case in the coastal area around Xiamen.<sup>73</sup>

#### **4 Social Unrest and Collective Violence**

Although the economy in Fujian had been thriving since the Ming Dynasty through the early decades of the century, the peasant-landlord relationship was stable, and public education was developing at an unusual speed beginning from the late Qing (as we will see in later chapters), it should be noted that life in Fujian's rural society in the early decades of the century was militant, violent, and volatile.

It seemed that the people in rural Fujian had distinct characteristics. The peasants in the province were often described in historical documents, even in CCP documents in the period in question, as people with "outrageous and intrepid" (*xionghan*) characteristics. The people in Wuping, a report by a CCP leader said in 1928, were "brave and militant," and the peasants "vied with one another to join the bandits and army." Once a division of Chen Jiongming, a famous warlord of Guangdong, entered the county to suppress the bandits. But the force failed to confiscate even one of

the more than 10,000 guns possessed by the peasants there. Instead, when the force tried to retreat from the county, it was disarmed by the bandits. When Zhu De led his Red Army into the county in 1927, he suffered heavy losses too.<sup>74</sup>

One factor nurturing the militant characteristics of the peasants in Fujian was the feuding among clans and lineages which, as has been mentioned above, was an important part of the lives of the Fujian people. When Deng Zihui, one of the most prominent CCP local leaders in Fujian, was sent to the Zhangzhou area to organize guerrilla warfare there, he chose a mountainous district in which to establish a base because, among other things, people there had a history of armed feuds, and had "intrepid and tough characteristics."<sup>75</sup> So did the peasants in Hui'an. They were either members of the "Forty-eight Society" (*Sishiba Hui*) or the "Fifty-three Society" (*Wushisan Hui*), which together were known as the "Father and Mother Societies" (*Fumu Hui*). Armed feuds between the two societies were routine, and many peasants had their guns.<sup>76</sup>

When armed feuds occurred, they were brutal and barbarous. Jinjiang was one of the counties famous for the tradition of *xiedou*. In 1903, the Liu lineage in Tatao village built an ancestral hall. The construction incurred a dispute over geomancy between the lineage and the Cai lineage in the neighboring village. The dispute triggered an armed feud which involved tens of townships and lasted for as long as six years, resulting in more than 300 casualties and many

idle lands.<sup>77</sup> In 1910, an armed feud broke out in Putian county when 300-odd men from Donghua village armed with primitive and modern weapons rushed into Longhua village and began to kill people indiscriminately. More than thirty people including several children were killed in the village. The ensuing armed feud involved many villages and resulted in large numbers of deaths.<sup>78</sup>

The Minxi area was notorious for armed feuds also. A town called Wushi in Yongding county was divided by the Lai and Huang lineages. Both lineages had more than 100 guns and even their own factories for repairing arms. Fights and killings between the two sides were constant and people of the two sides were always in combat-readiness. When the town was occupied by Communist forces, the CCP made use of the feud and became a friend of the two rivals. Therefore, the Communists could go back and forth freely in the areas dominated by both lineages.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to killing, looting was another major part of armed feuds. Once a village was occupied by its rivals, looting was inevitable. Although land-purchasing had become the usual means through which individuals acquired their land, armed feuds were still common ways for lineages or villages to settle their land disputes. This was particularly the case in claiming the newly-formed alluvial lands which often appeared in the lower valley of the Min River. This violent way to acquire land for the lineages was still used by the 1940s. In 1943, a piece of silt-deposited sand-

bar of Yixu village disappeared after a flood. Some time later, when two new sandbars appeared several miles down the stream, Yuxu village claimed the lands as its lost land and thereby started an armed feud with the villages which were located closer to the new lands.<sup>80</sup>

The intrepid and militant characteristics of the peasants in Fujian were also reflected in their tradition of anti-government rebellions. During modern times, peasants in the province had rebelled against the authorities spontaneously, or sometimes when organized by local gentry or bandit chiefs.

An upsurge of peasant rebellion broke out in the middle of the nineteenth century when the Taiping Rebellion in central China was declining. A person named Chen Tianmi led about 1,000 people in Yongding to rebel against the local government. They killed officials and gentry, and opened granaries. Later, peasant unrest known as the "Flower Flag Army" (*Hua Qi Jun*) rebellion swept over the counties of Shanghang, Yongding and Wuping. The forces of the rebellion even attacked and occupied the county seat of Ninghua. Another upsurge of peasant rebellion took place in Longyan in the first decade of the century, and the unrest spread to Yongding and Shanghang.<sup>81</sup>

Entering the Republican period, violent anti-tax peasant upheavals happened frequently, and most of them were led by local gentry. There was a local warlord named Lu whose exorbitant taxes and levies were resented by the peasants in

Chongan. The peasants simply rose spontaneously to resist the taxation by attacking Lu's soldiers who went to the villages to collect taxes. Sensing the strong resistance from the peasants, Lu finally decided to avoid further confrontation with the fierce peasants by giving up his attempted tax collection. Similar things happened in other counties too. In Zhangping county neighboring Longyan, nearly 10,000 peasants encircled and blockaded the county seat for seven days, demanding tax exemption. The local warlord living in the town finally made a compromise with the peasants.<sup>82</sup>

Villages often involved in armed feuds could also run into confrontation with the government. There were some big villages in Pinghe county, each with over 10,000 peasants. Under the leadership of local gentry, fierce armed feuds occurred in these villages frequently. Reports stated that peasants in these villages, particularly in the one called Guanbuo, "are intrepid, and not afraid of governmental troops. Fighting against troops, resisting tax-collection and levy-collection are their daily activities." Like armed feuds, these anti-government struggles were also led by local gentry.<sup>83</sup>

Another case of well-organized anti-government collective action organized by local gentry was provided by peasants in Huian. In the eastern part of the county, Zhang, Wu, and Wang were the three most powerful lineages, each of which had strong armed forces composed of their lineage

members. When armed feuds between the Zhang lineage and the Wu lineage occurred, the Zhang lineage drew its men from sixty villages. The commander of the Zhang force was a one-time company commander of the regular army of the Nationalist government. Relying upon their powerful armed forces, all three lineages defied the authority of the government, and became antagonistic to the local corps, which were also led by local elites but had a closer relation with the government.<sup>84</sup>

It seems that the peasants in Yongding county dared to defy any authority. In the early part of 1928, in a small village near the county seat, a peasant's wife had a quarrel with the son of a "tyrant gentry" over a trifle. The quarrel developed into a fight. When five soldiers of the peace preservation corps came from the town to settle the dispute, they were disarmed by the gathered peasants. The armed peasants even exchanged fire with a battalion of regular troops sent by the commander of the county garrison to suppress the unrest, although the peasants were not a match for the garrison and were routed quickly.<sup>85</sup>

Another indication of the violent lives in rural Fujian was the activities of the armed secret societies. One of the most famous secret societies in the southern provinces of China around the turn of the century was the Triads, which had originated in Fujian and still existed there in the early decades of the century.<sup>86</sup> The most important derivation of the Triads in Fujian was the "White Fan Society"



(*Bai Shan Hui*), which had been one of the participants in the revolution overthrowing the Qing Dynasty.<sup>87</sup>

There were some other secret societies in Fujian in the period in question, which were more local but also more military in nature, while like those major secret societies in China, they were characterized by their superstitious activities. It seems that in Mindong area this kind of society was more developed than in other parts of Fujian.

In Mindong area, rampant banditry surfaced in 1928. The largest bandit gang in the area had 2,000 men. The response of the society to the rampant banditry was the establishment of local corps led by local elites and the establishment of superstitious military societies set up by the populace.<sup>88</sup> They were generally known as the "Big Sword Society" (*Dadao Hui*). Usually one or several villages had a *tan* (altar); each *tan* had its own name, such as the "Nine Immortals Society" (*Jiuxian Hui*), the "Yellow Ancestor Society" (*Huangzu Hui*), and the "One Heart Society (*Yixin Hui*). Each of them had its own god, incantations, and spell, and its own martial arts master hired from its own village(s) or from another locality. Before going to battle, the members would worship their gods, recite the incantations, and drink liquor mixed with cinnabar. Believing they were guarded by the gods and that their bodies were impenetrable to swords and bullets, the members were extremely brave and violent in battles.<sup>89</sup>

Nonetheless, the most prominent indication of the

violent lives of rural Fujian was the rampancy of banditry. As in many other parts of China, banditry had a long history in Fujian, and its origin is difficult to trace. However, as has been mentioned before, the rampancy of banditry began from the mid-Ming dynasty. In the early decades of the century, there appeared another upsurge of banditry in the province. A Chinese saying goes that "poverty generates banditry and theft." This must be true throughout the world. Poor living conditions for many inhabitants in rural Fujian must be the basic explanation for the banditry there. But poverty alone can not explain why banditry in Fujian was worse than in many other parts of China, and why there was a upsurge of such outlawed, predatory violence in the early decades of the century. The mountainous landscape was one favorable condition for such a predatory activity, while the development of a commodity economy which provided numerous vulnerable trade routes and large flows of cash, the floating, volatile population, and particularly the anarchical political situation in Fujian right after the 1911 Revolution, were almost certainly also factors that helped the spread and savagery of the banditry.

The distinct feature of the banditry in Fujian was that many of the bandit bands were organized on the basis of lineage, while others were organized on geographical bases such as villages or townships. While at the turn of the century many local gentry were fanatical in raising education and advocating gentility, some others were ardent in

encouraging banditry. This role the local gentry played was closely linked to their role in the lineage feuds which were notorious in southern China, particularly in Fujian and Guangdong. (The role of the local gentry will be further discussed in later chapters.) A smaller, weaker lineage was usually suppressed and bullied by a bigger, stronger one. The same thing happened among sub-lineages inside a lineage in which every family shared the same surmane. Allying with other lineages was a common strategy to resist a stronger foe. If the two parties in a feud were equally strong, then armed feuds, meaning a bloody fight with weapons between lineages, would often occur. Local gentry always took the lead in this kind of vendetta, and banditry and lineage feuds were frequently interwoven: a band of bandits of a certain lineage would rob its rival lineage; and an armed feud would assume the form of fight between two groups of bandits.<sup>90</sup>

Another feature of banditry in Fujian was its ubiquity and popularity. It was rampant all over the province, although moving from the northwestern part to the southeastern part of the province, the rampancy lessened. The only county in the Mindong area where there was little or no banditry was Lianjiang. In Minbei, commerce developed rapidly and bandits "rose in swarms" after the First World War.<sup>91</sup> Minxi was notorious for the rampancy of banditry also. Every village or township in the area had its bandit band. In the counties of Yongding, Wuping and Liancheng, "almost all the

men were hooligans or bandits, and all the ordinary intellectuals were planning how to be chiefs of the bandits." There were 30,000 to 40,000 people in the Kanshi and Wuxi districts in Yongding county, and among them most were bandits. In Wuxi, "there was nothing except bandits, land was deserted because there were no people to till it."<sup>92</sup> Oxen became good targets of banditry. Consequently peasants in Yongding and Wuping counties dared not to raise oxen and had to allow land to become untilled. It was not uncommon in Minxi that peasants sold their land to buy guns, because once a peasant had a gun, he could become a bandit on his own or become a member of a band. Arms were very expensive. One *mu* of good land at that time cost about twenty *yuan*, and a *mu* of poor land cost only fourteen, while 100 rounds of cartridges cost sixteen. Three pistols and a few cartridges cost 500 *yuan*. However, peasants still wanted to acquire arms.<sup>93</sup>

Bandits from these two districts liked to loot their neighboring counties--Longyan and Nanjing. However, bandits in Fujian usually preyed on their own localities--the same districts of their own geographic origins. This characteristic distinguished them from the *Nian* in central and northern China during the mid-nineteenth century, which always looted villages far from their own.<sup>94</sup> Also unlike bandits in northern China during the early Republican period such as the gang led by Bai Lang (the "White Wolf") who acted like Robin Hood and always preyed on rich people and helped the poor,<sup>95</sup>

bandits in Fujian attacked people indiscriminately. They killed anyone who they did not like, kidnapped people for money, burned houses or even whole villages, and took away property including oxen. Bandit bands expanded in favorable times by recruiting more people and buying more arms, or even made rifles by themselves. When facing suppression by an overwhelming official force, they could retreat to remote mountains and bide their time: a strategy which would be inherited by the Communists later. Banditry was very rampant even in the area which came under Communist control later. In 1930, in Yanshi area, Longyan county, in order to squeeze money the chief of a Chen lineage's bandit band in a village brutally killed the chief of the same lineage.<sup>96</sup>

Peasants composed the bulk of the bandits. In some counties in Minxi, males in a peasant family did not work in the fields. Farming, wood-chopping and all the hard work were done by women, while the men stayed home and did light chores. This was a tradition of some *Hakka* people, who accounted for the main part of the population in Minxi.<sup>97</sup> Entering modern times, the booming commercial activities and banditry absorbed this idling human resource. A report from a Communist local leader even went so far as to say that in Yongding most of the males became bandits or hooligans, engaged in commercial activities, or went to Southeast Asia. "Generally speaking, males, particularly those who had guns, were all oppressors and exploiters. Only the women were real peasants!"<sup>98</sup>

Even some merchants turned themselves into bandits. In a "world of bandits," transferring commodities from place to place was very risky. For self-defence, merchants shipping their goods had to arm themselves and traveled in groups. Paradoxically, this measure to prevent banditry also encouraged banditry: if the merchants lost money, they could loot other people with the guns already on hand.<sup>99</sup>

No matter how favorable other conditions were, banditry could not have run wild in Fujian if the province had had an effective government. And such a government was what the province lacked after the 1911 Revolution.

Having defeated the "Second Revolution" led by Sun Yat-sen and some warlords in South China, Yuan Shikai, the President of the Republic of China, backed up by his *Beiyangjun* (The Northern Ocean Army), extended his rule to the provinces in the south. At the end of 1913, Yuan sent his governor with an elite division of his *Beiyangjun* to rule Fujian, thus starting the fourteen-year domination of the province by the *Beiyangjunfa*, the "Northern Warlords".

After Yuan's death in 1915, the *Beiyangjun* split into three factions: the *Zhili*, the *Wan*, and the *Fengtien*. Power struggles and contention among the three factions had strong effects on Fujian. The real powerholders of the province changed four times; a predecessor was always overthrown by his successor by force or political maneuver. Yet that was not the worst. During the fourteen-year period, Fujian was devastated by wars.

In 1918, a war broke out between the Northern Warlords and the warlords of South China, and Fujian became the battlefield. The war lasted into late 1922 and became a melee among the warlord of Guangdong and the factions of the Northern Warlords. The next year, a another war between the factions of the Northern Warlords broke out in the province. The *Beiyangjun* troops stationed in Fujian belonged to different factions. To expand their strength and spheres of influence, they vied to recruit local troops and even bandit bands from other provinces, and waged wars against each other. From 1922 to 1925, more than thirty wars occurred between the warlord factions in Fujian.<sup>100</sup>

In the early 1920s, Fujian was divided by rival warlords. The governor of Fujian, with his three divisions and some other reformed local bandit bands and *mintuan* (local corps), could only exert his power in the region around Fuzhou city. Longyan and the area west of it was the domain of commander Zhang of the First Infantry Division of the *Beiyangjun*, while the area west of Longyan (basically the Minxi area except Longyan), was an independent kingdom under General Li, commander of the Third Infantry Division.<sup>101</sup> None of them knew how much longer they were going to remain in power over the areas they controlled. The best thing for them to do, of course, was to extort as much money as they could from the people in their domain, both for war expenditures and for their own pockets.

There were many ways to collect money. One of them was

looting. From July 1923 to August 1924, Longyan was sacked twice by warlord troops which were going through the county. On the first occasion, every store in the county seat was looted.<sup>102</sup>

A more usual method was to levy exorbitant taxes. Local people, including merchants and landlords, had to pay taxes and levies for almost everything. In the area ruled by Commander Zhang, there were levies for "richness," "obligation", houses, livestock--in short, for everything they could think of. Since growing poppy was highly profitable and it could be a good source of tax, the warlords forced the peasants to grow it. The bulk of the money collected was from the land tax. All the warlords collected the land tax in advance. In Longyan, Commander Zhang in 1925 had collected the land tax of 1931, while in Minxi, Commander Li had collected the tax five years in advance.<sup>103</sup> Each region divided by the larger Northern Warlords was re-divided by local warlords who attached themselves to the former respectively, and these local warlords collected their own taxes and levies too.

Selling governmental bonds and issuing paper currency were convenient sources of income too. Three of the four governors issued huge amounts of bonds and securities in different names. These bonds and securities were actually not secure and there was no likelihood that the buyers would get back their capital, but people were forced to purchase them. The first *Beiyangjun* ruler of Fujian also set up a



bank and issued currency in the amount of several billions of *yuan*. When the governor's government was overthrown in 1922, the bank went bankrupt and all the currency it had issued became scrap paper.<sup>104</sup>

Other disreputable means to raise money included selling governmental positions and encouraging prostitution and gambling. Among the positions to be sold were those of county magistrates, heads of districts, commanders of army brigades, and chiefs of police. The prices for each position were announced openly. In Minxi, the price for a position of magistrate ranged from 3,000 to 10,000 *yuan*, and the same position would be sold again every several months. Of course, those who bought the positions would make the best out of the position by extorting from the people. As a result, each time a new county magistrate took over, new taxes would be levied again.<sup>105</sup>

To open up new sources of taxation, prostitution and gambling were legalized, although they had long been in fashion in Fujian. In Longyan, casinos were set up as early as in 1890, and a type of gambling organization called "flower societies" had existed in the county ever since 1870. By the 1920s, an unprecedented number of casinos were set up, and the whole population of the county became "flower society maniacs."<sup>106</sup> In the casinos, pornography was one important activity. The income of the casinos had to be shared with the local authorities. About forty percent of the profits were used to bribe the local warlords, and

twenty percent went to the county magistrate and his colleagues as dividends.<sup>107</sup>

Seeing the warlords from outside the province extorting money from Fujian unrestrainedly and ruthlessly, local elites in the province once appealed for "a Fujian ruled by Fujianese," and published an open telegram to the whole nation, declaring that the province "refuses any aid by outside armies." However, that demand was never met and in 1924 the movement collapsed.<sup>108</sup>

One of the consequences brought about by the negative developments happening to the society of Fujian in the early decades of the century--including the wars, the irresponsible rule of the warlords, the banditry, and a distracted populace--was the militarization of the society.

Facing attack from the bandits, local elites took the lead in organizing local corps to defend their own villages. In the Mindong area, where the Communist upsurge came later than other areas in Fujian, the rampancy of banditry also came late: banditry "swarmed up" in 1928. In a county called Shouning, some of the bandit bands had as many as 2,000 men. Unlike the bandits in Minxi, which usually preyed within their own localities, the bandits in Shouning robbed the whole Mindong area and even counties in southern Zhejiang province. Of course, their own county was their most convenient target. On three occasions they had even attacked and occupied the county seat.<sup>109</sup>

The response of the society to this dreadful threat of

powerful organized bandits was the mushrooming of local corps, all organized by landlords and gentry who had the power and money to play that role, and the building of bock-houses in villages. In villages where for various reasons gentry-led local corps were not formed, popular societies were organized instead. These societies adopted different names such as the "Nine Immortals" (*Jiuxian hui*), the "Yellow Ancestor" (*Huangzu hui*), the "White Crane" (*Baihe hui*) and the "Big Sword" (*Dadao hui*): all these names reflected their military and superstitious characters. Either in the local corps or in the popular societies, landlords and poor peasants joined hands to protect their interests.<sup>110</sup>

This was also the case in Minxi. Taking Longyan as an example, before 1923, affairs in the countryside were coordinated by "shezhang," the "heads of the community," who were elected by heads of families and lineages, and did not have any office and received no pay for their work. To adapt to a new situation under which peoples' lives and property were menaced by frequent bandit activities, this tradition was put to an end and standing "defense corps" were formed in each "qu" (district).<sup>111</sup> In 1928, before the CCP launched their insurrections, people in Yongding county possessed more than 50,000 guns. One half of the guns were in the hands of the bandits, three-tenths belonged to the gentry and the armed forces controlled by them, and the rest were owned by individual peasants. In Wuping county, "bandits are as many as in Yongding, and the people have an extraordinary

amount of guns: there should be no less than 10,000."<sup>112</sup> It is evident that the extent of militarization in Minxi was very high.

The over-sized Northern Warlord armies, the troops of local warlords, local corps, bandit bands, armed popular societies and armed individuals, all joined together to cause the growing militarization of Fujian society. The province, particularly some of its regions in the early decades of the century, had been torn apart by wars and conflicts between the factions of warlords, different bandit gangs, bandits and local corps, and the tradition of armed conflicts between and lineages.

All the evidence, as cited above, suggests that the peasants in Fujian had a penchant for violent action, and had a tradition of rebelling against the authorities. The frequent wars caused by the warlords, the wanton bandit activities, the bloody fights among lineages and villages, the armed rebellions against the government or any other tax collectors, made the society a hubbub in which all the social groups clashed with each other, and social groups of the same kind clashed with each other too: warlords killed warlords, gentry fought against gentry, and peasants looted peasants. For their own economic interests, the peasants in Fujian had already engaged in collective, violent actions, no matter who led these actions: warlords, bandit chiefs, or local gentry. Surrounded by such a violent environment, even those who were reluctant to join robbery, fights and kill-

ings would take this violence for granted.

### Summary

Fujian's political, economic and social situation in the pre-Communist era was a complex one. There were two main currents of change running in opposite courses: the economy was developing while politically the province was thrown into anarchy and the social order was deteriorating.

Due to its peculiar geographical conditions, the province had benefited from a commodity economy. Production of money crops had long since taken root in the province. At the turn of the century, although grain yields were stagnant, exports of all the staple money crops increased remarkably. The increase of exports suggests the increase of the yields of the crops. Exports of all the main products of traditional handicraft industries were in a state of expansion too.

To justify the necessity and inevitability of the Communist movement, reminiscences by Communist veterans always claim that due to the economic invasion of world capitalism, the exportation of tea, paper, and tobacco from Fujian declined sharply in the eve of the Communist movement, and that it was the decline which created job-loss to many peasants and prompted the upsurge of the revolution. This is not true. The "economic invasion of capitalism

against China," as Marxist historians like to put it, beginning from the mid-nineteenth century, had greatly benefited the economy in the province by promoting foreign trade, as well as the development of a commodity economy, although commercialization had long been underway in Fujian despite the extraordinary difficulty of traffic in most parts of the province.

The real decline of export came only after the end of the 1920s. Although due to the lack of materials, at this point we cannot conclude that the overall rural economy was prospering in Fujian, at least we know that the endemic grain shortage was overcome by importation, and that there was no famine or starvation recorded in the historical documents. More importantly, the dramatic increase of volume in foreign trade in the early decades of the century was a clear indication of the vigor of the economy in the province. The case of Fujian supports the argument of some historians that Western economic influence on China after the end of the Opium War had played a role of catalyst in promoting the modernization of China's economy. In Fujian, it at least was not a factor causing widespread peasant poverty and promoting a social revolution.<sup>113</sup>

Being affected by the development of commerce, the traditional land system, which was characterized by tenancy, began to transform itself. With permanent tenancy growing under the traditional land system, the tension between the landlords and the peasants, which has always been the focus

when historians try to look for the reasons why peasants rebel, relaxed. In a society with a well-developed commodity economy, even the gentry-scholar class had abandoned the traditional Confucian belief that farming and land were the essentials of a family or a state while commerce and money were the nonessentials. This evolution of ideology, combined with the separation of the ownership of land and the right to use the land permanently, made people's demands for land ownership much less strong than seems to have been the case in other parts of the country where commercial activities were not as prosperous as in Fujian. In short, land ownership was no longer a major bone of contention in Fujian. There was no sign of intensification of antagonism between the landlord and the peasant class in the pre-Communist era.

Furthermore, the boundary between a landlord and a "peasant" became much less clear-cut with the separation of land ownership and the right to use the land. Many peasants became so-called "secondary landlords" after they had achieved permanent tenancy and sub-leased the land to other people. The phenomenon that some landlords would rather sell the ownership of their land and become permanent tenants themselves was an indication that being a "landlord" or a "peasant" had to some extent become nominal. This interwoven status of landlord and tenant made confrontation between the two classes less likely to happen.

There was more. Sharp conflicts between clans and lineages in the province had brought the landlord-gentry

class and the ordinary peasants together to fight for their common interests. The interests of the two classes had more in common in a turbulent situation in which warlords and bandits had become a serious, constant menace to the lives and property of villagers, both poor and rich. The enhanced role of local corps and popular societies was an indication of their class cooperation. Therefore, it is safe to say that "class conflict," if that means conflict between the landlords and the tenants, does not work in explaining the cause of the Communist insurrections in the late 1920s in Fujian in which peasants were the main participants. In his study on the Communist peasant movement in the Hai-lu-feng area in Guangdong province, Marks contends that after the 1911 Revolution, lineages and "flags" (a kind of semi-military organization led by local elites as combat parties in armed feuds) began to disintegrate and class struggles replaced struggles between lineages or "flags" to become the dominant forms of social conflicts.<sup>14</sup> If this was the case in Hai-lu-feng (which is itself debatable), it was not true in Fujian.

Of course, a developing economy and relatively relaxed, peaceful tenant-landlord relations did not necessarily mean that the ordinary peasants in Fujian were satisfied with their lives and were demanding no social change. Although the exports were increasing, the profits from the exports, and wealth generally, were almost certainly not equally distributed. Although there was no major famine, which had



often triggered peasants rebellions through the Chinese history, the living conditions of many ordinary peasants in the countryside were still poor. Many of them might just be surviving marginally. Besides, entering the twentieth century, the peasants in Fujian had something new to complain about.

One thing the peasants resented was the political turmoil happening in the province after the 1911 Revolution. Frequent wars and the irresponsible rule by warlords from outside the province left Fujian in a state of anarchy. The consequence of this situation was rapid militarization of Fujian rural society and the rampancy of banditry. Unfortunately, the rampancy of banditry in turn inspired a vicious circle: as a response to the menace of banditry local gentry and peasants formed local corps and armed societies which might themselves turn into predatory organizations or be assimilated into the troops of the local warlords, thus intensifying the acute confrontation among the social groups, and generating a growing sense of insecurity among the people.

Another thing the peasants deeply resented was the economic extortions from the warlords. It is, however, noticeable that the negative developments in Fujian such as the plague of wars, banditry, and extortions victimized not only the ordinary peasants but also most strata of society, including scholars, landlords and merchants.

The convergence of the social, political and economic

changes, negative and positive, created a turbulent, volatile and violent situation in Fujian. Social dislocations happened to many kinds of people, who were eagerly looking for new social positions and opportunities. Young people with new-style educations committed themselves to changing their hometowns where everything seemed to be in sharp contrast with the ideals they had just learned in schools. The gentry stratum was undergoing a reshuffle, and most of the local elites had to make a choice in the roles they would play in a changing world. As for the peasants, particularly the male peasants in Minxi, an anarchical, violent situation seemed to be more pleasant to them: joining the bandit bands or the troops was certainly a more exciting life than staying at home or idling about. All of these developments could, to different extent, be traced to the ecological environment in Fujian.

Actually, the peasants in Fujian had been rebelling before the coming of the Communist revolution. Any open, violent collective action defying official authority and laws should be regarded as a "rebellion." Banditry and armed feuds were just this kind of peasant collective action. The Communist-led armed insurrections performed largely by peasants developed under just these circumstances. And it was a new stratum of the local elite who inspired and organized the peasants into this new form of collective action.

### CHAPTER 3 THE GENTRY AND INTELLECTUALS IN THE EDDY

As Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin have commented, it is taken for granted that a society should have an elite.<sup>1</sup> The role of the Chinese elite in the society and historical development has long been one of the foci of studies in the China field. The Chinese elite has been viewed as the pillar of the traditional Chinese state. Recently, many aspects of the elite in late Imperial and Republican China have been explored, such as the span of elite activity, local elite resources, and the change of elites over time. Frequently, the role of the elite in modern China is discussed by scholars from the perspective of state-societal relations. Argument has often revolved around issues such as "was the power struggle between the local elite and the state during the late Qing a zero-sum game or not?"<sup>2</sup>

"Elite" is a concept that is broadly defined by historians. Max Weber used it to include bureaucrats and retired and future officials. Esherick, Rankin and some other historians use the concept of "local elite" to encompass many sorts of people--gentry, merchants, militarists, community leaders. In other words, any individuals or families that exercised dominance within a local arena were "local elites."<sup>3</sup> It is this segment of the Chinese elite who receive most of the scholarly attention. The change of local

elites when the Chinese society was experiencing militarization, commercialization, and social revolution is well studied by scholars.

The role of local elites in the Communist revolution is also discussed by some scholars. In 1986, in his study on how the CCP won the support of the Chinese peasants during the Anti-Japanese war (1937 to 1945), Chen Yung-fa once examined the association between the CCP's success and its policy towards local elites, finding that through adopting a policy of "tolerance with strength" towards the local elites on one hand, and increasing the peasants' power on the other, the CCP made the elites unable to resort to violent protests such as blocking government's centralized tax collection.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, S. Averill has contributed to the study of the issue with his path-breaking inquiry into the relations between the genesis of local Communists and the fragmentation of the local elites in the hill country of Jiangxi in the 1920s. As Averill points out, owing to the social change happening in the early decades of the century, the status of individual elite families was insecure, although the elite stratum as a whole was still a dominant social force. Children of declining elite families went to schools in the core areas and were exposed to radical ideologies. It was these children of declining elite families who often became the first Communists in their hometowns.<sup>5</sup>

However, it should be pointed out that scholarship on

the role of local elites in the Communist revolution is quite meager. Except for the works just mentioned, scholarship covering the issue can be hardly found.

Averill's studies reveal the connection between "change" in the elite and the rise of the Communist revolution in a locality. A similar pattern in the origin of the local Communists can be found in Fujian. But the entanglement between the local elites and the Communist revolution did not only happen in the early period of the revolution. Local elites had become a most active force in Fujian at the turn of the century, and they remained active throughout the whole process of the Communist agrarian revolution. The mechanism and many characteristics of the Communist rural revolution in Fujian cannot be well understood without studying the activism of the local elite in Fujian during the period in question. The local elite was a factor of no less importance than the peasantry in deciding the nature and process of the Communist rural revolution in Fujian.

The phrase "local elite" in the following discussion is defined to include big merchants, degree holders of the Qing's imperial examination system, retired officials, the students trained by the new-style schools (all of the above categories were usually considered by the general public as "gentry"), and those persons who occupied a higher social status or played a leading role in certain aspects of social life in the localities, such as landlords, heads of clans and lineages, and militarists (who could be officers in the

local army, or chiefs of the local corps or bandit gangs). In some cases, these people were also degree holders. In a sense, it can be said that the Communist upsurge could be traced to the local elite's activism in Fujian.

### **1 The Old Elite as a Dominant Force**

As has been mentioned in Chapter One, clans and lineages were dominant elements in Fujian's social structure in pre-Communist times. It was natural that the clans or lineages were led by the local elites. The leadership of a lineage functioned like a small government. Sometimes it even had to handle negotiations with the real governments. Only persons who had higher social status and intellect could play roles like these. Therefore, the social function of the local elites was in conjunction with their leadership in clans and lineages as social organizations.

Tubao was one of the peculiar things in Fujian. A tubao was a castle-like, huge building in which people belonging to a same lineage lived. As early as in the Ming dynasty, many tubao had been set up in Fujian. A tubao functioned like a small kingdom and the elite presided like kings over the affairs in all aspects. Sometimes several lineages might unite to form a bigger tubao and it would be governed by the heads of the lineages jointly.<sup>6</sup>

After the 1911 Revolution, with the decline of the

influence from the central government in Beijing and the rise of warlord forces in Fujian, the whole province entered into a state of anarchy. Abuse of political power, irresponsible economic extraction, wars, and bandit activities tore the society apart. Against these adversities clans and lineages as organizations to safeguard the interests of their members became more important and so did the role of the local elite who had committed themselves to the leadership of the lineages and to the maintenance of the social and ethical orders of the local communities.

The most basic role of the local elites was the implementation of the lineage rules. Although the lineages usually called their written rules "guiyue" (terms and agreements), virtually always the "rules and agreements" had more authority and practical use than government laws. The rules of a lineage could also in practice override the laws of the state if there was a conflict between the two. For example, during the Ming and the Qing dynasties, the state had special laws giving local gentry the privilege of certain tax exemptions at the expense of the interests of the other members in the lineage. To maintain the principle of equality inside the lineage and to prevent conflict among the members, many lineage rules in Fujian had clauses specifying that such state laws would never be implemented in the lineages. It was a customary law that in handling affairs inside the lineages, the rules of the lineages were the first to be consulted, and then the laws of the local and

central governments. There were some lineages, such as the Shao lineage in Yongding county, which simply stipulated in their written rules that whenever a dispute occurred inside the lineages, it should be submitted to the lineage leadership for adjudication or the interested parties would be punished severely.<sup>7</sup>

Lineage rules covered almost every aspect of the members' lives, from the method with which the lineage leadership was chosen to penalties for gambling and smoking cigarettes. In the Tongbo district, the rules of a lineage stipulated that if a male baby was born to a family, the family was obligated to plant 100 trees on the mountain belonging to the lineage. By contrast, the Huang and the Wu lineages required their member families who gave birth to male babies to treat the senior members of the lineages with feasts at the next Spring Festival. Nobody dared to violate the regulations.<sup>8</sup> Some lineages had laws regarding the punishment of members who committed theft or banditry, or sold their children, or idled around and did no decent work. Although the chiefs of a lineage could have the power to punish lineage members even with the death penalty, this power was checked by the lineage rules and the other institutions of the lineage, so that abuse of power happened rarely.<sup>9</sup>

From the lineages the local elites stepped into the whole rural society. Although there was an official judiciary in the county seats, peasants living in the villages



usually turned to the local gentry to adjudicate their disputes.

One good example of this is provided by Kang Buyan, a native of Changting county. Born in 1861, Kang became a *jinshi* (the successful candidate for the highest degree in the Imperial Examinations) in 1892 and was appointed to the position of *neige zhongshu* (Secretary in the Cabinet) in the Qing court. Having no interest in being a bureaucrat, he resigned from the post and returned to his hometown and applied himself to educating the people. When the Qing court in 1905 declared the abolition of the Imperial examinations and the introduction of a Western-style school system into China, Kang went to Japan to study its educational system.<sup>10</sup>

When he came home from Japan, he was invited by both the magistrates of Tingzhou prefecture and Chaozhou prefecture (in Guangdong province) to set up new-style schools. He first set up a middle school for Tingzhou, his hometown, and then the Hanshan Normal School for Chaozhou district, which later became very prestigious normal school in Guangdong and is still functioning today.<sup>11</sup>

During the last few years of the Qing dynasty, he was first elected a member of the Consultative Committee (*ziyiyuan*) of Fujian province, and then a member of the National Consultative Committee. But soon the 1911 Revolution came and he went back to his hometown, resolving not to participate in political affairs any more.

But being determined not to get involved in politics

aid not mean he would retire from public affairs. He continued to be active in promoting education, managing social organizations, and developing commerce to solve the problem of material scarcity in his hometown. More significantly, he became a *de facto* arbitrator in the eight counties belonging to Ting prefecture. When people had litigation, they usually turned to Mister Kang for judgement instead of going to the official court. It was said that Kang handled all the cases with integrity and justice without asking a penny in fees. He became so popular among the people that his house was crowded with people every day. He died of illness in Chaozhou in 1916. When his coffin arrived at Tingzhou, thousands of people went to the suburbs to pay their homage to him.<sup>12</sup>

It was a tradition for the people to turn to local elites to resolve their disputes. Zhang Dingcheng, the prominent Communist leader in Fujian, also played the role of *de facto* arbitrator in his hometown before he became a Communist activist. After he graduated from a senior grade school in the county seat, Zhang stayed in his home village for several years. During the stay, people asked him to arbitrate family disputes, quarrels over property, feuds between lineages, and so on. Whenever he resolved a case successfully, he set off firecrackers to celebrate.<sup>13</sup>

While the adjudication of lineage disputes was based on lineage rules, the adjudication of village or community affairs was also based on folk laws. These regulations and laws, written or unwritten, covered many aspects of the

villagers' lives, ranging from the management of common property to the implementation of ethical norms. These folk laws were usually observed. In Tongbo village, Longyan county, to prevent soil erosion there was an unwritten village regulation stipulating that on the northern side of the mountain which was situated south of the village, there should be no lumbering. Even choppers and kindling materials were not allowed to be brought into that area. Any people who violated the regulation would be punished without mercy. The livestock of the violator, including pigs and oxen, would be commandeered and killed for the whole village to share. Due to the existence of the regulation, the mountain was well preserved.<sup>14</sup>

The village also had regulations to protect its bridges. It was forbidden for oxen to be led to walk on the bridges. The reason was that at that time most of the bridges were wooden, and they might not be strong enough to bear the weight of an ox.<sup>15</sup>

Yet lineage and village rules were not the only leverage which the local elites could use to run the local community. Their ruling power was also wielded through various popular organizations.

Popular organizations were almost ubiquitous in Fujian, covering almost every aspect of the villagers' lives. Taking the Nanyang township in Changting as an example, it had all kinds of those organizations administering district affairs such as the defence of the village, education, social wel-

fare, maintenance of roads, worship of Confucius, and the preservation of an ideal ethical code.<sup>16</sup>

On the top of the list of the organizations was the *Yukouhui* (Anti-bandit Association). Its predecessor, the *Niuganghui* (Oxen Management Society), was an association to protect the villagers' oxen from being stolen. The *Niuganghui* was a trans-village organization. A fee in the form of rice was required to become a member of the association. A person "of high reputation" was elected as the head. When a member's ox was found stolen, the head would activate the watch network in the whole district to check the roads and stop any suspect. A search for the ox would also be carried out by the mobilized members.<sup>17</sup>

When banditry ran rampant in the beginning of the century, the *Niuganghui* was reorganized into the *Yukouhui* and its function was expanded from protecting oxen to people. If a robbery or theft was reported in the township, the association would help to solve the case. If a bandit way-laying occurred, the head of the association would summon the able-bodied males from all the villages, with arms, to intercept and fight the bandits. In so doing, the *Yukouhui* was functioning as a combination of a local corps and the department of public security.<sup>18</sup>

The *Yicangshe*, the "Righteous Granary Association," was set up with funds donated by local gentry. Positions of a director and managers were created to administer the funds, which were used to purchase land; the harvest from the land

was used as relief for people who came to the township from disaster areas, or sold at low cost to the villagers at times when temporary shortage of grain occurred. Each year the heads of the association would be re-elected and the accounts would be checked.<sup>19</sup>

There were several associations for the purpose of promoting education. The role of the local elites in promoting public education will be discussed in more detail later. Briefly speaking, the funding of associations of this kind partly came from the income of the common lands of lineages or lineages, and partly from donations from local gentry. Compared with the *Yukouhui*, this kind of association was more a business of the gentry: ordinary peasants were not very much involved in the activities except when their sons received subsidies for going to schools from the associations. They were governed by the gentry. At the meetings of the gentry the regulations of the associations were made or revised, and the executive personnel were elected.<sup>20</sup>

Other popular organizations in the township included associations to provide tea for people passing on the road, to regulate the raising of ducks and the growing of tea bushes, and to maintain the bridges. Several associations had long been set up for the purpose of commemorating Confucius and Zhu Xi, the great educator and philosopher of the Southern Song dynasty. There was also an association called *Fu Lunshe*, the "Association to Promote Ethics." Any villager's infringement of the Confucian ethical principles

might be reported to the association and the violator would be punished. There was even a *Jinduhui*, the "Gambling Prohibition Association." It was set up after the 1911 Revolution as a response to the rampant gambling activity. Through a well-designed program, the association helped gamblers to quit their bad habit.<sup>21</sup>

All of the facts mentioned above indicate clearly that before the coming of the Communist movement, local elites in rural Fujian played a leading role in the social lives in Fujian's rural society. It was the local elites who ran the villages, while the official governments had almost been forgotten by the people except in moments when taxation was involved. The elite was in charge of the villages' legal jurisdiction, public security, public transportation, education, social welfare, and the maintenance of moral and ethical standards. The activism of the local elite had made the countryside of Fujian an almost autonomous society. The overwhelming general influence of the local elite on life in rural society would strongly affect the characteristics and processes of the Communist movement to come. However, one specific aspect of the elite's activism which became the midwife of the Communist movement in Fujian was the elite's unusual efforts to initiate public education.

## **2 New Schools Created by the Old Elite**

The coming of the Communist revolution in rural Fujian was closely associated with the effort of young intellectuals. Those young intellectuals were a product of the boom in Western-style schools in Fujian during the late Qing period. And to a great extent, it was the development of commerce in the province that facilitated public education.

The extraordinary development of the commodity economy and foreign trade created a huge number of rich local and overseas Fujianese merchants. The traditional Imperial examination system was abolished in 1905. But before that point Western-style education had been advocated by liberal intellectuals and accepted by the Qing court. During this transitional period, Fujianese merchants in and out of the country showed their great enthusiasm for establishing schools in their hometowns.

The most prominent overseas Fujianese merchant who promoted modern education in Fujian was Chen Jiageng. Born in Xiamen in 1874, he became a big entrepreneur in Singapore engaging in the rubber business. In 1913 he set up an elementary school in his hometown, Jimei, a township near Xiamen. Five years later he set up a normal school training teachers for middle schools. In 1921, the normal school was formally renamed the Jimei School, which now included many divisions such as normal, elementary, middle, business and

aquatic product industry. In the same year, Chen established Xiamen University, the first university in the province. Four years later he set up an agriculture and forestry school also.<sup>22</sup>

Yet Chen's goal was not only to promote education in the township where he was born. An "Education Promotion Bureau" (*jiaoyu tuiguan bu*) was formed when he set up the schools in Jimei. Seeing that there was no elementary school in the countryside of Tongan county, to which Jimei township belonged, Chen resolved to change the situation. The purpose of the bureau was to promote and subsidize the establishment of schools in the county. Through the efforts of the bureau, several years later elementary schools were set up in each township or village in the county, all financed entirely or partially by the bureau, or rather, by Chen. Before long, schools sponsored by Chen were also set up in each county in the Minnan area.<sup>23</sup>

The quality of the facilities and teachers of the schools in Jimei were among the finest in China at that time. To encourage more people to go to school, in the first years after the schools were opened, students received everything free of charge, including room and board. A monthly allowance was given to every student. Those who came from poor families were even allowed to work in their spare time.

Chen's achievement in promoting education was so remarkable that by 1923 the region surrounding Jimei was



praised by people as the "Jimei School Village" and the reputation of the township attracted contemporary national and even international celebrities to visit and give lectures. Among those visitors were Lu Xun, Lin Yutang (a Western-trained famous Chinese journalist), and the American thinker John Dewey and his British colleague Bertrand Russell.<sup>24</sup>

Even in the remote mountain areas like Changting in Minxi, education developed at an unusual speed, and started early. As in the coastal area, overseas merchants were ardent advocates of education. For example, two merchants returned to a remote village in Longyan from Southeast Asia and set up an elementary school with their money in 1919.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, however, the people who set up the first group of Western-style schools in the hinterland of Fujian were often those well-to-do families and degree-holders of the Imperial examination system in the localities. In Longyan county, a elementary school was set up in a resort by local intellectuals and gentry in 1910. The school was named *Kaiming* (illumination), because its founders wanted to "enlighten people's intelligence and illuminate the rationale." What they did not expect was that later many of the graduates of the school would join the Communist revolution there. The most outstanding one was Guo Diren, who set up the first CCP branch in Longyan. There were also many graduates who became high-ranking CCP officials after 1949. For example, Chao Juru became the General Director of the

Chinese People's Bank. One graduate by the name of Guo Binkuan achieved his Ph. D. in ophthalmology in Vienna, and became the most distinguished ophthalmologist in China.<sup>26</sup>

In Changting county, the people who made a great contribution to the development of education included five *juren*, the successful candidates of the provincial level of the examination system, and three *jinshi*, the successful candidates of the highest level.<sup>27</sup> The fact that the county had so many high-level degree-holders is an indication that the county had long had the custom of encouraging education.

The first new-style elementary school was set up in 1877 in the county seat of Changting. By 1927, the number of schools reached eleven, among which nine were run by the county or local governments, and two by foreign churches. In the countryside, the first school was set up by local gentry in the richest village of the county in 1909. By the early years of the Republican period, twenty senior elementary schools were set up in the countryside of the county. Adding the elementary schools in the county seat, the total number was forty-three. It is believed that in the whole nation in that period, there were fewer than twenty counties which had as many elementary schools as Changting did.<sup>28</sup>

From the very end of the Qing to the early 1920s, nine high and middle schools, including three normal and two business schools, were also established in the county. Most of the schools were founded and run by the provincial and county governments. Two were founded by foreign

missionaries, and a couple of them were founded by local gentry and returned students from overseas. There were even two women's schools, one of which was established by a local Qing juren. It had 300-plus female students in 1927. In the high school run by the provincial government, teachers were returned college graduates either from France, Taiwan (under Japanese jurisdiction) or from Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan. This meant that the quality of the teaching in the schools was very high.<sup>29</sup>

Even two private colleges were set up in the county. One was a political science and law school established by a returned graduate from Japan in 1875; the other was a medical school set up by British Presbyterians.<sup>30</sup> By contrast, in Haifeng county in Guangdong, where a Communist peasant movement also broke out in the 1920s, there were only two middle schools and no college in that period.

The public schools in the county were mainly supported by the county's salt business. During the Qing salt as a commodity was monopolized by the government. During the Guangxu reign (1875-1908), the county government's revenue gained from the salt business was divided into ten shares: nine of these were used to finance education in the county seat area, and the rest was for schools in the countryside. Of course the schools in the countryside could not survive on one-tenth of the revenue (totalling 68.3 taels of silver per year). To raise money for schools in their locality, gentry in the villages organized a *xiangshuci* (temple of

village school donors). Every local donor for schools would have a memorial tablet in the temple and would be worshipped twice a year by all the local degree holders of the Imperial examination system and the graduates of elementary and middle schools. In this way a large amount of money was raised and land was purchased, which in turn benefited education when it was rented.<sup>31</sup>

After the end of the Qing, the *xiangshuci* actually developed into a committee coordinating education in the county's countryside. It sponsored composition competitions, academic symposiums, and set up village libraries. Besides purchasing books, including famous Chinese and foreign novels, the libraries in the villages also subscribed to periodicals from Shanghai and Beijing, promoting the spread of new thinking and scholarship.<sup>32</sup>

The other sources of funding for education in the countryside included donations from individuals and *gongchang* (public estates of clans, lineages, or villages). Personal donations from local gentry were often raised when there was a need to set up new schools or new facilities, while funding from *gongchang* provided a regular and stable income for the schools' daily operation.<sup>33</sup>

The sufficient financial support enabled the unusual development of public education in Changting county. Advocated by local gentry, projects to send students to study abroad were also carried out with subsidies from the county treasury. The pathbreaker for studying abroad was Kang Yong,

a Changting native. Being a *jinshi* of the late Qing, he abandoned his high-ranking government position and went to inspect the northern Chinese border areas and Japan. Right after the Imperial examination system was abolished in 1905, he went back to his hometown and set up four schools in Changting and the Chaoshan area in Guangdong. He also became an ardent advocate for sending local students to study abroad so that they could benefit their hometowns when they came back. The local gentry and officials agreed with his idea and three groups totalling thirty-one students were sent to Japan, Europe and Taiwan from the end of the Qing to 1919.<sup>34</sup> Longyan county also had students going to Japan and France to study.<sup>35</sup>

Some schools were set up purely by clans to serve their members. In Huyang, a huge village in Longyan county, besides a public senior elementary school open to the whole village, the four dominant lineages in the village also set up junior elementary schools for their own people. It was the Guo lineage which set up its school first. The school took the temple of the lineage, which could contain more than one hundred students, as the site. All the children of the lineage could go to the school for free, and the funding came solely from the income received from public property such as land.<sup>36</sup> The quality of teaching in the school was so high that in a mathematics competition participated in by all fifteen schools in the district, students from the Guo lineage school monopolized the ten top prizes. In May 1928,

female students of the school won the group track and field championship in a meet of three counties.<sup>37</sup>

Besides those regular new-style schools, *sishu*, the old-style private schools, were still functioning in the countryside. Local gentry also set up many adult schools to help people. In Yongding county, public education was also well developed. Even many peasants had rudimentary literacy--a rare phenomenon in China at that time.<sup>38</sup>

The unusual development of education in Fujian was one of the factors directly leading to the outburst of the Communist movement in the rural areas of the province.

### 3 The Genesis of the New Elite

The public schools in urban and coastal Fujian areas such as Jimei-Xiamen, where transportation was much more developed than in mountain areas, had easier access to radical thinking introduced into China by contemporary Chinese thinkers living in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. But radical thinking spread to the remote Minxi area too, because Minxi and Jimei were culturally bridged when a "Jimei craze" surged among the youth in Minxi in the 1920s.

There was no highway connecting the two places at that time. Students who wanted to go to Jimei to take an entrance

examination had to walk for four days, climbing high mountains and risking being robbed by bandits. However, the hardship on the road did not offset the attraction of the Jimei schools' high-quality education and cheap cost. Large numbers of young people in Minxi went to the Jimei schools and Xiamen University. Taking Longyan as an example, from 1918 to 1929 more than 100 people became students of the Jimei schools.<sup>39</sup>

The coastal Jimei schools provided a window for these uninformed youth to observe a rapidly-changing outside world. The early decades of the century was a time when China opened its door to welcome Western ideas to flood the long-parched land of the Chinese intellectual world. The Jimei schools gave their students access to those new ideas and values by providing them with journals and periodicals, as well as with faculty members who were "people with revolutionary thinking." Graduates of the schools usually went back to their home villages to teach. Among the more than 100 students from Longyan, except for a small group who either transferred to other schools or quit to become professional revolutionaries, all went back to their mountainous hometowns to teach in local schools after their graduation.<sup>40</sup> In this way they spread the new thinking to the hinterlands, creating more new intellectuals like themselves. The large number of new intellectuals brought about by the boom in the schools in Minxi provided the market for the national radical journals as well as the ideas they

spread. Before long, journals such as *New Youth*, edited by Chen Duxiu, the founding father of the CCP, and *Xiangdao* (the *Guide*), the organ of the newly-established CCP, began to circulate in Minxi.<sup>41</sup>

Inspired by the radical periodicals in the libraries, such as *Xin qingnian* (the *New Youth*), which spread Marx's theory of class struggle, these new intellectuals committed themselves to a fundamental change in the social system of China. The first thing they wanted to do was to get rid of all the evil things in their hometowns, things such as what they believed to be the "crimes of the warlords and imperialism"--the political oppression of and economic extraction from the "toiling masses."

Taking the emancipation of the "toiling masses" in their hometowns as their first concern, these new intellectuals began their actions toward this goal by organizing associations and publishing journals. The proud Longyan students in Jimei formed the Jimei School Alumni Association (*Jimei xuexiao tongxue hui*) in Longyan. Each time the association convened there were more than seventy participants. When Deng Zihui organized a reading club, the "Strange Mountain Reading Club" (*Qi shan shushe*), in Dongxiao, Longyan county in 1921, he found more than 200 supporters among the educated youth.<sup>42</sup>

Now it was time for those new intellectuals to air their ideas about social change. Pioneered by *Dushulu* and *Tongshen*, both published by Deng's reading club, Minxi saw a



boom in local journals in the period from 1922 to 1927.

Periodicals addressing the social problems in the county were published by these enthusiastic youth with a self-defined historical mission. Those "evil things" most disgusting to them were the irresponsible deeds of the warlords, bureaucrats, and "tyrant gentry," such as economic extractions, and "ugly social phenomena" such as "feudalistic superstitions," gambling, premature marriage and reproduction, and arranged marriage.<sup>43</sup> The most active counties in Minxi in publishing periodicals were Longyan, Changting, Yongding and Shanghang--the four most prominent counties in the Minxi revolution later.

In Longyan, from 1922 to 1926, at least six journals had been published and circulated, including the leading one--*Yanshengbao* (the *Voice of Longyan*). Edited by Deng Zihui, the *Voice of Longyan* printed more than 700 copies each issue and circulated far beyond the county, reaching to Guangdong, Jiangxi, and Hubei provinces and major cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing and Beijing. There were even more than 200 copies of each issue which were sent to subscribers in locations such as Singapore, Luzon, and Rangoon. All the journals were run by Longyan students in Jimei schools.<sup>44</sup>

Besides going to the Jimei-Xiamen area, some other youth from the remote mountainous areas also went to major cities such as Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing. These students too were deeply concerned with affairs in their hometowns and published journals addressing problems in their

birthplaces. Students from Changting published the *Dragon Mountain (Longshan)* and circulated back to the county in 1919. Yet the most influential journal published by Minxi students outside of Fujian was *Tinglei* (the *Thunder over Tingzhou*). Its thirty editors were all from the eight counties formerly belonging to Ting prefecture in Minxi, as were its contributors. This monthly began to come out in March 1926, and stopped publishing in December of the same year when its editors and contributors followed the Northern Expedition troops to their hometowns.<sup>45</sup>

Although the new generation of Minxi intellectuals had a seething enthusiasm for changing the "dark" society of their hometown into a "bright new world," as reflected by the contents of the journals they were still far from being sure about the concrete means for the changes they desired. Imperialists, warlords, "capitalists," "local tyrants and evil gentry," and hooligans were defined as their arch enemies. But when it came to the question of how to deal with these enemies, the new intellectuals were not decided, although they generally agreed that the enemies' evils should be "revealed." Some of them seemed to be influenced by the nineteenth-century Russian Populists, advocating "going among the people" to study and reveal their sufferings and to educate them, to "explore the way of changing the old worlds."<sup>46</sup>

Of course, there were intellectuals influenced by Marxist-Leninist theories such as class struggle and armed

revolution. One of the intellectuals of this kind was Deng Zihui, who in an article published in the *Voice of Longyan* advocated that "we" should pick up arms and snatch the political power from the hands of the "troops, capitalists, and gentry."<sup>47</sup> At any rate, after Sun Yat-sen started his "National Revolution" in 1924, the policies advocated in all of the journals were generally in tune with Sun's revolutionary ideas, and support for the Northern Expedition became a common theme in the journals.<sup>48</sup>

The mushrooming of the journals run by the new intellectuals of Minxi indicated both their acute desire to change the world of Fujian and their great energy. This energy, generated by the clash between the radical ideas the new intellectuals had just learned and the "dark" realities of society in Fujian, would soon find an outlet and exhaust itself.

As has been shown above, the new generation of intellectuals in Fujian had strong social connections with the old generation of local elites: the former was a direct product of the efforts made by the latter to promote modern education. There were many students who were from poor families. Those young people would have had no chance to become literate had not the local gentry set up schools and made public education affordable to those poor families. One prominent example was Guo Diren, who later became the secretary of the CCP Minxi Special Committee.

Guo's father was a tenant and butcher. Due to the

economic hardship of his family, all of his sons and daughters died young. Guo and his young brother were the only two who survived. However, he was able to go to a grade school in his village in Longyan with the children of well-to-do families. After he graduated from the school, he was able to go to the normal school in Jimei set up by Chen Jiageng because the school offered free board and room for poor students. It was there that Guo became influenced by radical thinking and began to act as a social agitator.<sup>49</sup>

However, it should be noted that unlike Guo, most of these new intellectuals had close social connections with the old elite by virtue of being the offspring of old gentry families.

It is difficult at this point to write a collective biography of those graduates of the new-style schools in Fujian. However, available materials show that most of the famous local leaders of the Communist revolution in Fujian who were former students were from families in the upper layer of rural society, including landlords, merchants, degree holders and retired bureaucrats. Deng Zihui, one of the key founders of the Minxi Revolutionary Base, was an example. His father, although he could not be viewed as a rich man, was a *xiucaí*, a holder of the lowest degree in the Imperial examination system. His real occupation was a doctor of Chinese traditional medicine, as well as a grade school teacher--a typical "poor gentry" in the countryside. It seemed that this gentleman was leading a happy life with

his wife and eight sons and daughters until he lost a lawsuit to a powerful lineage in the neighboring village over a geomantic issue when Deng was thirteen. The father had to take refuge in Guangdong and died there ten years later. But the second son, Deng, continued his schooling. After graduating from the Longyan High School, he went to study in Japan and came back to his hometown in 1918.<sup>50</sup>

Fu Baicui, another famous CCP activist in Minxi, was a typical example too. Born to a landlord family in 1896, the economic affluence of his family enabled Fu to become a student of a *sishu* at the age of seven, and a law student in Tokyo at the age of eighteen.<sup>51</sup>

There were many less important Communist activists in Fujian who were also from gentry families. One of them was Li Zhendong. Li's father was another typical "gentry" in his home village in Changting county. Although he took the Imperial examinations and achieved the degree of *juren*, he refused to serve the government and stayed in his hometown to help with unofficial public affairs. When he died in 1921, he left several tens of *mu* of land for his four sons to divide. Being a son born by the second wife of the deceased gentry, Li Zhendong could only get a small share of his father's legacy. But he did not care very much. At that point he had graduated from a high school in the county seat and had been a close friend of the leading radical students and teachers at the school, concerned with how to eliminate social evil, including the "despotic gentry." In 1927 he

joined the CCP, and was later executed by the Nationalists for organizing peasant uprisings in 1929.<sup>52</sup> Similar cases can be found in the Mindong area. For example, Jian Zhubo, one of the earliest Communist leaders in the area, was from a landlord family. He became a Communist revolutionary after going to a high school in the county seat.<sup>53</sup>

Zhang Dingcheng, another of the most prominent local leaders of the Communist revolution in Fujian, was described by his biographers in China as a son of a destitute family. However, clues strongly suggest that his family used to be in the upper layer of rural society. One of those clues is that his grandfather was literate. It was he who served as Zhang's first teacher and kindled his desire to be a scholar.<sup>54</sup> Zhang was not his original name. His given name was originally "Furen," meaning "rich and benevolent." This name signified one of the Confucian principles, that is, being kindhearted when you are rich. Only a family with an intellectual background would give a name like this to its son.

The more important clue is that Zhang's grandfather-in-law, Fan Chunjiu, was a one-hundred-percent local elite. Being a *xiucaí*, holder of the lowest degree in the Imperial examination, he set up the first grade school in Zhang's village, and then went back to his own home village to set up a school. It was at these two schools that Zhang received his first official education.<sup>55</sup> In traditional Chinese society, being well-matched in social and economic status was the primary concern in deciding who a person was going to

marry. The marriage between gentry Fan's daughter and Zhang's father suggested the similarity of the two families in terms of social and economic status. At least, many of Zhang's uncles and other relatives were rich. It was those relatives who often sponsored Zhang's schooling. When he graduated from a grade school in the county seat, many of his relatives suggested that the public land of the lineage should be sold to support his going to advanced schools. This suggestion did not work out due to the opposition from the elderly members of the lineage.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, although it is true that Zhang's father was poor, evidence indicates that his family was probably a declining gentry family.

Therefore, one can see that similar to what Averill finds in the case of Jiangxi province, many of the new intellectuals in Minxi were from declining or fallen elite families (as in the cases of Deng Zihui and Li Zhendong, and probably Zhang Dingcheng), although there were also some other new intellectuals who were from still well-to-do families, as in the case of Fu Baicui. There were also some new intellectuals from families of the lowest stratum of the rural society. It is more correct to say that in the case of Fujian, the emergence into political visibility of large numbers of new intellectuals was more because of the collective dominance of the local elites--their leading role in developing local public education--than because of the downward mobility of some elite families.

Yet what was more important was that what the local

elite had "created" was not just a large group of new intellectuals, but a new segment of the local elite. The reason for saying this is simple: like the old local elite, the new intellectuals assumed, or were going to assume, a leading role in local affairs. The old elites organized popular societies such as the *Yukouhui*, and the new intellectuals set up organizations too, as we have just seen.

In some ways, the new intellectuals assumed the role as elites in the pattern similar to the old elites. They also competed with the old elites for power in some aspects. As has been shown in the case of Zhang Dingcheng, some assumed the role of arbitrators in their localities, helping the villagers with their disputes. Fu Baicui was another example. After he returned from Japan in 1917, he acquired a legal studies certificate from the warlord government in Beijing and set up a "law institute" in the county seat of Shanghang. This "institute" was actually a legal office through which Fu helped bully and mistreat people to get justice. Unlike those old gentry who became untitled arbitrators in their localities, Fu was now handling law suits with official authorities. The local bureaucrats and gentry disliked him and condemned him as a "student emperor."<sup>57</sup>

The new elites even competed with the old ones for political power. In 1925, the magistrate of Shanghang county was found embezzling several tens of thousands of yuan. The old elites of the county set up a provisional county consultative committee to fight the corrupt magistrate. Fu Baicui



participated in the affair actively and was elected by local gentry as a member of the provisional county consultative committee. The committee won its battle, and the corrupt county magistrate was forced to step down. But Fu did not stop there. He initiated another campaign to investigate the embezzlement of military public bonds by a former county magistrate who was now a principal of the High School of Shanghang County. This time a split occurred between Fu and other members in the committee: most of the committee members wanted to compromise with the former county magistrate while Fu did not. Fu resigned from the committee and turned to mobilizing the students. It was quickly apparent that he was more successful with the students: student unrest finally expelled the principal from his position.<sup>58</sup>

However, although in some ways the new elites assumed the role and the pattern similar to the old elites, the two groups of local elite were basically different in the following important aspects.

First, the resources of the new elites were totally different from those of the old. The old elite generally relied upon landownership, commercial wealth, or degrees of the Imperial examinations, or official positions or honors bestowed by the government, as the resources of their elite status. The new elites were devoid of these. Although some of the new elites like Fu Baicui and Li Zhendong were from well-to-do families and inherited a certain amount of land, they would soon disavow their rights of inheritance or burn

the land deeds belonging to them. The only resource they had so far was the Western ideas which were new to the ordinary Chinese.

Secondly, the arena in which the new elites performed or were going to perform their roles was quite different too. The term "public sphere" has been used by scholars as an analytical instrument in studies of the Chinese elites' social function. Although the definition of "public sphere" may vary with individuals when it is applied to the study of China, generally the term denotes affairs which were neither state nor private. Rather, they were "collective" or "communal" affairs.<sup>59</sup> It was over this "public sphere" that the Chinese local elite presided. For the old local elite in Fujian, as we have seen, lineage or village affairs were their public sphere. Except for developing modern education, which in most cases was for the benefit of their own lineages or villages too, the communal affairs of which they took charge, such as worshipping ancestors, were historical and traditional. Although it is true that after the end of the Qing, the old elite became involved in local "public" affairs such as becoming members of the county consultative committees, in which the new elites were also involved as we have just seen in the case of Fu Baicui, the new elites were or soon would also become active in an entirely new social arena. So far they had basically limited their activities to the intelligentsia, setting up intellectual societies and publishing periodicals which the old elites had never done.

But very soon they would shift their attention to the peasantry, peasantry as a social stratum but not as specific members of their own lineages or communities.

The new elites focused their attention in political instead of economic arenas. In addition to organizing political associations such as Deng Zihui's "Strange Mountain Society," and using their journals to criticize established powerholders, they also took the lead in local political agitation.

At this stage, students instead of peasants were the social stratum from which the new elite wanted to seek support. Fu Baicui was not unique in leading and organizing student unrest. When going to the Longyan High School, Deng Zihui once took the lead in student unrest and was expelled from the school by the school authorities. The action of the school authorities further angered the students. A school-wide student strike was held and the expelled students Deng and some others were elected by the students as their representatives to the negotiations with the school authorities. Deng and his supporters finally won the day.<sup>60</sup>

New intellectuals became leaders in anti-foreign-religion agitations too. In 1925, this kind of agitation occurred in Changting county. Japanese and British goods were boycotted by the residents in the county seat, while the church and high school run by British missionaries were smashed by peasants in the suburbs. The organizer and leaders of the agitation were young teachers and students of the

schools in the county, including those people who later became Communist activists such as Luo Huachen and Zhang Chinan, who had organized a united students' association for all the schools of the county earlier, and then set up committees for the boycott and anti-foreign-religion agitation.<sup>61</sup> Although at that point the National Revolution under Sun Yat-sen was well underway, and the anti-foreign agitation led by the intellectuals in Changting was in tune with the GMD's policy of anti-imperialism, Zhang Chinan and Luo Huachen were not then associated with any political party in China.

Some of the new elite had even begun to turn their eyes to the peasants. Anti-tax unrest was also an arena in which the new intellectuals exerted their talent. After going to the normal school in Jimei, Guo Diren went back to be a teacher at the grade school set up by his lineage in his home village in 1924. When the Northern warlord stationed in Longyan tried to force the peasants to grow poppy on half of their land, and levied twelve yuan of tax on each mu of poppy grown, Guo took the lead in organizing a resistance movement in the county. At first the movement took the form of demonstrations and mass gatherings participated in mainly by students, young teachers and peasants. Later it won support from all circles in the county, including the gentry stratum. Sensing the strong resistance from the general public, the warlord regime finally gave up its poppy-growing plan.<sup>62</sup>

The third and perhaps the most important difference between the new and the old local elite was that they were committed to different missions. Although it is a fact that some old local elites were involved in the 1911 Revolution, generally speaking, the old elites did not commit themselves to a revolutionary idea, and the efforts made by them in a traditional society were mainly to maintain the social *status quo*. But the new elites were convinced, as shown in their articles, that the world in their hometowns--which their predecessors had made so much effort to maintain and polish for generations--was basically unreasonable and ought to be destroyed, so that a new one could be built on it.

Based on their philosophy, the new elites had a strategy different from the old elites. The old elites generally adopted a defensive strategy: the "Anti-Bandit Association" and the "Association to Promote Ethics" were all to maintain and protect the old material and spiritual order. But the organizations set up by the new elites, such as the "Strange Mountain Society," adopted an offensive attitude toward the existing social order. The new elite had a much more aggressive spirit than the old, since so far they had not established the base of power which was definitely needed to accomplish their task of changing the world.

As has been shown before, the old local elite based their power mainly on the existing social structures, such as the divisions of lineages, and villages, and the popular organizations. This was not what the new elite was going to

use. So far they had established many associations among themselves, and used publishing journals as the vehicle to exert their influence. As shown by the case of Fu Baicui, the new elite had found student unrest a useful means to achieve their ends. More importantly, as reflected by their journals, some of the new elites had begun to think that the peasants who "account for the seventy to eighty percent of the population" would be a great power for destroying the old world.<sup>63</sup>

What was more significant is that the new elite not only did not inherit many traditions from their predecessors, but also considered their predecessors to be the object of their advocated revolution. Although so far on most occasions only the "tyrant gentry" or "evil gentry" had borne the brunt of the new elite's verbal attacks, as has been mentioned above, "gentry" as a whole had also been identified by radical young intellectuals as the object of revolution along with "troops, bureaucrats, and capitalists." Some new intellectuals even appealed to the public to overthrow the rule of "gentry power." Fujian society had entered a time of "omnipotent gentry power," an article in the *Voice of Longyan* claimed in 1924. The society could only continue to be filled with misery and darkness if "gentry power" and "tycoon power" remained in existence.<sup>64</sup>

Needless to say, the new elite was not a monolithic group. While being radical was the general characteristic of the young intellectuals, most of them were going to be

Communists or leftist Nationalists. Some of them might also have become conservative or anti-Communist, although there is no evidence available to show this at this stage, while there are a lot of materials showing that all the key local Communist activists in Minxi were once educated in Western-style schools. Therefore, it is safe to say that becoming Communists was the main trend in the evolution of the new elite. Now that the new elites had listed the old elite and its power as the objects of revolution, it seemed that a head-on clash between the new and the old elite was inevitable if a step further was made by the new elite in their effort to change the world.

#### **4 Clashing with the Old**

Although it seemed that a head-on clash between the new and the old elite was inevitable, this clash did not come when the wave of the National Revolution reached the rural areas of Fujian in about 1925. On the contrary, what occurred was cooperation between the new and the old local elites.

As has been pointed out in Chapter One, most of the new intellectuals, either leftist Nationalists or Communists, became the leading forces in the National Revolution in their hometowns, but their radical ideas were contained by

the guidelines of the GMD in the revolution. The objects of the National Revolution under the GMD were foreign imperialism and the warlords, particularly the Northern Warlords. "Greedy officials and corrupt bureaucrats" ought to be overthrown. But as for the gentry only the "local tyrants and evil gentry" should be opposed. Nothing was to be done about the existing land system. The most radical demand the GMD asked the peasant unions to raise was the "twenty-five percent reduction of rent."<sup>65</sup>

Such a moderate revolutionary program provided a base for the new and the old local elite to cooperate. Under the rule of the Northern warlords in Fujian, local gentry had various grievances too. Warlords from outside the locality, as well as "greedy officials and corrupt bureaucrats," were resented, as were their economic exactions, of which the well-to-do families usually bore the brunt. Therefore, it was natural for cooperation to occur, such as that between the old gentry and Fu Baicui in getting rid of the county magistrate in Shanghang in 1925, although at that point the "National Revolution" had not really reached Fujian. (As described in Chapter One, the revolution was "brought" to Fujian by the Northern Expedition forces in September 1926.) After the revolution became an open activity with the arrival of the Northern Expedition forces, the cooperation between the new elite and the old continued to do well. It now took the form of cooperation between the bureaus of the GMD, which were dominated mainly by those returned young stu-



dents, and the conferences of "representatives of all circles," which were dominated by local gentry.

The Social Movement Institute in Ting's Eight Counties (*Ting Shu Baxian Shehui Yundong Renyuan Yangchengsuo*), as indicated in Chapter One, was a product of the cooperation, or the compromise, between the two sides. While the party history written by the CCP official scholars in China declares that the idea to set up the Institute was initiated by the Communist or the leftist Nationalist youths, the reminiscences of the Nationalists state that it was Guo Fengming's initiative. Guo was one of the most important local warlords in Fujian. His troops had originally been local corps. He appointed himself the president of the Institute, and put his secretary, also a Fujian native, in actual charge of the institution; he hired a bunch of young intellectuals as teachers, who turned out to spread communism and made the Institute a training base for cadres of the ensuing Communist revolution.<sup>66</sup>

The cooperation between old and new elites lasted into late 1927 and even later, when the CCP and the GMD had split and the former had resolved to go ahead with its Communist agrarian revolution in the nation. Zhang Dingcheng's experience in his early revolutionary career shows how this cooperation happened at the village level.

The Xinan district in Yongding county was where Zhang's home village was. The district had 20,000 people, and most of its villages had public grade schools. Almost all the

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teachers of the schools were either members of the CCP or the CYL, or leftist Nationalists. This was also true in the whole *Minxi* area. Schools became the bases for the Communists to carry out their revolution.<sup>67</sup>

After Jiang Jieshi's anti-Communist *coup*, Zhang and his comrades, mainly school teachers, set up popular night schools and organized peasant unions in the villages, as means to unify people. But unifying the people for what? The earlier slogans of the peasant unions were "say no to opium-smoking, gambling and prostitute-visiting," and "be kind to other villages, be friendly to other lineages." This second slogan was raised because there were lineages and villages in the district which had been feuding for generations. The local elite had been trying to mediate the disputes for years, but had achieved nothing. It was the Communist new intellectuals headed by Zhang (he had experience in settling people's disputes, as mentioned above) who succeeded in pacifying the feuds (at least temporarily) by reasoning with the masses, and thus won the praise of the villagers.<sup>68</sup> The local elite must be included among the local people who praised the achievement of the new elite, since mediating the feuds was their goal too.

The next thing Zhang and his comrades wanted to do was to launch a tax-resistance movement, and this was where the cooperation of the old elite came in. The taxes the people resented the most were taxes on marriage, death, and livestock-slaughtering. Since the rich people ate more meat than

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the poor, Zhang and his comrades believed that the local gentry would be willing to participate in the anti-tax drive. They summoned a gentry meeting to discuss the strategy. At the meeting, more than 100 "respected and influential" local gentry were elected to sign a petition to the county government, appealing for exemption from the three most-hated taxes. Thus the local gentry were pushed to the front of the struggle.<sup>69</sup>

The struggle reached an impasse by the end of the year, and confrontation between the villagers and the tax farmers intensified. Some gentry began to waver. Zhang and other "people behind the scenes" encouraged them to persist in the struggle by promising them that should any of them be arrested, the whole district would stand behind them and do their best to rescue them; furthermore, if money was needed the public funds of the villages would be used first, and then it would be raised from "everybody." Before long a most prominent gentry by the name of Zhang Henglong was really arrested by the government. The Communist intellectuals lost no time in mobilizing more than 1,000 people to carry out a demonstration in the county seat, demanding the release of Henglong and exemption from the taxes. Facing the united front of the local elite and the peasants, the county authorities finally agreed to release the arrested gentry and suspend the three taxes while waiting for approval from the provincial government.<sup>70</sup>

This kind of cooperation was not unique in Minxi. A CCP

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circular issued by the Fujian Provincial Committee in early 1928 criticized that the peasant unions in "every county," mainly counties in Minbei, Mindong, and Minnan, were functioning incorrectly. The unions, the document complained, were staffed always by "respected, well-to-do local gentry or heads of lineages." The first thing the unions would do was "to arbitrate the civil disputes in the villages," the second was "to ban gambling, defend the villages from bandits, and maintain the security," and the third was "when a new tax or a donation is demanded, our comrades will go to the governments for them [the gentry in the unions] to submit a petition begging for a reduction, and to remove the barrier between the authorities and the public."<sup>71</sup>

Of course, the cooperation between the new intellectuals and the old elite turned into sheer hostility when the CCP began to organize armed insurrections and implement the policy of "strike down the local tyrants and divide the land." The hostility between the new elites, most of whom now became Communists, and the old elites came about quite suddenly because the policy of the CCP changed abruptly. As mentioned before, the CCP's "August Seventh" convention in 1927 had resolved that launching armed peasant insurrections should be the main policy of the party. Although at that point no specific policy had been made on issues such as whether landlords and rich peasants should get land in the land redistribution, the "upper layer" of the rural society, such as landlords and other and well-to-do families, bore

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the brunt of the Communist insurrections, as we have seen in Chapter One. Local corps controlled by local landlords or gentry became the enemy the CCP-led armed peasants first attacked. The slogan used during the period of the First CCP-GMD United Front, "down with local tyrants and evil gentry," now in the instructions from the CCP provincial leaders became "kill local tyrants, evil gentry, and landlords."<sup>72</sup> Actually, all the gentry were dealt with indiscriminately as enemies. This practice became the CCP's writtern policy later on. The "Acts of the First Minxi Soviet" passed in spring 1934 unequivocally listed "gentry in towns and villages, chiefs of villages, chiefs of local corps, chiefs of lineages, and local heads (*dibao*)," along with people who used to serve the "reactionary government," as reactionaries who were denied all political rights.<sup>73</sup>

Under a policy like this, even those local elites who had never been involved in political affairs became objects of persecution, if not execution, in spite of the good things they had done for society, such as promoting modern education. Zhang Xuanqing, a *juren* and one of the most famous founders of modern public education in Fujian (as mentioned in Chapter One), was shot by one of his students, Liu Yihui, who had become a Communist activist.<sup>74</sup>

Frightened by the CCP's policy to eliminate every "exploiter" physically, local gentry usually fled from their home villages to safer localities when the Communist revolution arrived or even before it did. A *xiuca*i by the name

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of Huang Tizhong was one of the local elite who adopted a passive "flee and hide" strategy. He had founded the Senior Elementary School of Longtian in Changting county in 1908, and the Changhang Middle School in 1924. He was also a great contributor to local public welfare. When the Communist movement rose in his home village in Nanyang district, this old gentleman in his seventies fled and took refuge in Shanghang county.<sup>75</sup>

The old gentleman died in 1924 in Shanghang. Had he survived the Communist regime set up in his home village, he might have done more than just "flee and hide," like his townsman, Chen Yiming. Chen was also a great contributor to public education and social welfare. After the Communist insurrection took place in Nanyang, he also fled to Shanghang. The Nanyang Township Soviet once voted on whether he could be allowed to come back to his home village, and the result was twenty-three in favor and seven opposed. But the gentleman could not trust the CCP. Later he sneaked into his home village and lived there until the final collapse of the Soviet in 1934. Thereafter he took charge of the local corps.<sup>76</sup>

Of course, there were some other elites who were not as lucky as Huang Tizhong and Chen Yiming were. Another *xiucaí* named Chao Youshi, also a native of Nanyang township, likewise had a reputation in promoting education and was the principal of a elementary school. But what made him most famous was that when he found that his youngest son was

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involved in banditry, he had hired somebody to execute him without mercy in 1924. When the Communists took over Nanyang, he took refuge in the county seat of Shanghang. But he was captured and executed by the Communists when the town was overcome by Mao and Zhu's Fourth Red Army in September 1929.<sup>77</sup>

A more active, offensive stand toward the Communist revolution was taken by some other old elites, including those degree holders of the Imperial examinations. One of the old intellectuals of this category was Kong Qinhui. Although his brief biography does not mention that he was a degree holder, his appointment to the position of county magistrate in Guangxi province toward the end of the Qing clearly indicates that this was true. After the collapse of the Qing in 1911 he went back to his home county Shanghang and became one the most famous gentry in the county. When the Communist revolution broke out in 1928, he became the chief of the local corps of the county. Due to his great service in fighting against the Communists, he was promoted to the position of the head of Shanghang county in 1930.<sup>78</sup>

Some local gentry, particularly those heads of lineages in big villages, as mentioned in the last chapter, could turn the whole village into a stronghold against Communist revolution. However, it should be noted here that in many cases it was those people who had less intellectual background but had experience as soldiers or bandit chiefs who became the heads of anti-Communist local corps. But the CCP

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was right in calling these local corps *dizhu mintuan*, "landlords' corps," because these local corps fought for the interests of the local gentry (most of them had lands) against the Communist revolution. In fact, most of the time it was these local corps which became the fiercest enemies of the local Communist regimes and the Communist local armed forces.

This was because, above all, in the period from 1928 to 1934 the regular troops of the Nationalist government were preoccupied with internal strife among the factions of the GMD. Secondly, these local corps were more familiar with the social conditions and the landscape of their localities. In a Chinese phrase, they were *ditoushe*, "snakes in their own old haunts." Therefore, they could fight the Communist local armed forces more effectively, inflicting great harm on the Communist movement in Fujian.

To mention just a few instances, in the fall of 1932, the secretary of the CCP Liancheng County Committee and 200-odd other CCP members and armed soldiers were all killed in an offensive against the county seat launched by a local corps headed by Hua Yangqiao. Liancheng was a county between Changting and Longyan. Hua was a native of the county and grew up as a soldier. In 1929 he organized local corps for anti-Communist purposes and was elected as a member of the Consultative Committee of the county. In the attack on the county seat, he unified the local corps of the neighboring counties, at more than 2,000 strong.<sup>79</sup>

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The case clearly showed that the military strength of the local corps was significant. Their strategy was usually offensive rather than defensive. The county seat of Yongding, occupied by the Communist forces, was re-captured several times by the local corps from the Lower Hulei township. Zhang Dunmin (whose background is unknown) set up and took charge of the corps in the Lower Hulei township while Zhang Dingcheng was leading an insurrection in the Upper Hulei in June 1928. In addition to the attacks on the county seat, the corps also raided other soviet districts in the county, inflicting heavy damages to the districts.<sup>80</sup>

Although the local corps had been a thorn in the CCP's side, they were so tough that the CCP armed forces, including the regular Red Army, just could not eliminate them from the soviet areas. There was a fierce local corps in Yongding county too. Its chief, Chen Rongguang, was a former bandit with a poor family background. After the Communist insurrections took place in Minxi, he was "bought over (*shoumai*)," to use a CCP phrase, by landlords and gentry to organize a local corps. The corps was so active and militant that it not only invaded the soviet areas in its own county, but also those in Shanghang county. In 1935, he successfully guided regular troops from Guangdong to raid a meeting convened by the most important leaders of the Minxi revolution, such as Deng Zihui, Tan Zhenlin, and Zhang Dingcheng. Due to his contribution, he was promoted to be a commander of a battalion of Nationalist regular troops.<sup>81</sup> In February

1935, the one-time Secretary-general of the CCP, Qu Qiubai, was arrested in Changting while he was being escorted by an armed force to pass through the county and the escort confronted an enemy force. Another prominent CCP top leader, He Shuheng, was killed on the same occasion. It was the Peace Preservation Corps of Fujian headed by a native of Minxi, Zhong Shaokui, which carried out the raid on the escort. Zhong had been leading anti-Communist local forces since 1930, when he had successfully led his Peace Preservation Corps of Wuping county to expel the Communist force from the county seat of Shanghang.<sup>82</sup>

The consistent operations of local corps attracted and consumed a considerable part of the Communist armed forces in Fujian. Dealing with the local corps was put on the top of the agenda of the CCP in Minxi in 1930. "The harassment of the red areas by the remnant corps-bandits (*tuanfei*)," a party document declared, was the reason why the "masses could not feel at ease in expanding [the red areas]." Therefore, eliminating the local corps was the first thing for the party and army to do, and the strength should be concentrated "resolutely" and rapidly to wipe out the local corps in a planned way.<sup>83</sup> However, this goal was never achieved. The local Communist forces, mainly the Red Guards, were not a match for the landlords' local corps. (In most of the cases, the Red Guards were losers in fights against the local corps.) When the corps harassed the red areas, the Red Army had to be called in to repel the enemy. As a result,

the Red Army was tired out by too much running around. Until 1932, local corps were still a serious headache for the Communists.<sup>84</sup>

There is hardly a single case which can be found from the materials available showing that there were some old elites who once supported the Communist revolution. The unanimously hostile attitude of the old local elite toward a revolution was not the case in the 1911 Revolution in Fujian. Although it was true that it was also the young intellectuals who took the lead in carrying out the 1911 Revolution, in that period the old gentry split into two camps: some were for the 1911 Revolution and some were against it. The two camps struggled against each other desperately.<sup>85</sup>

Why was the attitude of the old local elite so unanimously anti-Communist? The reasons were multiple. Above all, it was because from the very beginning the Communists defined the local elite as one of their revolutionary targets, leaving no choice for the old elite but to fight for their own survival. Besides the immediate menace to their lives and properties, there was a head-on conflict between the goals the old gentry had been pursuing for generations and the goals of the Communists, as has been pointed out earlier. The old gentry wanted social stability, although they also had grievances and complaints; the Communists wanted to change the whole social system with violence, although they often came from families privileged in the old order. Furthermore, the old gentry had committed themselves to main-

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tain the established moral and ethical system, but the Communists criticized the system as "feudalistic" and "reactionary" and meant to destroy it, advocating things such as liberal marital relations. *Datuhao* ("attacking local bullies"), which was regarded by the old gentry as a deed even worse than banditry, was claimed by the CCP as truly fair and reasonable. The old gentry just could not compromise with such a dramatic change of values.

Yet another thing which the old elite in Fujian might greatly resent was the destruction of public education by the Communist revolution. In all the localities occupied by the CCP, all the schools stopped functioning. The only CCP document which can be found about education is a section under the subtitle of "Cultural Issues" in the "Resolution of the First Minxi Soviet" adopted in March 1934. This was probably the only occasion when the CCP leaders in Minxi thought of public education, although revolutionary propaganda was emphasized as the main purpose of education. The resolution stipulated that a "higher school should be set up in each county" and "upper labor schools" should be set up in every district.<sup>86</sup> However, judging from materials available, the resolution was basically scrap paper, and all that had ever really been done was that "labor schools" and "Lenin Schools" were opened in some villages, and some night literacy classes were held.<sup>87</sup>

The neglect of cultural education by the CCP in Fujian was understandable if all the adversities for the CCP in

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that period are taken into account. But the Communists did more than just neglect education. Besides the slaughter of gentry who were famous for promoting education, they destroyed the educational facilities too. Some of the schools were burned, including the Changting Normal School. Some others were destroyed when the Communists retreated. Most of the rest were occupied by Communist armies and organizations and used as barracks or offices.<sup>88</sup>

Pushing the old elite to the enemy side might have been a big mistake committed by the CCP during the agrarian revolution, as was shown in the case of Fujian. As is suggested by Chen Yung-fa's study of the CCP's success in the Anti-Japanese war which was waged from 1937 to 1945, local elites were an important political force with which the CCP should deal with appropriate policies. At least the CCP should not push them into adopting violent action against the CCP.<sup>89</sup> The CCP was not so smart in the agrarian revolution, and the acute hostility between the Communist party and the old local elite greatly hurt the chance for the CCP to succeed in Fujian.

## **5 New Elite and the Revolution**

One of the prominent characteristics of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian was that it was basically a business of the local Communist intellectuals. The most prominent, immediate Communist leaders at the provincial

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level were figures like Zhang Dingcheng and Deng Zihui. Luo Ming was also a most prominent leader at the provincial level, particularly in party affairs. Although he was first of all a Cantonese, the county where he was born was just next to the Minxi area and he had been a student in Fujian before he began his revolutionary career. Therefore, he can be considered as a kind of quasi-Fujian native too. Except for some military cadres sent to Fujian by the CCP center, the only real non-native who was once in charge of the Fujian agrarian revolution was a Cantonese named Deng Fa. As a member of the Central Committee, Deng Fa was appointed by the Central Committee as the number-one leader of the Minxi revolution in November 1930. However, he remained in that position for only a short period and left Fujian in July 1931.<sup>90</sup>

At the regional and county levels, it is safe to say that all the leaders of the Communist revolution, except for a few military cadres, were former local young intellectuals. The most prominent ones included Fu Baicui, Guo Diren, Zhang Dingcheng, Deng Zihui, Yuan Shan, Luo Huachen.

Therefore, the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian was predominantly conducted by the former Fujianese new intellectuals. This characteristic was one of the factors dictating the process and forms of the Communist agrarian movement in Fujian.

Taken as a whole, these local Communist intellectuals were committed followers of Marxist-Leninism, although they

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might have had only vague and fragmentary understandings of Marx's and Lenin's theories. (A leader of the revolution in the Mindong area admits in his memoir that at the time when they were carrying the revolution they "did not know what Marxism was," and that every decision was made on a pragmatic basis.)<sup>91</sup>

Except for a few traitors, these local intellectuals were loyal to the party and its cause. Their loyalty can be illustrated by the fact that if they were captured by the Nationalists, they would choose death rather than betrayal, like Li Zhendong had done, as mentioned above.

However, being ready to die for the party and the revolutionary cause did not mean that the new local elite of Fujian were unconditionally docile to the CCP's central leadership. Ruptures occurred between the local party leaders and the party central authorities when there was a conflict between the interests of the revolution as a whole and the interests of the revolution in the localities. Ruptures could also occur between district leaders who safeguarded the interests of their smaller localities, and the provincial leaders who were more concerned with the interests of larger localities. For this matter the best example is Fu Baicui, whose name has been mentioned again and again.

Although one of the earliest and most prominent Communist leaders in Minxi, Fu had always put the interests of his hometown--the Jiaoyang township in Shanghang county--

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ahead of his revolutionary agenda. His revolutionary career was full of discord with other CCP top leaders in Fujian.

The first discord occurred in April 1928. As mentioned in Chapter One, using his prestige and the favorable physical conditions of Jiaoyang, which was an area isolated by high mountains and with plenty of grain production, Fu had by that point built the area into an independent kingdom that defied the authorities of the national government. But Fu did not do one thing which Zhang Dingcheng and Deng Zihui had done in Longyan, which was to redistribute the land. The CCP Fujian Provincial Committee believed that the situation in Jiaoyang had been ripe for the "land revolution" and sent Deng Zihui there to urge Fu to undertake it. The Shanghang County Committee also instructed Fu to stage land redistribution at once. But Fu "stubbornly refused" to do so. The reason he gave was that if Jiaoyang went ahead with land redistribution before other areas, the township would be destroyed by the reactionaries.<sup>92</sup>

It seems that the interests of the people in Jiaoyang were always Fu's priority. Jiaoyang was attacked by the Nationalist troops in late June 1928, although Fu did not carry out land redistribution. The peasant army led by him was defeated. Seeing the military disparity between the peasant armed forces and the enemy troops, the secretary of the CCP Shanghang County Committee, who was at that point joining Fu in leading the revolution in Jiaoyang, suggested that Fu and he should give up the armed struggles in Jiao-

yang for the time being, and go to Yongding to join Zhang Dingcheng. But Fu refused to do so, because he could still hear the gun shots by the armed peasants and he would not "forsake the masses of the locality." Therefore, he stayed in the area to persist in guerrilla warfare with about twenty people.<sup>93</sup>

In early 1929, Mao Zedong and Zhu De led the Fourth Red Army into Minxi from Jiangxi, greatly promoting the Communist activities in Fujian. In mid-June, the CCP Battle Front Committee headed by Mao decided to set up the Fourth Column for their Fourth Red Army. This newly-set-up Fourth Column was basically formed by Fu's Fifty-sixth Red Army Regiment, which had been established in Jiaoyang one month earlier. Fu was appointed to be the commander-in-chief of the Fourth Column.<sup>94</sup> But Fu refused to take the position. By October, Fu was reassigned to the position of political commissar of the same column and the chief of the Shanghang Red Guard. Again Fu refused to take the positions. He stayed within the area around his home village, called the Beisi district.<sup>95</sup>

Fu acted in this way because he was opposed to the argument that the Red Army should be expanded rapidly. His logic was that a larger Red Army meant a larger target for the enemy to attack. He also continued to oppose the party's instruction that land redistribution should be implemented in the Beisi district, which included his home village, Jiaoyang. Instead, he practiced a commune system there. Under the system all the land became the common property of

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the villagers, who labored together and shared the products. This system (which had some--doubtless not coincidental--analogies to the "common land" of many lineages) served the peasants there better than land distribution, Fu argued, because peasants in the Beisi district did not rebel for a land revolution, since landlordism was not a big problem there and land redistribution would benefit the peasants little.<sup>96</sup>

Needless to say, Fu's idea and action could not be tolerated by the CCP, which strongly emphasized ideological and organizational accord inside the party. Antagonism intensified between Fu and both the Minxi Special Committee and the Shanghang County Committee. The Special Committee issued a severe warning to Fu in late April 1930, and demanded he return the guns he took to his hometown from the Fourth Column. But Fu rejected the demand and continued to act in his own way. In his letter replying to the warning of the Special Committee, he sarcastically addressed Deng Zihui as "mister" instead of "comrade." He told Deng in the letter that he needed the guns because the peasants in his hometown needed them to protect their property from the enemy, and that the Special Committee could only get the guns back over his dead body.<sup>97</sup>

The CCP Minxi Special Committee, which at that time was called the Special Committee of Min-Yue-Gan (Fujian-Guangdong-Jiangxi), finally excommunicated Fu at the end of 1930 and sent a large number of Red Army troops to encircle Fu's



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hometown in an attempt to eliminate Fu and his supporters. The Committee also declared that Fu was the chief and his hometown was the lair of the alleged "Social-Democratic Party," which the CCP in Fujian then considered as its archenemy. Fu had no choice but to fight with arms against the party he had hitherto been fighting for. The disagreement between Fu and the other local leaders of the Minxi revolution finally developed into armed confrontation.<sup>98</sup>

Disagreements among the party leaders were not unusual inside the CCP. But Fu's case had a special meaning. He openly defied and challenged the authority of his party superiors on the basis that he had strong backing from his hometown. By acting as a new elite, he had established his prestige and reputation in his hometown even before he became a Communist. By leading the revolution in Jiaoyang and in the Beisi district, he had gained control of the local armed forces and the party organization, as well as the district's soviet. The party and the government of the district had not reported their work to their superiors at the county level for a long time, and seldom attended the meetings summoned by their superiors.<sup>99</sup> Fu knew in the middle of the year what would be the consequence of his confrontation with the higher-level party authorities. "I expect you will surely not forgive me after reading my letter, and you will lose your temper," Fu wrote in his letter, "probably I am incurring my own death. But as an outspoken person, I want to speak out what I think, and I

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will not regret it even if this means trouble and my death."<sup>100</sup> What really enabled Fu to speak so bravely, one can judge, was his conviction that the loyalty to him from his fellow-villagers and the physical conditions of his hometown would provide him with an unassailable position. In other words, only a local elite like Fu could openly confront his CCP superiors in this way. The cases of Zhang Dingcheng and Fu Baicui indicate that while it was, in a sense, the new local elite who created the Communist revolution in rural Fujian, the local nature of the CCP leaders in Fujian also created peculiar problems for the revolution.

While fighting against the local leaders' defiance of their own leadership, local party leaders at higher levels had to defy the authorities of the CCP central leadership too, and the ruptures between the CCP leaders in Fujian and the party's Central Committee had more serious effects on the revolution. The epitome of this kind of rupture was the so-called "Anti-Luo-Ming-Line Campaign."

The campaign was pressed from early 1933 to the time when the Red Army left the Central Revolutionary Base for the Long March. It was triggered by two letters to the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee from Luo Ming, then the acting secretary of the committee, in February 1933. The letters were regarded by the top party leaders as evidence showing Luo's "rightist opportunism." Later in the same month Luo was released from all his duties and was summoned to Ruijin, Jiangxi, to carry out "self-examination" and to be

criticized. The Fujian Provincial Committee was reformed immediately.<sup>101</sup>

In CCP party histories and Luo's reminiscences the rupture is described as a manifestation of the struggle between the correct party line represented by Mao Zedong and the "leftist opportunistic line" represented by Wang Ming, then the real power holder of the CCP. Luo in his memoir published in the 1980s claimed himself as a firm supporter and follower of Mao's strategy of "encircling the cities from the rural areas and then capturing them," and said that the "leftist opportunists" represented by Wang Ming launched the anti-Luo campaign as a part of their anti-Mao effort.<sup>102</sup>

Even today, identifying oneself with Mao's "revolutionary line" is still a fashion among the veterans of the Communist revolution who always need to defend themselves politically, because Mao is still confirmed by the CCP as the great helmsman of revolution, although after the mid-1950s he is acknowledged to have committed what a resolution of the CCP Central Committee in 1981 called some "serious mistakes".<sup>103</sup> At the same time, nobody wants to identify oneself with "Wang Ming's line," since he has long been condemned by the CCP as a sinner in the party's history.

Luo Ming, however, was not simply a victim of the "line struggle" between Mao and Wang. The CCP top leaders at that time were annoyed with him not because he had sided with Mao, who was then being criticized for his emphasis on guerrilla warfare and "base-building" as the strategy for

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the Communist revolution in China. Those so-called "returned students"(from the Soviet Union) such as Wang Ming, had condemned Mao's policies as a "rich peasant's line" and "rightist conservatism," and had earlier deprived him of power in the party and the Red Army. Although Luo Ming was criticized for his "rightist conservatism" too, he was criticized more for being an "opportunist" and a "liquidationist."

Then what was the root of the rupture? The "Anti-Luo-Ming-Line" campaign was launched right after Luo wrote two letters to the party center via the Fujian Provincial Committee. The letter he wrote on 23 January 1933 had one main argument. The "most urgent task" of the party in Fujian, Luo contended, should be to solidify the Minxi revolutionary base by expanding it northward and connecting it with the Minbei base, so that the existing Minxi base could be in a safer position. Ironically, his letter was criticized for "mentioning not a word about the consolidation and expansion of the existing Minxi base" and for "trying to abandon the soviet areas in Shanghang, Yongding and Longyan, and to escape to the rear area."<sup>104</sup> It seemed that there was miscommunication between Luo Ming and the top party leaders, but this was not really the case. Actually, the top party leaders had long been angry at Luo Ming, who had always emphasized the interests of the Minxi base and had been reluctant to carry out some directions from the top party leaders. The letters only provided an excuse for the top party leaders to

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The rupture between Luo Ming (actually, Luo Ming and other local CCP leaders of Fujian) and the top party leaders could be traced back at least to June 1930, when the Central Committee headed by Li Lisan decided that the Communist revolution should be carried out first in several provinces, including Guangdong and Fujian. Accordingly, the Central Committee ordered the Minxi area to be incorporated into the leadership of the party committee of Guangdong, and the main force of the Minxi Red Army to move to the East River area in Guangdong to help the success of revolution in that province. These decisions upset most of the members of the Fujian Provincial Committee, because they thought that the revolution in Fujian was developing and should not be sacrificed. Luo Ming wrote to the party Central Committee stating that he was opposed to the decisions. Deng Zihui and Zhang Dingcheng also disagreed with the party top leaders' decision. But all of their opinions were rejected by the party Central Committee, and its decisions were implemented. The reply from the top leaders was simple: the decisions made by the Central Committee were absolutely correct. As long as the plan succeeded, "it would not be a pity to lose the Minxi Soviet area."<sup>105</sup>

This "central-versus-local" struggle became acute again in late 1932, when Jiang Jieshi launched his Fourth "Encirclement and Suppression" against the Central Revolutionary Base. For strategic purpose, the Twelfth Red Army and some

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other Red Army units in Fujian were ordered to move into Jiangxi, weakening the defence in Fujian. As a result, the whole county of Longyan and some other parts of the Minxi base were occupied by Nationalist troops. The situation worried the local leaders in Fujian very much. It was said that at that time there were only two newly-formed local Red Army divisions with 3,000 men left in Minxi.<sup>106</sup>

In January 1933, the CCP Central Committee moved to Ruijin from Shanghai. As soon as the top party leaders arrived at Ruijin, they demanded a "drastic expansion of the Red Army." One million men must be recruited into the Red Army in the whole country as soon as possible, the Military Committee ordered. To fulfill the aim, mandatory quotas were used. The Minxi area must send 3,000 men to the Red Army in the period from 20 February to the same date of the following month. In addition, it was ordered that local Red Army units and the Red Guards as a whole, with their arms, should join the main forces which were fighting in the Jiangxi part of the Central Base.<sup>107</sup> This measure further worsened the situation in Minxi. The offices of the CCP leadership in Fujian, which had been expelled by the Nationalist troops from the county seat of Changting, now were expelled from a village. More areas were occupied by the enemy. The remaining Red Guards could do nothing but watch the enemy soldiers "burning houses, looting properties and killing people," and the forceful incorporation "angered the cadres and the masses very much," according to Luo Ming's reminiscences.<sup>108</sup>

This is probably true. Peasants in Minxi, as well as in Jiangxi province, had long been very reluctant to join the Red Army. They were particularly resistant to the idea of fighting in places away from their own hometown. (see discussion in the next chapter.)

It was under these circumstances that Luo Ming argued against the decision made by the CCP center. While advocating his strategy for defending Minxi, Luo Ming in his letter also emphasized the importance and urgency of expanding the local Red Army. Although in his letter dated 23 January he did not openly oppose the mandatory incorporation of local armed forces (the text of his other letter is not available), in his later reminiscences he stated that at that time he was opposed to the way the party had expanded the main force of the Red Army.<sup>109</sup>

This was an open objection and defiance to the authorities of the party Central Committee. At the time when the CCP and its Red Army were battling to survive Jiang's Fourth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign, such defiance could certainly not be tolerated and the anti-Luo Ming campaign was therefore launched. In his reminiscences, Luo tries to impress the readers that his opinion corresponded with what Mao Zedong thought at that time. One day in late 1932 Luo talked with Mao for "a whole morning," according to Luo's reminiscences. Mao had been discharged from his leading positions in the party and the Red Army and was "recovering" at a hospital. However, the gist of Mao's

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"instruction" to Luo, as Luo summarizes in the reminiscences, was that like Jiangxi, Fujian province should stage "widespread local guerrilla warfare" to support the mobile war of the main force Red Army.<sup>110</sup> Mao's opinion seemed to be closer to that of the top party leaders in power than to that of Luo who tried to secure more main force Red Army to be deployed in Fujian.

Anyway, both in 1930 and in 1933, Luo Ming was condemned by the Central Committee as a person with many bad "isms," such as "rightist conservatism," "opportunism," and "liquidationism."<sup>111</sup> Strangely, he was not criticized for his localism, which might in fact have been the most appropriate label for him. Perhaps this was because condemning someone of being "localist" was not in fashion inside the CCP at that time. But Luo Ming's localism was evident in the two ruptures with the CCP Central Committee. Localism as a major element in the two ruptures is more evident if one notices that Luo Ming's idea was strongly backed by the party leaders of Fujian origin.

Among those supporters were Deng Zihui and Zhang Dingcheng, as has been mentioned. Deng was removed from his positions of chairman of the Minxi Soviet and political commissar of the Twenty-first Red Army right after his disagreement with the Central Committee's decision in 1930. Zhang was also removed from the position of the Chairman of the Fujian Provincial Soviet in 1933. Guo Diren, then the Minister of Personnel, Propaganda, and Local Work

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Departments of the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee, suffered even more severe persecution. He was finally downgraded to be a foreman of a small group of laborers building fortifications.<sup>112</sup>

There were many local party leaders at the county level who also supported Luo Ming's ideas and openly defied the decisions of the top CCP leaders in 1933. Even in the meeting held to criticize Luo Ming, local leaders from the Minxi area spoke in favor of Luo. Representatives from Shanghang and Yongding insisted that the main force of the Red Army could only be expanded gradually, and argued that only the survival of the red area, namely Minxi, could provide a constant source of manpower for the Red Army. The "Anti-Luo-Ming-Line" drive victimized a large number of party cadres at each level, creating a mess in Fujian.<sup>113</sup> It is correct to say that while the local new elites had made great contributions in prompting and leading the Communist revolution in Fujian, their close ties to local interests also created problems for the revolution.

### **Summary**

In his studies of the Communist peasant movements in Guangdong in the 1920s, R. Hofheinz contends that the decisive factor prompting the rise of the movements was the returning home of Communist intellectuals educated outside



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the localities. Social and political factors favorable for the occurrence of the Communist revolution existed everywhere. The very presence of the Communists was the explanation why in some places Communist peasant movements occurred while in some other places they did not.<sup>114</sup> Studying the same movement in Guangdong, R. Marks opposes this "elite approach" by emphasizing the "structural factors" such as the intensification of landlord-tenant relations in the period prior to the Communist movement.<sup>115</sup>

The case of Fujian shows that the local elite was indeed an important element in the Communist agrarian revolution. It was those new elites who started the revolution, and the confrontation between the old and new local elite to some extent shaped the revolution. By organizing the local corps, the old local elites became an important factor checking the expansion of the revolution, and endangering its vitality.

The power of the state in Fujian declined due to the political disorder in the late Qing, particularly after the fall of the Qing. In many aspects of social life in the countryside, Fujian local elites assumed roles which were otherwise supposed to be played by the state, such as adjudication and public safety. In the case of Fujian, the "public sphere" was really vast. "The power of the gentry" became one of the dominant forces in the countryside of Fujian before the coming of the Communist movement.

However, the local elite did not expect that their

activism was creating its own antithesis. The new schools sponsored by the elite nurtured a large number of new intellectuals who believed that the old social system under which their education had been obtained needed to be overthrown, and that the social stratum of the old local elite, who had gained too much power in the eyes of the new intellectuals, ought to be removed. This belief of the new elite coincided with the CCP's revolutionary program. Many of those new elites became Communists. In this way, the segmentation of local elites and the formation of the Communist party joined to make possible the Communist revolutionary movement there. In a sense, the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian was an outgrowth and continuation of the new elite agitation, and the revolution in Fujian was to a great extent a contest between the new local elite who now mostly became Communist cadres and activists and the old local elite who took a unanimous anti-CCP stance and organized anti-Communist local corps.

The dominant form of the contest between the new and the old local elite in the revolution was the struggle between the local armed forces of the two sides. While the CCP could organize peasants into guerrilla forces or the Red Guards, the old elite could also set up their anti-CCP local corps which seemed to have stronger combat effectiveness than their Communist counterparts. The fate of the Communist revolution in Fujian would be decided in part by the result of the contest of the two sides' local armed forces. At the

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same time the result of the contest depended on the general situation of the Communist revolution in Jiangxi and Fujian, particularly on the higher-level military contest: the contest between the main force of the Red Army and the regular Nationalist troops. However, the result of the local military contest between the local Communists and the old local gentry constituted the main content of the Communist revolution in Fujian and it would certainly affect the general situation of the CCP-GMD contest at the higher level.

## CHAPTER 4 THE UNEASY ALLIANCE

Although it was the Communist young intellectuals who started and led the revolution, needless to say, without the participation of the peasants, there could not have been an "agrarian revolution." The questions which need to be asked here are to what extent, and in what pattern, the peasants participated in the revolution and, what were the reasons for them to participate?

The peasants' support of the Communist revolution in China has been viewed by some historians as the number one reason why the revolution prevailed in the nation in 1949. Scholars have long sought to answer questions such as how the Communists mobilized the peasants and won their support for the revolution. Ilpyong Kim, for example, finds that the CCP in the Central Revolutionary Base, of which Minxi was a part, achieved considerable success in mobilizing peasant masses, and that this could be attributed to the CCP's concept of "mass line," which meant unifying the middle-peasants and organizing the poor peasants into poor-peasant corps, and so on.<sup>1</sup> Mark Selden, on the other hand, argues that the CCP's appeal to the peasants was rooted in an effective program of administration and reform during the Anti-Japanese war.<sup>2</sup>

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granted the concept that the CCP had been successful in winning the support of the peasants, the study in this chapter will take a close look at the CCP-peasant relationship from the beginning to the end of the revolution, and will conclude that the relationship was not consistent, and that the prevailing concept about the relationship therefore needs some revision.

There have been various arguments about why peasants have rebelled in modern China. Daniel Little divides the arguments into three schools: the millenarian, the class conflict and the local politics schools.<sup>3</sup> The millenarian movements were not primarily driven by a coherent program of economic or social change, nor held together by shared material interests, but by a shared ideology. Only rebellions with religious overtones such as the "White Lotus" rebellions throughout the Ming-Qing period might have this characteristic, and evidently the Communist insurrections in Fujian did not belong to this category.

The local politics theory assigns a variety of local interests and organizational forms as the fundamental determinant of the occurrence and the course of rebellion. E. Perry's study of peasant unrest in the Huaibei area, as is mentioned in the last chapter, is a representative of the school.

The class conflict school singles out material class interests. Robert Marks' studies on the Communist peasant movement in Hai-lu-feng, Guangdong province (a province next



to Fujian) are regarded by Little as a representative of this school. Basing his study on J. Scott's thesis of "peasant moral economy," which implies that peasants would participate in a rebellion only when they found that the state or the landlords had failed to perform their moral responsibilities in social-economic relations, Marks' study contends that the "moral economy" broke down by the eve of the 1911 Revolution in the areas in question due to the imperialist economic invasion. By the decade after 1911, both the peasants and landlords began to act more in terms of class than in terms of the "moral economy" system. In short, the Communist peasant rebellion in the late 1920s was an outcome of the intensified class conflict between the peasant and the landlords, and worsening of the peasants' living conditions in the decades that preceded.<sup>4</sup>

The "moral economy" approach has also been used in studies of the rise of the Communist revolution in Jiangxi. For example, Kamal Sheel argues that, suffering from external socio-economic forces' disarray, small rural cultivators naturally expected intervention from landed elites to support them in their attempt to maintain the security of subsistence. But for some reasons the latter disavowed their traditional roles. Therefore, the peasants had to seek out radical intellectuals in the late 1920s for redress of their grievances. Those radical intellectuals led them into the Communist revolution.<sup>5</sup> The quest for security as a reason is noticed by other scholars also. For example, Roy Hofheinz

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finds that the peasants in Haifeng joined the Soviet for security just as they had earlier joined the "flags."<sup>6</sup>

The question of why the peasants joined the revolution is different from the question of why the peasants staged traditional revolts, simply because a revolution was different from traditional peasant revolts. The latter, as the "peasant moral economy" theory argues, were spontaneous efforts to restore the *status quo ante* which had been disrupted by the landlords' or the governments' violation of the moral standards guiding the conduct of all the parties in a "moral economy system."<sup>7</sup> Revolutions, on the other hand, are not spontaneous. They also involve appeals from outside the peasant community, and their purpose is not to restore the *status quo ante*, but to establish entirely new social systems.

Revolution and banditry are also different phenomena, though as Perry notes, scholars of modern China generally agree that there is a considerable overlap between peasant participation in both types of collective activity. But in explaining the commonality of peasants' motive in joining banditry and revolution, there are two opinions. One (represented by Edward Friedman) contends that the peasants viewed the revolution through their established concepts and regarded the revolution as an attempt to enlarge the family, so that the family could better meet economic and social challenges; the other (represented by Fei-ling Davis) believed that those rebelling peasants (bandits and members of

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secret societies) had a penchant for revolution--they were socially revolutionary long before they became politically revolutionary. They were not primitive rebels but primitive revolutionaries.<sup>8</sup>

The fact in Fujian province was that the peasants had already been staging some kinds of collective violent actions, such as collective banditry and lineage feuds, and even anti-government riots, as we shall see. By 1928, the Communist-led peasants' "revolutionary struggles" became the dominant form of peasant collective action in some areas. Was there any inner link between the peasants' collective actions and the eruption of the Communist revolution? If so, what was the mechanism through which the Communist insurrections became the dominant form of peasant collective violence? Or, how did the CCP reorient the peasants from their spontaneous traditional revolt to the Communist revolution? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions in the hope that this will help illuminate more basic questions such as why peasants joined the Communist revolution.

# 1 "Go Get Rich!"

During the spring of 1928, major Communist-led insurrections were staged in four counties in Minxi: Longyan, Yongding, Shanghang, and Pinghe. The insurrections involved a large population and a vast geographical area. All of the

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insurrections involved a form of escalation: they were started in some villages, and then the peasants were directed, or organized, by the Communists to attack the larger towns or even the county seats. The attacks on towns marked the height of the insurrection. How the Communists inspired and organized the peasants to follow this course is revealed by the memoir of Fu Baicui, the famous native Communist of Minxi often mentioned in previous chapters, who led the peasant rebellion in his birthplace, Jiaoyang township in Shanghang, and participated in two of the other three major insurrections.

At that time the county of Shanghang was divided into more than twenty districts. Fu was in the Beisi district, which included about twenty natural villages with a population of 8,000, among whom 2,000 lived in Fu's home village of Jiaoyang. Jiaoyang was the economic and political center of the district; it was populated exclusively by the Fu lineage, and ruled in many aspects by the chief of the lineage and the heads of the sub-lineages.<sup>9</sup>

The first peasant union in the district was set up in Fu's home village during the First United Front between the CCP and the GMD. The union was organized by the GMD county bureau. Although the bureau was actually controlled by the Communists, the peasant union that was set up in Jiaoyang was headed by heads of lineages, and did almost nothing. When the union was restored by Fu and his Communist colleagues in early 1928, Fu decided to do something to

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attract the peasants to join the organization. He set up a moderate goal for the union: to secure a one-seventh return of rent from landlords. Since one-seventh of the rent meant little to the landlords, it was felt (correctly) that they would rather comply with the demand than confront the union. So the union won and more unions were set up in other villages.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Communists continued to raise moderate demands, such as inspecting the accounts of the public properties of the lineages, and setting a ceiling for the price of rice, the peasants' actions were much more radical and violent than the CCP activists wanted. In May, the local warlord sent a company commander to the countryside to recruit soldiers. The commander, helped by some peasants from Jiaoyang and other villages, snatched several oxen in a village belonging to Longyan county. When they passed through Jiaoyang, they were all killed by the members of the peasant union there: another show of the intrepid characteristics of the Fujian peasants.<sup>11</sup>

This bloody action went beyond the tolerance of the authorities. An ultimatum was issued by the magistrate of the county demanding the disbandment of the union and the surrender of the Communists, under the threat of a military suppression.

Aiming at launching armed insurrections, Fu and his comrades had long been organizing "peasant self-defence corps." In his memoir he did not mention who were the most

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ardent elements in joining the corps, though he always referred to the soldiers of its counterpart--the "local corps"--as former bandits and hooligans. At the time the ultimatum was issued, the "peasant self-defence corps" in Jiaoyang had 600 to 700 soldiers. Fu decided to take the chance to expand the peasant armed force and usher the peasants into an armed rebellion when the military suppression came. A "dare-to-die corps" was easily formed with 800-odd volunteers, who drank animal blood and swore to fight to the death.<sup>12</sup>

What followed was an attack on Jiaoyang village by the troops in cooperation with local corps, beginning on 25 June. The resistance by 2,000 soldiers of the Communist-led peasant self-defence corps of the whole Beisi district was routed quickly, and all the scared villagers of Jiaoyang fled from their homes in a hurry, leaving to the troops their property including gold, silver, clothing, livestock and grain. Several days later, all the peasants and the soldiers of the peasant self-defence corps returned to their homes, except for several dozens or so who were condemned by the authorities as the chief criminals of the unrest and were required to pay fines and to "repent and mend" their ways. This small group of peasants refused to comply, and followed Fu in retreating to the mountains. Thus ended the so-called peasant insurrection in Shanghang.<sup>13</sup>

Two months later, Fu and his men (by then the number had increased to 150) were ordered by the CCP Provincial

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Committee of Fujian to go to the Wenxi district in Yongding county to assist and enable peasant insurrections there. With their support, armed peasants in several villages around two market places, Taipingli and Kanshi, rose to confiscate some rich people's properties. The Red Army of Fujian was declared to be formed from Fu's men and some armed peasants in the district.

Then the Red Army was ordered to move to another district, Baitu, to enable an insurrection there first, and then to attack the county seat of Longyan. Most of the armed peasants who had "fayangcai" (gotten rich in a sudden and easy way) by looting (or "confiscating," in the Communist terminology) the properties in the Wenxi district left for home, while some local armed peasants came and joined the force which was on its way to attack a market town called Baitu, the center of the Baitu district. With their rifles in hand, these newcomers marched at the front of the force and broke into the weakly-defended market town. Shops were sacked again, and an alleged landlord was executed. His head was cut off by the peasants after his execution.<sup>14</sup>

The county seat of Longyan was the next target of the victorious Red Army. Again some armed soldiers left for home with the booty won in Baitu. On the march to the county seat, the Communists appealed to peasants laboring in the fields by the road by shouting "everybody goes to strike at Chen Guohui" in the local dialect. Chen was a local warlord who lived in the town. Many peasants stopped working and

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joined the force with farm tools such as hoes, and the size of the force swelled rapidly. Unfortunately the offensive proved to be ill-fated. Suffering heavy losses, the force composed of the Red Army and armed peasants were repelled in front of the city wall.<sup>15</sup>

Fu and his men, as well as the members of the CCP Special Committee of Minxi, retreated to the Wenxi district from Longyan. A disagreement arose over what the Red Army should do next. Some people advocated that it should move to Jinsha village to join Zhang Dingcheng's armed force, which had just staged an armed insurrection there. But those natives of Wenxi district insisted on attacking Kanshi so that the force could get its supplies, since Kanshi was a rich commercial town. The Special Committee believed that attacking Kanshi was too risky because the town was heavily guarded both by the Lu lineage and by a local garrison. But a native of the Wenxi district, who was a graduate of the Whampoa Military Academy, finally convinced the Special Committee that attacking the town had a one hundred percent chance of success. So the decision was made, and a plan of military operations was set up which divided the Red Army into several parts which would march to the town from different directions and launch the offensive simultaneously. Unexpectedly, in operation the plan was disrupted by the force composed of the peasants from Wenxi, who were so anxious to loot the town that they started the attack before other parts of the Red Army had arrived. The garrison of the

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town deliberately let the armed peasants into the town, and then attacked them by surprise while they were busy and happy in looting people's properties. The peasants retreated from the city with heavy casualties, while the other parts of the divided Red Army either came too late or failed to come at all.<sup>16</sup> Part of Fu's remnant Red Army later joined Zhang Dingcheng's peasant army (without Fu, who refused to leave his hometown,) and soon became a guerrilla force, thus ending the upsurge of the Communist insurrection in Minxi. The process of several major insurrections shown above clearly indicates that looting had become the theme of the insurrections, and probably was the main incentive for many of the peasants to join the insurrections. Although sometimes the Communists tried to indoctrinate the peasants with CCP tenets such as "all the poor peasants unite to overthrow the rule by the oppressive classes," for the mass of the peasants, joining the Communist-led insurrections was not different from joining other kinds of predatory collective actions such as banditry or armed feuds. This was also the case in the insurrection in Pinghe county.

The insurrection in Pinghe was also highlighted by the attack on the county seat on 17 February 1928. In this case the peasant army did break into the city and occupied it for several hours. But once having entered the town, the armed peasants became disorganized and began to loot, turning the whole situation into a mess. When the enemy began their counter-attack, the CCP leaders on the scene tried to orga-

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nize the armed forces to destroy the town by explosions and fire before retreating, but none of the peasants with booty would listen to their commands any more. The CCP Provincial Committee considered the offensive against the town a total failure. Ironically, the peasants who participated in the action did not think of it in that way, although some of their comrades had gotten killed during the enemy's counter-attack.<sup>17</sup>

The insurrection in Yongding culminated in the attack on the county seat too. As in the case of Pinghe, the armed peasants once occupied the town for several hours. However, as observed by the CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian, the insurrection was "thoroughly dominated by the backward peasant consciousness," and the "peasants' general anti-city ideas." The insurrection had become an act of "desperate killing, desperate looting, and desperate burning."<sup>18</sup>

Not only were the peasants, who joined the insurrection only for a time, motivated by *fayangcai*, but also those who participated in the Communist-led guerrilla forces, over which the CCP had tighter control, looted like bandits whenever they got a chance. In 1933, the guerrilla force in Lianjiang county, Mindong area, had twenty guns and twenty men who were mostly peasants and "revolutionary masses" from different districts. The force "was nothing but bandits," reported a CCP inspector sent by the Provincial Committee. The daily life of its soldiers was eating, sleeping, and *datuhao* ("striking the local tyrants"), which to them meant

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to get rich. The only thing they would be concerned with before going out to *datuhao* was not how to help the masses in their struggles, but to figure out how much money they could get. If the guerrilla force was operating with the masses, it was only forcing the masses to join it, so that it "could use the masses to make a bluff." The so-called "distributing grain to the peasants," the inspector continued, was at best a way to lure the peasants to go with them.

As a result, one peasant remarked that the CCP guerrilla force was "much better than the navy [one type of warlord forces in Fujian], and a little better than the bandits. If they ask me to go with them, I have no reason not to loot while some people would set fire to the house for you." Therefore, wherever the guerrilla force attacked, the local people would loot the place in a destructive way, taking away everything from rice bowls to fire-tongs. And the masses would say to the guerrilla soldiers something like "it is really a paying thing for you if we come with you to *datuhao*. We only take away little things, while with our help you guys can get so much money and so many arms." Waylaying people was a common means used by the force to get money also. When one member of the party county committee was required to raise 1,000 yuan within a stated time, he simply commanded the force to waylay everyone passing along the road to the county seat.<sup>19</sup>

As for the guerrilla forces in Minxi, a high-ranking CCP leader in 1931 gave them the following evaluation:

There are a lot of local armed forces everywhere now. But they are not doing the job of strengthening the red area. The only things they are doing are *datuhao* and looting the white villages. The only concern of the guerrilla forces and the Red Guards is to *fayangcai*. As a result, the [people] in the white villages bordering the red area say that they are "fearful of only the local CCP, but not the CCP from outside," because the former know only looting. They are entirely carrying out a tribal war featuring fights between the red villages and the white villages.<sup>20</sup>

In the following year, the local armed forces in Minxi were again criticized by the CCP Center, because "the forces wantonly steal and loot the properties of the masses in the red areas, acting actually as bandits." There was a saying inside the party satirizing the local Minxi party members: the Minxi party members were brave only in carrying rice home.<sup>21</sup>

Even the local party organizations quickly became money-crazy. The CCP County Committee of Longyan took kidnapping people for money as its daily work. The money they got as ransom was mostly divided among the members as living allowances and "funds for activities" which were also under the control of each individual. The Provisional Provincial Committee of Fujian thought kidnapping a very inappropriate activity for a party organization because it would first, "corrupt the comrades," second, "destroy the faith of the masses in the party," third, "make the leaders concerned about kidnapping," fourth, "incur fights for money inside the party," and so on. Therefore, the Provincial Committee

allowed the Longyan County Committee to do kidnapping only as a last resort. However, the instruction was ignored by the local party organization.

What is ironic was that without money, the machine of revolution could not operate. The Longyan County Committee once sent a certain amount of money to the Provincial Committee in the spring of 1928 to purchase weapons. Instead of using the money to buy guns for the subordinate organization, the Provincial Committee used up the money for meals. The County Committee kept demanding repayment of the debt. The Provincial Committee first asked the CCP Center to pay for it, and was refused. Then it asked the Minxi Special Committee to pay for it, and was defied. At last the Provincial Committee told its creditor in January 1929 to the effect that since you had raised more than 1,000 yuan in Longyan, you had every reason to allocate part of the money as our payment.<sup>22</sup>

Another factor driving the peasants to join the insurrections were the feuds among the lineages and in some cases, between the townspeople and the peasants who lived in the villages. The market place of Kanshi in Yongding county was populated exclusively by the Lu lineage. The Lu was a powerful big lineage, and had been at odds with the villages around it. It was alleged that the people outside the market place had been "bullied and oppressed" by the Lu lineage, and this was why the peasants in the Wenxi district were very excited and anxious to stage an "insurrection" and to

attack Kanshi. When Fu's force retreated back to Wenxi district and the Special Committee was reluctant to attack Kanshi, it was a graduate of the Whampoa Military Academy who finally talked the committee into agreeing to do it. One of the reasons the man used to persuade the committee was that he was involved in a family feud with the Lu lineage in Kanshi and wanted decisive revenge. When the attack on Kanshi turned out to be a farce and the Red Army, which was mainly composed of the peasants from the Wenxi district, was routed and fled, more than 2,000 residents of Kanshi rushed to Wenxi village to get even by burning, killing, and looting, taking away "countless grain, clothes, pigs and oxen."<sup>23</sup>

The attack on the county seat of Pinghe was sharply criticized by the CCP Provisional Provincial Committee of Fujian for failing to kill a single landlord or capture a single gun. Furthermore, the insurrection had somehow instigated an armed feud between the Zhu lineage and the Zeng lineage. The Zeng lineage, allied with the warlord's force, attacked the Zhu lineage, which had been the main body of the armed force staging the insurrection. When the Nationalist troops attacked the villages of the peasants who had participated in the insurrection, peasants from some villages which were not involved in the insurrection followed the troops to loot the "red" villages too.<sup>24</sup>

All of the evidence points to the fact that the peasants joined the Communist-led insurrections as a new way to



practice a violent, predatory strategy which aimed at enhancing their individual economic interests. While it might be true that peasants in other parts of China joined the Communist revolution for a sense of safety, the peasants in Fujian participated in the armed insurrections as a chance to get rich. "I have no reason not to loot while somebody would set fire to the house for you" was the true reflection of the peasants' mentality in joining the insurrections. The CCP tried to usher the peasants into a "class struggle" aimed at taking over political power, but the only and obstinate concern of the peasants was money and other valuables.

Therefore, it is clear that in the armed insurrections in Fujian, the CCP and the peasants were using each other for their own ends: the local CCP activists used the peasants as manpower to achieve their political purposes, such as to take over political power from the Nationalists, or just to carry out the instructions from their superiors to launch insurrections; and the peasants used the CCP as the organizer and leader for their collective predatory actions; politics as a factor was evidently missing on their part. At first glance, the CCP and the peasants formed an alliance. However, in this mutual-utilization system, the CCP needed the peasants more than the peasants needed the party, because the peasantry was the only possible human source for the CCP to stage a rural revolution, while the peasants had more than one alternative in choosing their leaders for

collective violent, predatory actions: the bandit chiefs, heads of lineages, or even the "local tyrants." (In Chongan county, a "local tyrant" had the charisma to attract several thousand peasants to rebel against the local authorities.)<sup>25</sup> This characteristic of the relationship between the CCP and the peasants predetermined the fragility of the alliance of the two sides, and the hardship the CCP was going to meet in getting the peasants to continue to serve its revolutionary aims, as the CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian predicted in 1928:

Actually the peasantry is a remnant class in a feudal society... The peasants have a great revolutionary function, but at the same time they have a serious backward, reactionary consciousness. If this consciousness is left unchecked, it will harm the revolution. Our party is a party of the proletariat, i.e., the workers, not the peasants. Neither is it a worker-peasant party. We, on behalf of the workers, will mobilize the peasants to struggle, enhance and expand the revolutionary role of the peasants, while preventing and containing their backward, reactionary consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, the further development of the revolution in Fujian would prove that the "reactionary peasant consciousness" was too strong to be suppressed and the peasants remained an unpredictable, disobedient, and even dangerous ally for the CCP.

## 2 The Water Which Could Capsize the Boat

There is a famous maxim for Chinese emperors and all other rulers: "the water can either carry a boat, or capsize it." The connotation of the saying is clear: the populace can support the rule of a ruler, or topple it. Therefore, a ruler must treat the people well, or the "water" will turn fierce and turn the "boat" over. This didactic saying is also applicable to the CCP, which applied itself to control and manipulate the peasants in a revolution. Very soon, the CCP leaders in Fujian found that the peasantry--the sole potential force they could use in the rural revolution--was a turbulent and dangerous current in which to sail.

The first fact which made the CCP realize that it was dangerous to play with the peasants in Fujian was probably the insurrection in Yongding. With the instigation and organization of CCP activists, by the spring of 1928 the armed peasants around the county seat of Yongding had been carrying on the struggle called *pinggu*, that is, to commandeer by force the grain and livestock of the rich people and then divide them among the participants. At the end of May, the CCP Special Committee of the Xinan District concentrated a dozen armed peasants to form a guerrilla force. The new development upset the authorities of the county, and a force was sent to raid a school where the CCP activists often mustered. Several arrests were made by the force, and the

armed peasants in the suburbs of the county seat went up to the mountains to prepare a confrontation against the troops. The tension between the peasants and the force in the town intensified.<sup>27</sup>

The escalation of tension caused serious problems for the peasants. Their lives had been tightly linked to the market inside the town: dictated by the long-standing economic pattern, they traded their agricultural products, as well as firewood and charcoal, for cash and grain. Since many of the peasants were involved in the struggle of *pinggu* and had been accused by the rich people, fearful of being arrested, they now did not dare to enter the town; they were thus deprived of the sources for cash and grain, and so faced starvation.<sup>28</sup>

Naturally the militant peasants under such circumstances viewed a raid on the county seat as the most immediate solution of their problem--the town had abundant grain and other properties, and the morale of the peasants around the town was high. Yet there was another factor behind the peasants' urge to attack the town. The average people in the town had been contemptuous of the peasants in the villages, and it was a "general fact," as a CCP party document pointed out, that the peasants felt that they had been bullied by the residents inside the town. Enmity had long been developing between the peasants and the town residents. When the peasant unions were first organized by the CCP in the villages, to "strike a blow at the town people" had been the

purpose for the peasants to join the union. And now, when the tension was high, "kill everybody in the town" and "burn every house in the town" became the cries of the peasants. They even pledged that once they broke into the town, they wanted not only to "kill all, burn all and loot all," but also to destroy the city wall. On the other hand, the residents of the town, including all the poor ones who were regarded by the CCP as the revolutionary force, supported the garrison firmly in defending the town.<sup>29</sup>

At this juncture, however, the Party Committee of Yongding decided to prevent the peasants from attacking the town. The reason was simple: the CCP-led armed peasants were too weak a force to confront the regular troops in the town. Unexpectedly, the decision of the party angered the peasants. Some of the armed peasants decided to leave the CCP and to become bandits, some others condemned the party leaders as cowards, and some local party members formed new organizations independent of the party and went ahead in preparing the attack on the town. Yet that was not the worst: the most extreme peasants decided to kill off the CCP county leaders so that the stumbling block could be removed. Thus a revolt inspired by the CCP almost turned its spearhead against its organizer.<sup>30</sup>

The danger was removed in time when the County Committee compromised with the peasants by changing its stance from preventing the attack to supporting it. But what happened in Yongding was not unique in Fujian. In early 1933,

some soldiers of the Communist-led guerrilla force in Fu'an county, Mindong area, made trouble by demanding an improvement in living conditions, a public financial report, and an end to the dismissal of soldiers. When their demands were not met, they arrested and tied up the political commissar of the force and the party secretary of the county committee. The two party leaders would have been executed had not the CCP Municipal Committee of Fuzhou dispatched a special squad to crack down on the rebellion.<sup>31</sup>

More serious anti-CCP peasant unrest occurred in Chong'an in late 1928. The CCP County Committee of Chongan led some armed peasants to attack a timber mill. After the successful attack (the mill was not guarded), the CCP activists held a big gathering at which they instigated the peasants to struggle for rent-reduction. Among the more than 3,000 participants at the gathering, only a small portion were mobilized by the CCP; the rest were followers of a man named An Quan. An Quan was an intellectual and believed that the policies of the CCP were too radical, although he agreed to cooperate with the CCP in attacking the timber mill and holding a gathering. The peasants participating in the gathering arrested ten-odd "local tyrants" and demanded that all of them be executed. But the CCP local leaders insisted that a ransom should be extorted from them before they were executed. The "local tyrants" were put in custody while the dispute between the party and the peasants was going on.<sup>32</sup>

Information about specific identification of the

alleged "local tyrants" killed in the Communist rural revolution in Fujian is rarely provided in historical records. A memoir by a participant of the revolution in Minxi does, however, give information of that kind. According to the memoir, when Guo Diren led the peasants in Tongbo village, Longyan, to stage an insurrection in early 1929, he arrested and executed five "local tyrants." Among them the number one "tyrant" was a traditional Chinese medical doctor from outside the village. The number two was a *dibao* (a local person elected by the local community to be the liaison man between the government and the community). As to the other three, they were all called "tyrants" without revealing their professions or economic status, although the memoir admits that after the execution some villagers thought that two of the three did not really deserve death although they were a little "rude."<sup>33</sup>

In the case of Chongan, there is no information about the ten-odd detainees' identification either. At any rate, before long the detainees paid a ransom of several thousand *yuan*, and were released by allegedly bribing An Quan. Those released "local tyrants" reported the unrest to the local authorities, who soon dispatched a regiment to suppress the armed peasants. The armed peasants were quickly routed with more than twenty deaths, and the troops burned houses in more than twenty villages whose peasant inhabitants had participated in the unrest. Having suffered the defeat and heavy losses, the peasants blamed the CCP for all the

faults. Armed peasants encircled and arrested the party leaders. Finding there was no hope of breaking the encirclement by the peasants, an alternative member of the CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian committed suicide, and three other party leaders were captured by the peasants, while An Quan remained untouched due to the protection provided by the peasants faithful to him. After the suppression by the troops, the peasants expelled CCP followers from their villages, fearing that the activities of the CCP would lead to other "purges" of the villages by the troops.<sup>34</sup>

What happened in Yongding county provided an even better example. As has been mentioned in Chapter One, after the failure of the insurrections in the spring of 1928, Zhang Dingcheng, the leader of the insurrections, established a soviet first in his home village, Jinsha, and then in the Xi'nan district to which Jinsha belonged. The existence of the Communist regime led to frequent visits to the district by enemy troops, bringing to the villages burning, killing and other destruction, while the CCP-led armed forces were not capable at all of protecting the villages from the enemy raids. After a few months, all the peasants got sick of having a life like that, and demanded that the Communists move out of the district with their armed forces. However, the CCP decided that meeting the demand would mean a "dangerous compromise with the enemy," and refused to do it. To the surprise of the CCP activists, the peasants elected elderly and respected villagers as representatives



to make terms with the enemy. An agreement between the peasants and the Nationalist authorities might mean a sell-out of the CCP activists. Sensing the danger, the CCP leaders showed their firm opposition to the potential compromise between their ally and enemy by assassinating four of the peasant representatives. But this extreme action failed to deter the peasants from seeking terms with the authorities. Their demand for compromise became even stronger. Finally, the CCP leaders had to stop the functioning of the soviets and move the CCP armed forces out of the district, while threatening the peasants that only "conditional compromise" was tolerable and if anyone went any further, he or she would be executed without mercy.<sup>35</sup>

While those peasants who once followed the CCP could easily turn against it, there were some other peasants who chose to be foes of the CCP from the very beginning. This category of peasants were usually those who lived in bigger villages. Why the bigger villages had a stronger anti-Communist tendency needs further exploration in the future. Perhaps it was because in bigger villages the old local elites had a tighter control of the ordinary villagers, or the local corps in these villages were too strong for the CCP to defeat. At any rate, people in these villages were accused by the CCP of being "reactionary masses," and the villages they lived in were referred to as the "reactionary villages" which had become a headache for the CCP local leaders.

There were some villages and townships of this kind in the eastern part of Longyan county, notably, Yanshi and Yongfu. In these townships the peasants were so unanimously loyal to the gentry who opposed the CCP that Communist activities could not penetrate into the townships. Even in 1929, after most parts of Longyan had come under the domain of the CCP because of military support from Mao Zedong and Zhu De's troops, those villages were still immune to Communism and the armed forces there under the gentry were even preparing to re-capture the county seat, which was occupied by the CCP at that time.<sup>36</sup> "The reactionary foundation there was deep and thick," a memoir of a Communist veteran says.<sup>37</sup> In 1931, the CCP-led "worker pickets" of the Longyan county seat were ordered to attack the township of Yongfu and eliminate the reactionaries there. Having arrived at the outskirts of the town, the CCP-led armed force found that the defence of the town was so strong that there was not a chance of success. Therefore the force engaged in some harassment outside the town and then left in a hurry. To the surprise of the CCP force, the well-organized armed force under the gentry used the retreating CCP force as a guide and followed it to the outskirts of the county seat, encircled a township, and killed the chairman of the soviet there.<sup>38</sup>

In the fall of 1931, there were 400-odd soldiers of the forces led by the gentry stationed inside the town of Yanshi. The local Red Army of Longyan county concentrated more

than 800 soldiers to attack the town. "Bandit Liu [a gentry] had been running the place for many years, and his foundation was too strong to be shaken," a Communist veteran lamented a half-century later. In fact, the Red Army surrounded the town of Yanshi for three days and attacked, or rather harassed, the town every night, but had to retreat at last without achieving anything.<sup>39</sup>

All of these anti-CCP actions performed by the peasants clearly indicated that the direction the peasants would like to go solely depended on their own interests. The peasantry was not a "natural friend" of the CCP. Although the two sides could join each other for some activities, this purposes were often different, and the peasants would show their strong independence in the joint actions. The attitude of the peasants toward the party was so unpredictable that they killed party members when they were not happy about the way the party leaders distributed the rice confiscated from the "local tyrants."<sup>40</sup> To keep the peasants following the direction the CCP wanted them to go, the party should have kept wooing the peasants, and shunned doing things which might violate peasants' interests. However, the difference of aims between the Communist revolution and the peasants made the attempt very difficult. There were some things the CCP simply had to do for the success of the revolution, but these practices would certainly have violated the peasants' interests.

Extortion was one; as soon as a Communist regime was

set up, the thing it needed above all was money. Many soviets were set up in villages and districts in Wuping, Minxi in late 1929. The top priority on the agenda of these soviets was to raise money, because the members of the party branches, the staffs of the soviets, the Red Guards and the guerrilla forces all needed money to buy food and pay cadres' salaries. The Minxi Soviet government in 1931 needed 6,000 yuan per month to keep it functioning. Longyan, Shanghang and Yongding were each ordered to provide 500 yuan every half month. Although the CCP claimed that it was fully supported by the peasants, it had to pay the peasants for carrying messages, scouting, and so on.<sup>41</sup>

Paying the peasants was also the method by which the Fourth Army led by Mao and Zhu got its work done. When it occupied a place, the political bureau of the army would invite local people to have "tea and refreshment," asking them to organize a "provisional revolutionary committee." If they would like to report to the army information about the enemy, or to be a guide, each time a person could get ten yuan as a reward. Those invited were usually people who had "hatred against local tyrants," or were destitute, or were refugees from other localities, or had once participated in the revolution, and so on.<sup>42</sup>

While the local party organizations and soviets needed money to lubricate their activities, the provincial and central party committees also relied upon the local party apparatus for cash. Many communications between the Fujian

Provincial Committee and the local party organizations were about dire financial problems. The Provincial Committee in early 1930 informed the Minxi Special Committee that it had "decided" that the local committee should "raise money through the mass line" for the Central Committee, and demanded that a sum of 8,000 to 10,000 yuan should be sent to the Central Committee via the Provincial Committee as soon as possible. Seven months later, the Provincial Committee complained to the party Central Committee that it had been highly in debt since the Minxi party organizations did not send money to it and the Central Committee had stopped giving out subsidies too. A cabling of 500 yuan was desperately needed, the Provincial Committee claimed.<sup>43</sup>

A huge war machine needed huge amounts of money to keep it operating too. In the middle of 1932, the Provincial Soviet of Fujian was ordered by the CCP Central Bureau and the Provisional Central Government to raise 660,000 yuan as war expenditures to meet the needs of "the party, government and army" at each level. That is to say, the Fujian Soviet had to provide the Central Soviet with 110,000 yuan each month.<sup>44</sup>

It was relatively easy to raise money at the beginning of the revolution simply through "datuhao." However, this source of money dried up quickly because there were not many "local tyrants" (including landlords), and their wealth was not infinite. When it came to this point, rich peasants were victimized as landlords and "local tyrants." However, it was

the vast numbers of middle and poor peasants who became the most important constant source of money for the CCP, since these peasants constituted the majority of the rural population and were the direct producers of social wealth. Therefore, they became the main object of the CCP's economic extraction.

The means used to raise money from the peasants were multiple. Land tax was the first one. It was levied wherever the land redistribution was finished. The First Congress of the CCP in Minxi resolved that a progressive land tax should be levied in the "red" areas. Based on the amount of grain harvested from the field by an individual family, the tax rate ranged from five percent to thirty-five percent. However, in order to win over the poor and middle peasants more effectively, in July 1931 the Minxi Soviet stipulated that the rate of land tax was twenty percent for the rich peasants, and ten percent for the poor and middle peasants, as well as the farmhands. Thus the progressive land tax principle was abandoned. Tax rates were based on the households' "class origins" instead of their individual incomes.<sup>45</sup> On November 1931, the Central Government of Peasants and Workers in Ruijin enacted land tax regulations for the whole "Chinese Soviet Republic," of which Minxi was a part. The regulation again stipulated a progressive taxation system. Under the system the tax rate ranged from one percent to 16.5 percent. In the following year the regulation was revised and the rate was raised, ranging from four percent to

18.5 percent.<sup>46</sup>

There were also taxes for forests, and commercial taxes and tariffs. They were all raised by 1932. The First Soviet of Minxi in March 1930 resolved that the rate of commercial tax ranged from three to thirty percent. Ironically, despite the fact that due to the Nationalist economic blockade, the red areas in Jiangxi and Fujian were suffering a shortage of materials such as salt and medicine, the Central Government of the Peasants and Workers still levied tariffs on these materials coming into the red areas, although the rate was fifty percent lower than for other commodities. The only two commodities free of duty were wax paper and printing ink--materials the CCP needed desperately for propaganda. By 1932, tax rates on all of these commodities were raised greatly also.<sup>47</sup>

Judged by any standard, the rate of taxes was not unreasonable, although as is pointed out by King-yi Hsu, actual implementation of provisions might have been quite different from the provisions themselves.<sup>48</sup> However, taxation was not the only channel through which the CCP drew money from the peasants.

Forcing the peasants to purchase "revolutionary public bonds" was another method of extraction. Two series of "Revolutionary Warfare Short-term Bonds" were promoted in 1932 and one series of so-called "Economic Construction Long-term Bonds" were issued in 1933 by the Central Soviet Government. The total amount of the first series of short-

term bonds was 600,000 yuan. The amount of the second series of bonds was doubled. One of the reasons to double the amount in the second series was that, as is indicated by King-yi Hsu, difficult as it was, the first series of bonds were sold out within the deadline set by the Central Soviet Government. Along with the doubling of the amount was a change in the proportional amount assigned to social groups to buy. In the first series, about twenty-two percent of the total amount was assigned to the Red Army, the members of the party, the Youth League, and other governmental agencies. The urban merchants had a share of twelve percent, and the general public were required to buy the remaining sixty-six percent. In the second series, the proportion allotted to the general public increased to eighty-two percent, while the proportion to the party and governmental apparatus and their servicemen dropped. The amount of the long-term bonds issued in 1933 was three millions. And this time, the general public were required to buy all of the bonds.<sup>49</sup>

The bonds were undoubtedly a heavier burden than the peasants could carry. In the early 1920s, a warlord who was stationed in Yongding county demanded a 50,000 yuan donation from the public to support his troops. In 1925, another warlord also demanded a 100,000 yuan donation from the county. These extortions were considered by the local people, including landlords and merchants, to be monstrous crimes.<sup>50</sup> But now, the Caixi district in Longyan with 2,188 households was required to purchase 13,600 yuan of the



"Economic Construction Bonds."<sup>51</sup> The district was set up as a "revolutionary example" for all the other districts and villages to follow. Therefore, it can be assumed that similar per capita ratios were assigned to all the districts in Fujian. It is evident that in terms of the per capita share, the CCP was extorting money unreasonably even from the public.

Since the first series of the bonds matured in only six months, could be used for tax payments, mortgages, or securities, and were transferable, they were apparently sold out and were redeemed by the holders later. However, the second series was different. Although the period of maturity was the same, the amount was huge and many limitations were set on the usage of the bonds. Therefore, the selling of the bonds met much stronger resistance from the public, and forcible means were used. When the date of maturity, 1 June 1933, was near, the Communist government tried to work the masses to return the bonds without compensation. The date of maturity was also postponed.

To what extent the government's attempt was successful is unknown due to the lack of information, according to Hsu's studies.<sup>52</sup> But what is certain is that the Communist governments in June 1933 had decided to make every peasant "return" to the government all the bonds and receipts they held, including the long-term bonds which were supposed to be redeemed partially by the holders beginning in 1936. To make the people return the bonds without compensation was

set as a task for all the party organizations to fulfill. Whether or not the party organizations at each level did a good job on that became meaningless when the CCP Central Committee, the Red Army and the Central Soviet Government left the Central Revolutionary Base on the Long March in October 1934, without telling the public in advance. All the bonds and receipts became scrap paper overnight.

The peasants knew very well in the first place that the "bonds" were nothing but an extortion, and were reluctant to buy them. Although the CCP propagandized that the peasants "vied with each other to purchase the bonds," in fact, as was admitted by contemporary party documents, the sale of the bonds was achieved through forceful apportionment.<sup>53</sup>

Issuing paper currency was also used as leverage to extract money from the people. In January 1931, the Minxi Soviet Government declared the establishment of the Minxi Worker and Peasant Bank, and ordered the governments at lower levels, the unions of workers or peasants, and army units to set up committees to raise capital and sell the shares for the bank. It was required that 200,000 shares in total, at a price of one yuan each, must be sold within nine months. Again, apportionment was used. While each CCP government staff member must buy at least one share, the "vast masses" should be "mobilized" to buy them "enthusiastically." Only real gold and silver could be used to purchase the shares. The CCP propaganda said that many "young women peasants" enthusiastically purchased the shares with their

silver jewelry. It is true, as mentioned in Chapter Two, that the peasants in Minxi had quite a lot of gold and silver jewelry. But whether they were really happy to give it up for a receipt from the CCP bank is highly doubtful. Five months after the bank was declared founded, the Minxi Soviet issued a note to the county soviets, claiming that it was the main task at that time to overcome financial difficulties, and that an expansion of the bank capital by 20,000 yuan in two months was urgently needed. About one half of the desired capital should be raised from the "masses," the note stipulated. It also ordered that each county soviet should use "every possible means" to sell the shares to the peasants." "June is coming to its end," the note urged, "but you still have not reported whether you can collect the money." The note clearly indicated the difficulties the CCP met with in selling the shares.<sup>54</sup>

The Minxi Worker and Peasant Bank was later merged into the National Bank of the Chinese Soviet Republic, and became its branch in Fujian. A large quantity of paper money was printed and put into circulation by the Soviet Bank. Although the Minxi Soviet assured the people again and again that the paper currency it issued was reliable and should be circulated by all the businesses and individuals, the people often refused to use it. In early 1934, larger quantities of paper currency were issued as a means to alleviate the desperate financial difficulty of the CCP, causing serious inflation and in turn the resentment of the people inside

the revolutionary base.<sup>55</sup> On one hand, a large amount of paper money was issued; on the other hand, selling and buying gold and silver by individuals were prohibited. Any person who dared to buy gold or silver in the red area and sell it in the white area would be executed.<sup>56</sup>

Besides the extraction of money, the forceful conscription for the Red Army, which will be discussed in detail later, was another factor adding to peasant resentment. It is true that money and soldiers were indispensable for the CCP's Communist revolution. In this sense, the extortion and the draft were "understandable." However, the CCP in Fujian also annoyed the peasants with other unnecessary practices.

The policy of "eradicating superstitions" was one of the Communist practices infuriating the peasants. Besides smashing the statues of gods worshipped by the peasants, the CCP also unleashed the Communist Youth League and the so-called Young Pioneers to destroy the memorial tablets of the ancestors of the peasants in each household. The Minxi Soviet Government banned the peasants from using the traditional Chinese lunar calendar. In February 1931, the government issued a general order to the peasants, announcing that from then on, the "revolutionary public calendar" should be used by everyone as the sole calendar, because the Chinese calendar was a "remnant of feudalism." Festivals and holidays in the calendar, such as the Spring Festival, were also "evil habits passed down from the past" and should be eliminated. Besides, the edict stated, if there existed two

calendars at the same time, then people had to keep two new year's days. That would be a waste economically, and make no sense politically. Therefore, the "public revolutionary calendar," actually the Western calendar, would be the only one to be used for all purposes. Celebrating marriage or birth of a son by having a feast was also considered an "evil habit" and was once banned by the CCP in Minxi.<sup>57</sup>

Yet what was more intolerable to the peasants was the interference in their family life style and the disruption of their marriages. The Communist regime set up in Longyan in 1929 decided to push a movement to cut the hair of all peasant's wives, because having long hair was also considered by the CCP members as an "evil feudal habit." But the obstruction the party met in fulfilling the task was so strong that the CCP members and the chairman of the Soviet in Tongbo village decided that forceful means should be adopted. The chairman and other party members would go to every house with scissors to cut women's hair. To set a good example for the peasants, the chairman's wife was chosen to be the first target. The specific manner in which the wife's hair was cut is unknown. Some people said the hair was cut while the wife was asleep; another story went that the chairman invited several comrades to his house and cut his wife's hair forcibly. The one thing known for sure was that the lady hung herself after her hair was cut.<sup>58</sup>

Women were an important human resource for revolution, the CCP leaders believed, for women were the persons suffer-

ing "oppression" the most, and they would therefore support the revolution the most in turn. Therefore women must be mobilized to join the revolution and support the work of the party. To mobilize them the first thing to do was to "liberate them," since they had been "oppressed by the feudal system for several thousand years," and were fettered by the "feudal ethical code."<sup>59</sup> The existing marriage system was an epitome of the code. So, wherever a Communist regime was set up, a campaign for "free marriage" was usually carried out.

A "Marriage Law" was enacted by the soviet of Yongding County in early 1930, and a similar one was enacted by the soviet government of Minxi a little bit later. Ironically, in the law, the advocacy of "free marriage" became "free divorce." The law listed eleven conditions under which a wife was entitled to require a divorce. According to the law, a peasant's wife could divorce her husband if the husband became crippled, or he (including his brothers and sisters) had "oppressed" the wife, or the difference of ages between the couple was too great. Even the fact that the husband had left home for more than one year and sent no message home could be a legal grounds for the wife to divorce. The law also stipulated that after the divorce the former husband was obligated to support the former wife financially until she found a new husband.<sup>60</sup>

The soviets enacted a lot of acts and edicts to help the ordinary people, but most of them were not fully implemented or effective. Only the marriage law had a significant

reverberation. Divorce became a fashion among the peasant wives. In a village called Yutou, Longyan county, there were only 100-odd households. Surprisingly, after a Communist marriage law was published, thirty-six couples broke up, and thirty-six new marriages were approved by the Communist regimes. "Freedom of marriage was really realized, although the law of marriage were still not thorough," Deng Zihui said in praise of this achievement several decades later.<sup>61</sup>

But this "freedom of marriage" had gone too far for the male peasants, who traditionally wanted a stable family. Now under the encouragement of the party male-female relations in the villages had become "very much a mess," as a party report put it, and the party simply failed to find a way to clear it up.<sup>62</sup> In the Mindong area, male peasants were "shocked" by the marriage law. They were particularly angered by the clause that all child daughters-in-law could divorce their husbands. For those families which had child daughters-in-law, implementation of the law meant a heavy economic loss, and the end of the family line, because for many of them, raising a child daughter-in-law was the only affordable way to enable the male family members to marry. In their struggle for divorce, many wives refused to do chores, causing fights and break-ups in the families.<sup>63</sup>

The extraction of money from the peasants and the interference in their personal and family lives rendered the CCP regimes unpopular. Of course, the practices of economic extraction and conscription were because the CCP had no

alternative. The revolutionary base was small and the war machine was too big. In short, the resources were very limited. Furthermore, the military situation was in a spiral of deterioration for the CCP from 1931. The worsening situation meant an escalation of economic extortion. If the peasants in the red area really took the revolution as their own and hence supported it whole-heartedly as the CCP had wished, then the extraction might have been less harmful to the CCP. Unfortunately this was not the case. "The masses do not regard the governments as their governments, but governments specialized in *datuhao* and collecting land taxes," a Communist leader lamented in 1931. In Chongan, Minbei area, a local CCP leader reported in 1930 that only one-third of the "masses" believed in the soviet, another one-third were "afraid of" it, and the last one-third were "half-believing and half-fearing."<sup>64</sup> The CCP simply could not find many things to do to win over the peasants, except for the redistribution of land.

### 3 Land Redistribution as Ultimate Weapon

Although land redistribution was carried out in the Minbei and Mindong areas, compared with the undertaking in Minxi it was minor, for the area of the Mindong Base was small and the Communist regimes there were unstable. Land redistribution was carried out there unsystematically and



piecemeal.<sup>65</sup> As for the Mindong area, the Communist regimes were set up there late (in the fall of 1933) and lasted for only several months. Although land redistribution was carried out in these "solidified areas," it cannot serve as a good case for the study of the Communist land redistribution movement. Therefore, the discussion of the movement will be focused on the Minxi area, where it started from 1928 and lasted into 1934.

It is difficult to count how many times the land was redistributed in Minxi area during this period. The first drive for land redistribution was tried by Zhang Dingcheng and Deng Zihui in Zhang's home village in Yongding county. Right after the failure of the peasant insurrection led by Zhang in early 1928, he and some of the armed peasants retreated to his home village, Jinsha, and established there the first soviet in Fujian. In July, he set up a "soviet government" in the district known as Xi'nan, and set out to redistribute the land.<sup>66</sup>

At that time, the CCP did not have any definite, concrete policy of land revolution, nor did the CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian. Although in July the CCP Sixth Congress held in Moscow adopted an agrarian program, the program was ambiguous, leaving much room for different or even opposing explanations. The "Agrarian Resolution" called for "confiscating all the lands owned by the despotic gentry (*haoshen*) landlord class" to the soviets to be set up, and then "distributing the land to those peasants who have no or have

inadequate land to use." However, the resolution did not have any specific stipulation regarding the redistribution of land. It said that the land was to be distributed to those peasants "to use," implying that the peasants would not have the ownership of the land.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, Zhang and Deng had to do the work "creatively." After consulting "old peasants," including both farmhands, poor, middle and rich peasants, the policy of land redistribution was worked out. Under the policy, the land owned by a village would be redistributed to each villager equally. In other words, no matter whether the villager was old or young, landlord or poor peasant, he or she would get an equal share of land. The approach to implement this was *chou-duo-bu-shao*, "take from those who have too much and give to those who have too little." This was the earliest CCP land policy, believed to have been first used by Mao Zedong in Jiangxi. It was said that "in a very short period" the job was done in the whole district with a population of 20,000.<sup>68</sup>

The second drive for large-scale land redistribution started in June 1929, when Mao and Zhu's Fourth Army stayed in Minxi and propped up many soviets in the counties of Longyan, Yongding and Shanghang. Based on the experience in the Xi'nan district the previous year, Deng led the drive for land redistribution in Longyan first, using the same policy and approach he used before. Within two months, the job was done in the whole "red" area, which had 800,000

peasants. About one million *mu* of land were redistributed.<sup>69</sup>

However, the policy adopted by Deng was contradicted by the resolutions made by the First CCP Congress of Minxi in late July. Mao presided over the congress in his capacity as the Secretary of the Battle Front Committee of the Fourth Army. The "Political Resolution" of the congress claimed that the goal of the "peasants' struggles in the last two years" was "entirely for land," and the most important task of the CCP in Minxi was to "carry out the land revolution." Accordingly, a "Resolution on Land Issues" was enacted, which stipulated that land owned by landlords and local tyrants and the public land of lineages was to be confiscated. As for the "rich peasants" and "owner-peasants," their land beyond the need to supply their "own consumption of food" should be confiscated too. Although it also stipulated that people like landlords could get a "certain amount of land" according to the situation, the principle of egalitarianism honored by Deng Zihui and Zhang Dingcheng was evidently abandoned. In practice, all the land owned by rich peasants and owner-peasants was confiscated. To cater to this reality, the First Enlarged Meeting of the CCP Minxi Special Committee held in October 1929 revised its land policy:

To win over the masses, in the early phase of the land struggle, it is not appropriate to raise the slogan of "confiscate all the land." When all the peasants have been mobilized and most of them demand a equal division of all the land, the party

should support the poor peasants to confiscate all the land resolutely and burn all the title deeds for land, so that the leadership of the party over the poor peasants can be strengthened.<sup>70</sup>

Thus the policy of "confiscation of landlords' land" was transformed to "confiscation of all the land," and this transition was completed by March 1930, when the newly-established Minxi Soviet Government enacted its "Land Law."

This new law stipulated that "all the land, regardless of whether dry or wet, is to be confiscated by the soviet government, and distributed to the peasants to use." Selling or buying land, and raising a mortgage on land, even the transfer of land, were all prohibited. In addition, the peasants had only a five-year period in which they had the right to use the land. Therefore, under the law all the peasants, including the poor peasants, were deprived of the ownership of land. The Joint Conference of the Battle Front Committee and the Minxi Special Committee held in June 1930 also decided that the "rich peasant class has been reactionary since the beginning," and that "all the land should be confiscated," no matter who was the owner. The conference was presided over by the heads of the two committees: Mao Zedong and Deng Zihui.<sup>71</sup>

Although the CCP's policy on land was changeable over time, it is not clear if land in the villages was redistributed over again each time the policy changed. However, it is definite that all the land was confiscated and redistributed

again when in early 1931 the Politburo of the CCP issued the "Draft Land Law." The law emphasized that landlords "had no right to obtain any share of land," while the rich peasants could only obtain shares of "bad land". Every piece of land and property owned by landlords, despotic gentry, and "counter-revolutionaries" must be confiscated, and so must the land owned by rich peasants.

In addition, the law changed the traditional policy of "distributing land on a per capita basis" to "on the basis of labor power as well as per capita." In other words, the new law would give more land to the families with more able-bodied members than to those with fewer. This decision was made because the "rich peasants' have larger families," a party document said, without giving any evidence for the statement. If the change was not made, land redistribution would benefit the rich peasant class more than the poor peasant class, the party document alleged. Another major deviation from the previous policy was that now the peasants had the right to sell or transfer the land they were being given.

To follow the new law made by the Central Committee, the CCP in Minxi ordered through the Minxi Soviet Government that all the land in the red area should be re-distributed anew. A campaign was pushed in the middle of 1931 to re-confiscate and re-distribute land again, and the party's enmity to the landlords and rich peasants was taken out on the middle peasants in reality. Middle peasants were treated

as rich peasants. In some districts, to "give rich peasants bad land, middle peasants medium land, and poor peasants good land" was followed as a guideline by local CCP cadres. The peasants, poor or rich, were on tenterhooks, not knowing which direction they should follow.<sup>72</sup>

Things became messier one year later. The CCP Central Committee in February 1932 instructed its local organizations to carry out a *chatien yundong*, "Campaign of Land-Inspection." The rationale of the CCP leaders in launching the campaign was: although the redistribution of land had been done anew based on the "Draft Land Law" purporting to "strike blows on the rich peasants," it had not been thorough. There were still many landlords and rich peasants who had not been "dug out" and their land and properties had not been confiscated. That was why agricultural productivity was still not adequate, and hence an inspection of land was necessary for the victory of the revolution.<sup>73</sup>

The CCP leaders in Fujian followed the instruction of the Central Committee closely and ordered the campaign to be started in Fujian in July. However, redistributing the land over and over had exasperated the peasants and the local party activists. They showed great apathy to the CCP central leaders' instruction, and the campaign was making little progress in Minxi. By June 1933, eighty percent of the total area of Minxi had still not started the Land-inspection Movement.<sup>74</sup>

Beginning in July, the dissatisfied Central Committee

and the Fujian Soviet Government finally sent cadres they had trained to each county in Minxi to supervise and push the campaign forcibly. As a result, in just seven days about 300 *mu* of land allegedly owned by landlords and rich peasants were found and confiscated in just three districts in Ninghua county. By October in Changting more than 900 households of alleged landlords and rich peasants had been "checked out" and more than 6,000 *mu* of land had been confiscated. In fact, many of those newly-found landlords and rich peasants were middle peasants.

Even some poor peasants became victims of the CCP land policy. Some poor peasants were executed by shooting for having different opinions from the party in deciding some families' class status. Beginning from early 1931, a lot of guerrillas and Red Guard soldiers, most of whom were poor peasants, were executed as members of the alleged "Social-Democratic Party." Their lands were confiscated.<sup>75</sup>

There may have been many reasons for the inconsistency of the CCP's land policy. An evident one was that there were too many policy makers before the CCP party center made one for the whole party. Mao's Battle Front Committee could make policy, and so could the local committees in Minxi. The CCP itself today wants people to believe that the "interference of a wrong party line on Chairman Mao's correct line on the land program" was the reason. It is said that Mao Zedong's land policy was much more "correct" than those of Wang Ming or any others.<sup>76</sup> However, who made the decision or why the

policy was changed meant nothing to the peasants. This was something totally beyond their control. Changes were changes, suffering was suffering. What really mattered to the peasants was the policies *per se*, not who made them. Of course, different policy meant different things to different strata of the peasantry, and even to different families in the same stratum. Each time the policy changed, there would be some losers and some winners. However, it is imaginable that under the frequently-changing land policy of the CCP, no peasant could have confidence of his ownership of land and settle down to agricultural production.

In addition to the changes in principles regarding the "land revolution," minor changes of policy about specific issues were also frequent. Between April and June 1931, the Minxi Soviet Government issued at least four decrees or instructions exclusively regarding the undertaking of land redistribution, each of which had different stipulations about the same issues, such as who should get the growing crops when the land was redistributed. With these endless givings and takings of land, land redistribution was more an ordeal than a favor to the peasants. Under such circumstances, the peasants would naturally take a "wait and see" attitude and not work hard at farming.

As a matter of fact, under the circumstance of war, land redistribution could only been done perfunctorily. A fair, precise redistribution of land required a huge amount of work, particularly technical work. The land ownership



situation needed to be investigated (peasants would certainly cheat in reporting the amount of land they owned), and the quality of each piece of land needed to be sorted out, to mention only a few instances. All of this painstaking work could not have been done when surviving the military struggle was the first concern of the party and no party cadres had been trained to do the work. As Fu Baicui, one of the local leaders of the Communist revolution in Minxi, commented in 1931, land redistribution was "merely a slogan," with no measurement of land, no statistics, and no knowledge of land quality.<sup>77</sup> There are no detailed documentary materials reflecting how perfunctorily land redistribution was carried out in Fujian. However, as cited by Philip Huang, Mao Zedong's own description of the land redistribution in Xingguo county, Jiangxi province in 1931 can help people imagine how the work was done in Fujian in the same period. The process was simple and direct. Each village received a half-day's notice alerting it to the arrival of a propagandist from the district government. The whole process of land redistribution was completed in a time span of seven to eight days in the districts, which usually included several townships. Neither opposition nor much participation from below were allowed.<sup>78</sup>

Due to the separation of land ownership and the right to use it, the status of some "peasants" became complicated. Both the nominal owner and the permanent tenants of the land could be considered as "landlords," particularly when the

tenants sub-let the land to other tenants. This was a delicate situation which needed to be dealt with carefully in land redistribution. But no clauses or rules pertaining to the issue could be found in the CCP documents. The fact that a perfunctory job was done was probably one of the reasons why many rich peasants and even landlords could get good shares of redistributed land, as the CCP Central leaders always complained. What the CCP local leaders in Fujian wanted was to give the peasants land and make them grateful to the party, or just to fulfill the requirements of their superiors. But an unfair, perfunctory redistribution of land could detract from the merit of the undertaking.

It is generally believed by historians that Communist land redistribution had been embraced by the peasants, particularly those poor peasants. Sixty percent of the peasants in Xingguo county were poor peasants (most of them were farmhands) owning five percent of the land in total, Philip Huang comments in his article. Therefore, the land redistribution, in conjunction with debt nullification, made the difference between hunger and a full stomach for the poor peasants.<sup>79</sup>

However, the figures cited by Huang were from Mao's report. This makes the conclusion problematic. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the figures given by the resolution of the First CCP Minxi Congress, which claimed that farmhands and poor peasants constituted eighty percent of the population in Minxi and the landlords owned eighty to



ninety percent of the land, were not true. Even if the land system as Mao described was true in Xingguo, the case in Fujian was different. As shown by statistics collected by college students in the mid-1930s, "pure" tenants accounted for 37.6 percent of the peasant population in Fujian, while in Shanghang the figure was 28.3 and in Pinghe it was seventy.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the Communist land redistribution in Fujian could not be as significant in changing the peasants' lives as it was in Xingguo.

This appears even more the case if we know that from the very beginning, the peasants in Fujian were not very excited about the land they got. The traditional structure of land distribution in Fujian had its peculiar characteristics and the peasants did not show any particular craving for land ownership. This remained true after the occurrence of the Communist-led insurrections.

Although the CCP leaders always claimed that the biggest aspiration of the peasants was to have land, an inspector sent to Fujian by the CCP Central Committee reported in late 1928 that "the peasant movement has taken a wrong course," and the peasants "do not make a general demand for land and political power." The CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian convened to hear the report of the inspector and resolved that all the committee members agreed with what the inspector had found and would improve their work according to the criticism made by the inspector.<sup>81</sup> Although what the inspector was really criticizing was that the party in

Fujian did not propagandize the peasants sufficiently and effectively, his report at least reflected the fact that the ownership of land was not the peasants' first concern.

There is more evidence supporting the argument. Peasants who were "pure" tenants before the land redistribution might be very happy at the moment when they received the land from the Red Army or the soviets, thinking that they could have all the harvest from the allotted land they were going to till, although they would quickly find out that this was only wishful thinking. However, for those who had previously had no interest in farming, although they were generally regarded as "peasants" (although in the eyes of some Communists they were more "hooligans" than "peasants") receiving a piece of land which they had no right to sell or transfer just meant nothing. Although the CCP leaders thought that giving the land to the peasants was a great favor to the peasants, the peasants did not appreciate the favor very much. In early 1931, when addressing a party gathering, Xiang Ying revealed that in Minxi after the redistribution of land most of the peasants did not want to stay home and till the land. Instead, they all left the villages to find employment somewhere else.<sup>82</sup> A report from the Special Committee of Minxi in late 1930 also admitted that in Changting county many peasants turned the land back to the soviets and went to the county seat to take jobs.<sup>83</sup> In Chongan, Minbei area, the land redistribution created a vast extent of deserted land accounting for one-third of the

total cultivated area, while nine-tenths of the cultivated mountain surface was deserted too. After the Anti-Social-Democratic Party campaign began in 1931, large amounts of land were confiscated from those who had been identified as members of this dangerous party. Ironically, these confiscated lands were idled and not redistributed to the peasants. Seeing that these lands were deserted, the Minxi Soviet Government in August 1931 had to ask the district governments to take good care of the lands and suggested that the "best way to do it is to rent them to the poor peasants and farmhands." "Letting them become deserted is not allowed," the Minxi Soviet warned.<sup>84</sup>

While significant amounts of land were deserted, some of the redistributed lands were ruined due to the inappropriate farming approach of their new owners, who did not really know how to farm. Under CCP policies, "workers," which in Minxi usually meant farmhands and villagers who had been store or mill helpers, had the right to obtain for themselves and their families lands of the best quality. Unfortunately, these categories of people generally did not know how to treat the land right. As a result, after the land redistribution, the average unit yield of land dropped. In Minxi, in all the counties except for Longyan, most of the households could not produce enough grain from their shares of land to feed their families.<sup>85</sup>

Accompanying the land redistribution was another CCP drive to "promote the interests of the workers," who were

believed by the party leaders to be the leading class of the revolution, although a party document reported that workers in Xiamen were people characterized by "strong hooliganism" and "patriarchal behavior," who did nothing but gamble and visit prostitutes after work.<sup>86</sup> The CCP forcibly set the pay rates for the workers. Those employers who dared to ignore the rules set by the party would get themselves into trouble immediately. As a result, by 1934 the pay of the city workers, such as an employee of a fruit shop in the county seat of Changting, more than tripled, from ten yuan per month to thirty-two yuan. The pay rate of the workers in textile mills was 14.5 times as much as the rate before the revolution.<sup>87</sup> The dramatic increase of workers' wages demanded by the CCP brought about nothing but the general bankruptcy of business and the great decline of the commodity economy in Minxi.<sup>88</sup>

The wages of farmhands, long-term and short-term alike, were raised forcibly by the CCP too, since they were considered by the party as one part of the working class. While the CCP leaders believed dogmatically that promoting the interests of the "working class" was vital to the success of the revolution, they did not know that raising the wages of the workers, particularly the farmhands, was a two-edged sword. In Fujian, peasants, regardless of what "class" of peasant they might be in the CCP's scale, had the custom of hiring short-term helpers in farming activities, particularly in the harvest seasons. The dramatic rise in farm-

hands' wages made this kind of employment impossible: the price of the grain collected would be less than the wages of the helpers. Therefore, the peasants in 1929 would rather let their ripe rice rot in the fields than hire people to harvest it.<sup>89</sup>

All of these direct results of land redistribution contributed to the abrupt economic decline and dire economic difficulties in the areas in Fujian under Communist control, as seen in Chapter One. One of the main purposes of the CCP in staging the land redistribution was to promote agricultural productivity so that the Red Army and the party and government apparatus could keep supplied.<sup>90</sup> In this sense, the land redistribution had failed in Minxi.

Another main purpose of the land redistribution was to make the peasants more willing to join the CCP-led armed forces, particularly the Red Army. The logic of the CCP leaders was simple: once the peasants acquired what they had been longing for "generation after generation"--the land--they would naturally want to keep it, and the only way to keep it was to join the Red Army to defend the "fruits of the revolution." In short, the land redistribution aimed to increase the Red Army's manpower resources. Unexpectedly to the CCP leaders, the land redistribution in Fujian tragically failed to achieve this aim.

The first round of the large-scale, general land redistribution began and finished in the Minxi area in the latter part of 1929. However, in 1930 forcible means had to be used



in recruiting soldiers for the Red Army. In late 1930, a CCP cadre by the name of Liu had the following to say in his report to his superiors:

The expansion and reform of the Red Army in Minxi is the most difficult problem at present. As far as I know, the last expansions did not work out well... Historically when the Fourth Army arrived at Minxi, there were three to four [sic] peasants, in Yongding alone, who joined the Red Army voluntarily and followed it to Jiangxi. After several months they all asked for leave and came back to their homes. They spread among the masses the news about how hard the life is in the Red Army. They have become the first obstacle when we mobilize the masses to join the Red Army. No matter how we explain to them, they just refuse to go back to the army again, saying that "we know the Red Army much better than you do. You have not ever joined the Red Army, what can you know about it?" While those veterans refuse to go back, the new soldiers are not brave either.[sic] In each recruitment, it can be said that there are no volunteers. In some localities it is totally forcible lots-drawing. In some other localities it is done by election at mass gatherings. Some of those who are elected against their will have never reported to the army...When a meeting is called to draw lots, no youth and adults would come, but only those kids, old men and peasant women. Those elected or chosen by lot are usually kids in their early teens. I find that the soldiers of the Political Guard of the Minxi government are mostly kids. In the Twelfth Red Army, kids account for ten percent too.<sup>91</sup>

The fact that the peasants were so apathetic toward the Red Army, even after the land had been redistributed, was bitterly disappointing to the CCP leaders. An enlarged meeting of the Minxi Special Committee was summoned in late 1930 and adopted a resolution about how to recruit Red Army soldiers. The resolution sharply criticized the "shortcom-

ings and mistakes" in the past recruitment, among which were "coercion, assignment, lots-drawing, taking turns, hiring, cheating and elections." Wherever the coercive means were applied, people who had less power were usually more likely to be the victims. This was also true in the recruitment for the Red Army. Many "despotic gentry, landlords, rich peasants, hooligans, and criminals" were sent to the Red Army, along with those people who were "old, weak, or crippled." The resolution attributed these "very serious problems" in recruitment to the lack of "political propaganda," asking the party organization at each level to use more propaganda than those "mistaken means" in recruitment.<sup>92</sup> However, if even the very fact of giving land to the peasants failed to activate the peasants to join the army, how could abstract, empty propaganda possibly work by telling the peasants words such as "the revolutionary situation is very good" and "we need to expand the Red Army so that we can defeat the Nationalist reactionaries"? As a result, "no coercive means" meant "no recruitment," as the Minxi Special Committee desperately reported. It was evident that coercive means were the only solution, and it had to be used if the Red Army had to be expanded or kept at the same size. By 1930 the peasants, finding no better way to avoid the draft, took flight for Southeast Asia one after another, as they had for generations when they could not find a better way out in their home country.<sup>93</sup>

Things became even worse in the following years. In

late 1932, Changting, like all the other counties under Communist control, was ordered by the Central Soviet to recruit soldiers for the Red Army. When the designated time was due, most of the districts in the county were far short of the established goals. The Gucheng district had been an "old red district" for four years, but this time it failed to recruit even one person. The Hetien district sent four people to the Red Army, but the four were actually forced to go. Among them was a boy about thirteen years old. The CCP cadres picked him up and threatened him by saying that "if you will not go, we will put your mother into jail." The Red Square district found sixteen people, but they agreed to join the Red Army only because the CCP cadres told them that in the Red Army, they would be leading an enjoyable life and could have pork to eat and get a good allowance. When those new recruits found out the truth, they deserted even before they reached their designated units. Once fifty-seven people were recruited from Changting county. By the time they were "sent off" to the Provincial Soviet Government, only five men were left, among whom three were ill. Maybe their illness was the reason these three men did not escape on the way.<sup>94</sup>

Since it was too hard to recruit new soldiers from among the average peasants, the CCP leaders began in 1932 to draft their local party members and members of the Youth League into the Red Army. Those who refused to go were tied up and escorted to the army unit. This new method of re-

cruitment threw the local party and league members into panic. They stopped attending the meetings. Some of them, even heads of local party branches, hid themselves in the mountains to escape the draft. No peasants wanted to join the party any more, for fear of being forced to join the army.<sup>95</sup>

The peasants not only showed their resistance to joining the Red Army, but also showed their disdain and indifference to the relatives of Red Army soldiers. It was made a law by the CCP regimes to "give favored treatment to servicemen's families." For example, the "Regulations about Giving Special Treatment to Servicemen" enacted by the Minxi Soviet in 1930 stipulated that the families of servicemen should receive help in farming from the villagers at the rate of at least two days' work by two persons per month, and that the land of those dead soldiers of the Red Army would not be taken back by the government.<sup>96</sup> "Favored treatment to servicemen" was emphasized more vigorously by the party as a means to encourage people to join the army when more and more difficulties were met in recruiting.

However, the implementation of the regulations was very unsatisfactory to the party leaders. Most of the soviet governments in Minxi did a perfunctory job. Some of them even "did not implement the regulations at all." Since adult peasants were not very obedient to the soviet, kids were sent to help the servicemen's families with farming. Some of the relatives of Red Army soldiers became beggars due to the

lack of labor power. Sometimes the soviets did find peasants to help the servicemen's families with their farming. But those peasants delayed in going day after day. When they finally went, they just slowed down and did a perfunctory job, while not forgetting to demand that the families provide them with good meals. Peasants even ridiculed the family members of the Red Army soldiers by saying "whose idea was it for you to join the Red Army?" When the peasants were required by the soviets to "support the Red Army" by making straw sandals for the soldiers, they did shoddy work and used inferior materials.<sup>97</sup>

### **Summary**

The CCP-peasant relation in the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian could be roughly divided into two periods to study: the period before the surge of insurrection and the period after the surge.

It is true that the peasants were enthusiastic in joining the insurrections, as we have seen in the case of Minxi. Among the mob attacking the towns, only a small portion were organized peasant armies. The rest of them were peasants who joined the actions voluntarily. This suggests that the peasants welcomed and supported the insurrections. But the peasants embraced the insurrections for their own purposes, not those of the CCP. While the local CCP leaders

tried to mobilize the peasants to join the Communist revolution, the peasants were trying to assimilate the practices of the CCP into their long-standing traditions of collective action such as banditry and armed feuds. While it might be true that peasants in some other parts of China took the revolution as the enlargement of their family, the peasants in Fujian took the insurrections and some other CCP practices such as *datuhao* as alternate forms of their predatory collective actions.

As soon as the insurrections failed, the peasants' interests in joining the CCP's practices plunged. Even if an insurrection lasted too long, many participants would quit. As a CCP resolution observed in late 1928, "the longer the insurrection lasts, the less mass participation."<sup>98</sup> After the first phase of the revolution, that is, the phase of insurrection, was over, and during the whole second phase of the "agrarian revolution," winning the support of the peasants, and making them "participate" in the revolution, became one of the major tasks of the CCP in Fujian. If the first phase of the revolution could be characterized as a "peasant movement," then the second phase could only be characterized as revolution in which the CCP "moved the peasant." What the CCP wanted from the peasants in the second phase was their loyalty to the party in the form of providing material (mainly money and grain) and human resources to the "revolutionary war," materials and resources which were definitely needed for the survival and expansion

of the revolutionary bases. The interaction between the CCP's "base-building" effort and the peasants' economic interests was a "zero-sum" game unless the agricultural production in the bases could increase. It turned out that not only could production not increase, but instead that the whole economic situation in the bases deteriorated. Even the CCP's ultimate weapon to win support from the peasants--land redistribution aimed (in the short term) at producing food for the Red Army and supplying the Red Army with human resources<sup>99</sup>--did not work as well as the CCP had expected. In its desperate struggle to sustain the Communist regimes and the bases, the CCP had no choice but to adopt forceful measures toward its so-called "allied army," measures such as forcible recruitment and economic extortion which further damaged CCP-peasant relations.

The variability of the CCP's land policy is attributed by Chinese official scholars to personal factors--the coming to power of opportunist CCP chiefs brought about incorrect, "leftist" land policies. For example, Wang Ming, the one-time party power holder, is usually blamed for the mistaken "Campaign of Land-inspection."<sup>100</sup> However, it should be pointed out that the history of the land redistribution in Minxi suggests that the frequent changes in the CCP's land policy stemmed more from the CCP's desperate effort to win over the peasants' support than from the whims of certain top leaders of the party.

Land redistribution was regarded by the CCP leaders as

the ultimate weapon to win over the peasants. It was evident in 1930 that the existing land policy failed in achieving the two goals. Under such circumstances, the policy makers of the party, who were searching desperately for a cure for the peasants' apathy to the revolution, would naturally turn to a new land policy. It is recognizable that the general tendency of the changes of the land policy from 1928 to 1934 was that the policy became harsher and harsher toward landlords and rich peasants. This tendency reflected the CCP's attempt to give the majority of the peasants--the middle and poor peasants--more benefits. The CCP leaders probably realized that the more favor was given to the peasants, the more support the party could expect from the peasants. Unfortunately the frequent change of land policy in Minxi did more harm than good to the party's cause.

What did the peasants really gain from the revolution in their home villages? Compared to the immediate pre-revolution period, generally speaking, most of their grievances persisted: although some of them had been granted land (unhappily no materials are available to show what percentage of the peasants had more land to till than before the land redistribution), economic exactions were still there, and the means of extraction were almost the same, although the extractors were different now. The overall economic situation in the revolutionary bases was much worse than before the revolution, and commerce declined to an almost full stop; owing to the warfare between the "red" and the



"white" forces, peasants in the areas controlled by the CCP now had much less peace and security, suffering probably even heavier losses of lives and property than they would in feuding. What the warlords, evil officials and gentry, and the bandits had all wanted from the peasants was money. Otherwise they left the peasants basically alone to have their own life style. But now the CCP was forcing them to live as it required, interfering grossly in their family and personal lives. One thing the peasants detested was that the party often forced them to participate in mass gatherings, as even the local party leaders admitted.<sup>101</sup> Why should the peasants support a revolution which had made their lives more miserable?

Therefore, it can be concluded that only in the early stage of the Communist revolution in rural Fujian, that is, the stage of armed insurrection, did the CCP and the peasants form some kind of alliance, but it was an alliance in which the peasants exhibited a strong degree of independence. After the establishment of Communist political power in the region, the alliance collapsed and the relationship between the two sides became difficult. Although the CCP made constant efforts to win the support of the peasants for revolution, it was not successful. When the situation turned really against the CCP, as we shall see in later chapters, CCP-peasant relations would further deteriorate. In short, the discrepancy between the CCP's revolutionary aims and the peasant's immediate interests, and the intrinsic problems of

the "base-building" strategy (which will be further explored later), led to a difficult relationship between the party and the peasants.

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A MOVEMENT WITHOUT VITALITY:  
COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN FUJIAN,  
1924-1934

Volume II

By

Bixin Huang

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
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Department of History

1994

## CHAPTER

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## **CHAPTER 5 Communist Organizations in the Social Context**

The CCP loved organizational work. Actually, the Communist revolution in China was characterized by ubiquitous organizations of many varieties. Organization has been regarded by many scholars as one of the major factors through which the CCP won national power in 1949. Organization is even considered as the vehicle which had helped shape the unified Marxist ideology of the CCP. The CCP at birth did not have a coherent Marxist-Communist ideology, as Arif Dirlik contends. It was the organization of the party, whose formation was helped by the Comintern, that brought that coherence by the party's second congress.<sup>1</sup>

The role of Communist organization is emphasized by scholars from other perspectives. For example, Hofheinz denies that there was an apparent correlation between social and ecological factors and actual "revolutionary potential" or susceptibility to Communist influence. It was the Communists' very organizational presence and vitality that for him mainly explains the expansion of the CCP.<sup>2</sup>

In the studies on the issue of the CCP's mobilization of the peasants, the role of organization is also noted by scholars. The CCP's emphasis on organization is viewed by scholars as a component of the party's "mass line," which is believed to have been a great contributor to the CCP's

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success in different periods. One of the most important organizational goals of the Chinese Communist movement during the Jiangxi Soviet period was mobilization of the broadest possible mass participation in the revolutionary processes of the Chinese Soviet Republic, as Ilpyong Kim contends. The structure of the Jiangxi Soviet system can be viewed, in one sense, as consisting of three major groups: the militant vanguard made up of leading party and soviet government personnel; auxiliaries, consisting of the mass organizations that paralleled the soviet government at all levels; and subordinate administrative cadres who worked in the lower level units of the soviet system of government. The structure and operations of mass organizations, which served as administrative auxiliaries, were important for the studies on the mobilization policy and organizational techniques characteristic of the Jiangxi political system.<sup>3</sup>

For Mao Zedong, Kim argues, the key to the soviet system's success was to evoke the backward and illiterate peasants' political enthusiasm to join the revolutionary efforts. Mao finally worked out new techniques based on his concept of "mass line" to win over the peasants. At the same time, Mao emphasized the role of organization in attaining his revolutionary goals. The new techniques, therefore, included a policy of opposing rich peasants and uniting with middle-peasants, the organization of poor-peasant corps and farm-labor unions, etc. The poor-peasant corps was the main instrument for implementing the Land Inspection campaign and

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for carrying out land inspection and redistribution, and it performed many of the functions that had previously been performed by the land committees of the local soviet government.<sup>4</sup> F. Schurmann also believes that organization played a role equal to ideology in helping the CCP to succeed before and after 1949. Organization is a tool. Through the structures of organization power is transformed into action.<sup>5</sup>

As is reflected in the previous chapters, the rural society in Fujian before the Communist revolution had been highly organized and militarized. There existed various long-established social organizations such as local corps, bandit gangs, and all kinds of popular and secret societies. Under the leadership of the local elite, a clan or a lineage could function like an organization too: the lineages had rules governing the conduct of their members.

The Communist activists in rural Fujian began their revolution by setting up all kinds of organizations, including branches and committees of the CCP and the CYL, peasant unions, worker unions, unions of farmhands, the Red Army and the Red Guards, guerrilla forces, the Young Pioneers, children's labor corps, women's associations, various economic cooperatives, and even some secret societies at some points of the revolution. Almost every person in the areas under the control of the CCP, except for those new-born and those who were deprived of their "political rights," was involved in some kind of Communist organization. Getting people into organizations and keeping the organizations working became

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one of the preoccupations of the local CCP in Fujian. Since organization was so important to the CCP, the actual role it played in the agrarian revolution in Fujian, and the relations and interaction between the Communist organizations on the one hand and the old social organizations on the other, need to be examined so that a better understanding of the revolution's nature and its mechanisms can be achieved.

The Communist organizations in Fujian can be divided into three groups: first, organizations vital to the existence of the revolution, including the organizations of the party at the provincial, regional, county, district, and village levels, and the military forces composed of the Red Army, the Red Guards and guerrilla force; second, the auxiliary apparatus of the party, mainly the Soviet governments and the CYL at each level; third, the "mass organizations" (*qunzhong tuanti*) such as all kinds of unions, secret societies, boy scouts, and economic cooperatives. The function of peasant unions changed before and after the establishment of the soviet regimes. Before the establishment of Communist regimes, peasant unions were important as tools for the Communists to launch armed insurrections. After that point, their importance declined, as we shall see.

The Communist organizations were set up on the basis of the CCP's ideals. For example, the party committees and branches were set up to perform the "proletarian leadership of the revolution" and they should ideally have been composed mainly of workers, and have been effective and tough

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in performing their duties. The social reality in rural Fujian rendered those ideals difficult if not impossible to realize. Unlike some existing scholarship which examines the structure and mechanisms of the Communist organizations, this chapter will focus on the interaction between the CCP's ideals in setting up organizations and the reality of the rural Fujian society, as well as the interaction between the Communist organizations and the existing non-communist social organizations such as bandit gangs and secret societies. In exploring these interactions, the actual role of the Communist organizations in helping the revolution will be evaluated.

### 1 Eating "Ready Meals"

While the CCP regarded the local gentry and the local corps as the enemies with which it would not share the same sky, it treated bandits with much pity. In 1929 the "Soldier's Committee" of the Fourth Red Army issued a public letter to bandits in Jiangxi and Fujian. Since bandits in China were sometimes referred to with awe and respect by people as *lulin haohan*, "heroes of the green forest," the letter addressed the bandits as "brothers in the forest" or "brothers on the mountains." It aired grievances for the bandits:

...The local tyrants and evil gentry give you the name of "bandits," and "bandit" has become the fiercest, most evil, and meanest thing. Warlords, corrupt officials, local tyrants and evil gentry can rob millions of dollars each year. But when you bandits try to find a little stuff to fill your stomachs, it is regarded as the worst crime, and you will be arrested and executed without mercy...What an injustice! What a hateful thing! This is really outrageous!...We CCP and the Red Army do not think you are hateful. Only the local tyrants and evil gentry treat you as criminals and call you "bandits." But we do not care, simply because just as ourselves, you are poor friends without land, jobs, clothes, food and houses...<sup>6</sup>

But expressing great sympathy for the bandits did not mean that the CCP was encouraging them to go on with their banditry. Although being a bandit might be fully justifiable, the letter continued, the career was painful and destructive, because a bandit had to expose himself to grim winds and rains, and even worse, to risk being arrested and executed by warlords and local tyrants. The only way out for bandits, the letter asserted finally, was to become a part of the Red Army.<sup>7</sup>

The Fourth Red Army's policy toward bandits was in accordance with the resolutions of the CCP's Sixth National Congress held in July 1928. The "Resolution on Peasant Issues" stated that the "social component of the local corps and bandits has connections with poor and toiling peasants," and therefore the "masses" of the corps and bandits should be educated and absorbed into the revolutionary force. The "Resolution on the Organizational Issues of Soviet as Political Power" had a more sophisticated--and much harsher--

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policy regarding bandits. It said that only "before the armed insurrections" was alliance with bandits gangs allowed. As soon as the insurrections succeeded, the gangs should be disarmed and sternly suppressed, their chiefs, including those who had helped with the insurrections, should be "annihilated totally."<sup>8</sup>

However, the CCP's policy toward bandits was not constant and consistent in practice. In the "Political Resolution" passed by the First Congress of the Minxi CCP in July 1929, bandits were sorted into three categories: first, those who "make a living from robbery, and collude with despotic gentry and the bourgeoisie to oppose the revolution"; second, those who also made a living from robbery, but had "conflicts with despotic gentry and the bourgeoisie," and had a stance vacillating between revolution and counter-revolution; and third, those who made a living half from robbery, half from farming.<sup>9</sup> The party's policy towards the bandits should vary with their categories, the resolution said. The first group should be disarmed firmly by the party. Agents should be sent into the gangs of the second type to instigate the bandits to rebel against their chiefs, and to make the gangs side with the revolution. As for the last group, the party should organize them into a force against the landlord class.<sup>10</sup>

However, the policy of the party was one thing, and the practice was quite another. In practice, the local party leaders in Fujian would always do their best to draw in

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bandit gangs and incorporate them into the Communist local armed forces, because this was a much easier way to expand the Red Guards than to "mobilize the masses." As early as in 1928, the party county committee of Longyan had tried to seek bandits' military aid in launching armed insurrections.<sup>11</sup> By 1930 in Longyan county alone at least three bandit gangs were incorporated into the Red Guards.<sup>12</sup> In Wuping county a bandit gang was reformed into a Communist guerrilla force. Since the party thought that it was not "appropriate" for the force to stay around its home villages, it was ordered to operate in other districts.<sup>13</sup>

To incorporate bandit gangs into the Communist armed forces was called by the CCP local cadres "eating ready meals" (*chi xiancheng fan*). But those ready meals were sometimes poisonous. The only thing the bandit gangs were after was money. When the CCP leaders in Anxi county in the very southern part of Fujian tried to indoctrinate a bandit chief with "revolutionary truth" in an effort to draw the gang into the Communist guerrilla force, the bandit chief showed no interest in listening and replied that the only good thing he knew was silver dollars.<sup>14</sup> Having no political beliefs, bandits changed sides frequently, causing heavy losses to the CCP.<sup>15</sup>

What was even worse was that bandits could inflict great losses on the revolution by using the CCP cadres' thirst for recruiting them. In the spring of 1933, a bandit chief by the name of Wang plotted with the Nationalist

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county government to lure the CCP leaders in Anxi county. He showed his sympathy to the Communists, and faked some sort of conflict with the Nationalist government. When thirteen fooled CCP local cadres went to the bandits' territory to instruct the gang how to organize an offensive against the county seat, twelve of them were arrested by the bandits. Bound together with iron wires going through their ears, the twelve Communists were escorted to the county seat and soon executed there.<sup>16</sup>

But all of these cases did not mean that the CCP's attempt to use the bandits was always a failure in Fujian. There was a bandit chief by the name of Lin in Minxi. His gang was once incorporated into the Fourth Red Army, but soon left the army and became bandits again. By the middle of 1934, although Lin had died, his gang was still active in Longyan county, and occupied a vast area. The Ninth Independent Regiment of the Red Army, then operating in Longyan, allied with the gang by becoming sworn brothers with the chiefs of the bandits. As allies, the bandits allowed the Red Army to use two villages in their territory as shelters for the wounded. Within a month, the headquarters of the Red Army moved into the bandits' territory too. By fighting together, the Red Army and the bandits won several battles against the Nationalist forces and some other bandit gangs.<sup>17</sup> However, the Red Army was not so lucky the next time. When a commander led an armed squad into the territory of a bandit group, they were arrested and sent to the regu-



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lar Nationalist troops to be executed.<sup>18</sup>

Philip Kuhn divides militarization in south and central China during the late imperial period into two categories: the orthodox and the heterodox types. Based on the scale of organization, extent of official connections, and sources of financial support, Kuhn further divides each category into three hierarchical levels of military organization. In the orthodox category, the highest level was the regional army, followed by the *yong* (mercenaries), with the *tuan-lian* (local corps) at the bottom. On the heterodox side, homologically there were the "community in arms," the *gu* (bandits) and the *tang* (secret societies).<sup>19</sup>

To some extent Kuhn's approach is applicable to the analysis of the militarization in Fujian before the Communist armed rebellions set in. The local corps at the level of village or township (*xiang*), as well as organizations such as the *Yukouhui* could be regarded as a level equal to Kuhn's lowest orthodox level of *tuan-lian*, and the local corps at the county and district levels could be regarded as a level equal to Kuhn's second orthodox level of *yong*. The more regular troops controlled by local warlords and the government could be put into the highest level of the orthodox level.

The heterodox side, however, had a more complicated situation. The highest level, the "community in arms" which Kuhn identifies with the Taiping Army, was missing. Military organizations equal to the second level on the orthodox side

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(in terms of the geographic scope of activities) were hard to identify too, while bandits gangs and some armed secret societies could be put into the lowest level.

The other difference between the picture of militarization in pre-Communist Fujian and the one depicted by Kuhn is that in the former the boundary between orthodox and heterodox was not as clear-cut as in the latter. In many cases a local corps could behave like a bandit gang, or rebelled against the government and hence became "heterodox." Another characteristic of the militarization in rural Fujian before the Communist revolution was that the local corps and the popular organizations such as the Yukouhui mentioned in previous chapters were set up as a response to the rampant banditry in Fujian. Neither the local corps nor the bandits and the local secret societies had a political nature.

The occurrence of the Communist revolution rapidly changed the picture of militarization in rural Fujian. The main Red Army (Zhu-Mao's Fourth Red Army and some of the main force local Red Army) could be viewed as the highest level of militarization on the heterodox side, although they did not exactly match what Kuhn has defined as a "community in arms." Communist local Red Army forces, guerrilla bands and the Red Guards units at the levels of districts and up could be identified with the second level, while the other Communist-led armed forces such as the Red Guards and the Young Pioneers at the levels of villages and townships remained at the lowest level of the structure of militari-

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zation as depicted by Kuhn. But the most significant changes brought by the Communist movement were the politicization of the military organizations in both categories and the blurring of the boundary between the "orthodox" and the "heterodox" camps. The local corps, the job of which had been defending the localities from the harassments of bandits, changed their course and assumed the suppression of the Communist movement as their task.

So did the local Nationalist troops, which were usually upgraded bandit gangs or local corps. The force led by Chen Guohui was one example. Born in the southern part of Fujian, Chen became the chief of the most powerful bandit gang in the Minnan area. He and his gang were incorporated by the Northern Expedition troops in 1926, becoming a regiment of the National Revolutionary Army. Chen expanded his force in the following years and become one of the most powerful local warlords in Minxi. When the Communist insurrections broke out in Minxi, his regiment was upgraded by the Nationalist authorities to a division and became one of the major rivals of the Communist armed forces in Minxi, including Mao's Fourth Red Army.<sup>20</sup>

Yet the most dramatic change was the one which happened to the bandits. The desperate military struggle between the Communists and the anti-Communists set off the effort by both sides to draw in the bandits as military forces. The result of this effort was the politicization and split-up of the bandits. In the areas engulfed Communist activities,

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many bandit gangs became associated either with the anti-Communists or the Communists. What was noticeable is that, as reflected by the above-mentioned instances, the CCP was basically a loser in its competition against its enemy for winning the support of the bandits. One bandit chief's experience in Minxi provides an example showing how the politicization of a bandit force took place.

The chief, Zhong Shaokui, was born to a *xiucai* and small merchant's family in Wuping, Minxi area, in 1901. At the age of thirteen, he became a hero by saving his father's life when he shot to death a bandit who was robbing his family's shop. Three years later, he shot to death a woman who belonged to the Zeng lineage, which had been at odds with the Zhong lineage, and the incident triggered a protracted armed feud between the two lineages. Being a successful killer at his early age made him believe that his life would be in the "green forest" instead of at the schools which his parents wished him to attend.<sup>21</sup>

To become a hero in the green forest required guns. By attacking the local corps and the Nationalist troops, Zhong captured tens of guns and organized a bandit force with about one hundred men by 1928. Before long his force was incorporated into the forces of a local warlord.<sup>22</sup> So far the political color of his force was not distinguishable.

Then came the Communists. In 1929 a CCP member by the name of Li became an officer of Zhong's force. Knowing Li's political status, Zhong still wanted to become sworn broth-



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ers with him, and followed his suggestions in deciding upon whom his force should prey. Li's mission was to "reform" Zhong's gang into a force which could serve the Communist revolution. Under the influence of Li, the gang chose landlords as its targets. Even Communist revolutionary songs were taught to the soldiers. Li plotted to use Zhong to order the big landlords and all the important elites of the county to convert, and then launched a coup by arresting all of them and declaring the establishment of a soviet regime.<sup>23</sup>

But before the plan could be realized the force was ordered to attack a Communist-led peasant army, and several leaders of the peasant union were captured by a commander of a company. A dispute erupted between the commander, who advocated the execution of the captives, and Zhong siding with Li, who refused to do so. The commander turned for support to a *xiuca*i who was a close friend of Zhong. The *xiuca*i, although also a close friend of Li's father, asked Zhong to execute Li. Zhong refused to do so because Li was his sworn brother. But he had to ask Li to leave the force because of the dangerous situation. He sent Li three pistols and dispatched a squad to escort him.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the plot of the Communists aborted. After Li's departure Zhong applied his force to the military tangle among different cliques of local forces in the county. He defeated the troops of a local warlord and became the most powerful military force in the county.

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In 1930, the county seat of Shanghang was threatened by the Communist armed forces. A delegation was sent by the merchant organization in the town to ask Zhong and his force to take charge of the defence of the town. Zhong agreed. From then on he leaned to the anti-Communist side resolutely. A graduate of the Whampoa Military Academy was hired to train his soldiers. The force successfully repelled two attacks by the Red Army on the town, and expanded to two regiments in 1931. Sometimes the force even dared to battle against the Fourth Red Army. In February 1935, acting on the report of a peasant wife, the force made a great contribution to the Nationalist authorities by capturing Qu Qiubai, the one-time Secretary-general of the CCP Central Committee. In 1937, Zhong was granted an interview with Jiang Jieshi in Nanjing. Jiang also rewarded him with a "Jiang Zhongzheng Sword" and the rank of major general.<sup>25</sup>

Actually, the CCP local leaders at higher levels had realized the difficulty and danger in drawing the bandits into the revolution. A resolution adopted by the joint meeting of the Battle Front Committee of the Fourth Red Army and the Minxi Special Committee in June 1930 was addressed exclusively to the issue of *liumang*, the "lumpen-proletariat."<sup>26</sup> There were about thirty categories of people who belonged to *liumang*, according to the document. Among them the first group was bandits. Further down the list were thieves, theatrical persons, beggars, psychics, Buddhist monks, and converts of religions.<sup>27</sup>

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It is hard to figure out why theatrical persons and Buddhist monks should be treated as if they were bandits. But the resolution was basically right in stating that *liumang*, by which word the resolution meant mainly the bandits, had no revolutionary nature; on the contrary, they generally had a "sheer counterrevolutionary nature," and "although they might join the revolution on speculation when they have to, they will always be wavering, and will at any time betray the revolution and become the running dogs of the counterrevolutionaries." <sup>28</sup>

However, some local CCP leaders kept trying to draw in bandits, perhaps because the "ready meal" was really tempting and the "revolutionary masses" were too reluctant to join the Communist forces, particularly when the situation was bad for the CCP. But uniting with, or "using," the bandits did cost the revolution a lot. In addition to the losses caused directly by bandits' tricks and betrayals, cooperating with bandits and living in an environment full of bandits certainly had some "bad influences" on the CCP.

It is hard to judge to what extent the Communist armed forces in Fujian were influenced by the bandits' style, since there is not a scientific way to measure it. However, it is a fact that some Communist armed forces acted like bandits. The county committees of Putian, Xianyou and Yongding were criticized in 1928 by the provincial committee for assigning "capable comrades to lead the peasants to become bandits," and for trying to "turn the masses into bandits"

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While groups of bandits were convertible to the Red Army, and vice versa, Red Army soldiers of Fujian local origins could desert their army in groups and became bandit gangs. At least two examples of this could be found in just the Yanshi area, Longyan county. In 1930, a Comrade Lin led a group of Red Army soldiers away from their unit and went back to his home village, Libang, to become a bandit gang. The gang was later incorporated into the local corps but still took banditry as its business. In Subang village, Comrade Chen acted similarly.<sup>30</sup> It was convenient for those Red Army soldiers to become bandits since they had guns in their hands. The scouting squad of the Ninth Independent Brigade of the Minxi Red Army disappeared overnight, because all of its soldiers went home to become bandits.<sup>31</sup>

In the areas to which the Communist movement spread, secret societies became politicized too. One point to be raised here is that during the period of the Communist revolution, social organizations and structures became really fluid. There was no clear-cut boundary between the "orthodox" and the "heterodox" categories of militarization. For example, evidently the Communist armed forces should be put into the "heterodox" category, and so should the bandits. But the two groups were by and large against each other. It seems that for a better understanding of the military situation in Fujian during the period in question, the military organizations in the areas involved in the



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Communist agrarian revolution should be divided into "Communist" and "anti-Communist" categories instead of the "orthodox" and "heterodox" ones.

Three levels of military organizations could be discerned in each category. On the Communist side, the so-called "main force" Red Army occupied the top level. The second level was composed of the local Red Army, guerrilla forces and the Red Guards at the county and district levels. At the bottom were village Red Guards, the Young Pioneers, and Communist-controlled armed secret societies (which only existed in areas where communist regimes had not been set up). On the anti-Communist side, there were Nationalist regular troops, including troops from outside the province such as the Nineteenth Army, and the local warlords' troops such as Chen Guohui's. In the middle were local corps at the levels of county and district. Local gentry's private small-scale armed forces, secret societies such as the anti-Communist Big Sword societies, the Boy Scouts, and the bandits hostile to the CCP were at the bottom level.

In the debate on the reasons why the Communist revolution succeeded in China, Hofheinz contends that there was no apparent correlation between social and ecological factors and actual "revolutionary potential" or susceptibility to Communist influence. It was the Communist "organizational presence" and vitality, he said, that mainly explained the expansion of the CCP.<sup>32</sup> If this argument is true in the case of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian, then it

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should be added that the vitality of the Communist organization came from the presence of the Communist military forces, or rather, the main force Red Army, which mainly meant the Fourth Red Army.

The tumultuous Communist insurrection in Minxi in 1928 subsided quickly by the end of the year. It was the Fourth Red Army's arrival in Minxi in January 1929 that revived the Communist upsurge there. From then on until the middle of 1930, the Fourth Red Army stayed in Fujian most of the time, and it was during this time span that the revolution in Fujian reached its peak. The Fourth Red Army defeated several main forces of the Nationalist regular army in the Minxi area, and occupied many county seats, propping up Communist regimes at the county level.<sup>33</sup> The key role played by the Fourth Red Army was fully recognized by the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee. "Owing to the help from Zhu-Mao's Red Army, the struggle in Minxi has spread like a blaze," it commented in June 1929.<sup>34</sup> However, relying too much on the Red Army's military strength was certainly not a good thing. The Provincial Committee appealed to the Minxi Special Committee at the same time to "mobilize the masses." The masses must be mobilized to stage the struggle by themselves, to overthrow the rule of despotic gentry and landlords and disarm the local corps. "Don't rely on Zhu-Mao's military force to do everything," the Provincial Committee warned its subordinates. "Acting in this way you will nurture the masses' mentality of depending on Zhu-Mao. Once the

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Zhu-Mao [forces] leave, all the struggles will come to nothing. This was what happened last time."<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, dependence on the Red Army remained a fact all the way through the end of the agrarian revolution in Fujian. In 1932 the Minxi Special Committee was criticized again by its superior for "depending solely on the force of the Red Army," and for "failing to mobilize the masses to join the revolutionary wars...The masses consequently do not believe their own strength so far. Even if it is a small harassment by small groups of local corps, they would ask and wait for aid from the Red Army."<sup>36</sup>

"To mobilize the masses to join the revolutionary wars" meant to organize them into various military organizations, mainly the Red Guards. The achievement of the local party in Minxi was remarkable. Some CCP county committees ordered every man in the age between fourteen and forty-five to join the Red Guards or the "*baodong dui*" ("insurrection corps"). In some counties, the lower age limit was sixteen, according to a report from the Minxi Special Committee in late August, 1929. Each district had a standing unit with twenty to fifty soldiers, while each county must have a "special force" with good guns. At that moment Yongding county had twenty-four Red Guards units with more than 2,000 soldiers; Longyan had nine units with also more than 2,000 men. All the soldiers had free meals provided by the Communist regimes. Soldiers in some units could even have one dollar per day as allowance.<sup>37</sup> Although most of their soldiers were equipped with

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spears only, the Red Guards in Longyan county had 600 guns in total. The Red Guards in Yongding had about 2,300 guns plus 200 artillery pieces (not of modern styles, of course), while at that point the anti-Communist local corps in the county had only 1,000-odd guns.<sup>38</sup>

But numbers of soldiers and guns alone did not indicate fighting capacity. Most of the Red Guards "have very poor fighting capacity and cannot face the enemy," a party report admitted. All the Red Guards, particularly those in the area which had come under the control of the CCP recently, were "incarnations of peasant mentality." They were badly disciplined. In Chinese the word *tufei* means "bandit." These Red Guards were dubbed by the masses as *tugong*, meaning that they were half-bandit-half-CCP. This nickname was given to the Red Guards for their behavior of "wanton looting and wanton killing," a CCP report said.<sup>39</sup> While those local corps could stage raids independently against the Communist forces, as mentioned in the last chapter, the Red Guards could only be an auxiliary force to the main force of the Red Army in small-scale fighting. A tough battle could disperse the Red Guards totally.<sup>40</sup> The Communist-controlled armed peasants in Chongan, Minbei area, were organized into a "Red Army" in the middle of 1930. This force had about 2,400 men with 100-odd new-style rifles. But most of the soldiers of this large force were "not very brave. They hide their heads in between their two shoulders when gun shots are heard," a CCP inspector reported in 1930. "Our Red Army



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soldiers are really numerous. But they are like huge wax gourds, looking good but not delicious."<sup>41</sup> The poor performance of the CCP local armed forces in Fujian did not improve as time went on. In late August, 1932, the Provincial Soviet of Fujian in a resolution expressed its disappointment about the combat effectiveness of the local forces in Minxi:

The enemy forces in Minxi are not strong, while our armed forces, including the independent regiments, are large in size. This is particularly true in Changting. There are only a dozen remnant local forces and bandits gangs...with merely 400-odd guns. They can never unify themselves, and only one-third of their guns are good ones. Each of their men has only three to five bullets... Since the military preponderance is on our side, it should not be difficult to wipe out these local corps and bandits at one fell swoop, not to mention that we are tightly organized worker-peasant armed forces, and they are rabble...On the contrary, however, not only have we failed to eliminate them, but also we are often molested by them. Each time they attack, they have only 30 to 50 guns. But without collecting accurate information in advance, our governments and armed forces at each level believe the rumors that the enemy force is advancing with several hundred men and several hundred guns, and flee away at the false news (as in the Changting County Soviet)...The local forces and worker-peasant masses under our soviets neither get good political propaganda nor carry out the land revolution in depth. This is why they can only scatter like birds and beasts when the enemy comes...<sup>42</sup>

In the same period, the "People's Committee" of the "Soviet Republic of China" also criticized the local armed forces in Fujian for "being of large size, but most of the soldiers flee away either before each fight, or as soon as

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they hear gun shots. Even worse, they plunder and rob the masses inside the red areas, acting actually like bandits."<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, Communist local forces in Fujian were more decorations of the revolution than useful tools for military struggle. While the CCP local leaders realized that a powerful military force was the decisive factor for the success of the revolution (For example, Deng Zihui in his reminiscences concluded that it was only after the Longyan people set up their armed forces and with the help of the Fourth Red Army that the revolution in the county been guaranteed success),<sup>44</sup> the main force Red Army was the only military strength they could count upon. But Zhu-Mao's Fourth Red Army could not stay in Fujian all the time, not to mention that it was by no means capable of meeting every military need in the whole province. In early 1930, to create Minxi's own "main force," six county Red Guards were reorganized into six regiments of the "Minxi Red Army." In June, under instructions from the CCP Central Committee, the force was reorganized into the Twelfth Red Army with more than 3,000 men. However, the purpose of the CCP Central Committee in setting up the army was to promote the first success for the revolution in Guangdong. The Twelfth Red Army right after its establishment was ordered to move into Guangdong. As mentioned in Chapter One, it was quickly routed there.

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the Twenty-first Red Armies were set up in Minxi. But the two armies had even poorer combat effectiveness and suffered heavy defeats one after another in Fujian and in Guangdong. By September, the Twentieth-first Army had merely 400-odd of its 3,000 men left. In October, the remnants of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Armies were reorganized into the New Twelfth Red Army. Two weeks later, it was routed by local corps in Yongding county and most of its men deserted.<sup>45</sup> The local Red Army of Minxi "has for a long time had the reputation of being a 'bean curd unit,'" a party document admitted in late 1930.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, it is a fact that the Communists in rural Fujian had never established a local armed force which was strong enough to defend the "red areas" in case the main force Red Army was absent. The soviet regimes, once they were set up, relied upon the support of military force. The incapability of the local armed forces, however, put Zhu-Mao's Fourth Red Army in the position of having to be the sole lifeguard of the agrarian revolution in Fujian--a role the Fourth Army could not always perform. "Once the Red Army left, the Soviet areas became shaky."<sup>47</sup> In short, the under-performance of local armed forces was one of the fatal defects of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian.

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## 2 The Party and Secret Societies

There were some famous secret societies in the southern provinces of China around the turn of the century, such as the Triads. The Triads had originated in Fujian and still existed there in the early decades of the century.<sup>48</sup> The most important derivation of the Triads in Fujian was the "White Fan Society" (*Bai Shan Hui*), which had been one of the participants in the revolution overthrowing the Qing Dynasty.<sup>49</sup> However, it seems that there was no interaction between the CCP and those famous secret societies in Fujian during the agrarian revolution, since no record of interaction of that kind can be found in the available historical materials and reminiscences.

However, the CCP had many interactions with the other kind of secret societies, which were more local, less "secret", but more militant, such as the "Big Sword Societies" (*Dadao Hui*) in the Mindong area.

Not until the early 1930s had the Communist armed struggle developed in Mindong. Interestingly, to a great extent, this struggle was staged by using the popular superstitious societies as a tool.

The first armed force set up in that area was a "secret guerrilla force" in Fu'an county in 1931. The main undertaking of the force was *datuhao*, through which it could obtain money to maintain itself. It was difficult for this armed



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force to expand. One year later, it remained small in size, with about twenty men and several guns.<sup>50</sup>

But the Communist armed forces expanded rapidly in 1933. This was mainly due to the idea of using the form of superstitious societies to involve the peasants in the party's cause. Through the Communist-led peasant unions, the CCP activists set up many "Red Ribbon Societies" (*Hongdai Hui*) as one faction of the Big Sword Society in the villages. Except for the fact that it would fight for the CCP, the "Red Ribbon Society," in terms of its organizational structure and nature, was no different from the other factions of the Big Sword Society.<sup>51</sup>

In conjunction with the Communist guerrilla forces, the "Red Ribbon Society" became the main armed force of the Communists in Mindong in *datuhao* and fighting against the local corps and the other factions of the Big Sword Society which had become the enemies of the revolution. The Red Ribbon Society played a significant role in the military confrontation. Once in November 1933, a CCP guerrilla force was encircled by a company of the Nationalist marines while the force was taking a rest in a temple. At that critical point it was the Red Ribbon Society which came to its rescue by gathering about 200 men from the villages nearby and attacking the marines from the rear. By the end of 1933, the members of the Red Ribbon Society swelled to several tens of thousands.<sup>52</sup>

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special role in dealing with the Big Sword Society. For the Communists this was a strategy of "combating poison with poison." The members of both the two superstitious societies were called "*fabing*," "fighters with magic arts." In the battles against the Big Sword Society, the Communist guerrilla forces let the members of the Red Ribbon Society stay in front with primitive arms such as spears and long poles with hooks. When they were in a melee with the soldiers of the Big Sword Society, who also used primitive arms only, the guerrilla soldiers killed the enemies with gunshots at very short range.<sup>53</sup>

Later on, many branches of the Red Ribbon Society were reorganized into the Red Guards or guerrilla forces, or even the Red Army. But it took a while for the party members to "educate" those former "fighters with magic arts" to abandon their belief that spells and cinnabar could make them impenetrable to bullets.<sup>54</sup>

Similar popular societies existed in Minxi too. Besides the Big Sword Society, there were also "Boy Soldiers" (*Tongzi Jun*), who went into battle naked except for a red apron on their bellies. Like the adults, they drank liquor with cinnabar before going into battles. In 1934, several thousands of "Boy Soldiers" were organized to fight against the Communist local Red Army in Yongan county.<sup>55</sup>

However, there are no materials suggesting that the CCP in Minxi also organized its superstitious organizations, although the Communist activists there knew how to use the

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form of secret societies to mobilize the peasants. As early as in the later part of 1927, when the local warlord ruling Minxi, Lan Yutien, was trading his toleration of CCP activities for his popularity among the peasants and young intellectuals, Communist activists such as Deng Zihui organized some peasants into secret peasant unions while open unions were also being set up.<sup>56</sup> At about the same time, Zhang Dingcheng in his home county set up a semi-armed secret society called the "Iron and Blood League" to draw in the peasants. By early 1930, when the landlords began to set up "martial arts" associations as preparation for further confrontation with the CCP-led peasant organizations, Zhang and Deng set up theirs too.<sup>57</sup>

Evidently, the tradition of secret societies had given a hand to the Communist activists in developing the Communist revolution in rural Fujian. Like the bandit gangs, however, the existence of the secret societies also had a negative influence on the Communist revolution. For example, factionalism, which marked the secret societies, was inherited by the CCP organizations, particularly by those in the Mindong area where the CCP had close connections with the societies.

The CCP organizations in Mindong were characterized by their "splits." The party branch was first set up in Shouning county in 1931. By 1933, the party branch began to use the "Big Sword Society" to stage insurrections. But before long, the party members in the county split into the "east-

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ern faction" and the "western faction," and bogged down in internal conflicts between the two sides.<sup>58</sup>

More serious splits happened in the higher level of the party organizations in the area. In the fall of 1932, a party cadre by the name of Zhan Ying led an opposition campaign against the Party Committee of the Central County, which was supposed to be the highest authority in the Mindong area. The confrontation between the two sides was so acute that it almost led to bloody internal strife.<sup>59</sup>

In 1934, another split occurred at the highest level of the party organization. Some party cadres headed by Shi Lin denied the authenticity of the Central County Committee and set up their own committee. In addition to splits, internecine killing occurred also. The head of a guerrilla force, who was formerly the leader of a large-scale pro-Communist peasant rebellion, was secretly executed by the party because some party leaders doubted (without grounds) his loyalty to the revolution.<sup>60</sup> In summarizing the lessons learned in the past, a party document written in 1945 attributed the splits in the party in Mindong to the social conditions there, particularly the "ubiquitousness of bandits and secret societies."<sup>61</sup> The logic used in the document was that bandit gangs and secret societies tended to act independently. They were organizations which had difficulty taking unified actions. Perhaps the document was correct in making that statement.



### 3 "Peasant Consciousness" as a Specter

The CCP leaders did not like peasants. As noted in Chapter Three, the CCP Provincial Committee of Fujian once declared that the peasantry was actually a "remnant class in a feudal society," and warned its members against the "peasant consciousness" which would harm the revolution if it was left unchecked, although the peasants might have a "great revolutionary function." The CCP was the party of the workers, not the peasants, nor was it a worker-peasant party.

Although the main human resource in the rural revolution was the peasants, peasants must be led by workers, according to the CCP philosophy. Therefore, "the labor movement is of first importance for the party," the Fujian Provincial Committee told its members in 1928; "without doing a good job in the labor movement, the final takeover of political power by insurrection will be impossible."<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, "workers" could hardly be found in rural Fujian due to the contemporary economic pattern. Industrial workers were few even in the city of Xiamen, which was one of the most modernized cities in Fujian.<sup>63</sup> Ironically, the quality of the workers in Fujian seemed not to be up to the standard of the CCP. Take those in Xiamen as examples: "Most of the workers in Xiamen have a romantic life, and strong hooligan mentalities," while they had little "class consciousness," a CCP cadre reported. By "romantic life" the

cadre meant gambling and visiting prostitutes. In addition, many workers, particularly the boatmen in Xiamen, who were also classified by the CCP there as "workers," were famous for their armed feuds between rival lineages.<sup>64</sup> The CCP found itself in a dilemma in Fujian: how could people like this be the leaders of the proletarian revolution?

Workers were even more difficult to find in the rural counties, and they were not as qualified as the CCP had expected either. In Yongding, the major category of "worker" the party could find was shop assistants, and there were less than one hundred total of them in the three biggest market towns of the county. Their revolutionary morale was so disappointing to the CCP cadres that they did not dare to ask their bosses for a raise in wages even when the CCP regimes had demanded that the bosses give it to them.<sup>65</sup>

Owing to the scarcity of "workers," the CCP in rural Fujian had to make do with peasants in recruiting party members in spite of the peril of "peasant consciousness." As a result, peasants composed the main body of the party membership in rural Fujian. According to statistics compiled by the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee in March 1931, there were a total of about 1,300 party members in Fujian. Although the number included those in cities such as Fuzhou and Xiamen, only eighty-two were "workers," while 1,092 were peasants. "Intellectuals" accounted for 176. In the case of Yongding, peasants accounted for 270 among the 300 party members. The rest were all intellectuals. None was a worker.

In Longyan, things were a little "better": among the 300 party members, there were ten workers.<sup>66</sup>

Being a party mainly composed of peasants gave the party leaders a good excuse for the party's mistakes and failures. For example, in 1931 the CCP Minxi Special Committee attributed problems inside the party such as corruption to the lack of a "proletarian foundation of the party." "The frailty of the proletarian foundation is the most serious weakness of the party in West Fujian," it asserted. "In the countryside, there are a lot of rich peasants among the peasant party members...worker party members are also mainly handicraftsmen. As a result, rich peasant consciousness and petty-bourgeois consciousness, conservatism, and localism have dominated the party."<sup>67</sup> Another party document made the point more straight-forwardly: "Currently, peasants constitute a majority in the party. Peasant thinking governs everything. Lax working style, loose organization, phenomena like these are evident before our eyes."<sup>68</sup> Whether or not "peasant consciousness" was really responsible for the problems the local party had, it was a fact that the local party apparatus, including the soviets at each level in rural Fujian, was weak and slack.

In the latter part of 1930, in Minxi alone there were several hundred party branches with over 7,000 party members.<sup>69</sup> However, this huge machine was not functioning very well. "Party bureaus at each level are very slow in implementing circulars and notices from the superiors. Sometimes

they even do not implement them at all." Besides, party branches "rarely discuss and follow resolutions and instructions from their superiors." In the villages, many party branches did not know how to hold a meeting. To the CCP, no meeting meant no party work was done. Furthermore, party organizations at each level rarely abided by party discipline. Decisions by the superiors to punish their subordinates were usually ignored by the party branches.<sup>70</sup>

It seems that some party members did not realize that they should follow the decisions made by the party organs. The "idea of organization" (*zuzhi guannian*), to use a Communist cliché, did not exist in the minds of those party members. At the end of 1928 in Yongcun, a county east of the Minxi area, the party branch in the East District decided to summon a huge gathering and to incite the masses at the gathering to execute two "lackeys" of the despotic gentry, Lan and Zheng. A party member by the name of Chen opposed the decision and asked that Zheng be released on bail, because Zheng was his sworn brother and savior. After the appeal was rejected by the branch, he threatened to rescue Zheng by force.<sup>71</sup>

Keeping the threat in mind, the leaders of the branch ordered the gathering to be heavily guarded. However, when the sentence of execution was declared at the gathering, another party member stood up and asked for the release of Lan. The dispute turned into an exchange of blows and the gathering became a melee.<sup>72</sup>

The case in Yongcun shows that relationships between sworn brothers could be an ingredient in the party's decision-making. So were memberships in families, lineages, or clans. Although according to the later land policy of the CCP landlords and rich peasants were not allowed to receive a share of the redistributed land, it was believed by the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee that in practice, even in those early-established soviet areas, relatives of despotic gentry and landlords were given shares of land while rich peasants, strong clans and lineages, as well as staffs of the soviets, also got good lands.<sup>73</sup>

It was evident that the local Communist intellectuals constituted the backbone of the local party organizations in rural Fujian. A small group of zealous, active intellectuals trying to tow a huge group of peasants who most of the times were sluggish and reluctant to move, this was the reality of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian, and it was also the reality inside the party. A few local intellectuals were the locomotives in the party committees and branches leading groups of peasant party members. The lack of capable cadres was a chronic problem of the party in rural Fujian since the source of radical local intellectuals had dried up and it would take too much effort and time to train peasant party members into capable local leaders with "proletarian consciousness."

One of the consequences of this situation was that once the only leading figure of a party committee or branch could

no longer play his role, the whole organization became paralysed. In early 1930, the Minxi Special Committee complained that the party's efficiency in the area not only did not improve but in fact deteriorated. One of the reasons for the decline was that those comrades in key leading positions got sick often.<sup>74</sup> For example, after Comrade Xie, who led the Longyan County Committee, got sick, the work of the committee actually came to a full stop. Most of the leading comrades of the Yongding County Committee were also sick and work there was not really active. As to Changting and Liancheng counties, revolution developed there late and there had been too few cadres to take on the task. The Wuping County Committee had not been restored since the last setback because its leading figures were "afraid of death." In short, in Minxi, "not only was there not a single party branch playing a leading role among the masses, but some of them are even worse than the masses." The cure for this problem was to "set up a training program to create cadres," it was believed. But owing to many factors, this did not work.<sup>75</sup> It was beyond the capability of the local party organizations to carry out such training program. Only after Zhu-Mao's Red Army had come and with the help of the CCP Battle Front Committee of the army, "party cadre training classes" were tried at the district and county levels. However, little achievement was made because "the instructors were all outsiders who cannot communicate [with the trainees], and the trainees are too ignorant and too naive,"

according to a CCP report of August 1929.<sup>76</sup>

If the party organs at the level of county and below could exist at least nominally in days without mishap, they would totally collapse when the situation turned against the Communists. After the failure of the armed insurrections in 1928, party organizations in Pinghe, Longyan, Shanghang and Chongan totally disbanded and could not be restored until Zhu-Mao's Fourth Red Army arrived in Minxi to re-start the revolution.<sup>77</sup>

#### **4 The Performance of Other Communist Organizations**

The first set of soviets was set up in the villages of the Xi'nan township in Yongding county, August 1929. From then on, soviets were set up in each place occupied by the Red Army.

The performance of the soviets set up at each level was at least as disappointing as that of the party organs. As a matter of fact, the "soviet" and the "party" were often essentially two names for the same entity. It was always the case that party leaders of a certain county, or district, or village were also the leaders of the soviet at the same level. Although usually the head of the party and the head of the soviet were not the same person, this was merely a "division of labor inside the party." For example, prominent local party leaders such as Zhang Dingcheng, Deng Zihui, and

Guo Diren all used to be the heads of soviets or "Revolutionary Committees" at county level.<sup>78</sup> Actually, the party in Minxi always "ran the whole show" for the soviets, as party authorities themselves had criticized.<sup>79</sup> Since the party organizations at each level were lax and ineffective in their work, there was no reason to expect the soviets to be better. In addition to failing to fulfill the tasks given by their superiors, the county soviets would abandon everything and flee away desperately when their leaders heard that an enemy force was approaching. The chairman of the Changting Soviet was dismissed from his post and subjected to further investigation and punishment in August 1932 for fleeing several times.<sup>80</sup> The dismissal was done as a warning to all the CCP cadres. But two months later, Guo Diren, then the chairman of the "Revolutionary Committee of Longyan" (another name for the county soviet), suffered the same punishment for the same reason.<sup>81</sup> Fleeing when there was rumor that the enemy was coming, then coming back and enjoying liquor and meat when they felt it was safe, this was a pattern of some leaders of county soviets.<sup>82</sup> In Yongding county, a district soviet simply paid money to the enemy force for its protection.<sup>83</sup>

After all, the purpose of the soviets at each level was to do the "housekeeping" work for the party. From April to August 1933, the Fujian Provincial Soviet had the following work: recruiting soldiers for the Red Army, raising money and grain for the Red Army, promoting spring and summer



farming, and carrying out the "Land Inspection" campaign. It was said that "big success" had been achieved, although there were still many "mistakes and shortcomings." Among them were fulfilling the task of raising money and supporting the war "passively," and doing a poor job in expanding and strengthening local armed forces. Yet the most serious problem of the Provincial Soviet was carrying out the work of *sufan* "perfunctorily." Consequently, "desertion and defection happened frequently in the Soviets and the armed forces." Among those defected people were chairmen and ministers of the soviets at each level.<sup>84</sup> In early 1931, a party complained that there was no "real soviet political power has been set up." And if there was any, it only existed on paper, or in leaflets."<sup>85</sup> Party documents kept complaining about the performance of the soviets at each level from 1930 to 1934 when all the soviets were crushed. Maybe the party was too critical toward the soviets. But the complaints were indications that the soviets had never performed well enough to meet the expectation of the party leaders.

As to the CYL, it seemed to have little to do in rural Fujian, particularly in places where there were party committees or branches which took care of everything in the "red areas." While party documents talked about the situation and performance of the party, the soviets, and the Red Army or the Red Guards, they rarely mentioned the name of the CYL. Usually the CYL was not a subject in the reports

from the inspector sent by the CCP Center to Fujian either. The only report by an inspector mentioning the situation of the CYL in August 1931 had this to say:

About the organizations of the CYL in Fujian, there are still a provincial committee and two municipal committees in Fuzhou and Xiamen respectively (the one in Xiamen has been canceled now). The work basis in the two places are equally weak. There were several branches in schools in Fuzhou. But they died as soon as the students went home for summer break...In Xiamen there are a few more CYL members. But neither city has a branch which can function. Counties on the outskirts...have CYL county or special committees. But most of them are organs in name [only]...<sup>86</sup>

The negligible role of the CYL was probably why the party leaders once decided to merge the CYL committees and branches into their equivalents of the party.<sup>87</sup> The only revolutionary feat of the CYL mentioned in the reminiscences of the CCP veterans was smashing the idols of popular gods in 1927 and later.

It is believed by some scholars that the peasants in the Central Revolutionary Base were "actively involved, in fact as well as in theory, in the process of land confiscation and distribution," and that this was in part as a result of creation of two "auxiliary organizations under the county Soviet: the poor peasant corps and the farm labor union."<sup>88</sup> However, this argument seems contrary to the facts. One of the mistakes of the party organizations criticized by the party leaders at the higher level in 1931 was

"failing to really work on the revolutionary masses, to organize and lead assiduously various mass organizations, particularly red labor unions, farm labor unions, poor peasant corps. In addition, organizing and working on working women and youth have been totally neglected or even canceled."<sup>89</sup>

If one scrutinizes the documents generated by the CCP in Fujian, one can find that before the CCP-led armed insurrections, peasant unions was a subject discussed by the party leaders seriously, because at that stage the party needed the union as a form to mobilize and organize the peasants. As soon as soviet regimes were set up, organizing "peasant unions" was dropped from the party's agenda. Although "mass work" (*qunzhong gongzuo*), including organizing poor peasants and farmhands, and women into unions or associations, was emphasized from 1929 to the collapse of the CCP regimes in Fujian, it was basically only a slogan. This was logical. After the establishment of the Communist regimes, the first concern of the CCP was to keep them alive through military struggle, and the Red Army and the Red Guards were much more important than poor peasant corps, farmhand unions and women's associations, as far as military struggle was concerned. Even if the local party leaders at the county and village levels wanted to pay attention to those "mass organizations," they just did not have the time and energy to, since they did not even have enough energy and capability to keep in good shape the party and the

soviet organizations, the local Red Army and the Red Guards, which were at the top of the party's work agenda. The role of poor peasant corps in land redistribution and inspection was never mentioned in party documents or the reminiscences of those revolutionary veterans.

On the contrary, in 1932, the party in Minxi was criticized for "running the whole show of everything," including doing everything for "mass organizations, ordering and forcing [the masses] to join demonstrations, and mocking and cheating the masses."<sup>90</sup> One example of "running the whole show" for mass organizations was raising the wages of farmhands to unreasonably high levels, which aggravated the economic difficulties in Minxi after the soviets were set up, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter. The function of the boy scouts, or the "Young Pioneers" as they were sometimes called, was supposed to be to "support the Red Army in combat." But even the local Red Army and the Red Guards were undisciplined, not to mention the boy scouts. So all they could do was to smash the idols in temples, and to prevent people from celebrating their weddings or births of son. These kinds of "revolutionary actions" had helped to alienate the peasants from the revolution. In Yongding, the Young Pioneers were "used by rich peasants" of one lineage to dig up the ancestral graves of another lineage (digging other lineage's ancestral graves was a form of revenge or provocation used commonly in lineage feuds.) The lineage whose ancestral graves had been destroyed was "led by rich

peasants too," a CCP document alleged. Therefore, the victimized lineage killed the head of the Young Pioneers.<sup>91</sup>

Contrary to the CCP's purpose in organizing the "mass organizations," many of these organizations were complicating the revolution and consuming the party's already-inadequate human and material resources. It is imaginable that most of the local party cadres could see the truth. The problem was that under the "red terror" nobody dared to speak out the truth except for Yang Wenzhong, the secretary of the CCP Xinquan County Committee. In his letter to the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee in early 1933, he frankly said that there had been too many varieties of "mass organizations." One person had more than ten of them to join. The variety of mass organization had made "dizzy" the party cadres working in the lower levels. They had simply lost any idea how to handle the work. As a result, those organizations could not be sound and became "empty signboards." He hence recommended cutting the variety of mass organizations to as few as possible. He also spoke out about the fact that the numerous but poorly organized and trained local armed forces not only failed to support the Red Army in combat, but also messed up operations.<sup>92</sup> Needless to say, he was persecuted by the CCP chiefs.

The only economic "mass organization" worth mentioning was cooperatives (*hezuo she*). Facing the decline of commercial activities and shortages of material inside the red areas caused mainly by the CCP radical policies such as

extorting and persecuting merchants, the CCP leaders in Fujian decided in 1929 that cooperatives should be set up to promote commerce. About one year later handicraft cooperatives were also ordered to be formed so that industries such as paper-making could be restored. These handicraft industries had come to a full stop after the CCP regimes were set up, and a lot of people had lost their jobs.<sup>93</sup>

Cooperatives were supposed to be set up by the "masses" under the supervision of the soviets. Unfortunately it was proved after one year that the policy did not work in mitigating the economic difficulties. The achievement of cooperatives could "hardly be found," a Minxi Soviet circular signed by Zhang Dingcheng complained. As usual, rich peasants' participation in the cooperatives was blamed for the failure of the program, although the fact that "governments at each level have never paid attention to the cooperatives" was also said to be a reason.<sup>94</sup> The only solution to this failure that the party leaders could think of was to expel all the rich peasants from the cooperatives. Since this was a wrong cure for the sickness, it was not going to help. Seeing that the "masses" were not very interested in joining the cooperatives, in the middle of 1933 the party leaders decided to "develop and change the work on cooperatives," that is, to make "the cooperative movement a broad mass movement," and to use cooperatives as an instrument to "unify and educate the masses, so that the leadership of the proletariat can be realized."<sup>95</sup> At that point the coopera-

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tives movement had been pushed for almost four years without success, and the economy was getting worse and worse in the red area. But the CCP leaders were still living in illusion and satisfying themselves by repeating Communist cliches.

### **Summary**

In the case of the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian, it was true that the presence of the Communist organizations mainly explained the expansion of the CCP. For example, it was the party branches and peasant unions which made the insurrections possible. However, the role of organizations was not always the same. Things became different after the establishment of the Communist regimes. Then it was the presence of the Zhu-Mao Red Army that mainly explained the expansion of the CCP. Although it is true that before the upsurge of Communist insurrection in Minxi in 1928, the CCP activists could set up some organizations such as the party branches and secret societies like the "Iron and Blood League," they all collapsed after the failure of the insurrections and seemed unlikely to revive. All the other Communist organizations, including the CCP organs, the soviets, and those "mass organizations" such as the farmhand unions, were set up with the direct or indirect support of the Fourth Red Army. What was more significant was that they would collapse again without the backing of the Red Army.



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The survival of the Communist organizations, which represented the "expansion of the CCP" in the red areas in Fujian, was at the mercy of the local balance of military power between the Communist and anti-Communist armed forces. Unfortunately, the CCP local armed forces failed to perform the role expected by the CCP leaders, leaving the main force Red Army to be the only asset on the Communist end of the scales of military power, while the opposite end had many assets.

That the CCP organizations had to depend on the main force Red Army for survival had another cause, which was that these organizations, particularly the party county committees and branches, were really too loose and weak to play the role they were supposed to if the revolution was to succeed. The ideal of the Communists confronted the reality of rural Fujian. CCP organizations in rural Fujian inevitably inherited some of the characteristics of bandit gangs and superstitious secret societies. Although great efforts were made by the CCP central and provincial leaders to make the organizations more effective in serving the revolution, few results were achieved.

The role of "mass organization" in Fujian was by no means as important as some existing literature asserts. Although organizing the masses into all kinds of organizations could make a semblance of the Communist revolution, these "empty signboards" of organization did not help the revolution as much as some people have believed.

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While failing to help the revolution very much, the excessive organizations were also burdens on the CCP. This was also true economically. Since it was required by the party leaders to recruit "workers and peasants" into the soviet, a village soviet in Shanghang county recruited more than 100 people to become its staff.<sup>96</sup> Although the village might be an extreme case, feeding the government staffs plus huge numbers of local Red Army and Red Guard soldiers did require huge amounts of money. Even those "mass organizations" such as the Young Pioneers needed money to maintain their existence. The desperate Minxi Soviet at the end of 1931 issued an act which ordered that the numbers of staff in the government at each level should be reduced to as few as possible, and banned the governments from extorting money from the masses or economic organizations such as the co-operatives. It also ordered that beginning from January 1932 the local Red Army had to raise money for itself, and that the local governments at each level would no longer have the responsibility to provide it with funds and food. In the meantime, the governments would shake off their burden of funding all the "mass revolutionary organizations."<sup>97</sup> By the latter part of 1932, even the Young Pioneers were ordered to set up an armed force to go to the "white areas" to *datuhao*, so that children's organizations could have money to support themselves.<sup>98</sup> It seemed that by that time even the CCP leaders in Fujian had realized that those organizations like the Red Guards and the Young Pioneers were nothing but liabili-

ties and should be forsaken. Asking the "mass organizations" to raise money for themselves through *datuhao* in "white areas" almost meant letting the organizations die, because as the one-time local party leader Fu Baicui pointed out in 1931, only Zhu-Mao's Fourth Red Army had the capability of fighting in "white areas."<sup>99</sup>

## CHAPTER 6 THE FINAL COLLAPSE OF the MOVEMENT

In the early summer of 1930, to prevent the rice price from plunging inside the CCP-controlled areas, the Minxi Soviet headed by Zhang Dingcheng ordered "grain redistribution bureaus" to be set up in each village. At the time of the rice harvest, the bureaus were supposed to buy rice from peasants (except for former rich peasants) at a price higher than the one in the markets. As to the capital for the purchase of rice, the soviet ordered that it should be borrowed from those "rich families" in the villages. The money would be returned to the families the next year. But where to find the money to return? "Don't worry," the Minxi Soviet said. "By then the revolution must have succeeded in the whole country, and all the foreign banks and factories in the cities will have been confiscated...Why should we worry about finding the money to return?"<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately things did not develop as Zhang Dingcheng and his comrades had expected. After managing for three years, the rural revolution in Fujian collapsed fifteen years before the day of the nationwide victory of the Communist revolution.

The Minxi Revolutionary Base survived until the end of November 1934, when the last county seat in the area, Tingzhou, was occupied by Nationalist troops. Five months later,

the highest offices of the CCP in Fujian and Minxi were eliminated, marking the end of the Communist agrarian revolution in the province.<sup>2</sup>

These things happened during Jiang Jieshi's Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaign, at the beginning of which he used six regular divisions to attack Minxi. In a crucial battle at Songmaoling Mountain, in September 1934, the Red Army, including the central Red Army in Minxi, was defeated and the military situation in the Minxi area became hopeless for the Communists. The Communists also suffered heavy defeats in the other parts of the Central Revolutionary Base, and the CCP Central Committee, as well as the main force of the Red Army, had to abandon the Central Base and begin the Long March in October 1934.<sup>3</sup>

Evidently the military disparity between the CCP and the GMD, as well as the new strategy adopted by the GMD forces, were the main explanations for the final defeat of the Communists in the Central Base, which included Minxi. While there were only 100,000 Red Army soldiers in the base at the beginning of the Fifth Campaign, Jiang Jieshi deployed his 500,000 elite forces.<sup>4</sup> Different from the previous four campaigns, Jiang this time adopted the strategy of blockhouse warfare, aimed at squeezing the Red Army out of the base step by step. The CCP today blames Wang Ming's "wrong line" featuring "military adventurism" for the military defeat of the Red Army. In fact, it is more likely the right explanation that the GMD's new strategy made ineffec-

tive the Red Army's traditional strategy of mobile warfare which, under Mao, featured the tactics of "luring the enemies in deep and eliminating them one by one." This time, the Nationalist troops would never advance farther than several miles away from their strongholds. How could the Red Army "lure the enemies in deep?"<sup>5</sup>

However, it should be noted that military superiority was not the sole factor ensuring Jiang's final victory in suppressing the Central Base. The previous chapters have revealed all kinds of intrinsic difficulties and crises the CCP was experiencing in Fujian, particularly in Minxi. With time passing by, these difficulties and crises deteriorated or even exploded, weakening further and further the CCP's political, military and economic power in the areas under its control. On the eve of Jiang's Fifth campaign, the Communist regimes in Fujian had become a wooden house with all its pillars and walls rotten. Jiang's Fifth campaign was merely the gust that finally brought it down. Understanding the process and causes of the final collapse of the revolutionary bases will undoubtedly help with finding the answers for the questions this dissertation tries to explore.



## 1 The Insoluble Problems

Although money supply had been one of the major concerns of the CCP local leaders ever since the county and village soviets were set up in Minxi, food supply was not a problem for them until the later years of the regimes in the area. Due to the Nationalist economic blockade against the red areas and the CCP's policy of banning export of rice from its domain, in 1929 and 1930 there was an oversupply of rice in some districts in Minxi, and the price of rice dropped to a great extent during the harvest seasons. This was why the Minxi Soviet got worried and tried to do something to raise the price so that the peasants' enthusiasm for producing rice would not decline.<sup>6</sup>

But by the middle of 1933, the "Minister of National Economy" of the Chinese Soviet Republic had to appeal to "mobilize the masses to overcome the current grain difficulty" and pointed out that the places with the worst difficulty were areas around Ruijin and Changting where rice had become scarce and feeding the Red Army had become a big problem. To meet the needs of the Red Army and the party-government apparatus before the beginning of the next harvest season, which was three months away, at least 50,000 *dan* (about 25,000 kilograms) of rice needed to be collected. But the local soviets at each level thought they could collect only 15,000 *dan*.<sup>7</sup>

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dramatic expansion of the Red Army and the party-government apparatus, and the shortage of labor in the villages caused by war casualties, the army draft, and peasants' flight from their hometowns. In 1933, among the 554 able-bodied males in Upper Caixi village, Shanghang county, 485 had become Red Army soldiers or CCP government staff, leaving only twelve percent of the village's able-bodied men to do farming. From 1932 to 1934, 2,500 men were drafted from the Nanyang district, Changting county. By the time the Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaign began, only a few able-bodied men were left in the district.<sup>8</sup> Thus, as large numbers of grain-producers in the villages shifted to become pure grain-consumers on the battlefield, a grain shortage was inevitable.

The CCP's response to the grain shortage was to "borrow" rice from the peasants. In April 1933, *Hongse Zhonghua* (The Red China), the organ of the Chinese Soviet Republic, appealed to the masses in the Central Base to "lend" 20,000 *dan* of rice to the Red Army "immediately." At the same time, the organ asked the masses to "lend" rice without "asking for a receipt," "just like returning public bonds to the government without asking for the capital back."<sup>9</sup>

Needless to say, here the term "borrow" actually meant "commandeer." "Rush campaigns" (*chongfeng yundong*) to collect grain for the Red Army were launched several times during the Fourth and the Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaigns. Sometimes they were carried out under the

name of "collecting the land tax in advance." In the fall of 1934, the land tax of 1936 had been "collected in advance."<sup>10</sup>

Of course, as in the process of selling "revolutionary public bonds" earlier, mandatory quotas were used as the major method of "rice-borrowing," and the job of collecting rice was backed by severe punishment for those "counterrevolutionaries" who failed to provide grain. Actually, anyone who showed reluctance or discontent towards the extraction could be executed as "counterrevolutionaries." *Hongse Zhonghua* often cheered the effectiveness of stern suppression on "counterrevolutionaries" as a means to promote the rice-borrowing campaigns.<sup>11</sup> Ridiculously, although collecting taxes years in advance was an old method often used by the warlords, and was resented very much by the peasants, the CCP documents claimed that the method was used this time because the "worker-peasant masses" asked for it.<sup>12</sup>

Shortages of other materials also worsened during the later years of the CCP rule in Fujian as well as in Jiangxi. The already-reluctant newly-drafted Red Army soldiers were required to bring with them to their units sheets, rice bowls, and other personal items. Among those shortages the most vexing one to the CCP and the general public in the red areas was the shortage of salt. While in the nearby "white areas" one yuan could buy seven *jin* of salt, in the red areas it could buy only 0.75 *jin*.<sup>13</sup>

Financial problems also developed. Since increasing the

source of income had become extremely difficult, the CCP leaders had to try their best to reduce the expense of the regimes at each level. In July 1931, the Minxi Soviet decided to reduce the food allowance of the government staff and Red Army soldiers due to "financial difficulties." Beginning from the first day of August, each staff member's food allowance would be reduced to fifteen fen (100 fen equaled one yuan) per day, and that for the Red Army and the Red Guards soldiers to eighteen fen.<sup>14</sup> Twenty days later, the soviet decided to lower the allowance again. Each soldier of the armed forces would get eight fen per day, plus 750 grams of rice. A staff member could get only five fen plus the same amount of rice. This decision was made because "the finances in Minxi have long been in difficulty. It has become the most serious and most difficult problem to be solved recently, because the income has become less and less while the expenditure has been increasing."<sup>15</sup> By the end of the year, the soviet could not even provide rice for the Red Army and the Red Guards. They should manage to feed themselves through *datuhao*, although the food allowance of the government staff was still considered to be the responsibility of the soviets.<sup>16</sup> By early 1933, things became even worse and the CCP Central Committee had to ask the government staff to reduce their allowance "voluntarily" and even give up their food allowance entirely. It was said that the workers of the postal service in Shanghang county set a good example for the others in that regard by giving up the food

allowance first and then "asked" the government not to pay them for their service.<sup>17</sup> Putting its own words into the mouths of the "masses" was a old practice of the CCP. Behind the CCP-made pretence that "the masses are supporting the revolution zealously," one can hear the moans of the masses under the desperate economic extraction.

Accompanying the financial and food difficulties during the later years of CCP rule in Minxi was the exhaustion of sources of troops. It was not only because there were fewer and fewer able-bodied men left in the villages to be drafted, but also because peasants were more and more reluctant to join the Red Army when it was facing the growing military pressure from the GMD, while the CCP needed to expand its troops desperately. In addition to the fact that, as mentioned in previous chapters, peasants and local CCP cadres tried to escape from being drafted as much as possible, desertion became a headache for the party leaders. Beginning from the end of 1931, the Minxi Soviet issued wanted notices one by one to arrest deserted soldiers of the Red Army. Among the wanted deserters were average soldiers, platoon leaders, and even political commissars. The circulars asked the soviets at each level to arrest the deserted army men if they were spotted, and send them back to the army to be "punished severely."<sup>18</sup>

But severe punishment did not stop desertion. In the middle of 1932, the problem became even worse. The headquarters of the CCP Fujian Military District claimed that more

than 1,500 of its soldiers and commanders had deserted in a few months. The Fujian Provincial Soviet blamed local governments' covering up for the rampant desertion. Some local governments, it was said, set up guards companies on their own, and recruited exclusively those deserted soldiers and commanders. The Provincial Soviet ordered that no government, local force unit, or "revolutionary organization" was allowed to enlist deserted Red Army soldiers or commanders, otherwise severe punishment would be implemented.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, punishing the deserted now became punishing the local soviets and party organizations. This new development indicated that not only the Red Army in Fujian was falling apart, but also the CCP and soviet government organizations.

Unfortunately, threatening the local governments with "severe punishment" did not work either. At the end of the year, local governments were still accused by the provincial government of encouraging desertion by "asking for leaves for Red Army soldiers" and assigning deserted soldiers to positions in the local organizations. "To struggle firmly against desertion" was still the major task of the CCP in Fujian.<sup>20</sup>

Enduring economic hardship, endless warfare, and particularly the intensified economic extraction and forceful conscription, could combine to exhaust the peasants' last illusion that the CCP's myth of victory would come very soon and a happy life would begin for everybody. However, what

most effectively destroyed the peasants' last faith in the CCP and its revolution were the internecine purges of the CCP in Fujian. Among these internecine purges, the most typical ones were the campaigns to eliminate the "Social-Democratic Party" and the "Third Party" which began in early 1931 and lasted actually to the final collapse of the Communist regimes in Fujian.

## **2 The Purge of the Third Party and the Social-Democratic Party**

In the documents on the CCP in Fujian, the term "the Third Party" first appeared in a "outline for propaganda" issued by the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee in July 1928. The document implicitly linked the name of the "Third Party" to the "Provisional Action Committee of the GMD" and the "Chinese Revolutionary Party." The "Third Party," the document said, had a reformist program which had no future and the party would finally degenerate into "running dogs of the bourgeoisie." The document therefore asked the CCP organizations to guard against the "influence" of the "Third Party" and to "propagandize" intellectuals and young students that only the CCP's line of armed insurrection and setting up soviets could lead China to "national liberation."<sup>21</sup> It is evident that at this point the CCP Fujian Provincial leaders' attitude toward the "Third Party" was still moderate.



However, the CCP's anti-Third Party tone became more and more vehement later on, and the definition of the term "Third Party" became more and more general and unclear. A resolution adopted by the "Emergency Convention of the CCP Fujian Provisional Provincial Committee" in October 1928 accused Chen Zhukang of being the head of the "Third Party" in Fujian.<sup>22</sup>

Born in Zhangping county, Fujian, Chen was once a zealous Communist. From April to June 1928, he was the Acting Secretary of the CCP Fujian Provisional Provincial Committee. Suddenly he changed his belief and threw in his lot with Zhang Zhen, one of the most important local warlords in Fujian, and was appointed by Zhang to the position of tepaiyuan (specially-appointed official) in charge of "suppression and pacification" affairs in Minxi.<sup>23</sup> He was the highest-ranking CCP leader in Fujian who had betrayed the party so far. But the resolution did not give any clue why he had been accused as a "Third Party" member or whether he had joined or set up the "Third Party." The definition of the "Third Party" given by the document was that it "looks revolutionary but is actually a running dog of Jiang Jieshi." But this time only the Chinese Revolutionary Party was identified with the Third Party by the document.<sup>24</sup>

Historically the Chinese Revolutionary Party was founded by Sun Yat-sen in July 1914, and was reformed into the GMD in October 1919. Around 1928 it is true that some Nationalist leftists and ex-CCP members headed by Tan Ping-

shan, one of the founding fathers of the CCP, had tried to organize a party with the same name, but the efforts had foundered by 1929. In fact, although he advocated the need for an autonomous party, Tan still emphasized a close association of the party with the CCP.<sup>25</sup>

The term "Third Party" properly referred in China to the party whose formal name was "the Provisional Action Committee of the GMD" (PAC), officially set up in 1930 by Deng Yanda, who was a GMD leftist and a close friend of CCP top leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhu De, and Zhou Enlai. The party was informally established to oppose Jiang Jieshi and his policies in 1927, and Tan was one of its two primary leaders until 1930. Deng and Tan both had flirted with Marxism and cooperation with the CCP. The party also advocated "military struggle by the masses" to overthrow Jiang Jieshi's regime. But Tan emphasized a relationship with the CCP closer than Deng wanted. This was why Tan tried to establish his Chinese Revolutionary Party in 1928. The major difference between the PAC and the CCP was that the former could not accept the leadership of the CCP or its ideology. Anyhow, the influence of the PAC was limited to the circle of intellectuals in major Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing and Nanchang. Fujian was not a province where the party was active. Furthermore, Deng himself was arrested and executed by Jiang in 1931.<sup>26</sup>

Deprived of Deng's commanding leadership, factional strife burst uncontrollably to the surface of the PAC. The

party even failed to elect a leader.<sup>27</sup> During that period there was a periodical called *Shehui Xinwen* (Social News), which often ran articles viciously criticizing the Third Party's members. Huang Qixiang, one of the alleged leaders of the post-Deng Third Party, was accused of being the man who had helped instigate the "red peril" and the "red bandits" (the CCP) in China. The periodical also had reports of the Third Party's activities. But the authenticity of the reports is highly doubtful.<sup>28</sup> In any case, evidently the real "Third Party" was not as dangerous to the CCP as it wanted its members to believe. It shared the Marxist ideology and the Leninist theory of party organization with the CCP. It also took Jiang Jieshi's government as the archenemy. And most of the time, the Third Party sought cooperation with the CCP.

Having no genuine information about what the "Third Party" was, the impression of the "Third Party" given by the CCP leaders to the party members could only be that of a phantom rather than a real entity. The resolution only spoke evasively about the "Third Party" while warning seriously against the potential harm it might do to the CCP in Fujian.

The peril of the "Third Party" loomed larger by early 1929. In January, the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee issued an "anti-Third-Party" circular. In the past several months, the circular asserted, the Third Party, Zhang Zhen, and "Old Jiang" (Jiang Jieshi) had melted into each other and become a single entity. Although the Third Party was becoming more

and more reactionary, its influence was expanding daily with the expansion of Zhang's influence. (The rationale here was that no reactionary force could expand on its own, without outside help.) The activities of the evil party had spread from around the city of Zhangzhou on the coast to the Minnan and Mindong areas.<sup>29</sup>

More details about the Third Party now came out, provided by the Provincial Committee. It was a party of the bourgeoisie and had an organ called *Zhangchao Ribao* (the Zhangchao Daily) in the city of Zhangzhou. The nature of the party was reformist, and what it had done in Fujian was: first, staging the anti-Japanese and treaty-abolition movements; second, organizing trade unions and arbitrating labor-capital disputes; third, setting up peasant unions and demanding rent-reduction; and fourth, attracting students by setting up intellectual societies. Yet the most serious crime the evil party had committed was the organization of local corps and the suppression of the Communists. The recent arrests and executions of some CCP members by the Nationalist authorities were again attributed to the work of Chen and some other traitors of the CCP.<sup>30</sup>

However, again the party circulars in 1929 failed to give clues as to how the "Third Party" was organized, not even the real name of the evil party this time. Chen and a few other ex-communists were again made into the incarnations of the accused party. The term "Third Party" remained a general, elusive and phantom-like concept. One difference

between the accusations against the evil party made in 1928 and the one in 1929 was that in the latter the "Third Party" was criticized along with the *Gaizupai* (the Reformist Clique)<sup>31</sup> of the GMD.

But the fear of the Third Party expressed by the documents was real. "We should never underestimate the role of the Third Party," the Provincial Committee warned. The Third Party was "evidently the most cunning reactionary class, and the worst enemy of the revolution!" And fighting against the Third Party had become an urgent and inevitable task for the party in Fujian, it was said.<sup>32</sup> Slaughter of "Third Party" members began at least by the middle of 1929. "Many" of the "members of the Third Party" were found and executed by shooting in Minxi, and it was said that after Third Party members were shot in the villages, the revolution there developed rapidly.<sup>33</sup>

It seemed that the fear was caused by what the CCP leaders believed were the moderate programs of the alleged "Third Party" and the Reformists. "They [the running dogs of the Third Party] say that the GMD has been corrupt, and the CCP is too radical for our times. Only the Third Party is just right, neither radical nor conservative. That is why the masses who have got lost are fooled by them."<sup>34</sup> It was believed by the Provincial Committee that in fact the "class consciousness" of part of the masses had been "blurred" by the Third Party, and "part of the revolutionary struggles have been pacified."<sup>35</sup> In short, the CCP leaders in Fujian

were nervous about the alleged Third Party because they thought that its political program might be more appealing to the general public than the CCP's. However, this most hateful enemy remained elusive and too remote to be reached.

Finally by early 1931, the monster of fear and anger over the "Third Party" found its prey, which, ironically, turned out to be inside the CCP. It was called the "Social-Democratic Party (SDP)"

The revolution in Minxi suffered heavy losses in the latter part of 1930. The writers of party history in China today attribute the setbacks to the so-called "Li Lisan Line."<sup>36</sup> Li was then the actual power-holder of the CCP. But back in that period, the CCP leaders in Fujian attributed the setback to, among other things, sabotage by the counter-revolutionary organizations inside the CCP. Therefore, a "Committee for Elimination of Counter-revolutionaries" (*Sufan Weiyuan Hui*) (CEC) was set up in Minxi at the end of 1929, marking the beginning of a witch-hunting campaign. At first, the party leaders looked inside the party and the Red Army for the "Reformists," the "Third Party," the "Trotsky-ists" and the "A-B League."<sup>37</sup> Some Red Army soldiers were executed as members of the accused parties and groups.<sup>38</sup>

One day in January 1931, a gathering was held in Minxi with the soldiers and officers of the Twelfth Red Army to commemorate the Communist sages such as Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxembourg. When the speaker mentioned the names of the Social-Democratic Party and the Second Comintern in Germany,

to which Liebknecht and Luxembourg once belonged, some ignorant Red Army soldiers shouted "long live the Social-Democratic Party" to express their loyalty to the revolution.

The slogan was considered "reactionary" by the leaders of the CCP in Minxi, since the SDP in Germany was believed by the CCP leaders to have deteriorated into "revisionism." Eleven commanders and soldiers who shouted the slogan were arrested as "elements of the SDP" and interrogated with torture. They were forced to confess that there was a SDP in Minxi with Fu Baicui, whose name has been noted from time to time in the previous chapters, as the "secretary of its Minxi Special Committee," and Lin Tingmei, one of the organizers of the insurrection in Yongding, and now a regimental political commissar in the Twelfth Red Army, as the "head of its Propaganda Department." Many of the soldiers were executed soon, starting the campaign to *su shedang* (eliminate the SDP).<sup>39</sup>

The campaign showed its unusually bloody character from the beginning. Zhang Dingcheng, then the Chairman of the Minxi Soviet Government, in a circular signed by him declared that the SDP was a "combination of dirty dog parties of the SDP, the Reformist Clique, and the Third Party," and that to "eliminate these most dangerous enemies" had become the most important task of the party in Minxi. All of the members of these "dog parties" must be hunted and eliminated without mercy, otherwise they would engage in "cruelty

towards the revolutionaries."<sup>40</sup> Two weeks later, Zhang issued another circular, which required the soviets at each level to concentrate their efforts on the *su shedang* campaign, and stipulated some criteria for deciding if an arrested "member of the SDP" should be executed or not. The criteria were so ambiguous and general that they actually gave permission to the soviets at each level to execute everyone they declared was a SDP member. For example, it said that any member should be shot who "hides inside a party organ or the Red Army and often makes trouble."<sup>41</sup> This was a legal clause that left too much room for interpretation.

From January to the end of February, only sixty-odd CCP cadres (most of them young intellectuals) and Red Army men were arrested as members of the SDP. But the purge escalated rapidly with urging from the Minxi Soviet. Beginning from March, *su shedang* became the main work of all the Communist organizations in Minxi, including the party bureaus, the soviets, army units, and even schools, hospitals, peasant unions, the Young Pioneers, and the Boy Scouts. CEC were set up in all of these units, and had independent power to convict and execute SDP members. The campaign really went out of control. Almost everyone became suspicious. A local Communist could be arrested as a SDP member because he or she was from a "bad" family, or had once made a mistake in work, or had some kind of "conservative ideas."<sup>42</sup> Torture was the only means used in interrogation. Later on, even



torture was not necessary. After someone was arrested, in the trial there would be only one question asked: "are you a SDP?" No matter whether the answer was "yes" or "no," the person would be executed immediately.<sup>43</sup>

Killing "SDP members" became a competition among the CCP organizations to show their loyalty to their superiors. One would be considered to have the most resolute revolutionary stance if one arrested the largest number of SDP members and executed them with the shortest delay. In this atmosphere, the head of the CEC of Yongding county executed more than 100 people by himself. Guo Diren, then the Secretary of the CCP Minxi Special Committee, went to Shanghang county himself in June 1931 and arrested all the members of the CCP County Committee except for the secretary. Also in that county, the members of a district committee of the so-called "Young Communist Party" (an alternative name for the Communist Youth League) were all executed. So were all the members of a newly-set-up replacement committee, and the members of a third committee set up to replace the second. At last, only a female cook and a liaison man were spared. Then a fifteen-year-old CYL member was appointed to work in the committee, but three days later he and the liaison man were also arrested as SDP members.<sup>44</sup>

Sub-organizations of the SDP were also "uncovered." If a comrade gave another a cigarette, the giver and the taker might be arrested for organizing a "Cigarette League." A man and a woman chatting together might be charged for being

members of the "Love League." Some people drinking wine together were arrested as members of a "Wine-Drinking League." Although most of the victims were activists of CCP organizations, when the campaign developed a lot of innocent ordinary people who had not participated in political affairs were also victimized. According to the reminiscences of a soldier in an execution squad, once he was ordered to execute a young peasant in his twenties who had never gone beyond five kilometers from his home village in his life, and had never heard of the SDP. He had been arrested three days earlier when he was farming his land, and then beaten and sentenced to death.<sup>45</sup>

By the time the purge was basically over in March 1932, more than 6,000 people had been executed, including more than half of the members and alternate members of the Executive Committee of the Minxi Soviet. Some chiefs of the CEC at each level, including the Chairman of the CEC of the Minxi Soviet, Lin Yizhu, whose name usually appeared with Zhang Dingcheng's in the government circulars and decrees, were also arrested and executed as SDP members in the latter part of the purge.<sup>46</sup>

Although the internecine purge slowed down after March 1932, it actually lasted until late 1934 when the main force of the Red Army left Jiangxi and Fujian and the Minxi Revolutionary Base collapsed. Not until August 1983 was the injustice of the *su shedang* campaign really rehabilitated when the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee declared that the

SDP, the Reformist Clique, and the A-B League had not existed at all in Minxi at that time and that those who had been executed wrongly were to be recognized retroactively as revolutionary martyrs.<sup>47</sup>

A similar campaign for the "elimination of counter-revolutionaries" was staged in the Minbei base a little later, in the latter part of 1933. Several thousand CCP cadres and Red Army soldiers were executed as members of the so-called A-B League or "Reformists." There were several top party leaders in the base who had once advocated that attention should be paid to personal hygiene of the comrades, and that they should wash their feet before going to bed and often do something to keep fit. When the campaign began, they were charged with organizing a "Health Society," which was said to be a sub-organization of the Reformist Clique. Most of the chiefs of CCP county committees and county soviets, as well as Red Army commanders at the levels of regiment and up were executed.<sup>48</sup>

As was mentioned before, the Communist revolution developed in Mindong several years later than in Minxi. In turn the campaign for the "elimination of counter-revolutionaries" was pressed there late. It began at the end of 1935, and it was not the local CCP leaders but rather the Provincial Committee who wanted to stage the campaign. But the pattern was basically the same. Those who had once liked to complain about everything were arrested as members of the A-B League. Torture was routinely used in interrogation.

Several months later, the local leaders there realized that there must be something wrong in so doing and put an end to the campaign. To rehabilitate those who had been treated unjustly, they executed those who had formerly been in charge of the CEC at each level, thus actually continuing the internecine purge.<sup>49</sup> As in Minxi and Minbei, the campaign did self-inflicted heavy damage to the CCP organizations in Mindong.

As to the reason for this almost unbelievable irrationality, Communist historians today always attribute it to the "leftist line of Wang Ming."<sup>50</sup> However, as we have seen, the fear of the "Third Party" could be traced at least to late 1928 and 1929, when the "revolution in Minxi" was allegedly under the guidance of the "correct line of Chairman Mao."<sup>51</sup> Besides, the CCP Central Committee did not know what was going on in Minxi until the later part of 1931, when it found that the "revolutionary situation" in Minxi was deteriorating and the "red area" was shrinking.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the widespread purge in Minxi had no direct association with the "line" of top party leaders.

The real reasons might have been multiple. The *shedang* campaign might be viewed as an echo of the purge carried out by Stalin in Russia in the early 1930s. It could also have been an imitation of the anti-AB-League campaign in southern Jiangxi.

However, above all, the purge should be viewed as a desperate effort made by the party leaders in Fujian to find

scapegoats for the deteriorating situation, and as an explosive consequence of the crises which had been developing in the previous years. As a Communist veteran points out in his reminiscences, the momentum for the CCP leaders in Minxi to launch such a purge can be found by taking a look at the situation of the revolution in Minxi. In August 1930, the Twelfth and the Twentieth Red Armies in Minxi were ordered to launch offensives unsuccessfully in Hunan and Guangdong respectively and both suffered heavy casualties. While these two Red Armies were absent from Minxi, large areas in the base, including the county seat of Longyan, where the office of the Minxi Soviet was, and many other county seats were captured by the local warlord forces. "Counter-revolutionary elements" in the base became "very active," it is said, while large numbers of Red Army soldiers and party members defected or deserted. What made the party leaders in Minxi more upset was that due to the poor performance of the Red Army, the worsening economic difficulties, and the increasing economic burden on the peasants, the "masses" in the soviet areas had become "disappointed and discontented" toward the CCP and the Red Army.<sup>53</sup> Under these circumstances, the CCP leaders needed someone to be blamed for all the failures, and to do something to divert people's attention. They asserted that it was the counter-revolutionary organizations inside the party which incurred the losses and defeats, and set up the CEC to begin the witch-hunting.<sup>54</sup>

What needs to be noted here is that the social condi-

tions in Fujian enabled the cruel campaign for "elimination of counter-revolutionaries." The party in Fujian was composed mainly of two categories of people: the young intellectuals driven by their obsession with a radical revolution, and the ignorant, mostly passive, peasants, many of whom, as mentioned in Chapter One, were considered by local party leaders to be bandits or hooligans. The purge was launched and conducted by those zealous local Communist intellectuals, such as Zhang Dingcheng, Lin Yizhu and Guo Diren (who later replaced Lin to preside over the *su shedang* campaign and continued the bloody internecine purge).

The ignorant majority of the party members ensured that the utterly groundless assertions about the SDP would prevail. It was not necessary for the creators of the SDP phantom to tell the party members what exactly the accused party was. Actually nobody would ask. Some of those who were accused of being SDP members shouted "heroically" the slogan of "down with the SDP" and "long live the CCP" on their way to the execution ground.<sup>55</sup> As reflected in contemporary party documents, what the local party leaders knew about Marxism was the theory of class exploitation and class struggle, which was believed to be a life-and-death struggle and should be carried out cold-bloodedly. Ironically, it was the local party leaders in Mindong who claimed that they "knew nothing about Marxism"<sup>56</sup> at that time who showed the least enthusiasm in the campaign to "eliminate counter-revolutionaries."

As for the peasant party members, they could hardly even understand the meanings of the CCP cliches. Once at a meeting, Mao Zedong asked all the "land ministers" (*tudi buzhang*) from Fujian the question "what is a *liumang* (hooligan)." Since the word *liu* meant moving around, one minister who was previously an illiterate "poor peasant" answered that people cutting firewood or carrying loads on their shoulders were hooligans. As these two kinds of people were actually considered by the CCP as among the best supporters of the revolution, the minister only narrowly escaped execution on the spot.<sup>57</sup> Party members like him could only be deceived by their superiors.

Furthermore, despite its irrationality, the purge was embraced by some of the party members. A secretary of a CYL county committee had an affair with and wanted to marry a woman who already had a husband. He achieved his aim by reporting to the soviet that the woman's husband was a SDP member. There was also a wife who had adultery with a man. To get rid of her husband, she, in collusion with her lover indicted the husband for joining the SDP. The husband was executed.<sup>58</sup>

The purge was carried out with great severity. The most severe methods of torture were used in trials. Executions were mostly done with spears or swords. An eyewitness even saw a Red Guard soldier being executed by torture: a bunch of needles were stuck into his chest, and his nose was plugged so that he could not breath well and died slowly. To

stamp out the source of trouble completely, in some places the relatives of the alleged SDP members were also killed off. These lucky ones were expelled and their properties were confiscated. Execution was carried out so often that dogs in the villages would rush to the execution fields when the horn was blown (Blowing horns was part of the CCP execution ceremony).<sup>59</sup> In a sense, the internecine purge was a product of a marriage of the young intellectuals' overflowing revolutionary enthusiasm and the peasants' ignorance.

The result of the purge was the opposite of what the CCP leaders in Minxi expected. The morale and combat capability of the Red Army plunged, since, as in the case of the Twelfth Red Army, more than half of its officers were killed. As a result, the red area shrank to a great extent. The purge weakened the party and the Red Army in Minxi, and paralyzed most of the CCP organizations. Yet the most significant damage was to the image of the CCP and its revolution. The irrationality and cruelty showed in the purge, and the fact that the party could accuse even its loyal followers as "counterrevolutionaries" frightened the general public, and eroded their belief in the party and the revolution. Many fewer people were willing to join the party and the CCP army. Out of fear of persecution by the CCP, many peasants turned to worshipping Buddha and gods for protection. Wives stood up to prevent their husbands from participating in the revolution, and fathers did the same to their



sons. Many CCP cadres malingered at home and refused to work. In Dagan village, Shanghang county, eighty-three CCP or CYL members fled to the "white area" for fear of being persecuted as SDP members. Cai Duan, the secretary of the county committee, tried to do something to reverse the deteriorating situation, but he himself was soon suspected by the others as a SDP member. He committed suicide in disappointment.<sup>60</sup>

The purge also caused rebellions inside the CCP armed forces. Out of the fury against the outrages committed by the party leaders, some units of the CCP local forces rebelled against the CCP authorities openly. One typical case was the "Kengkou Incident."

In May 1931, the party representative, deputy commander and more than 100 soldiers of the Third Battalion of the Shanghang Red Guards were arrested as members of the SDP. Believing that they were all innocent, the commander of the battalion, who was ordered by the county CEC to guard those arrested, released all of them. The party leaders in Minxi decided that the commander and all of his men should be arrested and punished. The whole battalion declared its defiance of the order in Kengkou village and appealed for the release of other detained alleged SDP members. The party in Minxi answered their appeal with the gunfire of the Twelfth Red Army. As a result, the Third Battalion was annihilated under the name of "suppressing the counter-revolutionary rebellion." The atrocity prompted many Communist

cadres, including the deputy commander of the county Red Guards regiment, and the chairman of a district soviet, to defect to the enemy side. Many ordinary soldiers of the Red Guards simply shifted to the local corps.<sup>61</sup> An extreme case was that the CCP secretary of the Fujian Provincial Committee, Lu Deguang, having been scared by the brutal *su she-dang*, defected with 100 taels of gold.<sup>62</sup> The internecine purge thus greatly undermined the position of the CCP in the red areas in Fujian, and the damage could not be repaired in the shortterm.

### 3 Not a Glorious Ending

It was while the base areas were reeling under these internal political and economic crises that Jiang Jieshi's Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression Campaign," which was stronger than the previous campaigns, arrived. In referring to Communist rural revolution in China, Mao Zedong has a well-known saying: "a single spark can start a prairie fire."<sup>63</sup> That has been proved true. But what is also true and what he does not mention is that a prairie fire can die down to embers again. That was what actually happened to all the main CCP "revolutionary bases" established in China before 1934. The Minxi base and other smaller ones in Fujian were not exceptions.

To some extent Mao was right when he argued that the

real "bastion of iron"--the impregnable fortress--was nothing other than the masses' support of the revolution.<sup>64</sup>

Unfortunately, this "real impregnable fortress" had never been developed, at least in Minxi, and the support of the masses for the Communist revolution in the area further declined when the revolution dragged on. As serious crises developed inside the Communist movement in the red areas before the final collapse of the revolution, they actually aided the opposition, helping to prepare the way for Jiang's final military success.

In May 1933, Jiang Jieshi launched his Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign with unprecedentedly large forces (500,000 strong at the beginning), and he himself took the responsibility of command. What was more important was that this time Jiang carried out his campaign with a new approach. In April 1933, Jiang represented his new thinking in this way:

...Our battle against the red bandits is not a contest on the number of soldiers, the quality of arms and military supplies. Had that been the case, we should have beaten the red bandits, and eliminated them long ago. The real contest are first on organizations, particularly the organization of the army and the general public. Second, on the training, that is, the way to train the soldiers and the general public. Third, propaganda. That is, to raise the spirit of our army and people with our belief. The fourth is discipline...The fifth is military strategy... Perhaps these are the aspects in which the Communist bandits have been stronger than us...and these are the starting points in our search for the future strategy and tactics for the elimination of the bandits.<sup>65</sup>

Based on his new thinking, Jiang emphasized that more attention should be paid to the political aspects than military ones. That is to say, more measures should be taken to win over the masses. In the meantime, resolution and patience characterized his military strategy this time, and the basic tactic was blockhouse warfare.

The Central Red Army, for reasons mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, suffered heavy losses at the beginning. A new military strategy had been tried and failed, including the strategy of *liudong fangyu* and *duancu tuji*, that is, a mobile defence combined with surprise attacks if opportunities were found. The situation quickly became critical for the survival of the Central Revolutionary Base.

But in Minxi, there was an Indian summer to enjoy. The Nationalist Nineteenth Army, which had long been in Fujian to suppress the Communist forces, decided to revolt against Jiang and reached a secret truce with the Red Army in Fujian in late October. Therefore, while in south Jiangxi the air was full of the rumbling of artillery, the Red Army and the "white" army were burying their hatchets. In mid-November 1933, the Nineteenth Army openly rebelled against Jiang. Denouncing Jiang's conciliatory policy towards the Japanese aggression against China, the heads of the Nineteenth Army declared the establishment of the "People's Revolutionary Government of the Republic of China" in Fuzhou. This govern-

ment sought peace and cooperation with the Communist Soviet Republic in Jiangxi. The pressure on the eastern front of the Central Revolutionary Base was released.<sup>66</sup>

The Mindong area, where the Communist revolution had been half-dead, even enjoyed a belated heyday of the "land revolution." Jiang's Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" Campaign against the Central Base, and later the suppression of the Nineteenth Army's revolt, attracted all the Nationalist regular armies from Mindong, providing a good chance for the CCP to realize its goals. Peasant armed insurrections were launched in Fu'an, Xiapu, and many other counties. By the spring of 1934, soviet regimes were set up in ten counties, although the main towns and cities in the area were still in the hand of the Nationalists. Land redistribution was also carried out in some counties. The Mindong Soviet Area at its peak had a population of 200,000-plus.<sup>67</sup>

Unfortunately the gleam of hope for the Minxi base to survive the Fifth Campaign disappeared quickly. Furious, Jiang Jieshi decided to "encircle and suppress" the Nineteenth Army first before he finished the Red Army. The heavily-outnumbered Nineteenth Army was routed quickly and disbanded itself in Minxi in February, while the CCP leaders refused to give it aid when it desperately needed it.<sup>68</sup>

The final defeat became inevitable when Jiang concentrated his forces again to deal with the Red Army. Seeing no hope to defeat Jiang's Fifth "Encirclement and Suppression" campaign, the CCP center under Wang Ming decided to abandon

the Central Base. In the middle of October, the CCP center and the main strength of the Red Army left the base for the Long March, leaving about 3,000 local Red Army and guerrillas to "persist in struggle" in Minxi. By April 1935, the highest CCP party and government institutions of Fujian--the CCP Provincial Committee, the Provincial Soviet Government, and the Provincial Military District--were thoroughly smashed in Minxi, and their leaders were either killed or captured and executed later. The two regiments of the local Red Army directly under their command were annihilated. The whole area of Minxi was occupied by the Nationalist armies, ending the most glorious chapter of the Communist rural revolution in Fujian.<sup>69</sup>

Yet there were still some "lost" units of the Red Army in Minxi, like the Eighth Independent Regiment of the Fujian Military District. It was dispatched by the party center before the beginning of the Long March to manoeuvre in the area east of Minxi, in an attempt to pin down part of the enemy armies attacking the Central Base. Another unit was the Ninth Independent Regiment. Like the Eighth, it was sent by the party center to the area east of Minxi. This force did not know until the end of 1934 that the main body and the party center had left the Central base. These two regiments plus some other scattered local Red Army units in Fujian, about 1,500 strong in early 1935, became the main body of the CCP armed forces in Minxi to uphold the Communist revolution which had turned back to sparks again.<sup>70</sup>

And the embers were quite different from those in 1927 and 1928. Back in that time, Zhang Dingcheng, as a lower-level party cadre, could easily mobilize several thousands of peasants to stage an armed insurrection. But now, when this one-time chairman of the Fujian Provincial Soviet was sent back by the CCP Central Branch Bureau (which was to lead the Communist revolution in the former Central Base after the party center had left) to Minxi to get the party's undertaking organized, the only supporters he could find were a couple of his former subordinates and some relatives of Red Army soldiers. Most of the peasants had lost their faith in a Communist victory. They had become fed up with the fickle CCP policies and wars that had ruined almost every aspect of their lives. The attitude of former "revolutionary masses" toward the CCP was so cold that Deng Zihui and other party leaders were shocked when they found that they could not even find someone to be a guide and could not find anyone from whom they could buy food, in a place which not long before had been the soviet area!<sup>71</sup>

Compared to the guerrilla forces formed with those peasants who fled from the failed insurrections in 1928, the two Red Army regiments and other units now in Minxi were much stronger and more capable of fighting. However, the guideline of the party leaders in Minxi this time could only be "preserve our strength." That meant a passive survival-oriented course would be taken.

Unfortunately, even preserving the strength was a

difficult task. The remnant Red Army in Fujian was greatly outnumbered. When the Communist-led insurrections failed in attacking the towns in 1928, the CCP members could still retreat to villages to set up soviets and create small "red areas". But now the Red Army could hardly find a place to hide. Even remote mountains were not safe. The Nationalist forces would follow them anywhere and encircle them. "Peasants' support of the revolution," if it had existed before at least on the surface, now disappeared. The local CCP could not find food to buy, nor could they find peasants willing to be guides.<sup>72</sup> In September 1935, the Ninth Regiment suffered heavy losses, and the rest of the unit was finally routed in November.<sup>73</sup> The Eighth survived better by dividing itself into smaller groups to hide in different places. The period from October 1934 to the end of 1937 was later called by the CCP itself the "period of three years' guerrilla warfare," and the struggle in Fujian, as in all of southern China, was "extremely arduous." Although the Communist armed forces managed to survive the period, the general tendency of the Communist movement in rural Fujian was a decline. Had not the Fujian Nationalist military and civil authorities finally allowed the CCP remnant armed forces to join the Anti-Japanese war in January 1938, the Communist sparks in Minxi might have completely gone out.

The upsurge of the Communist rural revolution in Mindong ebbed quickly too. The soviet regimes existed for only one year or so. Beginning from November 1934, Jiang



Jieshi deployed 30,000 regular troops to wipe out the Mindong red forces, which had only 2,000-plus soldiers. The chiefs of the local Communist party and army often argued against each other over the strategy and tactics in dealing with the enemy's "encirclement and suppression" campaign. What was even worse was that in a few months most of them were killed or defected. Easy come, easy go. Defection became fashionable. Ma Lifeng, the chairman of the Mindong Soviet Government, was murdered by the commander of a local Red Army regiment which had defected to the Nationalist side. Some districts under the local soviet also shifted sides.<sup>74</sup> Even the commander of the main force of the local Red Army--the Independent Division of Mindong--tried to defect and was executed by the local party leaders. By the spring of 1935, the whole Mindong base was occupied by the Nationalist army, and the Communist-led armed forces dwindled to about 300 people scattered in isolated spots. Although some loyal local party members managed to maintain the armed forces and party activities in the following three years, and the party leaders even had the time and energy to carry out a *sufan* campaign there in 1936, as was the case in Minxi, the Communist revolution in Mindong could not get anywhere until early 1938.<sup>75</sup>

Only the Communists in Minbei suffered relatively fewer losses, although the Minbei Revolutionary Base stopped existing right after the Red Army main force left on the Long March. While the party and government apparatus in

Minxi and Mindong were under the leadership of the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee and the Fujian Soviet Government, the party organizations in Minbei were attached to the Provincial Committee of Min-Gan (Fujian and Jiangxi provinces). When the Fifth campaign began, the party and government apparatus evacuated from the county seat to the countryside. After the Central Red Army left Jiangxi, the local Red Army there shifted to guerrilla warfare which was integrated with the guerrilla warfare in Jiangxi and Zhejiang provinces. Unlike the local Red Army in Minxi and Mindong, the Communist armed forces in Minbei were not routed by the enemy, although the commander-in-chief of the Minbei Military District betrayed the revolution and went over to the enemy side, and as in Minxi and Mindong, the guerrilla warfare in Minbei was sporadic and was unable to become another Communist upsurge.<sup>76</sup>

#### **4 The Aftermath of the Revolution**

From the establishment of the Soviet in Minxi to the final collapse of the Communist regimes in the same area, six years had passed. What changes had the Communist agrarian revolution brought to the society in the area?

As in the case of civil wars the world over, destruction of dwellings, creation of vast stretches of uncultivated land, inflation, disease, depopulation and economic

depression were common problems in the Jiangxi part of the Central Revolutionary Base right after the collapse of the Communist rule.<sup>77</sup>

Similar problems existed in Fujian. Eyewitnesses who went to the Minxi area saw the devastation of war.<sup>78</sup> However, the most serious problem in the post-soviet areas in Fujian seemed to be the significant decrease of population. Many people in the area were killed in the protracted wars, or executed by the CCP for different reasons. Many others ran away to somewhere safer. It was said that in the whole Minxi area except for Longyan county, many houses in the villages were deserted. This was particularly true in Changting.<sup>79</sup> The Nanyang district in late 1928 had more than 13,000 people. In 1935, there were only about 9,000 left.<sup>80</sup> When the Nationalist troops recaptured the Minbei area, they found that economic productivity would not recover unless large numbers of immigrants moved to the area.<sup>81</sup>

Some areas in Minxi, such as the Shizhong, Wanan and Fusu districts in Longyan, had never been occupied by the CCP armed forces. In these districts the land system remained intact. Of course, the old land system had been destroyed where the land redistribution had carried out.<sup>82</sup> What the Nationalist government tried to do in those areas in the post-Soviet period was first to "return the land to its owners," but this was hard to do for several reasons. First of all, many former land owners had been killed or had fled. Second, in many areas land deeds had been destroyed

and hence there was no evidence for the former land owners to use to claim their land back. Third, and probably the most important, in the past six years many areas had been under the rule of the CCP and the GMD alternatively several times. Those land owners who dared to take back their already-redistributed property when the area was re-captured by the Nationalist troops would suffer severe punishment if the CCP came back. When the Soviets were entirely crushed in late 1934, former land owners were not sure how long the Nationalist regime would last, and were reluctant to claim their land back.

It is believed by Benton that the Communists in Minxi put up a dogged and effective resistance to the effort of returning the land. The Communists instigated the peasants to play tricks such as answering vaguely or inconsistently if they were asked to name the original owner of their fields.<sup>83</sup> Benton's assessment of the role of the remnant Communists in resisting the campaign of returning the land might be exaggerated, considering that after the Long March, Communist activities existed only sporadically in Minxi. However, it is clear that a combination of factors made the implementation of the policy to "return the land to its owners" impossible.

In addition, the price of land dropped significantly in the period right after the collapse of the Communist regime. In Longyan, in the pre-Soviet period the price for a *mu* of land was two to four hundred yuan, but in the late 1930s, it

dropped to merely one hundred. In addition, farming efficiency dropped too. Since the peasants did not know how long the land would belong to them, they would not treat the land properly.<sup>84</sup> A "land revolution" made land less valuable. This was probably an unexpected achievement for the CCP leaders.

Having failed to return the land to its previous owners, the Nationalist authorities in Minxi implemented the policy of "jikoushoutian," that is, to redistribute the land according to the population of each township. Although the authorities met many difficulties in fulfilling the goal (for example, many peasants lied in reporting how much land they currently owned), the land was redistributed at last.<sup>85</sup>

Therefore the Communist revolution in Minxi did destroy the existing land distribution system, but it failed to eliminate the tenancy system--the claimed main goal of the CCP agrarian revolution. The land redistributed to the peasants by the Nationalist authorities was forbidden to be sold, but it could be lent out. The peasants in the former soviet areas quickly picked up the old tradition of tenancy and became landlords. According to statistics collected in the late 1930s, tenants accounted for eighty percent of the total number of peasants in Changting county, seventy percent in Pinghe, forty percent in Yongding, and ninety-two percent in Liancheng, while the average figure in Fujian was 37.6 percent.<sup>86</sup>

The rehabilitation plan carried out by the Nationalist

government in the former-soviet areas included the aim of restoring local control by revamping the *baojia* system and promoting public education, among other things. Over the nature and the result of rehabilitation efforts scholars have made different comments.<sup>87</sup> However, whatever the conclusion of the debate might be, one fact is that after the CCP was defeated in Fujian, social chaos became a more complicated problem in the former-soviet areas due to the effects of the Communist revolution.

The Communist revolution brought new ingredients to feuds among the people. The life-and-death revolutionary "struggles" had created new hatreds among persons, families, clans and villages. Those who felt they had been treated wrongly tried to avenge themselves. Having experienced the revolution in which the CCP encouraged the people to be ruthless towards their enemies, villagers in the post-Soviet period became much more irritable and cold-blooded than before. Murders became common in the villages, and many of the cases had their roots in the revolutionary period.<sup>88</sup>

Politics could turn friends into enemies. Chen Zhensun and Chen Jiashou were friends in the village called Subang in Longyan. When the Red Army arrived at the village in the winter of 1929, the two friends joined the Red Guards but Jiashou defected before long and became a bandit somewhere far from his home village. Zhensun, who remained in the Red Guards, led some soldiers to arrest Jiashou's family members but only captured Jiashou's concubine. After the crushing of

the Communist regimes, Jiashou returned home and became the head of the local corps. He captured Zhensun and executed him in the spot where his concubine had been arrested.<sup>89</sup> This is merely one example to show how the Communist revolution had aggravated the feuds in the villages.

Bandits were as rampant as before, if not even worse. The Big Sword societies had not existed in the Minbei area before the Communist revolution spread there. When the revolution did spread to the area, many peasants set up Big Sword societies to defend their villages. The Nationalist authorities were not very happy to see the growth of these societies there, but since they were set up for anti-Communist purposes, they were tolerated. After the Communists had gone, these societies turned their depredations on the general public and acted as bandit gangs, creating a lot of trouble for the Nationalist governments.<sup>90</sup> In Yanshi township, Longyan county, bandits were even more rampant than before the revolution.<sup>91</sup> So were armed feuds, which did not become less vicious after the Communist rule. The armed feuds between the Lai and the Huang lineages in Yongding became so rampant after the collapse of the soviet regime there that the Nationalist authorities had to call in regular troops to suppress the fight and disarmed the two lineages.<sup>92</sup>

## Summary

What the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian experienced in the last few years before its end suggested that the movement was exhausting its vigor and embracing its death. With so many fatal, developing problems such as the shortage of grain and men, and the lack of support of the general public, it is hard to imagine that the Communist regimes in Fujian could have lasted very long even without the Fifth Campaign of "Encirclement and Suppression."

The CCP leaders themselves in Fujian understood that the real solution to the economic plight, and to the shortage of human resource was the expansion of the revolution, or rather, the expansion of the revolutionary bases. All the other measures they had adopted were "expedient." "It is an illusion that the social and economic problems in Minxi cannot be completely solved," the party leaders warned. "The fundamental solution is the expansion of soviet political power."<sup>93</sup> However, expanding the soviets first of all required the expansion of the Red Army, while it was very difficult to expand the Red Army if the soviet areas did not expand, otherwise recruiting too many men into the Red Army would aggravate the economic difficulty by increasing the peasants' burdens and reducing the already-inadequate labor force. The revolution thus bogged down in an insoluble interaction. This was the dilemma the CCP faced. Yet it was only one of the many dilemmas the CCP faced in Fujian, and



probably also in all the other revolutionary bases in China during the period in question. It was those dilemmas that made the vitality of the CCP's revolutionary bases questionable. This subject will be discussed further in the final conclusion of the dissertation.

## CONCLUSION

There have been many attempts to analyze and explain in global terms the causes of the development of the Chinese Communist revolution as a whole. The class conflict school, for example, has argued that an intensification of class struggle was the crucial cause of the revolution's success.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars, among them most notably Chalmers Johnson, have downplayed the effect of class struggle as a political environment for the Communist success by stressing other factors such as peasant's nationalism aroused by the Japanese invasion in 1937 which, according to Johnson, underlay peasants' support for the revolution, and hence accounts for the success of the CCP during the wartime period.<sup>2</sup> Still other scholars feel that the best explanation for the growth of the various local revolutionary movements in various parts of China lies in the nature and extent of the Communists' organizational activities and mass mobilizational policies.<sup>3</sup>

Although one or another of these hypotheses may work well when applied to certain specific cases, none of them has proven completely satisfactory in interpreting the Chinese revolution as a whole.<sup>4</sup> In retrospect, this is not surprising. China is a vast country whose socioeconomic and political circumstances vary widely from place to place, and

from time to time. In addition, the revolution was not a single, well-defined phenomenon, but rather the sum of the results of multiple clusters of complex and fluid processes interacting over a period of many years.

Given these facts, it is both more feasible and one hopes more productive to choose a limited geographical area and a relatively short time period to examine in detail conditions which might have helped or hindered the development of a specific part of this lengthy and diverse revolutionary process. It is for this reason that I have chosen Fujian between 1924 and 1934 as the focus for this study.

Based upon new materials,<sup>5</sup> this study has reexamined in the context of this local area the roles and relative importance of socioeconomic factors and politico-military strategy in the development of the revolution. As will be explained below, my investigation has confirmed the interpretative usefulness of some aspects of existing theories, while it has also demonstrated the need to modify significantly many arguments that have been advanced by previous scholars.

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

Although it is among the most well-known and persistent of the socioeconomic explanations for the Chinese revolution, the class conflict thesis seems not to be very applicable in explaining why the Communist revolution occurred in Fujian. In the existing scholarship, intensification of

class struggle has often been regarded as a consequence of economic deterioration, or of changes in socioeconomic structure incurred by factors such as imperialist economic invasion.<sup>6</sup> In the two to three decades prior to the Communist movement in Fujian, there is no evidence showing such a deterioration in the province. On the contrary, statistics cited in Chapter Two strongly suggest that at least in some important sectors the economy was expanding. There is no evidence showing a worsening landlord-tenant relationship either.

Actually, "class cooperation" (to borrow a Communist cliché) was developing among ordinary peasants and local gentry in rural areas. The strongest resentment of peasants (as well as the gentry) seems to have been against the excessive taxes and levies from the warlord governments. But when the Communist-led insurrections occurred, it was the local gentry who bore their brunt. This fact can be understood as the effect of the CCP's program of agrarian revolution, not as an indication of the intensification of class conflict before the revolution.

Then what enabled the Communist-led insurrections? It seems that the local politics theory, represented by Perry, has more interpretative power in this case than other existing theories. The theory, as Perry implements it, traces the pattern of peasants' collective action to the local ecological conditions which shaped the characteristics of the local people.<sup>7</sup>

There had been significant social unrest and violence in Fujian before the Communist revolution, such as large-scale banditry, armed feuds between lineages, and other kinds of collective predatory actions.<sup>8</sup> It is evident that there was a close connection between the mountainous landscape and the economic mode on the one hand, and the militant, lawless characteristic of the local people on the other (Benton notes that the Fujian people were stereotypically felt to be a "bold and lawless race"<sup>9</sup>), although it should be added that social factors such as immigration patterns of the Fujian people were also important elements in shaping the social unrest.

It was this social unrest and violence that provided favorable conditions for the CCP activists to launch the revolution, which can be seen in one important sense as having simply channeled the social unrest and violence in a new direction. In other words, the Communist-led insurrections can be regarded as a new form of the existing social unrest and violence.

Social unrest and violence were often connected to social militarization, as Philip Kuhn's study of rural militias in late imperial China usefully reveals.<sup>10</sup> Like the situation in nineteenth-century southern China that Kuhn analyzed, rural Fujian on the eve of the Communist movement was highly militarized, and the ubiquitous and often well-organized armed forces in Fujian by and large matched the multi-tiered structural pattern of nineteenth-century militariza-

tion that Kuhn described. The CCP-led military struggle was a new expression of this on-going militarization process, which had quickened after the 1911 Revolution. When looked at in long-term perspective, therefore, the military struggle between the Communist and anti-Communist forces appears to have been a variant manifestation of well-established processes of militarization that had begun well before Marxism arrived in China.

If the Communist movement in Fujian can thus be considered in some respects to have been a continuation of existing social unrest, violence, and militarization, then to what extent did the peasants take the new form of collective violence as a "revolution" as defined by the CCP? In other words, to what extent can the peasants' involvement in the Communist movement be regarded as a reflection of the continuation of purely local endemic tensions and feuds as opposed to evidence of their support of the revolution? In the existing literature, although no clear conclusions have been reached on how the CCP won support from the peasants, it nonetheless seems that the debates have operated under the presumption that the CCP did in fact win such support. Facts in the Communist agrarian revolution in Fujian challenge this presumption.<sup>11</sup>

As I have shown in Chapter Four, large numbers of peasants did participate in the CCP-led armed insurrections in the first phase of the "agrarian revolution." But participation, even on voluntary terms, did not necessarily mean

"support for the revolution." The peasants could join the violence for their own purposes. As has been shown in the case of insurrections in Minxi, many peasants showed by their actions and words that they did not feel that they were participating in the Communist revolution.<sup>12</sup> Actions led by the Communist activists such as *datuhao* and attacking towns were perceived by the peasants as revivals of forms of violent collective action which had prevailed before the Communist revolution began. In this first phase of the revolution, peasants in Fujian are better described as "fellow travelers" than as supporters of the revolution.

One thing that should be noted here is that while Perry in her study of peasant unrest in the Huaibei area considered that the peasants' rebellions and banditry were best treated as "survival strategies,"<sup>13</sup> Fujian peasants' predatory actions such as banditry and rebellions had more complicated social rationales than simply "survival." While it is likely that there were some people who suffered from hunger in rural Fujian (even in today's developed countries there is hunger), and it was a fact that the life of the peasants in Fujian was by no mean happy and enjoyable, there is no historical record showing that in the decades prior to the eruption of the Communist surge there had appeared economic factors such as famine or deep recession which had often inspired peasant rebellions in China's history.

If it is true that the peasants were not participating in the revolution consciously, then what was the relation-

ship between the CCP and the peasants? There were two main social groups among the constituents of the revolution: the young intellectuals who believed in Communism and became the incarnation of the party in the local movement, and the peasants who mostly knew nothing about Communism. Although the purposes of the two groups in action were different, the young intellectuals, as discussed in Chapter Four, formed a kind of alliance with the peasants in the first phase of the revolution, that is, the phase of insurrection. But the alliance was precarious and short-lived. As soon as the peasants found that joining the CCP-led violence would bring them more harm than good, they resigned or even turned against the CCP.

Entering the second phase of the revolution, that is, after the establishment of the soviet regimes, the relationship between the CCP and the peasants became a little more complicated. On the one hand, the original characteristics of the alliance lasted to some extent: it was said that the peasants were still willing to join CCP-led guerrilla forces and the Red Guards, while they were generally reluctant to join the Red Army. The reason was simple: the nature and function of the first two organizations were closer to the old forms of social organization such as bandit gangs and local corps, and they did not require travelling to strange areas far from home.

On the other hand, the CCP-peasant relationship was sliding into confrontation. Political control and autonomy,



economic extraction and resistance to it, became themes in the relationship between the two sides. The various "mass organizations" are better understood as tools to control the masses rather than (as scholars such as Ilpyong Kim believe) as vehicles to "mobilize" the masses.<sup>14</sup>

Control of the peasants became vitally important when it proved impossible to win their support by giving them material benefits such as land, while at the same time the increasing military and economic pressure on the CCP made it essential that the party obtain more and more peasant "support." As a result, to collect human and material resources the CCP had to adopt expedient, forceful measures toward the peasants. As soon as these measures were implemented, "peasant support" for the revolution became all the more difficult to identify, as I have shown in the discussion of land redistribution in Chapter Four. At least in the case of Fujian, it is therefore clear that the CCP-peasant relationship was dominated more by confrontation than by cooperation. It can also be observed that these findings are consistent with those of Chalmers Johnson in north China where he contends that the CCP had also been unsuccessful in mobilizing the peasants until the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937.<sup>15</sup>

It is also apparent that in the final analysis the influence of existing social conditions proved more harmful than helpful to the revolution, despite the fact that the existing social unrest and violence did provide the CCP with

favorable conditions for launching its insurrections. While the Communists were trying first to take advantage of and then to wipe out the old social structure and institutions, society was assimilating the revolution into its old patterns. The "class struggle" desired by the CCP could turn into feuds between lineages, CCP-led guerrilla forces could degenerate into bandit gangs, and upright party activists could become corrupt local powerholders. In the battle against social inertia, the CCP was on the losing side.

The argument that the existing social conditions did more harm than good to the revolution becomes even stronger when one considers the role of the local elite.<sup>16</sup> Although some recent scholarship has at least begun to note connections between the social structure and activities of local elites and the development of local revolutionary movements, evidence from the Fujian case suggests that local elites played a much more significant and far-reaching role in the Communist revolution than scholars have so far acknowledged.<sup>17</sup>

Local elites had dominated most aspects of rural society in pre-Communist times. The power of established local elites was such an important factor supporting the existing socioeconomic order that it could not be ignored if the distribution of power and resources in rural Fujian was ever to be fundamentally changed. At the same time, the vast majority of early CCP members were also themselves of elite origin, and had begun to participate in the revolutionary

movement while attending or teaching in modern schools and other elite-run institutions.

The fact that both the dominant rural powerholders and their leading revolutionary challengers were local elites clearly indicates that--like the peasantry--the Fujian rural elite was not a single homogeneous social category, but rather a complex and conflict-ridden group whose members varied in their resources, status and attitudes. Of particular relevance to the history of the Fujian revolution was the distinction between what I have called in Chapter Three the "old" and "new" elites: the former generally older, more traditionally-educated and rurally-oriented people, and the latter typically young, urban-oriented graduates of modern schools. In somewhat the same way that the patterns of conflict and violence characteristic of rural Fujian society as a whole resulted from long-term processes, the existence of these two broad sub-groups of the elite also resulted from ongoing processes of change and fragmentation within the traditional Chinese gentry. Looked at from this point of view, the conflicts between the rural landlords and tuhao on the one hand and young CCP intellectuals on the other can be understood in part as a manifestation of growing competition between segments of a diversifying elite to inherit or to assume the power previously held by the imperial-era gentry.

Even if bitter conflict between young CCP challengers and threatened rural powerholders was doubtless inevitable, it appears in retrospect that CCP leaders still had at least

some choice in the tactical policies they might have adopted to deal with their powerful elite enemies. For instance, if the CCP had adopted a relatively moderate policy toward the old local elite, as it did later in the Anti-Japanese War period,<sup>18</sup> the local Communists might have met less hostility from the old elite and hence had a better chance to succeed. Unfortunately, they did not do so during this period. Due to its ideology and its program of radical agrarian revolution, the CCP publicly identified the old local elite as its major enemy from the very beginning of the agrarian revolution. As a result, the revolution featured from the beginning a rivalry between the old gentry and the Communist intellectuals who had derived from the local elite stratum.

Communist intellectuals assumed the locomotive role in the local revolutionary movement.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, the history of the Communist movement in Fujian proved that they were too weak a force to fulfill the revolutionary program of the CCP during the period in question. On the one hand, they had the difficult task of mobilizing the peasants, who as we have seen were mostly passive toward the revolution; on the other hand, these Communist new elites had to fight an all-out war against old local elites such as degree holders and lineage heads who had powerful influence in the countryside and had organized the local corps which were the arch-enemies of the Communist local armed forces. The local elite's strong resistance to the revolution was one of the main factors shaping the process of the revolution, and contrib-

uting to its final failure in 1934.

### **Political Policies and Military Strategy**

If, as this work has suggested, socioeconomic factors in rural Fujian were at best ambiguous and at worst unfavorable to the revolution, the CCP's political policies and military strategy were arguably more important and effective instruments for winning the revolutionary struggle. Even in this area, however, the CCP in Fujian faced many more problems and achieved much more ambiguous results than party members at the time had expected or than scholars have so far recognized.<sup>20</sup>

The first issue which needs to be discussed in this regard is the adequacy of the CCP's overall rural strategy, or rather, the viability of the Communist rural bases. The CCP's rural-centered strategy was the anti-thesis of the urban-centered strategy used by the party earlier. Drawing on both the experience of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the ideological assumptions of Marxist-Leninist theory, the CCP in its early years had taken it for granted that the center of the Communist revolution was in the cities, and that urban workers were the main force of the revolution.<sup>21</sup> After the collapse of the First CCP-GMD United Front, however, the August Seventh Emergency Conference of the CCP Central Committee in 1927 resolved that the "fundamental content of the Chinese revolution is land revolution," thus marking the beginning of the Communist "land revolution" or

"agrarian revolution." The conference also decided that the party's "general policy" should be "to prepare and organize armed insurrections in those provinces which have become the centers of peasant movements."

However, the decisions of this conference were only precursors to the rural strategy featuring base-building. When the conference ordered armed insurrections to be staged, its participants still aimed to use these to achieve the immediate occupation of big cities such as Changsha in Hunan province and Guangzhou in Guangdong. This urban-centered strategy was still attractive to many top CCP leaders such as Li Lisan and Wang Ming during the agrarian revolution period. As we have seen in Chapters One and Five, these leaders ordered the Red Army to attack major cities again and again. By contrast, it was Mao Zedong who because of his practice of building revolutionary bases in the Jinggang Mountains and in southern Jiangxi province, and his theorization of the practice during the period from 1928 to 1930, became recognized as the architect of the rural strategy.

Mao as a party cadre had been particularly interested in organizing peasant movements since the early days of the First CCP-GMD United Front. After the August Seventh conference, he was ordered by the party center to organize the so-called "Autumn Harvest Uprising" in Hunan aiming at the occupation of Changsha, the provincial capital. Predicting that there was no hope of victory if his forces attacked Changsha, Mao led the remnant of the rebellious soldiers to

the Jinggang Mountains and set up a base there, thus beginning the practice of the rural strategy.

It is true that the CCP-led armed forces could survive better in rural bases than in the cities, at least for a while, as was proven by the failure of the Nanchang Mutiny in August 1927 and other CCP-led uprisings in the cities, and by the temporary success achieved in setting up bases in the Jinggang Mountains and some other areas of China. But seeing that many of these bases, including Mao's base in the Jinggang Mountains, had difficulty surviving and expanding after they were established, many national party cadres continued to doubt the role and future of base-area-centered rural strategy.<sup>22</sup>

It was through his arguments against such skeptical cadres that Mao consolidated his reputation as the architect of the rural strategy. In his articles published during the 1928-30 period, Mao argued for the correctness of the base-building strategy and for the vitality of rural bases and the Red Army. Mao contended that base-building was the sole correct revolutionary strategy for a "semi-feudal, semi-colonial" country such as China. In addition to the reasons mentioned in the "Introduction" of this dissertation, such as the protracted splits and wars among the anti-Communist camp, Mao also gave as reasons why the bases and the Red Army could "stand for a long period and expand" that the peasants in provinces such as Jiangxi and Hunan had obtained rich experience in revolutionary struggle through the Na-

tionalist Revolution, that the splits and wars among the "white regimes" would continue, and that the "revolutionary situation in the whole country" would continue to develop. Above all, Mao insisted that the revolutionary countryside could live without the support of cities, and "provide materials necessary to the Red Army's warfare and the revolutionary bases' struggle which will last for a long time."<sup>23</sup>

Since Mao established his leading position in the party during the Long March in 1934-35, his rural strategy, or the idea of *gongnong wuzhuang geju* (occupation of areas by armed workers and peasants) centering on the practice of base-building, has been exalted by the CCP and the CCP official-scholars as the key strategy leading to the success of the Chinese Communist revolution. The strategy was sanctified by the resolution of the CCP Seventh Plenary Session (enlarged) of the Sixth Central Committee in 1945, which has since functioned as the party's Bible.<sup>24</sup> In China, Mao's base-building theory has long been praised in textbooks for having provided a new way for the people to seize political power in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries.<sup>25</sup> To explain the unpleasant fact that all the revolutionary bases in central and southern China collapsed in 1934, Mao and the CCP blame a temporary "incorrect line" in party policy, particularly the "incorrect military strategy" of the power-holders of the party at a time when Mao was out of favor and his ideas were being ignored.<sup>26</sup>



Interestingly, the adulation of Mao's base-building theory is echoed in Western scholarship. For example, Hofheinz believes that the rural strategy was adopted successfully by Mao Zedong and other Chinese Communists in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>7</sup> However, the case of the revolutionary bases in Fujian as presented in this research seriously challenges the established view.

As is indicated by the case of Minxi, the "base-building" strategy had many intrinsic problems. The first problem was the tension between the expansion of the bases and their limited human and material resources. This issue has to some extent been discussed in the "summary" of Chapter Five. Although Mao's prediction that China's countryside could "provide materials necessary to the Red Army's warfare and the revolutionary bases" might have been basically correct if China's whole "countryside" had come under the control of the CCP, in an isolated base this was not true, as was explicitly shown by the case of Minxi.

The development of Communist rural revolution was characterized by regional imbalance. The susceptibility to Communist influence was widely different from region to region, even from village to village. Besides, as is suggested by the case of Fujian, the success of the CCP's effort to set up bases relied on many crucial factors: the lack of or weakness in the enemy's military power, the presence of Communist activists, the help of the regular Red Army, conducive social conditions and characteristics of

people in a locality. The absence of any of these factors could render establishing a base impossible. This was why in Fujian the CCP could only set up bases in three areas (Minxi, Minbei and Mindong) which were not geographically connected to each other. Even inside the Minxi base, there were "reactionary villages and townships" which the Communists could never overcome. As discussed in Chapter Six, the expansion of the Minxi and Minbei bases also proved to be extremely difficult after 1930. And when a base stopped expanding, its resources of money, grain, and manpower would dry up rapidly. The shortage of human and material resources in turn further weakened the capacity of the bases to expand, and a vicious circle thus developed which could finally stifle the bases to death.

Another intrinsic problem the "base-building" strategy had was the disparity between the party's need for peasant support of the revolution and its need for money, grain, and soldiers. This problem was closely associated with the first one, and to the discrepancy between the CCP's aims and the peasants' immediate interests. The support of peasants was really crucial to the survival of the bases, because without the peasants the revolutionary movement would consist simply of a small group of Communist intellectuals and there would be no "agrarian revolution." If the peasants would not support the revolution voluntarily, the party needed at least to make them "malleable" constituents who would not openly resist the party's authority in the bases. This

proved to be impossible in the case of Minxi. Due to the discrepancy between the aims of the CCP and the peasants in the revolution, tensions and conflicts between the two sides were evident from the very beginning of the movement. The tensions which developed in the bases persisted, because in its desperate struggle to sustain the bases against Nationalist military pressure the CCP was simply unable to balance its need for popular support with its need for money, grain and soldiers. What was even worse was the cumulative nature of the problem: the longer the revolution lasted, the less support it could get from the peasants, and the lower the morale of the local party members and Red Army soldiers became.

The CCP leaders understood the divergence between their goals and those of the peasants, and from the beginning of the Communist revolution in Fujian tried to balance the CCP's revolutionary goals and the peasants' immediate interests. But the "interests of the revolution" always came to the fore when the CCP leaders tried to find a solution to the conflict between the two goals. For example, as early as 1929, the CCP Minxi Special Committee realized that there were two possible ways to redistribute the land: on a per capita basis, or on the basis of labor power. Per capita distribution would create many problems in the long run, such as hindering the development of agriculture. However, redistributing the land this way would also make every "peasant, worker, small merchant, intellectual, old and

young in the villages" happy at the present, and thus serve the CCP's purpose of winning the strong support of the masses. Therefore, the committee decided that the per capita method was appropriate in the "current stage of the revolution."<sup>28</sup> When the revolution dragged on and the situation deteriorated for the CCP, the interests of the party became even more prominent in the CCP's decision-making. Using the Northern Warlords' method of collecting the land tax in advance was an indication that the CCP in the late period of the agrarian revolution, in order to fight for its own survival, had openly acted at the expense of the peasants.<sup>29</sup> The divergence of goals and interests between the CCP and the peasants had already developed into confrontation in the latter stage of the Communist agrarian revolution, which it was claimed would emancipate the majority of the peasantry. While these expedient measures helped the CCP in the short term, in the long run they made the party and the Red Army helpless.

The confrontation between the interests of the Central Revolutionary Base as a whole and the interests of the individual regional bases, particularly the interests of Minxi, was another problem. The disparity of military strength between the Nationalist side and the Communist side was really sharp. As discussed in the body of this dissertation, the Red Army was far outnumbered by the Nationalist troops in the campaigns of "encirclement and suppression," and without aid from the Red Army, the Red Guards were not able

to fight the local corps. As a result, the CCP top leaders had to concentrate as much strength as they could to serve the strategy of defending the central base and expanding the revolution. It was evidently not a bad idea to defend the existing base by taking a "offensive line," that is, to defend the old bases by expanding them or establishing new bases beyond them so that they could aid each other. This idea was also in line with the CCP's ultimate purpose of promoting the revolution in the whole country.

Actually, Mao practiced this offensive strategy when he and Zhu De led the Fourth Red Army away from the base in the Jinggang Mountains and moved to southern Jiangxi to set up a new base in early 1929. That move resulted in the birth of the central base. Ironically, a similar effort made by the top party leaders in mid-1930, when they ordered the main force Red Army in Minxi to march to the Eastern River area in Guangdong, was criticized later by the party under Mao as a show of "leftist adventurism." Later party historians have also criticized the efforts to defend the central base by moving part of the Red Army's military strength and manpower to the northern battle front of the central base in Jiangxi, despite the fact that such a move was in line with Mao's constant military strategy featuring "active defence" and concentrating the Red Army so that the party could "use a large force to defeat a small one."<sup>30</sup>

The point here is that efforts of higher party leaders to solidify or expand the base as a whole often met with

resistance from local party leaders. This kind of centrifugal-centripetal conflict over the leadership of the military forces inside the base, as we have seen in the case of the Anti-Luo-Ming-Line rupture, was a negative factor impeding the success of the revolution.<sup>31</sup>

The confrontation between the local interests and those of the revolution as a whole put the CCP in a dilemma. On the one hand, they had to concentrate the strength available to defend the whole base or to expand it in a certain area; on the other hand, moving strength away from some parts of the base would certainly mean the loss of territory and the lives and property of the people in these areas, which would lead to further damage to the peasants' faith in the party and the revolution. In his report to the top party leaders in early 1933, Luo Ming warned about the resentment of the Minxi people created by the party's efforts to concentrate its military forces. If the party leaders did not change their course, then "even if we invite our best leader Chairman Mao...or invite Comrade Stalin from the Soviet Union...to...lecture to the masses for three days and three nights, to intensify our political propaganda, I think there will still be no way to change the masses' mood thoroughly."<sup>32</sup> Luo Ming also advocated that the revenue of the counties in Minxi should not totally go to the central soviet. Instead, local government should have the right to use part of it to feed the local forces.

Luo Ming was probably not speaking idly. The anger of

"the masses" was serious, and the solution to the dilemma was difficult for the CCP to find. Even had Mao Zedong gotten the chance to assume military command in the central base, he would have been bogged down in the dilemma too, and found his favorite tactic of "luring the enemy deep" difficult to use.

Moreover, the contention between the party's top leaders and local party cadres was not merely over the balance between local interests and the interests of the revolution as a whole. Such ruptures should also be understood in part as manifestations of the struggle between low-level party cadres' desire for more policy-making input and independence and top party leaders' efforts to centralize political power in their own hands.

What Luo Ming and his associates wanted was to have more say in the party's decision-making, particularly when local interests were involved, while the top party leaders wanted more centralization of power. Mao Zedong's own well-chronicled conflicts with and disobedience to the party's central leadership during this period should have given him some empathy with the feelings of local leaders such as Luo Ming.<sup>33</sup> However, at least in dealings with regional and local party organs where the reach his own authority was at issue, Mao was also a strong advocate of the so-called "democratic-centralization system" (*minzhu jizhong zhi*) and the principle that "local interests should submit to the central interests" (*jubu fuchong zhongyang*), which actually

meant that whenever there was a conflict between the opinion of the lower party cadres and that of their superiors, or a conflict between local interests and the interests of the party as whole, the former should yield to the latter.<sup>34</sup>

This friction between centralized power and local interests has been an enduring problem throughout the CCP's whole history. Although the party has survived it so far, it has created more hazards for the party at times of crises than at times when the party has been in a relatively stable position. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the friction exploded even at the time when the party was struggling desperately for its own survival.

The CCP's organizational skill and mobilizational ability have often been considered by some scholars to have been powerful instruments contributing to Communist success in China.<sup>35</sup> However, the case of Fujian shows that while it is true that the establishment of party branches in the early stage of the revolution did play an important role in spreading the movement, most Communist organizations set up in later periods, including both vital organs such as party Committees and Red Army units and also less important ones such as worker's unions, usually functioned very poorly.

Although Arif Dirlik argues that during the CCP's formative years in the late 1910s and early 1920s it was the organization of the party itself that first engendered a coherent Marxist-Leninist ideology linking its members,<sup>36</sup> the organizations set up by the party in rural Fujian in the



late 1920s and 1930s often played just the opposite role. Rather than serving as focal points for the intensification and spread of Marxist-Leninist ideology among the rural populace, they instead functioned as entry points for the infiltration of a kind of "peasant consciousness" that often eroded the party's own established ideology. Both Marxist theory and practical realities demanded that the membership of these organs should reflect the social composition of the rural society in which they were situated, and despite the best efforts of the party's original intellectual cadres the attitudes of the undisciplined and poorly-educated peasants who eventually came to compose the bulk of these organizations often undermined the party's intentions.

Had the CCP had sufficient trained and ideologically-sophisticated cadres to lead its diverse rural organizations, things might have been different. But social conditions in Fujian rendered staffing the party very difficult, and the local party never solved the problem of cadre shortage. Party documents clearly reflect the fact that neither the CCP central nor regional leaders were ever satisfied with local organizations.<sup>37</sup>

I have not focused upon the factional struggles among the top CCP leaders in this study, because they have been thoroughly discussed by earlier scholars.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, it should be noted here that the existence of such struggles and conflicts was another reason for the important policy inconsistencies which hampered the CCP's efforts to win pea-

sant support (as discussed in Chapter Four).

During this period the CCP was internally divided. On the one hand, the CCP joined the Third Comintern in May 1922. As a branch of the Comintern, technically the CCP had to base its important policies on the instruction of the Comintern. For example, the CCP Central Committee could not raise the slogan to "establish soviets" until the Comintern said so. On the other hand, some CCP leaders at higher levels did not respect the Comintern's decisions very much and acted on their own. For example, in leading the Autumn Insurrection in late 1927, Mao planned to set up soviets in spite of Comintern objections.<sup>39</sup>

In the Jiangxi soviet period, there was a rupture between the so-called "returned students" from Moscow (Chinese Communists who considered themselves "one hundred percent Bolsheviks") on one side, and some other key CCP leaders such as Mao on the other. The two sides had acute differences over the strategy and tactics the Chinese revolution should use, such as whether the Red Army should move to attack the major cities or remain in rural areas to expand the bases. The two sides also had differences over land policy.<sup>40</sup> It is said that it was the returned students' decision to change the policy of giving landlords a share of land in land redistribution to one giving them no land at all. In early 1933, the returned students clique, who had close connections with the Comintern, won the upper hand and dismissed Mao from his leading position in the Central Red

Army.<sup>41</sup>

These ruptures and instances of discord within the party leadership, which often manifested themselves in changable policies and confusing directives to the party organs below, certainly had a negative impact on the revolution in Fujian, since the local party's activities there were conducted within the larger political context.

In light of all of these serious problems, it is evident that the widely-acclaimed strategy of rural base-building with which Mao's name is so closely associated was at the very least much less successful than either party historians or Western scholars have so far acknowledged. Similarly, this study has shown that behind the sweeping statements that have often been made about the influence on the Chinese Revolution of rural economic conditions, social structures and peasant attitudes lie many locally-variable socioeconomic phenomena whose effects are far more complex and ambiguous than such generalizations can reveal.

This study has not attempted fully to "explain" the Chinese Revolution, nor even that portion of the complex revolutionary process that occurred in Fujian. What it has sought to do is to subject some of the most well-established dogmas and theories about the revolution to critical reexamination in light of information found in newly-available contemporary documents and other sources.<sup>42</sup> By thus questioning--and where necessary undermining--accepted interpretations, I hope that I have been able to help pave the

way for the similar but far more comprehensive and multi-faceted studies of China's many local revolutionary movements through which we will be able to develop a new and more satisfactory understanding of this vast historical event.

## NOTES

## Introduction

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## Chapter 1

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4. *Zhong guo xian dai shi gao*, pp. 131,135,136.
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90. "Muqian zhengzhi xingshi yu Min-Yue-Gan suqu dang de renwu" (Current Political Situation and the Task of the Party in the Min-Yue-Gan Soviet Area) 1932, ZB, 2:350-1.

91. "Zhonggong Minxi tewei baogao diyi hao" (Report Number One of the CCP Minxi Special Committee) 29 Nov. 1930, FWJ, 8:200.

92. JJB, p. 490; also MGS, p. 253.

93. "Lianxin baogao" (Lianxin's Report) 13 Oct. 1930, FWJ, 8:172.

94. "Minxi suweiai zhengfu bugao di shiyi hao" (Circular Number Eleven of the Minxi Soviet Government) May 1930, FWJ, 14:116; "Minxi suweiai zhengfu tonggao di san hao" (Circular Number Three of the Minxi Soviet Government) 29 Sep. 1930,

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95. "Min Yue Gan dang zai jingji zhanxian shang de renwu jueyi" (Resolution on the Min-Yue-Gan Party's Task in the Economic Battle Front) 12 June 1933, ZB, 3:592.

96. "Zhonghua suweiai gonghe guo di er ci quanguo suweiai daibiao dahui guanyu suweiai jianshe de jueyi an" (Resolution about the Construction of the Soviet Adopted by the Second Soviet of the Chinese Soviet Republic) 1 April, 1934, ZB, 3:348.

97. "Minxi suweiai zhengfu tongzhi di yieryi hao" (Circular Number 121 of the Minxi Soviet Government) 7 Dec. 1931, FWJ, 15:216.

98. "Fujiansheng suweiai tonggao" (Circular of the Fujian Soviet Government) 6 Aug. 1932, FWJ, 15:299.

99. Jianzhong, "Fu Baicui fangwen ji" (Interviewing Fu Baicui), *Shehui Xinwen* (Social News), (25 Feb. 1933), 2:19:263.

## Chapter 6

1. "Minxi zhengfu jingjibu guanyu tiaoji mijia xuanquan dagang" (Minxi Government's Propaganda Outlines about Rice Price Control) 1 June, 1930, FWJ, 14:170.

2. MGS, pp. 299-301.

3. Ibid., p. 297.

4. MGS, p. 283.

5. JJB, pp. 545, 548.

6. "Minxi zhengfu jingjibu guanyu tiaoji mijia xuanquan dagang" (Minxi Government's Propaganda Outlines about Rice Price Control) 1 June 1930, FWJ, 14:167.

7. Wu Liangping, "Dongyuan guangda gunzhong lai jie jue muqian liangshi kunnan" (Mobilize the Vast Masses to Overcome the Current Grain Difficulty), *Hongse Zhonghua* (The Red China), (17 May 1933), 80:5, cited by JJB, pp. 372-3.

8. MJS, p. 103.



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9. *Hongse Zhonghua* (The Red China) (27 April 1933), 71:3, cited by JJB, p. 375.
10. *Hongse Zhonghua* (The Red China) 26 July 1934, No. 219, p. 3. Cited by JJB, p. 377.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
12. The CCP Central Committee and the Central People's Committeels joint decision to borrow 600,000 *dan* of rice and to collect land tax immediately. *Hongse Zhonghua*, 26 July 1934, 219:3, cited by JJB, p. 377.
13. JJB, p. 611.
14. "Minxi suweiai zhengfu tongzhi di qishiqi hao" (Notice No. 77 of the Minxi Soviet Government) 24 July 1931, FWJ, 15:150.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
17. MS, p. 200.
18. See circulars from the Fujian Provincial Soviet in FWJ, 15:192, 197, 207, 208, 211.
19. "Fujian sheng suweiai zhengfu tongling di shiwu hao" (Circular Number 15 of the Fujian Provincial Soviet Government) 2 June 1932, FWJ, 15:255-6.
20. "Fujiansheng suweiai zhengfu guanyu zhengzhi ji shengsu gongzhuo baogao jueyi" (Fujian Provincial Soviet Government's Resolution about the Politics and the Provincial Soviet's Works) 20 Oct. 1932, FWJ, 15:375.
21. "Fandui di san dang xuancuan dagang" (Propaganda outline for Opposing the Third Party), 9 July 1928, FWJ, 3:33-9.
22. "Dang de zhengzhi renwu jueyian" (Resolution about the Party's Political Tasks) Oct. 1928, FWJ, 3:223.
23. MS, p. 257.
24. *Ibid.*, pp, 223, 224.
25. Jeans, Roger, *Roads Not Taken: the Struggle of Opposition Parties in Twentieth-century China*, (Westview Press, 1992), pp. 113,115.
26. *Ibid.*, pp 114, 120-1, 124-5; Jiang Boying, "Minxi suqu," *Minxi Wenchong* (Jan. 1982), p, 97.

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27. Eastman Lloyd, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937*, (Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), p. 96.

28. For example, an article ("Di san dang zhi zai Fujian" [The Third Party in Fujian], *Shehui xinwen*, 12 April 1933, 3:4:52) alleged that Fu Baicui, Dong Jiangqin, and Duan Fenfu were chiefs of the Third Party in Fujian. But the last two persons were loyal Communists and have been ever honored as revolutionary martyrs. Fu was once accused by the CCP in Fujian as the chief of the SDP in Minxi. But later he was rehabilitated as we shall see in the coming pages.

29. "Zhonggong Fujian shengwei tonggao di shiliu hao" (Circular Number Sixteen of the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee) 7 Jan. 1929, FWJ, 4:16.

30. Ibid., pp 17-18; Hongxing, "Fandui Fujian de zichan jieji jiqi zougou" (Opposing the Bourgeoisie and Its Running Dogs in Fujian) 21 Feb. 1929, FWJ, 4:69-73.

31. Headed by Chen Gongbo, some GMD cadres formed the "GMD Reformist Comrade Association" in Shanghai in 1928, opposing Jiang Jieshi's dictatorship. This clique is usually referred to as the Reformist Clique, and was viewed by the CCP as one of its most dangerous political enemies in the early 1930s.

32. Ibid., pp. 17, 70, 74.

33. "Zhonggong Minxi tewei baogao" (CCP Minxi Special Committee's Report) 28 Aug. 1929, FWJ, 8:129.

34. "Zhonggong Fujian shengwei tonggao di shiliu hao" (Circular Number Sixteen of the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee) 7 Jan. 1929, FWJ, 4:18.

35. Hongxing, "Fandui Fujian," FWJ, 4:74.

36. As an example, see MS, pp. 131-133.

37. About the A-B League, see Ch'en Yong-fa, "Zhonggong zaoqi sufan de jiantao: AB tuanan" (Examining CCP's Campaign of Eliminating Internal Counter-revolutionaries: The Case of AB League), *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiu shuo jikan*, (Taipei, Taiwan), June 1988, No. 17 (Part 1), p.194; also JJB, pp. 419-435.

38. Wang Furui, "Minxi dangshi shang de yige da yuanan" (The Great Injustice in Minxi's Party History), *Minxi Wenchong* (Minxi Literature), (March 1983), p. 64.

39. Ibid., pp. 64, 65; MS, p.143.

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40. "Minxi suweiai zhengfu tonggao di shijiu hao cai zi di yi hao" (Circular of the Minxi Soviet Government, Number 19 or Number 1 of the Character of Cai) 21 Feb. 1931, FWJ, 15:38.
41. "Minxi suweiai zhengfu tonggao Zhongbien di ershier hao cai zi di san hao" (Circular of the Minxi Soviet Government, General Number 22, or Number 3 of the Character of Cai) 4 March 1931, FWJ, 15:52.
42. Jiang Boying, "Minxi suqu de 'suqing shehui mingzhudang' yuanan" (The Injustice of "Eliminating the SDP" in the Minxi Soviet Area) *Zonggona Dangshi Yanjiu (CCP History Studies)* April 1989, pp. 31-32.
43. Wang Furui, "Minxi dangshi," pp. 65-66.
44. Ibid., p. 66; Jiang Boying, "Minxi suqu de yuanan," p. 32.
45. Wang Furui, "Minxi dangshi," p. 66.
46. Jiang Boying, "Minxi suqu de yuanan," p. 34.
47. Ibid., p. 35.
48. Shao Shiping et al., "Min Zhe Wan Gan," FL, 1:228.
49. "Ye Fei tongzhi guanyu mindong dang de douzheng lishi de huiyi" (Comrade Ye Fei's Reminiscences about the Struggle of the Party in Mindong) FL, 3:95; Fan Shiren, "Huiyi mindong," FL, 3:119.
50. For an example, see MGS, p. 192.
51. MGS, p. 57.
52. Jiang Boying, "Minxi suqu de yuanan," p. 34.
53. Wang Furui, "Minxi dangshi," p. 64.
54. Ibid.
55. Wang Furui, "Minxi dangshi," p. 67.
56. Fan Shiren, "Huiyi mindong," p. 127.
57. Wen Biqun, "Huiyi Fujian de chatien yundong" (Reminiscences of the Land-inspection movement in Fujian), *Fengzhang Hongqi (Red Flag in the Wind)* (1984), p. 4:139.
58. Wang Furui, "Minxi dangshi," pp. 65.

59. Ibid., pp. 66, 67.
60. Ibid., p. 68.
61. Ibid., pp. 67, 68; Jiang Boying, "Minxi suqu de yuanan," pp. 33, 34.
62. Gong Chu, *Wo yu hongjun (I and the Red Army)*, (Hong Kong, 1955), p. 249, cited by JJB, p. 397.
63. Mao Zedong, "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire," 5 Jan. 1930 *Selected Works of Mao Tze-tung*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1964), Vol. 1, p.117.
64. Mao Zedong: "Be Concerned with the Well-being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work" 27 Jan. 1934, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 1, p 150.
65. Jiang Jieshi's speech in Nanchang, cited by JJB, pp. 590-1.
66. MGS., p. 283.
67. "Ye Fei tongzhi," FL, 3:90.
68. JJB, pp. 539-544.
69. MGS, pp. 301; Zhang Dingcheng et al., "Minxi san nian youji zhanzheng" (Three-year Guerrilla Warfare in Minxi), FL, 3:47.
70. MGS, pp. 303-5.
71. Zhang Dingcheng et al., "Minxi san nian," pp. 47, 49-50.
72. Ibid., pp. 47, 50.
73. MGS, pp. 314, 320.
74. Fan Shiren, "Huiyi Mindong," pp. 110-111.
75. Ibid., pp, 112, 119.
76. Zuo Fengmei, "Minbei geming douzheng de huiyi" (Reminiscences of the Revolutionary Struggles in Minbei) FL, 2:229-233.  
Based on reminiscences of the Communist veterans, Benton on his *Mountain Fires* has a summary of the CCP's situation in Fujian after the Long March, pp.124-167.
77. Averill, S., "The New Life in Action" in *China Quarterly* Dec. 1981, 88:597-8.

78. "Minxi shehui yibi" (Snapshots of the Minxi Society) *Shehui xinwen* (Social News), (1 May 1935), 11:4.
79. Fu Jialin et al. eds., *Fujiansheng nongcun jingji cankao ziliao huibien* (A Collection of Reference Materials about the Rural Economy in Fujian Province) (The Economy Studies Division of the Bank of Fujian Province, 1941), p. 174.
80. Ruo Ping, "Changting Nanyang xiang fei luan jishi" (Record of Chaos Caused by Bandits in Nanyang Township, Changting) *Changting Wenxian* (Literature of Changting), (1974), 1:58.
81. *Zhongyang Ribao* (The Central Daily) 19 Sep. 1935, p. 2.
82. Fu Jialin et al. eds., *Fujiansheng nongcun*, p. 176.
83. Benton, *Mountain Fires*, p. 143.
84. Ibid., pp. 177, 179.
85. Ibid., pp. 178, 179.
86. FZZY, pp. 51, 52.
87. See Stephen Averill's article, "The New Life in Action."
88. Ruo Ping, "Changting Nanyang," p. 59.
89. Yan Ming, "Yanshi fei luan," pp. 57-58.
90. *Zhongyang Ribao* 5 Sep. 1935; 29 Sep. 1935, p. 2.
91. Yan Ming, "Yanshi fei luan," pp. 57-58.
92. *Shishi Xinbao* (New daily News) 4 Sep. 1935.
93. "Zhonggong Fujian shengwei gei Minxi tewei ji si jun qianwei xin" (A Letter from the CCP Fujian Provincial Committee to the Minxi Special Committee and the Battle Front Committee of the Fourth Army) 8Jan. 1930, FWJ, 6:13.

## Conclusion

1. One of the examples of this kind of argument is Robert Marks' *Rural Revolution in South China: Peasants and the Making of History in Haifeng County, 1570-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 119, 151. Also all of the Chinese historians in their works emphasize the intensification of class struggle. For examples, see Jiang



Boying, *Minxi geming genjudi shi* (History of the Minxi Revolutionary Base) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1987), and the other one of the same title by authored by the CCP Longyan District Committee (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1987).

2. Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 70, 187.

3. For example, Roy Hofheinz stresses the role of Communist organizational activities in his "The Ecology of Chinese Communist Success" (in A.D. Barnett ed., *Chinese Communist Politics in Action I*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1969, p. 77); Ilpyong Kim as mentioned in Chapter Five notes the successfulness of the CCP's mobilization policies in his "Mass Mobilization Policies and Techniques Developed in the Period of the Chinese Soviet Republic," in the same book edited by Barnett, pp 78-9.

4. For examples of scholarly opinion expressing dissatisfaction with the general interpretations of the Chinese revolution, see Chen Yung-fa, *Making Revolution*, "Introduction" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and also "Introduction" in Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein (eds.), *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions*, (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe Inc. 1989).

5. See "Introduction" of this dissertation, pp. 9-10 for discussion of these materials.

6. See Note 1 of this conclusion.

7. Elizabeth Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 45-6.

8. Lineage and armed feuds in southeastern China in the Qing period have been studied to some extent by Harry Lamley's articles, including "Hsieh-tou: The Pathology of Violence in Southeastern China" (*Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*, 3.7 [1977]:1-39) and "Lineage and Surname Feuds in Southern Fukien and Eastern Kwangtung under the Ch'ing" (Kwang-chih Liu [ed.], *Orthodoxy in Late Imperial China*, University of California Press, 1990). However, a more recent, comprehensive and thorough study which examines this subject in the specific context of Fujian has been carried out by a Chinese scholar, Chen Zhiping, with his book, *Jin wubai nian lai Fujian de jiazu shehui yu wenhua* (Fujian's Lineage Society and its Culture in the Last 500 Years) (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian Shanghai fen dian, 1991). I have cited Chen's work rather than Lamley's in this dissertation because it is more explicitly focused on the place and time period that I am study-

ing.

9. The words were from a Western botanist who visited Fujian in the mid-nineteenth century, and are cited by Gregory Benton in his *Mountain Fires: The Red Army's Three-year War in South China, 1934-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 125.

10. Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

11. For examples of divergent opinions about how the CCP appealed to peasants, see sources cited in the first paragraph of this conclusion. For my findings on these issues, see Chapter Five and Six.

12. See facts listed in Chapter Four.

13. Elizabeth Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*, pp. 45-6.

14. See Kim's article cited in Note 1 of this conclusion. It is worth mentioning that relations between the CCP and the peasants in the Jiangxi part of the Central Revolutionary Base were no better than they were in Fujian. As early as the end of 1930, peasants' changing sides became a serious problem in Jiangxi. Many villages changed to the GMD side. The CCP Jiangxi Provincial Committee instructed its party organizations at lower levels in measures to deal with the problem. Among the specific measures were first, to arrest all the rich peasants as hostages; and second, as a committee circular directed, "absolutely to concentrate the masses," that is, to drive all the people in the villages out of their homes, allowing "not a single person to stay." Those villagers driven out of their homes were to bring with them "food enough for more than fifteen days, and clothes and sheets," so that they could stay outside longer. These concentrated villagers would be forced to "molest the enemy day and night without stop." Other measures including "arresting large numbers of the masses in the villages which have changed sides, and then training them, making them awaken." Although none of these measures was in fact feasible, the instruction illustrates the tension that eventually developed between the CCP and the peasants in the base, and the CCP's desperate attempt to control the "masses." (All the citations in this paragraph are from "Jinji tonggao di qi hao" [Urgent Circular Number 7], 3 Dec. 1930, in ZB, 2:266.)

15. Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, pp. vii, 70, 187.

16. Elite as defined in Chapter Three of this work, p. 113.

17. As has been discussed in the "Introduction," only a few scholars, such as S. Averill in his articles mentioned in the "Introduction" of this dissertation, have paid attention to the elite's role in the Communist revolution. Scholars such as John Rue in his *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927-1934* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), and Tso-ling Hsiao in his *The Land Revolution in China, 1930-1934: A Study of Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), do not stress the role the elite.

18. Chen Yung-fa, *Making Revolution*, "Conclusion."

19. As we have seen in Chapters One and Three.

20. For example, as cited in Chapter Five, Kim in his "Mass Mobilization Policies and Techniques Developed in the Period of the Chinese Soviet Republic" believes that the CCP's policies were successful in the period.

21. After 1949, Chinese scholars stressed the ideological contributions Mao had made to revising Marx-Leninist theory by stressing the importance of peasants' role in the revolution. However, in the 1920s and 1930s, the CCP documents continued to stress the Marxist theory of relying on the workers as the vanguard of the revolution. See documents in *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanbian* (Selection of CCP Central Committee's Documents), Vols. 2-6, (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1992). Mao himself in his "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society" (1926) (*Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 1 pp. 13-22) also emphasized that the workers in the city were the leading force of the Chinese revolution.

22. For the evolution of the CCP's rural strategy, refer to Hofheinz's *The Broken Wave: The Chinese Communist Peasant Movement, 1922-1928* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), Part 1, "Strategy".

23. Mao's articles in this regard include "Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China" (Oct. 1928), "The Struggle in the Jinggang Mountains" (Nov. 1928), and "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire" (Jan. 1930), all in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 1.

24. "Guanyu ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi" (Resolution on Several Issues in the History), *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanbian* (Selection of CCP Central Committee's Documents), Vol. 13, p.38.

25. One example of such a textbook is *Zhongguo xiandai shigao* (Draft History of Modern China), (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1980), p.325.

26. "Guanyu ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi," *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanbian*, p. 40.
27. Roy Hofheinz, *The Broken Wave*, p.4.
28. "Zhonggong Minxi tewei tonggao di shiwu hao" (Circular of the CCP Minxi Special Committee, Number 15) 5 Nov. 1929, ZB, 3:374.
29. See Chapter Four, pp. 208-215.
30. Mao Zedong, "Problems of Strategy in Chinese Revolutionary War," 1936, *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, vol. 1, pp.228, 233.
31. See discussion in Chapter Three, pp. 163-170.
32. Luo Ming, "Guanyu Luo Ming Luxian," FL, 2:55.
33. For Mao's conflicts with the CCP central leadership, refer to Jonh Rue's *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927-1935*; also Derek Waller, *The Kiangsi Soviet Republic: Mao and the National Congress of 1931 and 1934* (Berkeley: University of California, Center for Chinese Studies, 1973).
34. "Guanyu ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi", *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanbian*, p.48.
35. See "Introduction" in Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein (eds.), *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions*.
36. Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.152-3.
37. As an example, see "Zhonggong Minxi tewei guanyu ge xian qingkuang gei shengwei de baogao" (CCP Minxi Special Committee's Report to the Provincial Committee on the Situation in Each County), 21 Nov. 1928, FWJ, 8:30-38.
38. See Note 31 of this conclusion.
39. JJB, pp. 8, 22.
40. See Note 31 of this conclusion.
41. ZG, p. 449.
42. In addition to the newly-published party documents mentioned in the "Introduction," there are some other materials published recently which are also highly valuable, such as reminiscences contained by *Fujian dangshi ziliao* (*Historical Materials of Fujian Party*) and other collections such as *Longyan wenshi ziliao* (*Longyan Historical Materials*), many

of which have been frequently cited in the body of this dissertation.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- FH *Fengzhan Hongqi (Red Flags in the Wind)*
- FJJS *Jin wubai nian lai Fujian de jiazu shehui yu wenhua (Fujian's Clan Society and Culture in the Last 500 Years)*
- FJS *Fujian jingji fazhan jianshi (A Concise History of the Economic Development in Fujian)*
- FL *Fujian dangshi ziliao (Materials of Party History in Fujian)*
- FSXJ *Fujian shehui yu xiangcun jingji (The Society and Rural Economy in Fujian)*
- FW *Fujian wenshi ziliao (Historical Materials of Fujian)*
- FWJ *Fujian geming lishi wenjian huiji (Collection of Revolutionary Historical Documents in Fujian)*
- FZZY *Fujian zudian zhidu zhi yanjiu (Studies on the Tenancy of Fujian)*
- HS *Huailian bamin shansui (Cherishing the Mountains and Rivers of the Eight Min)*
- JJB *Jiangxi suweiai zhi jianli jiqi benghui (The Establishment and Collapse of the Jiangxi Soviet)*
- MGS *Minxi geming genjudi shi, by Jiang (History of the Minxi Revolutionary Base)*
- MJS *Minxi geming genjudi de jingji jianshe (The Economic Reconstruction in Minxi Revolutionary Base)*
- MS *Minxi geming genjudi shi (History of the Minxi Revolutionary Base)*
- ZB *Zhongyang geming genjudi shiliao xuanbian (Selection of Historical Documents of the Central Revolutionary Base)*
- ZDRZ *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan (Who's who in the CCP History)*

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## GLOSSARY

An Quan	安全	chuyang	出洋
Anxi	安溪	Dadaohui	大刀会
bamin	八庙	dan	担
Baihehui	白鹤会	datuhao	打土豪
Baishan hui	白扇会	Deng Fa	邓发
Baitu	白土	Deng Yanda	邓演达
baodong dui	暴动队	Deng Zihui	邓子恢
Beiyangjun	北洋军	dibao	地保
Beiyangjunfa	北洋军阀	ditoushe	地头蛇
Caixi	才溪	dizhu mintuan	地主民团
Changle	长乐	Dongjiang	东江
Changting	长汀	Dushulu	读书录
Chaoshan	潮汕	fabing	法兵
Chaozhou	潮州	fa yangcai	发洋财
Chen Guohui	陈国辉	Fang Zhimin	方志敏
Chen Jiageng	陈嘉庚	fen	分
Chen Jiongming	陈炯明	Feng Yuxiang	冯玉祥
Chen Rongguang	陈荣光	Foshan	佛山
Chen Tianmi	陈天宓	Fuan	福安
Chen Zukang	陈祖康	Fu Baicui	傅柏翠
Chongan	崇安	Fujian	福建
chongfeng yundong	冲锋运动		

<i>Fulunshe</i>	扶伦社	<i>Huian</i>	惠安
<i>Fumu hui</i>	父母会	<i>Hunan</i>	湖南
<i>Fuzhou</i>	福州	<i>Huyang</i>	湖洋
<i>gaizupai</i>	改组派	<i>Jiang Jieshi</i>	蒋介石
<i>genju di jianshe</i>	根据地建设	<i>Jiangsu</i>	江苏
<i>gongchang</i>	公尝	<i>Jiangxi</i>	江西
<i>gongnong wuzhuang geju</i>	工农武装 割据	<i>jiaoli</i>	脚力
<i>gongtian</i>	公田	<i>Jiaoyang</i>	蛟洋
<i>Guangdong</i>	广东	<i>Jiaoyu tuiguang bu</i>	教育推广部
<i>Guangxi</i>	广西	<i>jikoushoutian</i>	计口授田
<i>Guangzhou</i>	广州	<i>Jimei</i>	集美
<i>quantian</i>	官田	<i>Jimei xuexiao tongxue hui</i>	集美学校 同学会
<i>Gui</i>	桂	<i>Jinduhui</i>	禁赌会
<i>Guihua</i>	归化	<i>Jinsha</i>	金沙
<i>guiyue</i>	规约	<i>jinshi</i>	进士
<i>Guo Diren</i>	郭滴人	<i>Jiulongjiang</i>	九龙江
<i>Haifeng</i>	海丰	<i>Jiuxianhui</i>	九仙会
<i>Hai-lu-feng</i>	海陆丰	<i>juren</i>	举人
<i>hakka</i>	客家	<i>kaiming</i>	开明
<i>He Shuheng</i>	何叔衡	<i>Kang Buyan</i>	康步崖
<i>Hongdaihui</i>	红带会	<i>Kanshi</i>	坎市
<i>Hongse zhonghua</i>	红色中华	<i>Kengkou</i>	坑口
<i>Huangzhuhui</i>	黄祖会	<i>kou</i>	寇
<i>Huaqi jun</i>	花旗军	<i>Lan Yutian</i>	蓝玉田
<i>Hua Yangqiao</i>	华仰侨	<i>Liancheng</i>	连城
<i>Hubei</i>	湖北	<i>Li Lisan</i>	李立三

Lin Tingmei	林汀梅	Nanchang	南昌
Lin Xinyao	林心尧	Nanning	南宁
Lin Yizhu	林一株	neigezhongshu	内阁中书
Lin Yutang	林语堂	Nian	捻
liumang	流氓	Ningde	宁德
Li Zhendong	李震东	Ninghua	宁化
Li Zongren	李宗仁	Niuganghui	牛纲会
Longmen	龙门	pasi, paku, zuiqiu xiangle	怕死, 怕苦, 追求享乐
Longshan	龙山	pinggu	平谷
Longyan	龙岩	Pinghe	平和
lulin haohan	绿林好汉	Putian	莆田
Luo Huacheng	罗化成	qianghan	强悍
Luo Ming	罗明	Qing	清(朝)
Lu Xun	鲁迅	Qishanshe	奇山社
Mao Zedong	毛泽东	Qingliu	清流
min	闽	Quanzhou	泉州
Minbei	闽北	qu	区
Mindong	闽东	qunzhong tuanti	群众团体
Ming	明(朝)	Qu Qiubai	瞿秋白
Minjiang	闽江	Ruijin	瑞金
Minnan	闽南	Shanghai	上海
mintuan	民团	Shanghang	上杭
Minxi	闽西	Shangmei	上梅
Min-Zhe-Wan-Gan	闽浙皖赣	Shenshan	深山
mu	亩	shezhang	社长
Nanyang	南洋	shi	石

<i>sishu</i>	私塾	<i>Wenxi</i>	文溪
<i>sitian</i>	私田	<i>Whampoa</i>	黄埔
<i>Song</i>	宋(朝)	<i>Wuhan</i>	武汉
<i>sufan</i>	肃反	<i>Wuping</i>	武平
<i>sufan weiyuan hui</i>	肃反委员会	<i>Wushisan hui</i>	五十三会
<i>sushedang</i>	肃社党	<i>Wuyi</i>	武夷
<i>Sun Yat-sen</i>	孙逸仙	<i>Xiamen</i>	厦门
<i>Taipingli</i>	太平里	<i>Xiangdao</i>	向导
<i>Taiwan</i>	台湾	<i>xiangshuci</i>	香书祠
<i>tang</i>	堂	<i>Xiang Ying</i>	项英
<i>Tan Zhenlin</i>	谭震林	<i>Xianxia</i>	仙霞
<i>tepaiyuan</i>	特派员	<i>Xianyou</i>	仙游
<i>Tinglei</i>	汀雷	<i>Xiapu</i>	霞浦
<i>Tingshu ba xian shehui yundong ren yuan yang cheng suo</i>	汀属八县社会运动人员养成所	<i>xiedou</i>	械斗
<i>Tingzhou</i>	汀州	<i>Xinan</i>	溪南
<i>Tongsheng</i>	同声	<i>Xinqingnian</i>	新青年
<i>tongzibing</i>	童子兵	<i>xiuca</i>	秀才
<i>tuanfei</i>	团匪	<i>Yanshengbao</i>	岩声报
<i>tuanlian</i>	团练	<i>Yan Xishan</i>	阎锡山
<i>tubao</i>	土堡	<i>Yicangshe</i>	义仓社
<i>tudi buzhang</i>	土地部长	<i>Yixin hui</i>	一心会
<i>tu-dui-tu</i>	土对土	<i>Yongan</i>	永安
<i>tufei</i>	土匪	<i>Yongding</i>	永定
<i>tugong</i>	土共	<i>yuan</i>	元
<i>Wang Ming</i>	王明	<i>Yuan Shikai</i>	袁世凯
		<i>Yukouhui</i>	御寇会
		<i>Zhangchao ribao</i>	漳潮日报

Zhang Chinan	张赤男
Zhang Dingcheng	张鼎承
Zhangping	漳平
Zhang Zhen	张震
Zhangzhou	漳州
Zhejiang	浙江
Zhenghe	政和
Zhong Shaokui	钟少葵
Zhonghua geming dang	中华革命党
Zhou Enlai	周恩来
Zhu De	朱德
Zhu Xi	朱熹
zuzhi guannian	组织观念
ziyiyuan	咨议员



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