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Shanghai's Strike Wave of 1957

Elizabeth J. Perry

In the spring of 1957, a strike wave of monumental proportions rolled across the city of Shanghai.¹ The strikes in Shanghai represented the climax of a national outpouring of labour protest that had been gaining momentum for more than a year. The magnitude of the 1957 strike wave is especially impressive when placed in historical perspective. Major labour disturbances (*naoshi*) erupted at 587 Shanghai enterprises in the spring of 1957, involving nearly 30,000 workers. More than 200 of these incidents included factory walkouts, while another 100 or so involved organized slowdowns of production. Additionally, more than 700 enterprises experienced less serious forms of labour unrest (*maoyan*).² These figures are extraordinary even by comparison with Republican-period Shanghai when the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925, the Shanghai Workers' Three Armed Uprisings of 1926–27 and the protests of the Civil War years gave rise to one of the most aggressive labour movements in world history.³ In 1919, Shanghai experienced only 56 strikes, 33 of which were connected with May Fourth. In 1925, it saw 175, of which 100 were in conjunction with May Thirtieth. The year of greatest strike activity in Republican-period Shanghai, 1946, saw a total of 280.⁴

The labour unrest of 1956–57 is rarely mentioned in English-language studies of the period, but it suggests the need to rethink several common assumptions about the development of Chinese Communism. In contrast to the conventional image of the mid-1950s as a time when basic urban problems were resolved in China,⁵ the strike wave indicates that the era

1. Oral presentations of this paper were made to seminars at the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, Indiana University and the University of Washington. The author would like to thank participants in those seminars for many stimulating comments and suggestions. Appreciation for a critical reading of an earlier draft goes to Joseph Esherick, Ellen Fuller, Nina Halpern, Richard Kraus, David Shambaugh, Dorothy Solinger, Christine Wong, and especially Thomas Bernstein, Anita Chan, Charles Hoffmann, Stanley Rosen, Mark Selden and Andrew Walder. Valuable research assistance was provided by Jiang Kelin, Li Xun and Susan McCarthy.

2. These statistics are the calculation of the Shanghai Committee Party History Research Office. See *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Shanghai, 1921–1991 (The Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai, 1921–1991)* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1991), p. 472.

3. On the other hand, the figures for 1957 pale in comparison with those for late 1949 – the period immediately following the establishment of the new Communist order in the city. In the six months from June to December of 1949, Shanghai experienced 3,324 strikes and major disturbances (averaging more than 500 incidents per month). This critical takeover period remains to be carefully studied.

4. Shanghai Bureau of Social Affairs (ed.), *Strikes and Lockouts in Shanghai, 1918–1932* (Shanghai: Shanghai Municipal Government, 1933).

5. See Kenneth G. Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin, 1949–1952* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980); and Ezra Vogel, *Canton Under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949–1968* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) for pathbreaking analyses of the impact of socialist transformation on urban China. A. Doak Barnett, in his pioneering study of the period, *Communist China:*

might better be viewed as one in which fundamental social cleavages became evident.⁶ Scholars and ordinary Chinese alike are apt to point to the 1950s as a kind of golden age – a period of unusual harmony and goodwill marked by a special closeness between the Chinese people, particularly the working class, and their new socialist government. Weary of war and proud of their revolutionary victory, citizens and cadres – we are told – co-operated in the process of socialist transformation.⁷

Of course the early 1950s were racked by the campaign to suppress counter-revolutionaries, the Three-Antis and Five-Antis, but these were targeted at class enemies, cadres or capitalists. And the end of that decade was marred by the Anti-Rightist campaign of late 1957 and the launching of the Great Leap Forward the following year, but these involved mainly intellectuals and peasants. For most of the decade, we are led to believe, friction between leaders and labour was minimal. The period just prior to the Anti-Rightist movement is often remembered most fondly. As renowned Chinese journalist Liu Binyan summarizes popular opinion,

Twenty years later, looking back on the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, most people felt nostalgic for 1956 and regarded it as the best period in the history of the People's Republic, calling it "the golden year." Some thought if it had not been for the antirightist campaign of the following year, Chinese society would have developed in a far more humane way.⁸

The strikes of 1956–57, Liu Binyan's candid reportage of which resulted in his denunciation by the Communist Party, were symptomatic of the severe social strains that predated and precipitated the Anti-Rightist crackdown. In demanding improved welfare and decrying the bureaucratism of local officials, strikers revealed deep divisions within the Chinese working class itself. Partly a product of pre-1949 experiences and partly a result of the socialization of industry under Communism, such fissures would shape labour unrest in China for decades to come.

By the same token, the strikes of the mid-1950s may also demand some revision in the understanding of subsequent outbreaks of popular protest in the People's Republic of China (PRC) – most notably the Tiananmen uprising of 1989. The so-called democracy movement of 1989 is often treated as unprecedented in the history of Communist

footnote continued

The Early Years, 1949–1955 (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 11, concluded that "a small but vitally important minority of the Chinese population," including organized labour, had enthusiastically accepted Communist rule.

6. Roderick MacFarquhar's *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vols. I and II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974 & 1983) and David Bachman's *Bureaucracy, Economy and Leadership in China: The Institutional Origins of the Great Leap Forward* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) emphasize the conflicts of the period, but their focus is on the political elite rather than the ordinary citizenry.

7. For a discussion of socialist transformation in the countryside, see Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). That the process in the rural areas was also socially divisive is suggested in Elizabeth J. Perry, "Rural violence in socialist China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 103 (September 1985), pp. 420 ff.

8. Liu Binyan, *A Higher Kind of Loyalty* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), p. 61.

China.⁹ Unlike earlier outbursts (such as the Hundred Flowers of 1956–57, the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s or even the Democracy Wall movement of 1978–79), the Tiananmen protest tends to be pictured as a bottom-up, rather than a top-down affair – an event which, in contrast to the earlier incidents, was neither initiated nor orchestrated by the top leadership.¹⁰ Thus Wang Shaoguang argues that “workers’ involvement in the protest movement of 1989 marked a turning point of changing class relations ... the working class in China is no longer a pillar of continuity but a force for change.”¹¹ Likewise, Andrew Walder and Gong Xiaoxia characterize worker involvement in 1989 as a “new species of political protest in the People’s Republic” which does not fit earlier modes of worker activism “where factions of political leaders mobilized their local followers for political combat.”¹² This interpretation has been picked up by general comparativists as well. Jack Goldstone asserts that “unlike other confrontations that involved mainly intellectuals, such as the Hundred Flowers Movement, or other events that were in some sense orchestrated by the regime, such as the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen marked the first time that intellectuals and popular elements acted independently to challenge the regime.”¹³ Yet as early as the mid-50s, when relations between workers and the state were purportedly at their closest, labour activism evidenced considerable independence and bottom-up initiative.

Another feature of the 1989 uprising, highlighted in both journalistic and scholarly accounts, was its rich panoply of protest repertoires – which drew inspiration both from China’s own May Fourth heritage and from international practices. Protesters at Tiananmen put up big-character posters, presented petitions, issued handbills, threatened industrial strikes and slow-downs, organized autonomous unions, and undertook hunger strikes, marches and even the capturing of political centre stage during the visit of a foreign dignitary (Gorbachev). Joseph W. Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom have analysed this aspect of the movement percep-

9. Useful collections stressing the novelty of the uprising of 1989 include Tony Saich (ed.), *The Chinese People’s Movement: Perspectives on Spring 1989* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1990); Jonathan Unger (ed.), *The Pro-Democracy Protests in China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1991); and George Hicks (ed.), *The Broken Mirror: China After Tiananmen* (London: St James Press, 1990).

10. For a maverick view, stressing the close connection between student organizers and high-level members of the Chinese Communist Party in 1989, see Lee Feigon, *China Rising: The Meaning of Tiananmen* (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 1990). Feigon emphasizes the similarities between the Tiananmen uprising and earlier student protests in Chinese history, both before and after 1949.

11. Wang Shaoguang, “Deng Xiaoping’s reform and the Chinese workers’ participation in the protest movement of 1989,” *Research in Political Economy*, Vol. 13.

12. Andrew G. Walder and Gong Xiaoxia, “Workers in the Tiananmen protests: the politics of the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Federation,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 29 (January 1993), pp. 3–4.

13. Jack A. Goldstone, “Analyzing revolutions and rebellions: a reply to the critics,” *Contention* (forthcoming).

tively in their treatment of 1989 as political theatre.¹⁴ But on this score, too, there are remarkable precedents in the unrest of 1956–57.

A study of these earlier incidents thus offers a corrective to some of the assumptions both about the beginnings of the PRC (the 1950s) and about the contemporary scene (the 1980s and 1990s). Scholarship on dissent in Communist China – whether focusing on the Hundred Flowers, Democracy Wall or the Tiananmen uprisings of 1976 and 1989 – has been preoccupied with the plight of the intelligentsia.¹⁵ Yet alongside each of these famed outbursts of protest by intellectuals have occurred little-known, but highly significant, labour movements.¹⁶ Indeed, the draconian manner in which the state chose to terminate each of these instances of protest (with the Anti-Rightist campaign in 1957, the imprisonment of Wei Jingsheng and other democracy advocates in 1979 and the massacre on June 4 1989) becomes somewhat more intelligible – though certainly no more excusable – in light of this hidden history of working-class resistance.

Moreover when put in historical and comparative context, as will be attempted in the conclusion of this article, the Shanghai strike wave of 1957 may also have some implications for models of labour protest in general. The distinction between a strike wave and a general strike, though rarely emphasized in the theoretical literature, underscores the importance of the relationship between workers and intellectuals and highlights the contrast between the labour movements of pre-1949 and post-1949 China.

Sources

Although there exists, so far as I am aware, no English-language treatment of these events, fragmentary evidence about the labour unrest of the mid-1950s has been available for some time. First of all, hints about the magnitude of the protests appear in speeches by top leaders during the period. Mao Zedong in his famous address of February 1957, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” notes that “in 1956, workers and students in certain places went on strike.”¹⁷ In the more candid collection of Mao’s speeches published for internal circulation in 1969, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui*, there are more refer-

14. Joseph W. Esherick and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, “Acting out ‘democracy’: political theater in modern China,” in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry (eds.), *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China: Learning from 1989* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 28–66.

15. Important studies of intellectual dissent include Merle Goldman, *China’s Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1981); Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Goldman and Timothy Cheek (eds.), *China’s Intellectuals and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Andrew J. Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

16. This point is also made in Anita Chan, “Revolution or corporatism? Workers and trade unions in post-Mao China,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 29 (January 1993), pp. 32–33.

17. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), Vol. 5, p. 414.

ences. In a January 1957 speech, for example, Mao mentions widespread strikes and notes that a recent investigation found that only 25 per cent of the workers were reliable.¹⁸ And in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, recently edited by Roderick MacFarquhar *et al.*, Mao cites a report by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) in 1956 which noted, on the basis of only partial statistics, that some 50 strikes had recently taken place – the largest of which had more than 1,000 participants.¹⁹

Liu Shaoqi, speaking in December 1956, raised the question of how to deal with strikes and petitions, but did not answer it.²⁰ The following spring, when the number of labour disputes had increased exponentially, Liu boldly proposed that union and Party officials should themselves participate in strikes in order to regain the workers' sympathy.²¹

A second source for the strikes of the mid-1950s are central reports and directives, many of which were reprinted in the internal-circulation journal, *Zhongguo gongyun* (*The Chinese Labour Movement*).²² In February 1957, the Party group of the ACFTU issued a report noting that it had handled 29 strikes and 56 petitions by disgruntled workers the previous year. The report pointed out that this was but a small percentage of the total number of disputes which had erupted across the country. In Shanghai, for example, six labour disturbances had broken out in the first three months of 1956, 19 in the second trimester, 20 in the third and 41 in the last trimester of that year.²³ In March 1957, Party Central issued a directive on the problem of handling strikes. Acknowledging that labour strikes, student boycotts and mass petitions and demonstrations had increased dramatically in the past half year, Party Central estimated (perhaps with some hyperbole) that more than 10,000 strikes had erupted across the country during this period.²⁴

A third – and somewhat more accessible – source is the official press.²⁵ Newspapers from around the country carried stories about strikes, petitions and other varieties of labour disputes in their locales.²⁶ And on 13 May 1957 *People's Daily* ran a lengthy editorial entitled “On Labour

18. Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* (*Long Live the Thought of Mao Zedong*), Vol. 1 (Beijing: n.p., 1969), pp. 74–76.

19. Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek and Eugene Wu (eds.), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 174–75.

20. Liu Shaoqi, *Liu Shaoqi lun gongren yundong* (*Liu Shaoqi Discusses the Labour Movement*) (Beijing: Central Documents Press, 1988), p. 434.

21. *Joint Publications Research Service*, No. 41889, p. 58.

22. Published by the ACFTU, this journal can be found in a number of research libraries in China.

23. *Zhongguo gongyun* (*The Chinese Labour Movement*), No. 2 (1957).

24. *Zhongguo gongyun*, No. 7 (1957). Reprinted in Yan Jiadong and Zhang Liangzhi (eds.), *Shehuizhuyi gonghui xuexi wenjian xuanbian* (*Compilation of Study Documents on Socialist Unions*) (Beijing: 1992), pp. 176–183.

25. Taiwan's mainland-watchers were the first to pick up on these press reports. See the useful discussion of labour unrest throughout the 1950s in Qiu Kongyuan, *Zhongguo dalu renmin fangong kangbao yundong* (*Anti-Communist Protests of the People in Mainland China*) (Taipei: 1958), pp. 92–101, 165–166.

26. For descriptions of labour unrest in the city of Guangzhou, see *Guangzhou ribao*, 12 May 1957, 14 May 1957, 20 August 1957; and *Nanfang ribao*, 10 May 1957. For a case in Guilin, see *Guangxi ribao*, 16 October 1957. For an example from Hangzhou, see *Hangzhou*

Trouble,”²⁷ which attributed the problem of strikes and petitions to bureaucratism on the part of the leadership.

A pioneering study of labour unrest in this period, based upon the official Chinese media, was recently completed by a French scholar. Francois Gipouloux’s *Les cent fleurs a l’usine (The Hundred Flowers in the Factory)* is a valuable work which emphasizes the year 1957 as a point of rupture in the history of Chinese socialism.²⁸ But Gipouloux was dependent almost entirely upon the official press – central and provincial, trade union and Youth League. His findings are very suggestive, but also quite partial. As Gipouloux himself points out, cases were not reported in the press until they had been satisfactorily resolved. Successful resolution, more than the typicality of the incident itself, was the criterion for press coverage. Thus Gipouloux provides a blow-by-blow account of the resistance of 200 Shanghai bath-house workers – an incident which was treated in both the Shanghai and the central press as “a very good example of how to handle contradictions among the people.”²⁹ Interesting as the case is, however, it turns out to have been atypical in a number of respects. As will be seen, strikes by repatriated workers comprised fewer than one per cent of the disturbances that spring.

Fortunately it is now possible to go beyond speeches, central directives and the official press in an investigation of this subject. The Shanghai Municipal Archives hold hundreds of detailed reports compiled in the spring of 1957 by the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions and its district branches across the city on incidents which erupted in their areas of jurisdiction. These rich data offer a new perspective on the strike wave, allowing previously unanswerable questions about the origins and objectives of the protests to be posed.³⁰

Causes of the Strike Wave

As studies of the Hundred Flowers Movement have emphasized, Chairman Mao’s role in encouraging the dissent of this period was of

footnote continued

ribao, 26 June 1957. For an incident in Chongqing, see *Chongqing ribao*, 22 September 1957. For disputes at mines in Guangdong, Hebei and Shanxi, see the reports in *Xingdao ribao*, 16 February, 1957; *Renmin ribao*, 9 May 1957; and *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 2 June 1956. For disturbances at co-operatives in Tianjin and Jiangxi, see *Da gong bao*, 22 May 1957. And for a dispute at a Beijing paint factory, see *Da gong bao*, 9 May 1957. Charles Hoffmann, *The Chinese Worker* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 145–150, offers an informative description – based upon official press reports – of a longshoremen’s strike in Guangzhou between November 1956 and April 1957.

27. A translation can be found in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 1536, 23 May 1957, pp. 1–3.

28. Francois Gipouloux, *Les cents fleurs a l’usine: Agitation ouvriere et crise du model sovietique en Chine, 1956–1957* (Paris: L’ecole des hautes etudes en sciences sociales, 1986). My review of this useful volume appears in *Journal of Asian Studies* (February 1989), pp. 134–35.

29. Gipouloux, *Les cents fleurs a l’usine*, pp. 198–202. For Chinese press reports, see *Xinwen ribao*, 27 April and 13 May 1957; *Da gong bao*, 27 April and 3 May 1957.

30. An informative guide to the archives is *Shanghaishi dangangan jianming zhinan (Concise Introduction to the Shanghai Municipal Archives)* (Beijing: Archives Press, 1991). Most of the materials for this paper were drawn from the “C1” category of Shanghai trade union archives, described on pp. 286–87 of the guide.

critical importance.³¹ Concerned about the unrest then sweeping Eastern Europe, Mao hoped that the release of social tensions in China would avert a popular uprising at home. Whether the Chairman was setting a trap for his enemies (as most Chinese assume)³² or whether he was acting initially in good faith (as Western analysts generally believe),³³ Mao was clearly anxious to defuse domestic contradictions. He referred repeatedly in both his published and unpublished speeches to the Hungarian revolt of 1956 and expressed the hope that strikes in China might help to forestall a larger and more serious insurgency.³⁴

The importance of state inspiration is undeniable. Without the Chairman's explicit encouragement, it seems inconceivable that the strike wave would have assumed such massive proportions. Moreover, previous mobilization of workers in state-sponsored campaigns to monitor capitalists had prepared the ground for the outburst of labour unrest at this time.³⁵ Factionalism within the upper echelons of the Party leadership also fostered dissent among the populace at large.³⁶ Even so, one is hard pressed to characterize the events of spring 1957 as a top-down affair. The archival materials give no hint of direct instigation by higher authorities, at either municipal or central levels. Although certainly stimulated by Mao's "On Handling Contradictions" speech, the protests evidenced considerable spontaneity and presented real problems for management, Party and trade union officials alike.

Much of the explanation for the explosion of labour unrest lies with the economic restructuring of the day. The years 1956–57 were not only noteworthy for the Hungarian revolt abroad and Mao's Hundred Flowers initiative at home; they were also the period in which most of Chinese industry was socialized. Private firms were eliminated and replaced by so-called joint-ownership enterprises (*gongsi heyingshi qiye*). Under this arrangement, the former owners became state employees, receiving interest on the value of their shares in the enterprise. The capitalists no longer enjoyed profits, nor did they exercise any real managerial initiative. Except for the fact that the former owners clipped coupons, the joint-owned companies were in effect wholly state-run entities.³⁷

The fundamental transformation of the Shanghai economy can be illustrated with a few figures. In the autumn of 1950, a year after the establishment of the new socialist regime, more than 75 per cent of the city's industrial work force was still employed at privately-owned facto-

31. See especially Roderick MacFarquhar (ed.), *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Praeger, 1960); and Goldman, *Literary Dissent*.

32. See, for example, Cong Jin, *Quzhe fazhan de suiye (The Years of Tortuous Development)* (Henan: Henan People's Press, 1989), pp. 84ff.

33. MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. I, Part III.

34. *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui*, pp. 74–79, 87.

35. On the role of workers in earlier "tiger-hunting" campaigns, see Lynn T. White, III, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 67–71.

36. See n. 3.

37. Carl Riskin, *China's Political Economy: The Quest for Development since 1949* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 96–97.

ries; state enterprises claimed a mere 21 per cent. In December 1957, by contrast, 72 per cent of Shanghai's labourers worked at joint-ownership firms and another 27 per cent at state-owned enterprises.³⁸ Private industry was a thing of the past.

The great majority of strikes in the spring of 1957 were concentrated in newly formed joint-ownership enterprises to protest against the deterioration in economic securities and political voice which accompanied the socialization of these firms. In most instances, the wage and welfare reforms that occurred with the formation of joint-ownership enterprises spelled a decrease in real income for workers. For example, at the Yongxing Cloth Factory, workers lost the right to glean the left-over cotton waste, forfeited a special food subsidy at festival times, and gave up bonuses for good attendance and promotions. This meant on average a loss of more than 400 *yuan* per person per year. Similarly, at the Zhenhua Paint Factory, 18 forms of wage and welfare subsidies were abolished.³⁹ Although it seems that many of these subsidies were actually very recent in origin, having been introduced after 1949 by private entrepreneurs in response to state pressure, workers reacted to their abrogation with all the righteous indignation associated with the collapse of a "traditional" moral economy.⁴⁰ At Zhenhua, workers referred to the cuts – which resulted in an average per capita monthly loss of 45 *yuan* – as "18 chops of the knife" and satirized cadres at the factory as "master monks" for the enforced austerity programme. When the Shanghai Water Company discontinued its practice of issuing free toilet paper to all employees, the workers responded by using the company's letterheaded stationery instead! At the Tianhua Gas Lamp Factory, the 54 labourers were accustomed to a sumptuous annual banquet, a practice that was terminated under joint-ownership. In protest, the workers themselves ordered a five-table feast and sent the bill to management. When the new state managers refused to absorb the cost, a disturbance erupted.⁴¹

The socialization of industry also resulted in a loss of political input for ordinary workers. After the Communist takeover in 1949, most private enterprises had been forced to implement a system of mass supervision – under the auspices of the enterprise trade union – in which workers had some say in production plans, management procedures, wages, bonuses, and so on. But after joint-ownership was established, this system of worker supervision was often dispensed with.⁴² The workers' unhappi-

38. Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA), Nos. B31-1536-1237, B31-1-304.

39. Qian Min and Zhang Jinping, "Guanyu 1957 nian Shanghai bufen gongchang naoshi de yanjiu" ("A study of the disturbances at some Shanghai factories in 1957"), *Shanghai gongyun yanjiu* (February 1990), p. 3. This informative internal-circulation report, based upon archival sources, was published in the aftermath of the 1989 uprising as a reference document for leading cadres in the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions.

40. On the notions of customary justice that fuelled labour protest among the English proletariat, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963), especially chs. 8 and 9.

41. SMA, No. C1-2-2234.

42. Qian Min and Zhang Jinping, "Study of the disturbances," p. 14.

ness was intensified by the fact that, in stark contrast to their own plight, bonuses for the managerial staff were generally unaffected by the socialization process.⁴³

Of the more than 1,300 incidents which took place during approximately 100 days from March to early June 1957 (the high point of labour unrest in Shanghai), nearly 90 per cent were centred in newly formed joint-ownership enterprises.⁴⁴ The vast majority of the incidents were located in small-scale enterprises with fewer than 100 workers, where working conditions were especially poor and cadre-worker relations commensurately strained.⁴⁵

The disproportionately high number of strikes at joint-ownership enterprises was not the result of wage differentials *per se*. In 1957 the average worker at a joint-ownership factory in Shanghai actually took home more pay than his or her counterpart at a state enterprise.⁴⁶ But growing disparities in welfare assistance, housing subsidies, bonuses and job security strongly favoured the state employee and generated understandable resentment on the part of workers at joint-ownership firms. Their militancy may have been furthered by the fact that they were somewhat better educated than state factory workers.⁴⁷

In terms of motivation, nearly half the disputes were driven by a demand for higher income or improved welfare⁴⁸ – usually in response to cuts imposed during the change to joint ownership. An additional one-third were by apprentices, protesting a recent State Council directive that extended their training period beyond the initial contract. Approximately 7 per cent of the disturbances were prompted solely by poor work-style on the part of the cadres. The remainder were closely connected to the newly emerging system of household registration (*hukou*) which threatened to create a neo-feudal hierarchy based upon the location of one's

43. SMA, No. C1-2-2272.

44. Only 10% occurred in previously established joint-ownership enterprises and fewer than 2% in state enterprises.

45. SMA, Nos. C1-1-187, C1-2-2407. More than 90% of the incidents occurred in these smaller firms.

46. The average annual wage in Shanghai for workers at local state enterprises (*difang guoying*) was 796 *yuan* and for workers at central state enterprises (*zhongyang guoying*) was 856 *yuan*, whereas workers at central joint-ownership enterprises (*zhongyang gongsi heyong*) earned an average annual wage of 880 *yuan* and at local joint-ownership enterprises (*difang gongsi heyong*) a whopping 924 *yuan*. SMA, No. B31-1-304.

47. Among state enterprise workers, 25% were illiterate; among joint-ownership workers, the figure was 16%. SMA, No. B31-305. Although the cause of the difference in literacy rates is unclear, it may be a function of a higher proportion of (literate) workers from petty bourgeois backgrounds in the smaller firms, contrasted to a larger number of (illiterate) demobilized peasant soldiers in the state enterprises.

48. The cost of living index for workers in Shanghai had shown a steady, but gradual, increase over the preceding years. With 1952 taken as a base of "100," the index rose to 105.76 in 1953, 106.62 in 1954, 107.76 in 1955, 108.15 in 1956 and 109 in 1957. Thus the *rate* of increase had actually tapered off in recent years. See *Shanghai jiefang qianhou wujia ziliao huibian* (*Compendium of Materials on Shanghai Prices Before and After Liberation*) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1958), p. 463.

permanent job assignment.⁴⁹ Some 4 per cent of the disruptions were instigated by workers unhappy about being transferred out of Shanghai to work at industrial enterprises elsewhere in the country. Another 2 per cent were by temporary workers demanding permanent worker status. Fewer than 1 per cent of the strikes were by repatriated workers (*daoliu gong*) sent back to their native places – the bath-house workers on whom Gipouloux showered such attention, for example – but the protests of these peasant/workers were especially militant and the authorities thus put particular efforts into their resolution.⁵⁰

While the formation of joint-ownership enterprises triggered the unrest of 1956–57, some of the workers' grievances had been mounting for years prior to the explosion. At many factories, wages had been withheld – often for six months or more – during the difficult period of the Korean War. When it later came time to make restitution, the Shanghai Bureau of Labour insisted that repayment take the form of a “collective welfare fund” (*jiti fuli jin*) to be used by individual firms for the general good of their workforce. The disposition of this fund created a good deal of friction at many factories. In some cases, factory unions publicized plans to construct new dormitories or cafeterias, which never actually materialized. In others, dormitories were built but were open only to newly hired workers – despite the fact that money for their construction had come from the withheld wages of older workers. Incensed by such injustices, workers called for a disbursement of the welfare fund.⁵¹

Style of Protest

Typically, a dispute would begin by raising repeated suggestions and demands (*ti yijian, ti yaoqiu*) to the factory leadership. When these were not dealt with, formal complaints were lodged (*gaozhuang*) with the higher authorities. The workers set deadlines by which they expected a satisfactory response and often staged rowdy meetings to publicize their grievances. These initial steps were classified by union authorities under the rubric of *maoyan* or “giving off smoke.” But if their demands did not receive a prompt response, the protest would evolve into a strike (*bagong*), slowdown (*daigong*), collective petition movement (*jiti qingyuan*) or forcible surrounding of cadres (*baowei ganbu*) – activities that were categorized as *naoshi* or outright “disturbances.”

Many of the protesters did demonstrate a desire to remain within the law. Pedicab drivers sought legal counsel before raising their three demands to ascertain that they were legitimate. Other measures were also adopted in order to impress the authorities with the propriety of the protests. Thus after elections for workers' representatives were held, anyone from a bad class background (capitalist, landlord) was usually eliminated from the roster. Even so, over time many of the protests grew

49. Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, “The city, the countryside and the sinews of population control: the origins and social consequences of China's hukou system,” paper presented to the conference on “Construction of the Party-State and State Socialism in China, 1936–65,” The Colorado College, 31 May–5 June 1993.

50. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

51. SMA, Nos. C1-2-2272, C1-1-188.

larger and more complicated, moving beyond simple requests about welfare provisions or leadership attitudes to involve bolder initiatives.⁵²

The protesters evinced a remarkably wide repertoire of behaviour. Many workers put up *dazibao* and wrote blackboard newspapers explaining their grievances, some went on hunger strike, some threatened suicide, some marched in large-scale demonstrations, holding their workplace banners high as they paraded vociferously down Nanjing Road, some staged sit-ins and presented petitions to government authorities, and some organized action committees, pickets and liaison officers to co-ordinate strikes in different factories and districts. In many cases, workers surrounded factory, Party and union cadres, raising demands and imposing a deadline for a satisfactory response – refusing to disband until their requests had been met.⁵³

The importance of foreign influences was obvious. Just as the example of Poland's Solidarity inspired Chinese workers in the 1980s,⁵⁴ so at this earlier juncture the Hungarian Revolt was a powerful stimulus for labour unrest. A popular slogan in the Shanghai protests of 1957 was "Let's create another Hungarian Incident!" There was an awareness – as in 1989 – of China's being part of an international socialist world. Another slogan in 1957 was "We'll take this all the way from district to city to Party central to Communist International." Some workers, hearing that Khrushchev was about to visit Shanghai, planned to present their grievances directly to him.⁵⁵ Although it turned out that the Soviet leader did not actually make his visit until the following year – well after the Anti-Rightist crackdown had thoroughly crushed the possibility of a direct confrontation with striking workers – the parallel with 1989, when protesters presented their grievances to Gorbachev, is notable.

Again as in 1989, there was evidence of a growing sophistication in protest strategies over time. In many cases strikers' plans included assigning "good cop/bad cop" roles to different participants; or, as the workers referred to this, *ban honglian*, *bailian* – acting the part of the red-faced hero or white-faced villain of Peking opera. In the later stages, workers distributed handbills to publicize their demands and formed autonomous unions (often termed *pingnan hui*, or redress grievances societies). In Tilanqiao district, more than 10,000 workers joined a "Democratic Party" (*minzhu dangpai*) organized by three local labourers. Some protesters used secret passwords and devised their own seals of office. In a number of instances, "united command headquarters" were established to provide martial direction to the struggles.⁵⁶

52. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

53. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

54. For a discussion of demands for a Solidarity-type independent trade union in early 1980s Shanghai, see Chen-chang Chiang, "The role of trade unions in mainland China," *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (February 1990), pp. 94-96; Jeanne L. Wilson, "The Polish Lesson": China and Poland, 1980-1990," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, No. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter 1990), pp. 259-280; and Chan, "Revolution or corporatism?"

55. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

56. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

Divisions among the Workers

About one-fifth of the disturbances involved all the workers at an enterprise,⁵⁷ and in a few cases (such as the artisan trade of cloth-dyeing) an entire industry participated. Usually, however, fewer than half of the workers at a factory were involved, with younger workers playing a disproportionately active role.⁵⁸

One reason for the less than universal participation in most disturbances was quite simply that divisions among the workers themselves were an important precipitant of many of the protests. At the Taichang Nail Factory, for example, workers from rural backgrounds demanded that their dependants still living in the countryside receive the same benefits as Shanghai workers whose family members resided in the city. Similarly, barbers stationed at construction sites demanded the same welfare provisions as the construction workers whose hair they were cutting.⁵⁹

Apprentices distraught by the extension of their training period proved especially unruly. When Shanghai's Party Secretary, Ma Tianshui, explained in a radio broadcast the new State Council directive prolonging indefinitely their period of servitude, apprentices across the city wept openly at the news. Most of them hailed from the countryside and had promised their families that they would send home a part of their wage as soon as the apprenticeship was completed and they were promoted to the status of regular grade-three workers. Many owed money which had to be repaid at the end of the original apprenticeship period; others had made plans to marry at that time.⁶⁰

The apprentices were remarkably adept at forging inter-factory links. On 10 May, some 800 apprentices from factories across the city staged a sit-in at the recreation club of Penglai district. On 12 May, more than 300 apprentices from ten factories in Hongkou and Zhabei districts gathered at a workers' library to demand higher wages, better welfare provisions and guarantee of promotion to grade-three worker upon completion of the apprenticeship period. In Luwan district, apprentices printed handbills to summon their colleagues to a mass meeting at a local park.⁶¹ In Yulin district, apprentices from five machine factories organized a "united command headquarters" to press their demands.⁶²

The shabby treatment accorded to apprentices was symptomatic of the newly emerging socialist industrial order, with its sharp division between privileged permanent workers at state enterprises and less fortunate members of the workforce. The dispute at the Shanghai Fertilizer Company in May 1957 illustrates the importance of these intra-worker divisions. The previous summer the company had taken in 41 temporary workers (*linshi gongren*), planning to promote them to regular employee

57. SMA, No. C1-1-187.

58. Qian Min and Zhang Jinping, "Study of the disturbances," p. 2.

59. SMA, No. C1-2-2407.

60. SMA, No. C1-2-2272.

61. SMA, No. C1-2-2234.

62. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

status (*guding gongren*) after a three-month trial period. However, an unexpected contraction in production meant management decided to fire them instead. Soon thereafter the union at the factory announced a plan to issue membership cards to its regular employees, making the discharged workers think that access to a union card would ensure them permanent worker status. They thus marched off to the union office to apply for the cards. They were, of course, refused since they had already been dismissed from the factory. Nevertheless they set a deadline by which they demanded that the cards be made available to them. After the union failed to comply, the angered ex-workers dragged its director and vice-director to the banks of the Huangpu River and dunked the head of the director in the polluted waters. This continued, at two to three minute intervals, for more than an hour until the union director's face was covered with mud and blood. Afraid for his own life, the vice-director jumped into the river in an effort to swim away. A boatman who offered help was stoned by the workers and some bystander night-soil carriers who tried to provide assistance from the river's edge were beaten off with sticks. The factory physician arrived on the scene just in time to pronounce both director and vice-director near death, at which point the discharged workers finally released them to the authorities.

Two days later the small group leaders of the union and youth league at the fertilizer factory held a meeting and declared that if the Party leadership considered this outrageous incident an example of contradictions among the people (which, as a non-antagonistic contradiction, did not require stern punishment), then they would take matters into their own hands and repay violence with violence. The permanent workers strongly agreed and even stockpiled weapons in preparation for killing the temporary workers who had instigated the affair. The only sympathy they evidenced for the discharged temporary workers was a pledge to take responsibility for the dependants of those they planned to kill! Fortunately, the authorities decided to handle the incident themselves by arresting the ringleaders as perpetrators of an antagonistic contradiction.⁶³

Temporary workers had good reason to feel ill-served by the socialist system. In 1957, of the 4,200 "temporary" workers employed in Shanghai's underwear industry, 691 had held their jobs for more than one year. Yet they enjoyed no employment security. One "temporary" worker who had laboured for more than four years at the Tongfu Sock Factory (where he had trained numerous apprentices) was dismissed because of illness just a few days after being transferred to another sock factory in the city.

In some instances, protests were launched by workers who had lost permanent status through job reassignments. For example, a sizeable contingent of workers from the Fuxing Flour Company were transferred to a local motor car factory, in the process forfeiting their permanent worker status, suffering a 50 per cent pay cut, and succumbing to an inordinate number of workplace injuries because of unfamiliarity with their new jobs. In other cases, participation in public works projects

63. SMA, No. C1-2-2234.

fuelled the workers' grievances. In the winter of 1955, a large number of former vagrants (*yumin*) who had undergone training at a vocational centre in Shanghai were dispatched to help with harnessing the Huai River in northern Anhui province. The trainees had been promised regular work at the Shanghai Number One Construction Company upon their return to the city in July 1956, but after nearly a year's delay were informed that they would not be hired because of illnesses contracted while working on the river.⁶⁴

Divisions within the workforce were a significant component of the unrest of the period, but these splits did not follow the "activist" versus "non-activist" dichotomy that might be anticipated from previous analyses of political participation in Communist China.⁶⁵ Instead of political status, socio-economic and spatial categories – permanent vs. temporary workers, old vs. young workers, locals vs. outsiders, urbanites vs. ruralites – were the more salient lines of division.

In most cases, Communist Party members, Youth Leaguers and activists do not seem to have behaved very differently from ordinary workers.⁶⁶ At the Datong oil factory, six of the 40 workers who signed a petition demanding back pay and restoration of previous piece-rates were Party or League members or other activists. One of the three ringleaders of this petition drive and factory walkout had been a secret society leader of the Red School Association (*Hongxue hui*) before 1949 and had also served as a yellow-union cadre under the KMT, but the other two principal instigators had been guerrilla fighters on the Communist side during the revolution and one of them currently served as a member of the factory management committee. The former secret society leader is credited with the slogan, "We workers need only a working people's organization (*laodong renmin zuzhi*), not a union (*gonghui*)."⁶⁷ One of the

64. SMA, No. C1-2-2271.

65. On the role of activists in Chinese politics, see Richard Solomon, "On activism and activists: Maoist conceptions of motivation and political role linking state to society," *The China Quarterly*, No. 39 (July–September 1969), pp. 76–114. James R. Townsend, *Political Participation in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 132, argues that "the primary distinction to make in analyzing ... mass participation in any political movement in Communist China, is that between activists and ordinary citizens." Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 166, states that "the distinction between activists and nonactivists ... is easily the most politically salient social-structural cleavage" in the communist factory. Wang Shaoguang, "Deng Ziaoping's reform," takes the political divisions within the working class a step further, arguing for a tripartite schema: "The workforce, whether in the state sector or in the collective sector, was largely divided into three categories: activist, middle-of-the-road, and backward element." Susan Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), chs. 3–4, portrays a comparable cleavage among Chinese high school students.

66. A 27 June 1957 report from the Hongkou district union noted that at the 15 affected enterprises in the district for which there were statistics, 43% of the protesters were union, Youth League or Party members. SMA, No. C1-2-2407. At the Xinguang Underwear Factory, which boasted a long history of labour strife in the pre-Communist period, of the 500 or so workers who participated in the 1957 strike, nearly 100 were Communist Party or Youth League members or other activists. A strike at the Hongwen Paper Factory was instigated by 27 employees, of whom 11 had "political history problems," five were Youth League activists, six were staff members, and five were ex-soldiers. SMA, No. C1-2-2272.

Communist guerrilla fighters, who had also been a secret society member, reportedly claimed that “the cadres don’t emphathize with our joys and sorrows. To merge us with the cadres the Americans would have to drop an atomic bomb forcing us all to die together.” And the former guerrilla and current factory committee member – in other words the activist – raised the slogan, “Let’s all return to the factory for an ‘eat-in’ (*zuo chi*) and wait there for a resolution.”⁶⁷ Thus a worker’s political status (as Party member, Youth League member, activist, backbone element or bad element), although duly noted in the official reports, does not appear to have played a major role in determining his or her participation in the strikes.

State–Society Relations

Economic cleavages and concerns were fundamental to the labour unrest of this period, but such matters were inextricably linked to the policies of the new socialist state. Central directives now determined everything from wage rates to apprenticeship periods. Workers were of course acutely aware of the fact that responsibility for industrial policy and factory management rested squarely with state cadres. Thus although economic demands (for higher income and improved welfare measures) dominated their requests, much of their wrath was directed against cadres in factory, government, Party and union positions.

With joint ownership had come a huge increase in the size of the factory managerial staff, which burgeoned to more than one-third of all employees at most enterprises. The outcome was a greater financial burden on those employees engaged in productive labour, and a commensurate resentment against the unproductive employees. Workers decried the growth in bureaucracy (which at the Ronghua Dye Company meant a leap from two-and-a-half full-time staff positions before 1949 to 52 after joint ownership). And they criticized the practice of promoting Communist Party members, rather than seasoned workers, to staff positions: “If you want to sit upstairs, you first have to get yourself into the Party.”⁶⁸

Anger at the surge in bureaucratization was intensified by the state’s growing interference in the labour market.⁶⁹ In late 1955, there had been an effort to transfer industrial workers to enterprises located in more remote parts of the country and to repatriate service workers (such as the bath-house workers highlighted in the press) to their native places in the countryside. Cadres at the time had often exaggerated the comforts of life in these more remote areas and falsely promised that transferred and repatriated workers could return to Shanghai when the economy im-

67. SMA, No. C1-2-2272.

68. SMA, No. C1-2-2407.

69. Deborah Davis, “Elimination of urban labor markets: consequences for the middle class,” paper presented to the Association of Asian Studies annual meeting, Los Angeles, 26 March 1993.

proved. In some cases, cadres even mobilized activists to pretend that they were going down to the countryside voluntarily so as to trick ordinary workers into following suit. The workers were, however, disappointed by the poor conditions and low pay in the rural areas, so in 1957 when the city's economy did in fact improve, these people streamed back to Shanghai to reclaim their former jobs. They discovered they had been lied to and were not going to be reinstated. The workers pointed out that in duping them by painting such a beautiful picture of the countryside, the cadres had been like "priests reciting the sutras." And as for the cadres' current attitude, "cold porridge and cold rice are edible, but cold words are hard to swallow."⁷⁰

The Guohua Charcoal Briquet Factory illustrates the pattern. In late 1956 the factory was to be relocated in Tianjin. Cadres in Shanghai had deceived the workers into thinking that a factory and plush dormitory accommodation had already been built there, but in fact in the spring of 1957 – a year after their transfer north – the area was still a wasteland. The transferred workers had no work and only a pittance of a wage. That June, 43 of the 108 employees returned to Shanghai to petition for a permanent return to the city. Ten of them threatened to commit suicide rather than to go back to Tianjin.⁷¹

A common sentiment was that cadres were indifferent to the plight of workers and had to be shaken up if they were to fulfil their proper socialist duties. As a popular slogan of the day put it, "Leaders are like candles; if you don't ignite them there'll be no light."⁷² Union leaders were a frequent target and were put in a very difficult position by the strikes.

In many cases, protesting workers evidenced a desire to take back from unions the right to represent their own interests. They organized their own meetings from which union officials, as well as management and Party branch leaders, were excluded. They cut the wires in their workshops during union broadcasts or took over the factory broadcast system themselves. When district Party and union officials went to the Hongfa Nuts and Bolts Factory to resolve the conflict there, workers stationed at the gate refused to give them entry since they could not produce a shoulder-badge identification issued by the striking workers. And when Party and union cadres went to the Lianyi Metalworking Plant, the protesting workers mocked them: "The emperor (i.e. the Party secretary) has come down and the emperor's grandson (i.e. the director of the union) has accompanied him."⁷³ At the Shanghai Pen Company, strikers called for selling off union property (electric fans, magnifying glasses and the like) and distributing the proceeds to the workers.⁷⁴

70. *Xinwen ribao*, 27 April and 13 May 1957; SMA, No. C1-1-189.

71. SMA, No. C1-2-2407.

72. SMA, No. C1-1-189.

73. SMA, No. C1-2-2407.

74. SMA, No. C1-2-2272.

The protests created a real dilemma for the trade unions. On the one hand, workers often criticized union cadres for being insensitive to their interests and sometimes aimed their struggles directly at the unions. Nearly half the disputes included a demand for disbursing the collective welfare fund – a pot of money which was under union control. Union directors who refused to comply were subject to curses, and in many cases beatings, from enraged workers.⁷⁵ On the other hand, trade union cadres who *were* inclined to side with workers (such as the director of the union at the Shanghai Knitting Factory) might find themselves out of a job.⁷⁶ An open letter from ten members of the Shanghai trade union expressed the fear that they would be accused of “syndicalism,” “economism” or “tailism” if they pushed too aggressively for workers’ interests.⁷⁷

Even so, in some cases union participation – and even leadership – was a key factor in the expansion of the dispute. At the Lianyi Machine Factory, the head of the union (a Party member) became disillusioned with the Communist regime after his elder brother, a rich peasant in the countryside, had been struggled against during collectivization. His entire union organization was mobilized to help direct the protest at the machine factory.⁷⁸ In this instance, disenchantment with the Communist regime prompted a union leader’s activism.⁷⁹ In most cases, however, unions were trying earnestly to live up to their obligations as defenders of working-class interests under socialism.

As in 1989, many union officials saw in the disturbances a chance to shed their image as government tools and forge a new closeness with the workers.⁸⁰ A union report on the uprising at the Datong oil factory in the spring of 1957 noted approvingly that when striking workers gathered at a teahouse, pounded their fists on the tables and loudly cursed the cadres as “scabs” (even jostling the teacups in the process), union cadres sat

75. SMA, No. C1-2-2396.

76. *Renmin ribao*, 9 May 1957. In 1956, Mao Haigen, chair of the trade union at the Shanghai Knitting Factory, was deposed after he revealed serious problems of mismanagement to an ACFTU inspection team.

77. *Gongren ribao*, 21 May 1957.

78. SMA, No. C1-2-2407. In this case, all the Youth League members – except for the League secretary – participated in the struggle.

79. In a few instances, “enemies of the people” were charged with having incited the protests. A strike at the Yiya Electronics Factory was reportedly instigated by a staff member who had received intelligence training in Taiwan before returning to China from Hong Kong in 1953. He is said to have tried to “restore the blue sky” [i.e., raise the flag of the Kuomintang] in the course of the protest movement. SMA, No. C1-2-2407. “Counter-revolutionary” slogans were also detected at a few enterprises. On the walls of the bathroom of the China Machine Tool Factory, someone had scribbled in chalk “Down with Chairman Mao!” And on a blackboard at an iron implements factory, someone had written “Down with the Chinese Communist Party!” SMA, No. C1-2-2234. But such displays of overt hostility to the new regime were rare.

80. See Elizabeth J. Perry, “Labor’s battle for political space: worker associations in contemporary China,” in Deborah Davis, Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton and Elizabeth J. Perry (eds.), *Urban Spaces: Autonomy and Community in Chinese Cities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

meekly by and listened respectfully to the criticisms. As a result, worker-cadre relations improved and the dispute was amicably resolved.⁸¹

The ACFTU was anxious to enhance the standing of the union apparatus by successfully mediating labour disputes. On 1 July 1957 the national union issued a notice to provincial and city unions pointing out that it had been deluged with petitioners from all over the country and complaining that it often could not resolve the problem for lack of full knowledge about the local situation. It thus requested that in future provincial and city unions should whenever possible give advance warning to the ACFTU if workers under their jurisdiction were planning a protest trip to Beijing. Moreover, local unions were enjoined to send their own representatives to the capital to help settle the affair.⁸²

This sympathetic attitude on the part of the union leadership elicited harsh criticism during the subsequent Anti-Rightist campaign. A notable target of the crackdown was the director of the ACFTU, Lai Ruoyu. In June 1957, shortly before the launching of the Anti-Rightist campaign, Lai had delivered a speech at a basic-level cadre conference in Shanghai in which he accorded considerable legitimacy to the widespread disturbances that had recently rocked the city. In his memorable formulation, “A so-called disturbance (*suowei naoshi*) arises only because of something disturbing (*jiushi yinwei youshi cai naoqilai*).”⁸³ Shanghai trade union leaders revealed a similar sympathy toward the strikes. In August 1957, the municipal trade union issued a general work report concluding that the vast majority of disturbances were contradictions among the people and should thus be resolved in a peaceful manner.⁸⁴ In the ensuing suppression effort, union officials at both national and municipal levels were accused of denying class struggle and were packed off to labour reform as rightists. Not until the post-Mao period did they enjoy rehabilitation – posthumously in the case of Lai Ruoyu.

The deposed chair of the ACFTU was actually one of the most astute observers of the Chinese labour scene in 1957. That May Lai Ruoyu delivered a very perceptive speech to union cadres in which he candidly acknowledged that, after the socialization of industry, the unions had become useless in the eyes of many workers – who described unions as “breathing out of the same nostril as enterprise management” (*he xingzheng yige bikong chuqi*). Lai countered the arguments of some cadres that the huge increase in labour unrest was the result of having recently added so many new workers to the labour force who were immature, impure and imbued with a low class consciousness. The union director acknowledged that young workers, transferred Shanghai workers and demobilized soldiers were especially prone to protest. He contended,

81. SMA, No. C1-2-2407.

82. SMA, No. C1-2-2271.

83. Lai Ruoyu, “Dangqian gonghui gongzuo de ruogan zhongyao wenti” (“Several important issues in union work at present”), reprinted in *Gongyun lilun yanjiu cankao ziliao* (*Reference Materials on Studies of Labour Movement Theory*), internal circulation document of the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions, October 1986, p. 87.

84. Qian Min and Zhang Jinping, “Study of the disturbances,” pp. 5–6.

however, that this proved that the main cause of the strikes was not the backwardness of the workers, but the bureaucratism of the leadership. These types of workers, Lai insisted, were especially daring in struggling against injustice and bureaucratism.⁸⁵

Lai Ruoyu further noted, in a mode of analysis congruent with that of this article, that there were serious divisions within the working class – between new and older workers, between locals and outsiders, and between ordinary workers and managerial staff. He pointed out that current state policies were exacerbating these differences. New workers tended to be promoted more rapidly than older workers because book-learning was valued above practical ability in tests for promotion. As a result, the younger better-educated workers became arrogant and disrespectful to the seasoned skilled worker, while the older workers – the backbone of production – grew resentful.⁸⁶ Furthermore, newly established factories tended to hire workers from the North-east or from Shanghai who did not get on well with the local workers.⁸⁷ Such fissures, along lines of age, education, experience and native place, provided fuel for many of the protests.⁸⁸

Conclusion

As Lai Ruoyu's analysis indicates, the strike wave of 1957 grew out of deep divisions within the workforce. This was not a new phenomenon, however. I argue in my study of the labour movement in pre-1949 Shanghai that the fragmentation of Chinese labour was a key explanation for its militancy.⁸⁹

Previous scholars of labour (whether working on Europe, the United States or China) have usually seen the fragmentation of a working class as a cause for concern. Disappointed by the failure of 20th-century workers to live up to the exalted expectations raised by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, scholars have focused on fragmentation as an explanation for the lack of labour militancy. Workers are divided along lines of gender, age, ethnicity and skill, and are depicted as rarely having acted in the cohesive, class-conscious fashion predicted by Communist vision-

85. Lai Ruoyu, 10 May 1957, "Zhengdun gonghui de lingdao zuofeng, miqie yu qunzhong de lianxi, chongfen fahui gonghui zai jie jue renmin neibu maodunzhong de tiaojie zuoyong" ("Overhaul the unions' leadership work style, intensify relations with the masses, thoroughly develop the mediating role of the unions in resolving contradictions among the people"), reprinted in Yan Jiadong and Zhang Liangzhi, *Shehuizhuyi gonghui xuexi wenjian xuanbian*, pp. 191–92.

86. As one manager remarked of the division between young and old, "Young workers are promoted by leaps and bounds while the old ones always remain at the same place under the ironic pretext of promoting their wages. At the time of the Hungarian and Polish incidents, some young workers manifested wavering in their thinking while the old workers maintained a firm standpoint." *Guangming ribao*, 5 May 1957, translated in Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 64–65.

87. Lai Ruoyu, 10 May, 1957, p. 194.

88. A useful analysis of stratification within the Shanghai proletariat can be found in Lynn T. White, III, *Careers in Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), ch. 3.

89. Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

aries. Contradictions between men and women, old and young, skilled and unskilled, northern and southern European, black and white American, or *Jiangnanren* and *Subeiren* in the case of Shanghai, have allegedly prevented workers from exhibiting the class-conscious partisanship that might otherwise have been expected of them.⁹⁰ In this view, intra-class divisions act as a brake on labour activism.

In my Shanghai study I suggest that the fragmentation of labour could itself provide a basis for working-class militancy, not only in support of one or another political party but even in the emergence of new political regimes. In the Chinese case, fragmentation has not implied passivity. Despite, and in large part because of, important distinctions along lines of native-place origin, age and skill level, the Chinese working class has shown itself to be remarkably aggressive. This is true not only for the pre-1949 period, but for the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as well. Worker activism during the Hundred Flowers movement, the Cultural Revolution, the strikes of the mid to late 1970s and the uprising of 1989 can all be linked to splits within the working class.

The prevailing image of urban China under the People's Republic stresses the role of the enterprise "unit" (*danwei*) in co-opting the working class and thereby diluting its potential for protest.⁹¹ As Andrew Walder puts it in his influential analysis of Chinese industry, "the network of clientelist ties ... provides a structural barrier to concerted worker resistance This complex web of personal loyalty, mutual support, and material interest creates a stable pattern of tacit acceptance and active co-operation for the regime" ⁹² But it is important to keep in mind that the large, state-owned enterprises from which Walder built his impressive model of Communist neo-traditionalism have never employed more than a minority of the Chinese industrial labour force. The selective incentives available to workers at such firms, and the resultant antipathy between "activists" and "non-activists," may indeed explain the relative quiescence of state workers – at least until recent industrial reforms threatened their privileged position. But the very benefits enjoyed by this favoured minority of workers constituted a continuing source of resentment for the majority of the workforce which was excluded from such paternalistic arrangements. It is no accident that workers at joint-ownership enterprises, contract and temporary workers, apprentices and the

90. Richard Jules Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Charles F. Sabel, *Work and Politics: The Division of Labor in Industry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (New York: Pantheon, 1981); Suzanne Berger and Michael J. Piore, *Dualism and Discontinuity in Industrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919–1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

91. Important studies of the *danwei* in urban China include Gail E. Henderson and Myron S. Cohen, *The Chinese Hospital: A Socialist Work Unit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); and Martin King Whyte and William L. Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

92. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism*, pp. 246, 249.

like – subject to neither the subsidies nor the controls experienced by their counterparts at state enterprises – stood at the forefront of labour protests under the command economy. Nor is it surprising that the market reforms of the post-Mao era should elicit a defensive reaction from the once quiescent state sector.

In each of these periods of acute labour unrest in the PRC, debates over both domestic and international developments generated serious disagreements within the ruling elite. Uncertainty over policy directions at the Centre, in turn, created space for popular dissent. Equally important, the protests that erupted – though often promoted by elements of the state itself and seldom viewed by the participants as a fundamental indictment of the socialist system – served nevertheless as the pretext for the application of overwhelming state repression.⁹³ The fragmentation of labour was thus a double-edged sword: a source not only of worker militancy, but also of vulnerability in the face of a government crackdown.

The complex ties that link Chinese labourers, even when engaged in protest, to the state apparatus make it awkward to conceptualize their labour unrest as an indication of “civil society,” defined as the autonomy of individuals and groups in relationship to the state.⁹⁴ The ambivalent position of the official trade unions (“yellow unions” under the ROC, the ACFTU under the PRC) in these struggles further underscores the difficulty of neatly distinguishing between “state” and “society.”⁹⁵ Rather than envisage labour as a solid expression of social interests poised to mount an opposition to a unitary state, it may be advisable to seek the roots of worker militancy in a segmented labour force prepared to make common cause with responsive state agents.

The socialist state has played a major role in shaping this segmentation. Thus in 1957 the uniform imposition of regulations on a great diversity of industries created, ironically enough, conditions under which groups of workers such as apprentices now found cause to join together across enterprise and even industrial lines. Unlike previous analyses of divisions within Chinese society, however, I do not see the primary split as one of “activists” vs. “non-activists” – political categories artificially imposed by the Communist party-state.⁹⁶ Instead, the lines of fragmentation reflect a rich history of labour unrest which predates the PRC.

93. In 1957, intellectuals and trade unionists were not the only casualties of the Anti-Rightist campaign. Large numbers of workers were also imprisoned or packed off to years of labour reform for their involvement in the strike wave. Thanks to a Party directive stipulating that only intellectuals and cadres could be labelled as “rightists,” these indicted workers were designated as “bad elements” instead. See Chan, “Revolution or corporatism?” p. 33.

94. On the difficulties of applying the concept of “civil society” to modern China, see Frederic Wakeman, Jr., “The civil society and public sphere debate: Western reflections on Chinese political culture,” *Modern China*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 1993), pp. 108–138.

95. Chan, “Revolution or corporatism?” p. 37, adopts the appellation of “state corporatism” to characterize a trade union apparatus that could “become an advocate on behalf of the workers, *in addition* to mobilizing labor for production . . .”

96. See the references in n. 57. This is not to deny the utility of such categories for explaining certain aspects of contemporary Chinese political behaviour. The peculiar blend of moral rhetoric and self-interested clientelistic manipulation – highlighted by both Shirk and

As other scholars have shown, longstanding socioeconomic cleavages were central to the factionalism of the Cultural Revolution.⁹⁷ During the early years of that movement, the ranks of Shanghai's so-called "conservative" Scarlet Guards were filled with older state workers, predominantly from the Jiangnan region, experienced in the pre-1949 labour movement. Their leaders were mainly former underground Communist Party organizers who hailed from the same region. The Revolutionary Rebels of Wang Hongwen, by contrast, were mostly younger workers led in part by cadres sent down from the Subei area in the early 1950s. Among their constituents were more than a few "unskilled" contract and temporary workers.⁹⁸ Enduring as some of these intra-worker divisions may be, however, they are also not "primordial" cleavages, immune to all change. The fissures that rend today's working class are equally a product of history and a contemporary construction.

The importance of changing circumstances is demonstrated by the very different segments of the work force that spearheaded the protests of 1957 and 1989. As already seen, the earlier strike wave was launched by workers who felt especially threatened by the process of socialization: labourers at small joint-ownership firms, temporary workers and the like. Stripped of many of the welfare measures they had enjoyed under the private ownership system that prevailed during the early years of the PRC, yet denied the privileges that came with permanent employment at large state enterprises, such workers felt particularly disadvantaged by the industrial reforms of the mid-1950s.⁹⁹ In 1989, by contrast, the backbone of the protest were those workers most concerned about the implications of de-socialization: permanent employees at large state-owned enter-

footnote continued

Walder – is indeed a striking feature of those areas of activity most affected by the state's presence. Often, however, it appears that divisions which issued from socioeconomic differences were *rationalized* in political terms. The omnipresence in China of a Manichean political discourse – which portrays conflict at the top of the system as two-line struggle and at the bottom of the system as contradictions between activists and non-activists – has perhaps skewed the understandings of both ordinary Chinese citizens and outside observers.

97. Michel Oksenberg, "Occupations and groups in Chinese society and the Cultural Revolution," in *The Cultural Revolution: 1967 in Review* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1968), pp. 1–39; Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982).

98. Interviews with former Shanghai Red Guards, 25 May 1987 and 2 July 1987. See also Lynn White, III, "Workers' politics in Shanghai," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 105–107; and Andrew G. Walder, *Chang Ch'un-ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1978), ch. VI. As Walder points out, "contract and temporary labor ... formed a large reservoir of radicalized workers and constituted some of the most active and vocal of Shanghai's mass organizations, virtually all of whom were reportedly aligned with the Rebel camp" (p. 45).

99. In other cities as well, those disenfranchised by socialism proved militant in 1956–57. Shanghai may have experienced an especially high level of protest, thanks to its history of labour unrest, the size and concentrated living and working conditions of its labourers, and the sympathetic attitude of its trade union. But other places (Beijing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Tianjin, Jingdezhen, Shanxi, Hebei, Chongqing, Guangxi) also reported a high incidence of protest, led by apprentices, temporary workers and the like. See the citations in n. 18 as well as *Renmin ribao*, 10 May and 15 July 1957.

prises. It was these beneficiaries of socialist industry who felt most threatened by the new round of economic reforms.¹⁰⁰

The salient lines of division within the work force are dynamic, shifting in response to changes in worker composition as well as to alterations in state policy. New socialist structures have created new winners and losers, while the experiences of the Hundred Flowers, the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen uprising have provided new understandings of the possibilities and boundaries of labour activism. But no less than in the past, Chinese labour remains fragmented.¹⁰¹ And no less than in the past, its struggles are likely to follow the lines of that fragmentation.¹⁰²

Studies of labour in pre-Communist China have emphasized the catalytic role of intellectuals – whether Communist revolutionaries or members of the left-wing KMT – in stimulating the unrest of the Republican period.¹⁰³ As Nym Wales put it in her monograph on the Chinese labour movement, “the students told the workers what unions were and the workers acted.”¹⁰⁴ While such analyses underestimate the capacity of Chinese workers to act on their own behalf, without outside direction, they do nevertheless highlight an important fact: the milestones of Republican-period history were laid by the concerted efforts of workers and students. The general strikes of May Fourth, May Thirtieth, the Three Armed Uprisings and the civil war years all exhibited close co-ordination between labour and the intelligentsia.¹⁰⁵

By contrast, labour unrest in Communist China is notable for its lack of student involvement. With the exception of a brief period during the Cultural Revolution, when Red Guards entered the factories on instructions from Beijing, workers in post-1949 China have acted without guidance from intellectuals. Thus, although intellectuals contributed greatly to the dissent of the Hundred Flowers period, there is no evidence that they attempted to join forces with the strike wave that was then sweeping the nation's factories.¹⁰⁶

100. See Perry, “Labor's battle for political space.”

101. On this point, I take issue with Wang Shaoguang's stimulating analysis of the contemporary Chinese labour movement in which he argues for a newfound horizontal solidarity among the Chinese working class. See his “Deng Xiaoping's reform and the Chinese workers' participation in the protest movement of 1989.”

102. See *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: China*, 30 January 1991, p. 67, for a description of temporary and contract workers turning to “‘regional gangs’ which often create disturbances ... For instance, fifteen strikes took place in Longgang Town in Shenzhen, with eight of them instigated by Sichuan workers, three by Guangxi workers, two by workers from south of the Chang Jiang, and two by workers from Hunan.” The phenomenon of regional gangs serving as the organizational nucleus of labour strikes is highly reminiscent of pre-1949 patterns. Whether such patterns have, however, qualitatively changed as a result of the socialist experience remains to be studied.

103. The classic English-language treatment of this subject is Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labor Movement, 1919–1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

104. Nym Wales, *The Chinese Labor Movement* (New York: J. Day, 1945), p. 11.

105. On the activities of students in these events, see Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protest in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

106. The lack of co-operation was mutual; in fact, relations between workers and students were sometimes overtly hostile. See *Renmin ribao*, 8 August 1957 and *Chengdu ribao*, 9 July 1957 for descriptions of violent encounters between the two groups.

The labour protest of 1957 was, however, not a general strike in the tradition of May Fourth, May Thirtieth, the Three Uprisings or the civil war years. It did not have one central political grievance – the terms of the Versailles Treaty in the case of May Fourth, the slaying of workers and students by Japanese and British police in the case of May Thirtieth, the indignities of warlord rule in the case of the Three Uprisings, the corruption of the KMT in the case of the civil war unrest – around which public opinion could be galvanized. Workers in 1957 were protesting about workplace issues: labour compensation, managerial style and the like.

Theorists of labour history and industrial relations have seldom drawn a clear distinction between a general strike and a strike wave, but the record of labour unrest in Shanghai suggests that the difference may well be a significant one. To clarify the issue, it is necessary first to remove some of the meanings which have become attached to these terms in the secondary literature. One such to be dispensed with is the romantic rapture of Georges Sorel, who saw the general strike as having “engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess; the general strike groups them all in a co-ordinated picture ... it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness.”¹⁰⁷ Another is the narrowly quantitative approach of Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, who define a strike wave as occurring “when both the number of strikes and the number of strikers in a given year exceed the means of the previous five years by more than 50 per cent.”¹⁰⁸ Although the scholarship on these phenomena is contradictory (Sorel as well as Shorter and Tilly use the terms “general strike” and “strike wave” interchangeably, for example), the contrast between the poetic approach of Sorel and the prosaic approach of Shorter and Tilly does hint at a central distinction between the two types of strikes. The intense and widespread fervour that characterizes the general strike is the result of a set of political demands that generate extensive cross-class enthusiasm targeted directly at the state. Strike waves, by contrast, tend to develop around work-related grievances; participation is often limited to members of the working class who aim their criticisms at factory management.

Of course the distinction is hard to maintain in practice. General strikes, even when prompted by a national political crisis and instigated by outside intellectual leadership, may serve to stimulate important workplace demands as well. And under socialism, where factory managers are also state agents, economic and political objectives are often inextricably linked. Even so, a distinction between the two types of strikes seems worth making in light of their very different impact on the course of modern Chinese political history.

107. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950), p. 127.

108. Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 106–107.

The general strikes of Republican China were watershed events. The May Fourth Movement led directly to the founding of the Chinese Communist Party and heralded a new style of populist culture and politics; the May Thirtieth Movement and the Three Armed Workers Uprisings hastened the expulsion of warlord rule and its replacement by a new KMT regime; the civil war strikes helped to unravel KMT control over the cities and usher in a new socialist order. Under the “proletarian” People’s Republic, by contrast, labour unrest has enjoyed a much less glorious fate. Protests have elicited harsh state repression (the labour camps of 1957, the tanks of 1989) rather than augur a new political era. One reason for the difference lies in the success of the Communist state at isolating working-class resistance from intellectual dissent. The strike waves of 1956–57, 1974–76 and the 1980s – albeit encouraged by concomitant student protests – developed without significant support from educated outsiders. Considering the prominent role that intellectuals have historically played in Chinese protest movements, it is hardly surprising that their absence would have such profound implications. The phenomenon is not unique to China, however. A cursory survey of strikes in other countries reveals a similar pattern; whereas strike waves often arise “spontaneously” among the workers themselves, a general strike tends to develop under the guiding hand of outside organizers. Intellectual leadership may act to mute divisions within the workforce and enable concerted action on behalf of unified objectives.

Take the case of St Petersburg, which was racked by strikes in 1896–97, 1901 and of course 1905. The strike wave of 1896–97 was confined to cotton spinners demanding a shorter working day (on the order of that enjoyed by skilled metalworkers), while the wave of 1901 was launched by metalworkers enamoured of new political ideas. The general strike of 1905 combined the concerns of both skilled and unskilled workers by presenting a cohesive set of demands for greater civil liberties and freedom to unionize and strike, as well as calling for an eight-hour working day. In contrast to the earlier waves, the general strike was organized by the St Petersburg Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers, a workers’ club with close connections to the Social Democrats. Stunned by the humiliating loss of Port Arthur to the Japanese (not unlike the trigger of the May Fourth Movement), workers were emboldened to articulate overtly political grievances. The massacre of Bloody Sunday (not unlike the May Thirtieth tragedy) further galvanized the Russian proletariat in launching its historic general strike.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, the stage for the Seattle general strike of 1919 was set by a high degree of co-operation between the Central Labor Council and the local trade unions. The concerted efforts of progressive, yet pragmatic, labour organizers had built a strong foundation for working-class mobilization in the city. Unfortunately for the fate of the protest, however, the strike erupted just when the entire top echelon of union leadership happened to be in Chicago at a conference. The lack of central direction

109. Gerald Dennis Surh, *Petersburg Workers in 1905: Strikes, Workplace Democracy and the Revolution*, University of California at Berkeley Ph.D. dissertation, 1979.

was reflected in the strikers' inability to enunciate a cogent list of demands – a failing that explains, in no small measure, the rapid demise of the movement.¹¹⁰

General strikes are unusual, albeit remarkably powerful, events. Because they entail the participation of very different – and under normal circumstances quite competitive – groups of workers, these incidents are typically fought for causes that transcend the divisive concerns of the workplace. Not wages and welfare but national humiliation, price inflation and political corruption are the rallying points of the general strike. Working-class interest in these issues is often promoted by those who have a professional preoccupation with such problems: the intellectuals.

Shanghai's 1957 strike wave belongs to a more common species of labour protest, a contagious movement that stems from work-related grievances. As more than a few analysts of labour have noted, politics at the point of production are inherently divisive. Indeed, the very awareness of substantial differences among workers often encourages labour activism. Depending upon their location in the job hierarchy, workers may be militant in trying to minimize, maintain or magnify discrepancies in wages or working conditions between themselves and other workers.¹¹¹

Socialism, like capitalism, creates winners and losers among the workforce. These are determined not only by clientelist networks (which, as Andrew Walder notes, are most pronounced in large, state-owned enterprises where only a minority of the industrial workforce is employed).¹¹² For the majority of workers, a more salient division is the structural gap that separates the haves and have nots of the socialist economy. In the strikes of 1957, those excluded from the benefits of socialist reform – the marginal temporary and contract workers – took the lead. More recently, it is the beneficiaries of socialism – permanent employees at state enterprises – who have emerged as vocal protesters.¹¹³ As the segment of the work force which stands to lose the most from the reintroduction of capitalist practices, their militancy is understandable.

Differences in social composition were not the only thing that distinguished the two periods. The protesters of 1989 also undertook a more concerted effort to develop autonomous workers' organizations than did their predecessors of three decades earlier.¹¹⁴ Despite such differences,

110. Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

111. This point is developed in John R. Low-Beer, *Protest and Participation: The New Working Class in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

112. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism*, pp. 40, 159.

113. As Walder observes, "Long the lynchpin of social and political control in urban China, in mid-May 1989 work units suddenly became centers of political organizing and protest." Andrew G. Walder, "Workers, managers and the state: the reform era and the political crisis of 1989," *The China Quarterly*, No. 127 (September 1991), p. 487.

114. See Lu Ping (ed.), *A Moment of Truth: Workers' Participation in China's 1989 Democracy Movement and the Emergence of Independent Unions* (Hong Kong: Asia Monitor Resource Center, 1991); and Walder and Gong, "Workers in the Tiananmen protests."

however, in both periods links between the labour unrest and the protests of other social elements – especially the intellectual community – have remained weak.¹¹⁵ In this important respect, then, the strike waves of post-1949 China are but a faint echo of the general strikes of the Republican era.

115. The point is elaborated in Elizabeth J. Perry, "Intellectuals and Tiananmen: historical perspective on an aborted revolution," in Daniel Chirot (ed.), *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left: The Revolutions of 1989* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), pp. 129–146.