

Radicalism at the Margin: The New Emergence of the
Chinese Trotskyist Movement in Hong Kong, 1969-1981

Yang Yang

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Department of History

University of Essex

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Abstract: As a marginal radical Left group, Chinese Trotskyists who were suppressed by the Communist state and other dominant political powers have rarely been mentioned in the modern and contemporary history of Chinese politics. This is what led to my academic interest in discovering the “unknown” Trotskyist history of Chinese radicalism. Compared to previous studies on Chinese Trotskyism in mainland China prior to 1952, based on newly-available archival sources and other primary materials, this thesis explores the new political emergence of Chinese Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong by investigating the Trotskyists’ role in Hong Kong’s political arena and the political dynamics of the Trotskyist activities mainly in the 1970s. As a result, this research will add something new to previous studies, and will enrich readers’ understanding of the “neglected” history of Chinese Trotskyists’ radicalism at the margin.

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In 2009, when I was doing my undergraduate study in China, it was from a book *Shuang Shan huiyilu* (Memoirs of Wang Fanxi) that I bought from a bookshop in my hometown, that I first learned about the history of Chinese Trotskyism. As a person who always had an interest in discovering the history of Communism in China, Wang Fanxi's memoir offered me a different perspective on the Chinese Communist movement he witnessed. As a result of this interest, before I finished undergraduate study, I had a basic knowledge of the history of Chinese Trotskyism.

In 2012, from my "Trotskyist" friend Lin Zhiliang, I obtained Prof. Greg Benton's English book on Chinese Trotskyism. In the same year, I was introduced to Prof. Benton by Lin. In the meantime, when I decided to study abroad for a postgraduate course in the UK, Prof. Benton asked me: "Do you want to do some research on Chinese Trotskyism?" Without thinking, I said yes. However, it was difficult for me to prepare PhD research on this specific field in 2012. Consequently, I went to University of Essex to undertake an MA course into Political Theory first. Fortunately, after I completed my MA degree, with my supervisor Dr. Zhou Xun's help, I got a chance to do PhD study on Chinese Trotskyism. And so, first of all, I would like to express my special thanks of gratitude to Prof. Benton and Dr. Zhou Xun, for frequently encouraging me to do this work and giving me great support.

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Abbreviations:

Baodiao	“The Protection of the Diaoyu Islands”
BAC	Baodiao Action Committee
CCL	Chinese Communist League
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDM	Chinese Democracy Movement
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
FI	Fourth International
FTU	Hong Kong and Kowloon Federation of Trade Unions
GMD	Guomindang
HKFS	Hong Kong Federation of Students
HKU	University of Hong Kong
IMT	International Majority Tendency
IWP	Internationalist Workers’ Party
IYSA	International Young Socialist Alliance
JRCL	Japanese Revolutionary Communist League
LCR	La Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire
LTF	Leninist-Trotskyist Faction
PRC	People’s Republic of China
RCP	Revolutionary Communist Party
RCY	Revolutionary Communist Youth
RIL	Revolutionary Internationalist League
RML	Revolutionary Marxist League
ROC	Republic of China
SWP (US)	Socialist Workers’ Party (United States)
UF	United Front of the Protection of the Diaoyu Islands
Usec	United Secretariat
USFI	United Secretariat of the Fourth International
YSG	Young Socialist Group

This thesis uses the Pinyin system of romansing Chinese except when mentioning some historical figures, Hong Kong’s publications and district names that are better known in Wade-Giles spelling.

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Introduction

Research questions and methodology

Chinese Trotskyism is historically taken as an ideological tendency and a radical left faction that emerged in the late 1920s in China, profoundly influenced and shaped by Trotsky's thought and the political activities of his fellow comrades and disciples, the Left Opposition, dating back to factional struggles within the Soviet Communist Party. Like other "third forces" during the period of Nationalist China, the Trotskyist group in China was never well developed, but remained a marginal force in Chinese politics. As the Trotskyists were highly critical of both the Nationalist regime and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Chinese revolution, their political presence became a target of repression from both sides.

Particularly, after the CCP's seizure of state power from the Nationalists in 1949, the Trotskyist movement was eventually destroyed in mainland China. In December 1952, Trotskyists and their sympathisers remaining in the Communist state were rounded up and imprisoned, which completely eliminated the Trotskyist presence on the mainland. Moreover, Trotskyists were not only politically suppressed by the Communist regime, but the memories of Trotskyist activities in China were also erased. In the Communist rulers' perspective, Trotskyism was no more than a category of

“counterrevolutionary thought”, and, apart from the official negative representation of Trotskyism, there was nearly no other voice on Trotskyism for approximately 30 years under Communist rule in China. As the British historian, Alan Hunter, points out, “The Chinese Trotskyist movement has been a main victim of the suppression and distortion of truth under the Chinese Communist Party government...their activities have been for the most part ignored, or else radically misrepresented.”¹ Therefore, the radical left history of Trotskyism in China became a neglected and blank space in the narrative of the Chinese revolution in the 20th Century.

However, since the 1970s, a small group of scholars have taken an interest in interpreting this neglected history of Chinese Trotskyism. For example, academic works by Joseph Miller (1979) and by Gregor Benton (1996)² shed crucial light on this. However, this scholarship mainly focuses on the Trotskyists’ history in China prior to 1952, which may result in a vacuum in our understanding of the Chinese Trotskyist movement from the 1950s onwards. In other words, we should ask: in contemporary history, was there any political presence of Chinese Trotskyism existing somewhere else outside of the Chinese Communist state? Indeed, as a political refuge, colonial Hong Kong provided a space for the political survival of the Chinese Trotskyists who had retreated from the mainland on the eve of the CCP’s seizure of power, because as a common “enemy” of both the CCP and the Guomindang (GMD), Chinese Trotskyists were unable to preserve their

¹ Alan Hunter, “Radical Opposition: the Chinese Trotskyist Movement”, *China Information*, Vol. 12, 1997, p. 242.

² Please refer to Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism* (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1979), and Gregor Benton, *China’s Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996).

organisation either on the mainland or in Taiwan. And more importantly, in the 1970s, profoundly influenced by the New Left from the West, there was a new ideological-political emergence of the Trotskyist movement at the “margin” of China, in Hong Kong, although this later Trotskyist force was also marginal in Hong Kong politics.

In Hong Kong studies and previous research into Chinese Trotskyism, scholars such as Tai-lok Lui, Stephen Chiu, Wai-man Lam and Joseph Miller, briefly mention Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong socio-political movements.³ But there is very little scholarship that exclusively focuses on the emergence and development of a new but marginal “radicalism”, i.e. Trotskyism, in Hong Kong in a certain period of time during the post-war era. Thus, it behooves this thesis to fill the historical vacuum in scholarship on the Chinese Trotskyist movement from the 1950s onwards. Specifically, it will look into the historical course of the Trotskyist activities in a Chinese but colonial territory in the 1970s.

To enrich our understanding of a neglected history of a Chinese Trotskyist movement in “diaspora” in a Hong Kong context, and to discover the Trotskyists’ role in Hong Kong politics in the 1970s, this thesis will address four research questions in the following chapters. Firstly, it aims to explore the

³ In a research article, Lui and Chiu mentioned the Trotskyists’ “vanguard” role in Hong Kong social movements in the 1970s in a few words. Also, Lam refers to the “Trotskyists” several times in her book on the political culture of Hong Kong. See Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu, ‘Social Movements and Public Discourse on Politics’, in *Hong Kong’s History: State and Society under Colonial Rule*, ed. by Tak-Wing Ngo (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 107–8. Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depolitization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 182, 209, 215. Furthermore, in Miller’s PhD thesis on Chinese Trotskyism, he provides readers some new information about the “new growth in Chinese Trotskyism” in Hong Kong, but it is not in much detail. See Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism* (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1979), pp. 236-251.

causes of the new formation of Trotskyists in Hong Kong and the Trotskyist role in Hong Kong socio-political movements in the 1970s. Secondly, as a valid political actor in the local political arena, the Trotskyists interacted with other political forces; hence, this thesis is also to focus on the relations and ideological-political confrontations between Trotskyists and other political actors, such as the colonial government and the pro-Communist PRC presence, in the colony. Thirdly, as an “unknown” part of the international Trotskyist movement and as a radical Left tendency, it attempts to discover the international connections between foreign Trotskyist organisations and the Trotskyist organisation in Hong Kong, and to look into the internal dynamic of the Hong Kong Trotskyist group. In the end, the thesis will discuss the democratic values of Chinese Trotskyism and the Trotskyists’ views on Chinese democracy.

The basis of this study is materials collected from archives and from various university libraries in Hong Kong,⁴ and interviews with a number of former Trotskyist activists. Most importantly, this includes archival materials such as British colonial documents collected from the Hong Kong Public Records Office, which reflect the British rulers’ perspectives and attitudes towards the Trotskyist activity in Hong Kong, and a large number of internal Trotskyist documents, manuscripts, and personal correspondence, etc., obtained from the Wang Fanxi Archive, at the University of Leeds, which demonstrate the

⁴ A large range of published primary sources are collected from Chinese University Library, Chung Chi Library, United College Library, CUHK Special Collections, Hong Kong University Library, HKU Special Collections, and Universities’ Service for China Studies, CUHK.

movement from an insider's point of view and reflect the international connection between Western and Chinese Trotskyists.⁵

In total, there are mainly six categories of primary materials which are strongly relevant to this research. By using and analysing these six categories of primary sources, various perspectives on the 1970's Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong will be integrated into the scholarly narrative of this thesis:

1 Trotskyist documents (including Trotskyist magazines, pamphlets, internal meeting minutes and reports, personal correspondence.)

2 Pro-Communist PRC publications (including leftist newspapers, student newspapers, and youth magazines.)

3 Colonial government files on pro-Communist, New Left and Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong

4 Local newspapers (e.g. *South China Morning Post*, *Ming-Pao*, *Sing-Tao Daily*, *Hong Kong Standard*, etc.)

5 Online sources including online archives, such as the *Marxist Internet Archive* and *Elsie Elliot Digital Speeches*, etc., and secondary interview reports from the media.

6 Other publications, such as Trotskyists' memoirs.

It is important to stress that, as this study is to present a picture of Trotskyist politics in Hong Kong, the firsthand materials mentioned that this thesis uses may reflect various forms of political discourse, a range of propaganda efforts, and differences in perspectives towards the emergence of the Trotskyist

⁵ See the archival materials that this thesis has referred to in the bibliography.

movement in Hong Kong. For example, from government sources and local newspapers on certain Trotskyist activities, we may find that in the government's discursive view of Trotskyism, the Trotskyists would be viewed as "troublemakers". On the other hand, in Trotskyist publications, Trotskyists regarded themselves as "genuine Marxists". And, likewise, in the discourse and propaganda shown through the pro-PRC newspapers and magazines, the Trotskyists would be categorised as being "counterrevolutionaries" and "notorious traitors".

Though as a research tool, primary sources can definitely help researchers shape argument, raw materials here that present a variety of perspectives and reflect a number of discourses cannot directly respond to the research questions of the study, but will show a large range of political statements that justify one group's position while stigmatising its opponents. Thus, this study aims to extract meanings from the various perspectives in such materials, and to interpret, evaluate and analyse the "meaning" of political struggle between Chinese Trotskyist groups and other political forces in Hong Kong's political domain so that a complex picture of the Trotskyist group and its respective opponents, and of its internal political dynamics can be comprehensively shown.

Moreover, oral history method will be used in this thesis. Paul Thompson, an oral historian, once pointed out that ethnic minorities, as "persecuted" groups, might be "misleadingly documented by a hostile majority".⁶ When probing some particular political minority or marginalised group in history, we may find

⁶ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 90.

something similar, that records pertaining to that group will be “misleadingly” presented or neglected by the “ruling” authorities. In this sense, as Thompson also demonstrates, oral history has power to preserve the past of the political minority which is “misleadingly documented”, while it also “offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgement inherent in its tradition”.⁷ Hence, by means of oral history, the voices of marginalised and minority groups in politics can be heard and recorded.

In the case of Hong Kong Trotskyists, from the written sources documented by the colonial government or pro-PRC groups, i.e. the “hostile majority” in this context, we are informed that during a certain period of Hong Kong’s contemporary history, the Trotskyists merely played either the role of “troublemakers”, or of “counterrevolutionaries”. Nevertheless, in addition to Trotskyist publications and internal documents, oral sources from a number of former “marginalised” Trotskyists can offer us a different voice from the perspective of a political “minority” about how they view the role of Trotskyists in Hong Kong’s political history, and their oral narratives of seeing themselves as “political activists” challenges the traditional judgement of seeing them as a bunch of “troublemakers” or “counterrevolutionaries”.

During my short visits to Hong Kong for fieldwork in 2014 and 2015, while collecting written primary sources from Hong Kong libraries, archives and informants, I also conducted oral interviews with the key leaders of and activists in the past Trotskyist activity. Before the interviews, following the basic rules for compiling oral history provided by Thompson, firstly, I got

⁷ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.22

familiar with a basic knowledge of the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement, and in order to avoid leading the interview, I only prepared a few “open-ended” questions for interviewees, e.g. “Tell me about your experiences as a Trotskyist”, “What Trotskyist activities did you engage in?” “Can you describe X event you were involved in to me?” etc.⁸ However, the interview process did not go smoothly. Some of interviewees refused to talk about their life experience as Trotskyists, while a few others did not respond to my interview requests at all. Nevertheless, nine informants agreed to be interviewed, and during the interviews, all the interviewees were straightforward and forthcoming. Sometimes, they spoke of the subjects of the prepared questions without my asking.⁹ Additionally, it is crucial to note that as only a small range of interviews have been collected, a quantitative analysis of them will not be adopted for this study. Rather, this thesis will remain largely based on written sources, and supported by a small number of “qualitative” oral narratives.

What is the advantage that we can take from oral sources for historical studies? Thompson indicates that “oral evidence, springing from direct personal experience...is valuable precisely because it could come from no other source”.¹⁰ Another oral historian, Donald Ritchie says, “an oral history helps interpret and define written records and makes sense of the most obscure decisions and events”.¹¹ In this study of Chinese Trotskyism in Hong Kong, oral evidence collected from the interviewees, on the one hand, is indeed an additional primary source that helps to “interpret and define written

⁸ See Thompson’s interview rules in *ibid*, pp. 308-331.

⁹ See a list of oral interviews with former Trotskyists in the bibliography.

¹⁰ Paul Thompson, 2017, p. 364

¹¹ Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 112.

records”; more importantly, oral sources sometimes can provide a unique narrative if there is “no other source” regarding certain historical events, especially the internal affairs of Trotskyist activities only obscurely recorded in written form.

For example, a lack of written records about a group of Hong Kong young radicals’ personal “conversions” to Trotskyism in the early 1970s results in difficulties for researchers to draw a picture of the formation of the newer generation of Trotskyists. As a result, oral narratives from the former Trotskyist activists about why and how they personally accepted Trotskyism and eventually ideologically converted to Trotskyism become vital to help us deepen our understanding of Trotskyist formation.

However, oral history also has its flaws. Firstly, like written sources, oral narratives about life experience “cannot exist outside discourse”.¹² Thus, when reflecting upon a certain event, oral informants would present their opinions by using their own languages/discourses, which may reveal strong personal preferences/biases particularly regarding a political event in the case of the Trotskyist movement. As Ritchie points out, some interviewees’ remarks are “self-serving”: sometimes, they “recall only events that cast themselves in a good light, and seem to always get the better of opponents”; and sometimes, they would only speak about themselves positively.¹³

Secondly, in some oral histories, we can find that the informants will interpret their past by expressing their contemporary values rather than their earlier attitudes. In the case of interviewing former socialists who firmly believed “in

¹² P. Summerfield, “Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews”, *Cultural and Social History*, 1, 2004, p. 67.

¹³ Ritchie, 2014, p. 111.

total revolution and the inevitability of socialism” at an early stage of career, a sociologist, Trevor Lummis demonstrates that “[s]ince people frequently become less radical as they grow older, oral evidence probably has an inherent tendency to under-report conflict, and history as individual experience seems likely to strengthen that trend”.¹⁴ Thirdly, in oral history projects, as researchers discovered, discrepancies and inconsistencies of memory, anachronisms and contradictions will always appear in the informants’ testimonies.¹⁵ From the above, we can see that there remains a problem of reliability of oral sources, and researchers must interpret them very carefully.

In the case of Hong Kong Trotskyists, the oral sources collected from the interviewees also have similar problems. Some interviewees’ remarks might be deemed “self-serving”. For example, one particular informant emotionally recalled and stressed that he acted as the crucial figure of “big brother” to the younger generation of Trotskyists. And it is sometimes obvious that some informants had presented the past according to their present values. For instance, one informant, in the middle of the interview, said, “Now I support Social Democracy”, which seems to indicate that he felt his past as a Trotskyist was too “radical”.¹⁶ Moreover, after comparing the transcripts of the interviews with written documents, a range of contradictions and

¹⁴ Trevor Lummis, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence”, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, ed., *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 276.

¹⁵ For example, an American oral historian Hoffman, in her oral history project, often discovers the discrepancies between her informants’ testimonies, and between the informants’ testimonies and other sources. See: Alice Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity in Oral History”, in *Today’s Speech*, Vol. 22, 1, 1974, pp. 23-27. Also, Paul Thompson admits that in the interviews, contradictions and anachronisms would appear. However, Thompson considers that “where there are discrepancies between written and oral evidence, it does not follow that one account is necessarily more reliable than another”. Paul Thompson, 2017, p. 364.

¹⁶ See Cen Jianxun, *Cen Jianxun Interview*, Jun 16th, 2014.

discrepancies can be found, as well. Consequently, I am sometimes skeptical in adopting the collected oral evidence as fact. Consequently, the Trotskyists' oral narratives are carefully treated as are written records; they are cautiously scrutinised, assessed, and cross-referenced by other relevant written sources and other oral testimonies.

Although not all collected oral sources are reliable, some of them enrich this study, and by combining the interviews with other primary sources, the thesis can delve into the politics of the Trotskyist movement in the historical context of Hong Kong.

Before going to the main contents of this thesis, to deepen our understanding of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong, some important conceptual problems and pre-history will be firstly introduced and interpreted, since they are strongly related to the main themes of this thesis.

Trotskyism as a weapon, and the making of Trotskyists in the Chinese context

1 Trotskyism as a weapon

In the political history of the 20th Century, the world witnessed the collapse of the Soviet model of socialism. This Soviet version of socialism or so-called "Stalinism" did not historically represent the "emancipatory", "democratic", and "internationalist" characteristics of socialism as many "socialists" or "Communists" expected, but represented state terror, mass repression,

coerciveness, and authoritarianism, etc. in its practice.¹⁷ In the 1920s, during the internal factional struggle of the Soviet leadership, to compete with Stalin's power, various political factions emerged in opposition to Stalin's vision of socialism.

The Left Opposition, headed by Trotsky was one key group amongst them. Later, a collective criticism of "Stalinism" that defined the Soviet Union under Stalin's order as an undemocratic "deformed workers state" ruled by the "Stalinist bureaucracy"¹⁸ took shape and was developed by Trotsky and his political partners in the Left Opposition, which later came to be known as "Trotskyism". For some anti-"Stalinist" socialists, "Trotskyism" was viewed as a radical leftist alternative to both "Stalinism" in the East and "Social Democracy" in the West,¹⁹ as well as a way of "restoring genuine Marxism"²⁰ and of "re-organising the proletariat to overthrow capitalism".

According to Robert Alexander's scholarly summary of the important elements and characteristics of Trotskyism, Trotskyism as a political ideology

¹⁷ As V. Kiselev describes, the characteristics of Stalin's version of socialism represent "total centralisation of control over all spheres of social life; administrative-command methods combined with state terror, including the organisation of mass repressions and forced labour camps; the extensive and regardless-of-cost (zatratnyi) economic and political mechanism, which ignores evaluation by reference to social effectiveness; rejection of the values of antecedent forms of democracy, the detachments of the masses from government and the turning of democratic institutions into empty forms; the rejection of self-management; the consecration of Authority and the cult of personality." V. Kiselev, *Inogo ne dano*, p. 363 [quoted in Alec Nove, "Stalin and Stalinism—Some Introductory Thoughts", in *The Stalin Phenomenon*, ed. by Alec Nove (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), p. 10.]. Nove continues to describe the characteristics of the Stalin model of Russian socialism as also representing "the widespread use of capital punishment, the strictest of censorships, the strictest ban on any autonomous trade unions", and that Stalin's version of socialism is "not even a caricature of Marx's vision, it resembles it [Marx's vision of socialism] in no way". Alec Nove, p. 10.

¹⁸ For instance, see Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* (London: Pathfinder Press, 1972).

¹⁹ Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (London: Open University Press, 1990), p. 2.

²⁰ James Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism, 1928-1938* (London: Pathfinder Press, 2009), p. 25.

and theoretical system is considerably complex. On the one hand, as Trotsky and his followers viewed themselves as Lenin's disciples, Trotskyism accepted the principles of Leninism, which involved the Leninist notions of the vanguard party, democratic centralism, and proletarian dictatorship, etc.; on the other hand, as Alexander points out, Trotsky's notions of permanent revolution, of "uneven and combined development", of the "degenerated workers' state", the "transitional demands" of Trotskyists in the capitalist states, and the Trotskyist version of the united front, etc. are the main characteristic ideas of Trotskyism.²¹ Amongst these core Trotskyist principles, the theory of permanent revolution is the fundamental one, which involves four principal dimensions: the proletariat-centred dimension, the dimension of transformation, of "international revolution", and of "political revolution" in the "deformed workers' state".²²

²¹ Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 5–12.

²² Firstly, Trotsky and other Trotskyists argued that because of the weakness of the capitalist class in the "backward" countries, only the urban proletariat could undertake the exclusive leading role in the bourgeois-democratic revolution and in the overthrow of feudalism, imperialism, and capitalism, while only the proletarian revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and workers' states could pass through the capitalist-democratic stage described by traditional Marxist theorists. Secondly, they took the view that between the triumph of the bourgeois-democratic revolution led by the proletariat and the final destination of socialism, there would be a prolonged period of the transformation of society to socialism. Thus, in the established proletarian states, revolutionary innovations and socialist construction in all spheres of social life including economy and industrialisation, technology and science, individual and family, etc. would be massively developed. Thirdly, in opposition to Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country", Trotsky expounded that the goal of socialism could not be achieved within national limits, but that the completion of socialist revolution would have a broader dimension of internationalism, i.e. heavily depending upon the worldwide victory of proletarian revolution in advanced countries, and thus in this sense, the Trotskyist movement is an international movement [For example, please refer to Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution & Results and Prospects* (London: Socialist Resistance, 2007). Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008)]. Additionally, to stake out an opposing position against Stalin's model of socialism and challenge "Stalinist" rule in "deformed workers' states", such as the Soviet Union and later socialist countries founded in Eastern Europe and Asia, the Trotskyist notion of permanent revolution involved an extensive dimension of "political revolution". That is to say, in the "Stalinist" regimes, to restore the genuine "proletarian dictatorship" and "socialist democracy" in Marxism, it would require a political struggle against the ruling bureaucratic stratum, whilst

For a considerable number of intellectuals and activists worldwide, Trotskyist principles are ideologically and intellectually attractive. More importantly, like other political ideologies, for a certain group of people who have particular anti-establishment political demands, especially from the radical Left, Trotskyism became a useful weapon that would help them shape their political identity and provide a “direction” to challenge existing hegemonies. In the Trotskyist case, i.e. this was the capitalist states of the world, and the “Stalinist regime”, and other dominant versions of Communism. Based on various understandings of Trotskyism, different groups of left radicals from different countries collectively formed the Trotskyist movement worldwide.

However, it must be remembered that the international Trotskyist movement cannot be thought of in stereotyped and monolithic terms. Under different political cultures and environments, the Trotskyist movement will be produced or reproduced differently, but there is something in common: by making use of Trotskyism as a “weapon”, a particular group of political activists could enter into particular political arenas, and make “Trotskyism” fit into a certain political context to justify a certain group’s political needs or mentalities. In reality, the “Trotskyists” in their activities refer to themselves as Trotskyists, and “inscribed” themselves into the Trotskyist discourse by adopting the principles of Trotskyism according to their different interpretations so that the political meaning of Trotskyism could facilitate their political struggle in a particular political environment.

the importance of democratic system under a structure of “proletarian dictatorship” needed to be restated so that the secret ballot, the multi-party system, individual political freedoms and rights had to be guaranteed. For example, see some discussions in Chapter 7 and Epilogue.

Since the late 1920s, the meaning of Trotskyism had also been transferred to the Chinese political context. Despite the fact that this remains “unknown” amongst most of the Chinese population and even among the Chinese intelligentsia, the activities of Trotskyism emerged in Chinese history. And in the 1930-40s and in the 1970s, two generations of Chinese Trotskyists respectively made use of this Trotskyist ideological “weapon” to justify their autonomous position or anti-establishment demands in different political environments. Subsequently, we will first introduce a basic knowledge of the formation of Trotskyism in a particular Chinese political context.

2 The origin of Chinese Trotskyism

Many sociologists argue that identity politics and the making of political identities are derived from particular cultural, psychological and political bases.²³ Sociologists, such as Charles Tilly, further point out that different historical, political, and cultural contexts offer the basis for the formation of certain political identities and constitute political actors’ self-recognition of who they politically are in certain political arenas.²⁴

Indeed, in historical research focusing on the formation of a particular political group, we can find that the making of a certain political group and the emergence of a political movement heavily depend upon the specific contextual situation of a particular period of history. The emergence of Trotskyism in China is not an exceptional case. In different periods of time, the determinant causes of the making of Chinese Trotskyist identity were

²³ See a summary and discussion of identity politics as a sociological term in Mary Bernstein, ‘Identity Politics’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31 (2005), 47–74.

²⁴ Please refer to Charles Tilly, *Stories, Identities, and Political Change* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

historically contextual. In other words, depending on different historically contextual situations, the formation of early Trotskyism in China in the late 1920s and the new emergence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong in the early 1970s are distinct. Before approaching this main study of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the 1970s, first of all, let us briefly explore the historical context of the origin of Chinese Trotskyism and its emergence in the 1920s.

International Trotskyism might be thought of as a major political-ideological tendency resulting from the power struggle within the Bolshevik party between Stalin's majority and Trotsky's opposition. Though, for some Western scholars, such as Gregor Benton, in China, Trotskyism was "no more a 'foreign transplant'" than was the CCP, its origin might contain an indigenous element, an argument also raised by Benton.²⁵ The birth of Chinese Trotskyism at the indigenous level coincided with the emergence of a group of the CCP's dissidents' resistance against Moscow's "patriarchal authority" during the Chinese Revolution 1925-27. That is to say, "the Chinese Opposition's 'Trotskyist' concern preceded its Trotskyist conversion".²⁶ In other words, the making of Trotskyism in China as a political consequence did not only come from the splits on strategy regarding the Chinese revolution within the Comintern, but was also profoundly and indigenously rooted in the dispute of early Chinese Communists that echoed these splits in the Comintern regarding its core policy of subordinating the CCP to the Guomindang (GMD) in the 1920s.

²⁵ Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 109.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

At the very beginning of the establishment of the CCP in China, the founders of the CCP, influenced by Japanese socialist thinking and “Bolshevism”,²⁷ decided to model themselves on the “Bolshevik Revolution” for their Chinese struggle. In the eyes of those early Chinese Communists, party autonomy was a crucial principle in party building and organisational life.²⁸ From Russian historian Alexander Pantsov’s point of view, the principles in the early CCP’s programme may reflect that the early Chinese Communists desired to adopt a radical approach in their socialism, subscribing to “post-February 1917 Bolshevism”, which, for Pantsov, was greatly defined by Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution and its enshrinement in the 1917 Russian Revolution, which highlighted the role of ideological and organisational independence in the Communist movement.²⁹

Without doubt, the Bolshevik victory in the 1917 Russian Revolution inspired Chinese Communist followers to seek to learn the lessons of “socialist victory” from it. The thinking of the early Chinese Communist intellectuals was

²⁷ See the first perceptions of Marxism of early Chinese Communists acquired from the Japanese socialist movement and Bolshevik texts in Ishikawa Yoshihiro, *The Formation of the Chinese Communist Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 1–81. For more the initial influence of Marxism and the Bolshevik revolution on Chinese progressive intellectuals, particularly on Li Dazhao, see Arif Dirlik, *The Origin of Chinese Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 43–52.

²⁸ In the CCP’s first national congress 1921, this principle of party autonomy was officially written in *the First Programme of the Chinese Communist Party*, in *The Communist Movement in China: An Essay Written in 1924 by Ch’ en Kung-Po*, C. Wilbur, ed (New York: Octagon Books, 1960), p. 105.

²⁹ Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), pp. 36–38., and Alexander Pantsov, ‘Bolshevik Concepts of the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927’, in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s, Between Triumph and Disaster* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), pp. 30–33, where Pantsov points out that such a belief of “post-February 1917 Bolshevism” “helped them [Chinese Communists] to ignore the absence of the material premises in China, which, according to Marx, were essential for the transition to socialism, and generally speaking, allowed them to find the justification for their own radicalism” [pp. 32–33]. In Joseph Miller’s thesis on Chinese Trotskyism, he also considers that the early Chinese Communist programme reflects a “rather mechanistic Marxist line”, Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism* (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1979), p. 103.

overwhelmingly influenced by the Russian revolutionary experience and had been conquered by the ideas and principles of the Bolsheviks, such as internal party democracy, organisational independence, a “proletariat-centred” working line, and a world revolutionary outlook. Bolshevik ideas and principles also helped the Chinese Communists shape the indigenous logic of the Chinese Communist movement. In particular, “the desire of the Chinese Communists to claim their own ideological and organisational autonomy seems to have been too powerful”.³⁰

Thus, Pantsov has even argued, and this would be contested by some, that many widespread Bolshevik concepts in the minds of Chinese radical intellectuals were “Trotskyist in origin”.³¹ Later, by profoundly adopting a Bolshevik approach, an indigenous logic of Chinese Communism was shaped to emphasise the importance of maintaining party independence at the very beginning, which might be an indigenous Chinese source of Trotskyism.

Indeed, the early Chinese Communists had a strong desire to preserve the organisational and ideological autonomy of their own organisation, and to deepen their preliminary understandings of Marxist principles, such as urban proletarian revolution, party democracy, party independence, internationalism, “borrowing” from the outside world, during the mobilisation of the indigenous Communist movement. However, the Soviet Union’s political intervention from outside quickly interrupted the Chinese Communists’ radical self-education about Marxism and the CCP’s construction of an indigenous Bolshevik model. Consequently, this resulted in a contradiction between the Chinese

³⁰ Alexander Pantsov, 2000, p. 37.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 38.

Communists' indigenous logic of maintaining party autonomy and the Comintern's intervention, and thus from 1922 onwards, a group of Chinese Communists began to engage in a "battle" with foreign advisors sent by the Comintern in defending their right to party autonomy regarding the party's strategic line.

Henk Sneevliet, a Comintern representative in China, was keen to persuade his Chinese comrades to establish a party collaboration with other progressive forces in China. During his stay in China, he found the GMD led by Sun Yat-sen in southern China to be a progressive party with a "national-revolutionary" character that the CCP could cooperate with. Therefore, he tabled a "bloc within" proposal to Chinese Communists in the spring of 1922, in calling for the Communists' entry into Sun's GMD. However, his Chinese comrades, from the very beginning, were reluctant to accept his recommendation and fiercely opposed his "bloc within" proposal.³²

Regardless of the Chinese Communists' opposition, in his report to the Comintern, Sneevliet uncompromisingly suggested the "bloc within" strategy for the Chinese Communist movement and once again urged the Chinese Communists to join the GMD as individuals.³³ In the summer of 1922, despite the fact that there was a strong disagreement within the Comintern over

³² For example, On April 6th, 1922, the secretary of the central committee of the CCP, Chen Duxiu wrote a letter to a leader of the Far Eastern bureau of the Comintern, Voitinsky, to express strong opposition against Sneevliet's strategy on behalf of a majority of Chinese Communists. See *Chen Duxiu zhi Wu Tingkang de xin* (A Letter from Chen Duxiu to Voitinsky), Apr 6th, 1922, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/ccp-1921-1949/01/006.htm>.

³³ See Sneevliet's role in the building of inter-party collaboration between the CCP and the GMD in Dov Bing, 'Sneevliet and the Early Years of the CCP', *The China Quarterly*, 1971, and see more original documents about his role in Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

Sneevliet's "bloc within" strategy,³⁴ the Comintern leadership accepted his proposal and decided that the building of an "inter-party" national-revolutionary alliance would become a major task for the current Chinese Communist movement. Consequently, as the Comintern's "order" from above was irresistible, the CCP had to accept the "bloc within", and in early 1924, after the first national congress of the GMD was convened, the inter-party collaboration between two parties was formally established.

Nevertheless, the voices of opposition against the strategy of the CCP's entry into the GMD were echoed within the CCP. For a group of Chinese Communists, it was difficult to shift from a radical concept of "post-February 1917 Bolshevism" to a pragmatic idea of building up a "united front" with a "national bourgeois" force, i.e. the GMD, and so they remained cautious about this "entryist" line while stressing the autonomous and independent character of the CCP in their own activities.³⁵

³⁴ Steve Smith, *A Road is Made, Communism in Shanghai, 1920-27* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), pp. 52–53.

³⁵ For example, according to Van De Ven, who has looked through the materials of early Communist activities in China, as late as November 1923, the regional organisations of the CCP did not carry out the "bloc within" policy because "the dislike among CCP members of the policy and their unwillingness to cooperate with the GMD members prevented the policy's implementation". Meanwhile, a group of eminent Chinese Communist cadres, wanted to reclaim the essence of organisational and ideological autonomy as a key principle for the indigenous Chinese Communist organisation. Zhang Guotao in November 1923 doubted if in spite of the Communist participation in the regroupment of the GMD, the GMD as a domestic bourgeoisie could represent the national-revolutionary movement at that moment. Moreover, according to Peng Shuzhi's recollection, at some time in 1924, in order to reiterate party independence and to strengthen the CCP's role in the national workers' movement, he submitted a draft resolution to the central committee, in which he called on the party to renew regional party organisations and to establish a "labour movement committee" for undertaking a leading role in the workers' struggle. More importantly, according to his recollections and other archival materials, Chen Duxiu, the founder of the CCP, who was the party general secretary at that time, frequently worried about and doubted whether this inter-party "united front" strategy would make the Communists able to retain their own party's autonomy and initiative; furthermore, that this would create an obstacle for the Communists to play a key role in the Chinese national revolution during the period of the inter-party cooperation between two parties. See: Hans J. Van de Ven, *From Friend to*

But during the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1927, the CCP's approach of "post-February Bolshevism" was eventually replaced by the imposed strategy of the "bloc within". Within the framework of this inter-party collaboration, the CCP members joined the GMD as individuals and submitted themselves to the GMD's party discipline. At that juncture, the concerns of a group of party senior cadres such as Chen Duxiu that the policy of inter-party alliance would finally create a barrier to maintain the party autonomy of the CCP itself were borne out. Though, during the national revolution, 1925-1927, the Communists revealed a great ability to mobilise Chinese workers and peasants to involve themselves in the Communist activities, from some observers' point of view, it seemed that the CCP, at that time, was no more than a radical "Left-Wing appendage of the GMD."³⁶

Furthermore, after Stalin and his allies gained advantage in the power struggle of the Soviet party in the mid-1920s, the "Stalinists" began to largely interfere in the development of the national-revolutionary movement in China. From then on, the impacts of "Stalinists" from the Soviet and the Comintern leadership became a decisive factor in the Communists' role in the Chinese national revolution. According to Pantsov, in 1925, Stalin seemed to embrace a concept of the GMD as a "worker-peasant party" or as a "multi-class

Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927 (Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p. 108. "Letter from Zhang Guotao to Voitinsky and Musin", Nov 16th, 1923, in *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party: Documents and Analysis*, ed. by Tony Saich (New York: Routledge), p. 71. Peng Shuzhi, "Introduction", in *Leon Trotsky, Leon Trotsky on China*, edited by Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Monad Press, 1976), p. 46. Chen Duxiu, *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuan* (The Collected Works of Chen Duxiu) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1993), Vol. 3, pp. 85-105., and V.I Glunin and A.M. Grigor'ev, 'Komintern i Kitaiskaia revoliutsiia', *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, 1989, p. 106, Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji, Vol. 1, Hebei, 1989, pp. 282-283 [cited in Steve Smith, 2000, p. 56]. Chen suggested the CCP withdraw from the GMD several times, but he did not eventually insist on his view or call for this.

³⁶ Harold Issacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 64.

party”,³⁷ and thus regarded this concept as a manoeuvre, which “might facilitate the establishment of the Communist party’s hegemony in the nationalist movement [in China]”.³⁸ Since then, Stalin’s group had exerted its enormous impact on China via the Comintern and to instruct the Chinese Communists to establish the hegemony of the CCP within the inter-party united front structure, while radicalising the GMD as “leftist” as possible.³⁹ Subsequently, the Comintern followed up this Stalinist tendency as a main task in the Chinese Communist practice.

However, Stalin’s radical direction that was pushed by the Comintern and Soviet advisors in China possibly led to the March 20th Anti-Communist coup by Chiang Kai-shek in 1926.⁴⁰ Even after this coup took place in Guangzhou, the Comintern did not expect that the CCP would abandon the “bloc within” strategy. The Russians wanted the CCP to stay in the GMD and to work with the ranks of the GMD inside the structure of inter-party collaboration to continue radicalising this leading force of the national-revolutionary movement. As a result, they ordered the Chinese Communists to make concessions to the GMD and forced them to submit to GMD party guidelines

³⁷ See: *Pravda*, May 22nd, 1925 [cited in Pantsov, 2000, p. 87; Steve Smith, 2000, p. 58]. Titarenko, *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional I kitaiskaya revolyutsiya*, pp 58,61 [cited in Pantsov, 2000, p. 89.]

³⁸ Pantsov, 2000, p. 86.

³⁹ Alexander Pantsov, ‘Stalin’s Policy in China, 1925-27: New Light from Russian Archives’, *Issues and Studies*, 34.1, 1998, pp. 129–60. Pantsov, 2000, pp. 84-98.

⁴⁰ Pantsov, 2000, p. 90. See more discussions on March 20th coup, for example in Yang Kuisong: “Zouxiang san’erling zhilu” (The Way to the March 20th Coup), *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical Research), Vol. 6, 2002; Yang Tianshi, “Zhongshanjian shijian zhimi” (The Mystery of the Zhongshan Warship Incident), *Lishi yanjiu*, No.2, 1988.

that largely restrained the autonomy and political power of the Communists within the GMD structure.⁴¹

During the same time, the Communists' indigenous pursuit of party independence and autonomy had by no means disappeared. To a number of the CCP members, party autonomy was still considered as a core principle of the Chinese Communist movement, and they perceived an increased threat to Communist activities from the GMD within the structure of inter-party united front.

Thus, the discontent of the Communists' with concessions to the GMD were widely expressed in the rank-and-file of the CCP,⁴² and some key leaders and

⁴¹ For example, on May 15th, 1926, during the second plenum of the GMD central executive committee (CEC), Chiang Kai-shek and his GMD colleagues brought forward a series of severe organisational restrictions on the Communists working within the GMD. Chiang's proposal was adopted by this plenary meeting and acceded to by the representative of the Comintern, Borodin. If the Communists within the GMD accepted Chiang's propositions, they would not criticise the fundamental principles of the GMD, such as the Three People's Principles, and its leader, Sun Yat-sen, they had to hand over a list of all the CCP members inside the GMD to the CEC of the GMD, they would not be allowed to occupy more than one-third of the positions in any party organ of the GMD, and they could not arrange conferences or create their own organisations without the permission of the GMD, etc. Moreover, under pressure from the Comintern, the Communists had to accept the new guidelines of the GMD. See: C. Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying, *Missionaries of Revolution Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920–1927* (London: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 268. C. Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-1928* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 48–49. Bruce Elleman, *Moscow and the Emergence of Communist Power in China, 1925-30: The Nanchang Rising and the Birth of the Red Army* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 24-25. See Zhang Liujian, "Bao Luoting yu zhengli dangwu'an" (Borodin and the Arrangement Case of the GMD's Affairs), *Dangshi yanjiu yu jiaoxue* (Party History Research and Teaching), Vol. 6, 2007.

⁴² For instance, some senior members like Chen Yannian, criticised the Communists as having become "the GMD's lackeys" during a period between March 20th and May 15th. See *Liangong (bu), gongchan guoji yu Zhongguo guomin geming yundong* (The All-Union Communist Party [Bolsheviks], the Comintern and the Chinese National-Revolutionary Movement, 1926-27), Vol. 1 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1998), pp. 455-456. Furthermore, In Shanghai, a group of Communists demanded that their party should withdraw from the GMD as soon as possible, because "it was impossible for the Communists to work effectively under the conditions laid down by the May 15th Kuomintang (GMD) plenary session". See: Harold Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010), pp. 86-87. Additionally, in Guangzhou, a number of Communists also asked for an immediate organisational break with the GMD. They said: "the national revolution is over, while the relentless class struggle is going on. The only realistic political force for the revolutionary struggle is the CCP. For us, the GMD was no longer necessary; [hence], we can withdraw

senior cadres of the CCP, such as Chen Duxiu, questioned the Comintern's "bloc within" policy and suggested several times that their party should leave the GMD and to work out an independent Communist strategy in the Chinese national-revolutionary struggle.⁴³ As such, in spite of the fact that the Communists were forced to abide by the Comintern's "bloc within" strategy and to submit to the GMD'S guidelines under pressure from the Comintern, there was something of a consistent pursuit of organisational independence within the CCP. Nevertheless, the Comintern's official line of "bloc within" eventually became bankrupt when the Nationalists launched the anti-Communist coups on April 12th and July 15th, 1927, which triggered the destruction of the early Communist activities in China in 1927.

Regarding the implementation and maintenance of the "bloc within" policy in China, from 1926 onwards, there was a clear split on China strategy in the Comintern and Soviet party: a minority of the Russian Communists, especially from dissident factions in opposition to the Stalin-Bukharin majority, criticised this policy.⁴⁴ More importantly, from April 1926, as Trotsky increasingly took

from the GMD". See *Liangong (bu), gongchan guoji yu Zhongguo guomin geming yundong* (The All-Union Communist Party [Bolsheviks], the Comintern and the Chinese National-Revolutionary Movement 1926-27), Vol. 1, p. 481.

⁴³ For example, according to Steve Smith, during the third enlarged party plenum of the CCP central committee, from 12th to 18th July 1926, some party leaders, particularly Chen Duxiu and Peng Shuzhi, formally advocated that the CCP should leave the inter-party collaboration to retain the CCP's autonomy. However, the Comintern advisor, Voltinsky persuaded a majority of the central committee members to continue implementing the "bloc-within" policy. See Smith, 2000, p. 116. Also, according to Chen Duxiu's recollections, in a report to the Comintern, he "argued for a 'bloc-without' approach in order to retain the CCP's autonomy in the mobilisation of the masses", which was later criticised by Bukharin. See: Chen Duxiu, 1993, pp. 88–89. Roland Felber, "A 'Bloc Within' or 'Bloc Without'? Controversies on the CCP's Attitude towards the Guomindang before and after 20 March 1926", in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s, Between Triumph and Disaster* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 60.

⁴⁴ For example, unlike Stalin, Karl Radek, before 1926, characterised the GMD as a "petit-bourgeois" party, and warned that the united front policy would be an obstacle for the Chinese revolution, while he recommended that the CCP could take the Chinese national-revolutionary movement out of the hands of the GMD. Moreover, as one of the first leaders

the view that the GMD “bourgeoisie” had gained the upper hand in the dynamic of the Chinese national revolution. The Communists remained powerless and unable to implement an independent struggle strategy on behalf of the Chinese “proletariat” as long as they remained within the structure of the inter-party alliance. Trotsky, had therefore, begun to suggest that the CCP should organisationally break with the GMD and reclaim autonomy in its activities, which became one of his consistent ideas regarding the Chinese revolution.⁴⁵

In the spring of 1927, the China issue became a central concern of Trotsky and his political allies as they perceived that there was a growing threat from the GMD to the Chinese Communist movement. Amongst the oppositionists in the Soviet party who concerned themselves with the development of Chinese Communism during the national revolution, Trotsky, before the April 12th anti-Communist coup launched by Chiang Kai-shek and his generals in the GMD, warned the Soviet directors that there would be dangers facing Chinese Communism from the GMD and restated the importance of

of the United Opposition who considered that the GMD was turning to the “Right”, in March 1926, he strongly suggested transforming the “bloc within” to the “bloc without” policy, i.e. forming a “bloc of two autonomous parties”. See Elleman, 2009, p. 16, 32. Steve Smith, 2000, p. 115. Roland Felber, 2002, pp. 59–60. Also, before the March 20th Incident, the director of Russian military advisers in Guangzhou, N.V. Kuybyshev revealed his worry about the inter-party united front. Unlike the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) and Stalin’s concept of the GMD, he stated that the GMD was a “bourgeois, unstable party...Today, it is with us, tomorrow—not with us”. Meantime, in February 1926, Voitinsky suggested that the CCP should expand its own independent organisation in the peasant movement and establish a separate united front from the Nationalists. See: *Vidnye sovetskie kommunisty-uchastniki kitaiskoi revoliutsii* (The Outstanding Soviet Communists, Participants in the Chinese Revolution) (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), p. 35; *Communist International*, 2 (51), Feb 1926, p. 100 [both cited in Elleman, 2009, p. 22]. Also, in 1926, another key figure of the United Opposition, Zinoviev advocated that the Chinese Communists should withdraw from the inter-party alliance with the GMD. See Pantsov, 2000, pp. 110-111.

⁴⁵ See Trotsky’s role in criticising the “bloc within” policy while advocating the autonomy for Chinese Communists in 1926 in Pantsov and see his opinions and attitude towards the inter-party alliance between the GMD and the CCP in several his published articles, for example, in Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China* (New York: Monad Press, 1976), pp. 113-120.

Communist independence in the revolution.⁴⁶ In this sense, Trotsky keenly hoped to see that the CCP could independently organise its own activities during the revolution, without restrictions imposed by the GMD.

From recent historiography, it can be seen that Trotsky did not realise the CCP's independent operations in the Chinese national-revolutionary movement. For example, some scholars, such as Steve Smith and Li Dajia, have shown for Shanghai, work in the labour movement and citizens' assembly movement as well as the urban armed uprisings were independently conducted by the CCP itself, which demonstrated that the CCP was actually capable of undertaking an independent role in the 1925-27 Chinese revolution by agitating workers and organising political operations, while in those Communist activities, the CCP did put an effort in establishing the Communist hegemony in the national-revolutionary struggle.⁴⁷

Moreover, from several historians' understandings, the Stalin group was not, as Trotsky claimed, to accommodate to the GMD right wing in order to maintain the inter-party alliance, but Stalin and his allies actually expected to establish the Communist hegemony in China and convert the GMD into a "leftist" party by utilising the "bloc within" strategy. As Pantsov pointed out, after the March 20th coup, Stalin had not abandoned his hope for radicalising the GMD while establishing the CCP's hegemony in the inter-party united front, and the resolution regarding the China problem which was passed by the 7th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ Steve Smith, 2000, pp. 145-189; Li Dajia, *Shangren yu gongchan geming, 1919-1927* (Merchants and Chinese Communist Revolution, 1919-1927) (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2015), pp. 351-416.

(ECCI) in late December 1926 reflected this.⁴⁸ Yet the Stalin team did not sufficiently notice that the tendency of the GMD “centrist” factions, such as Chiang Kai-shek’s, had shifted to the right. This only became clear in early 1927.

After news of the April 1927 anti-Communist massacre in Shanghai reached Moscow, the question of the inter-party united front continued to divide the Stalin majority and the Trotsky group. In their concern to keep the GMD on the Left, Stalin and his leadership only saw the April coup as a “temporary defeat”.⁴⁹ Moreover, the Comintern continued to disregard Trotsky’s previous warnings and instructed the Chinese Communists to remain in the Left GMD government established in Wuhan.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Trotsky and other oppositionists accused the Soviet and Comintern leadership of making “huge mistakes” in the Chinese revolution,⁵¹ and he warned that the Comintern’s new instruction to Chinese Communists, i.e. remaining in the Left GMD government, was dangerous.⁵²

Trotsky and the Opposition’s arguments regarding China were too late. The political situation in China swiftly changed in the summer of 1927. On July

⁴⁸ Pantsov, 2000, pp. 96-98.

⁴⁹ Elleman, 2009, p. 91.

⁵⁰ See more details in Pantsov, 2000, pp. 127-151, and Elleman, 2009, pp. 80-102. Also see Bukharin’s role in this dispute regarding China in Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 260–61.

⁵¹ Leon Trotsky, 1976, p. 159.

⁵² For example, in a section of Trotsky’s critical article on the Left-GMD government, he said, “If the Hankow [Wuhan] government is supported in this ruinous policy, if the Chinese workers and peasants are restrained from immediately eliminating the enemy, and from building soviets, then *the Chinese Communist Party is helping the Hankow government to collapse in the shortest time*, and to die an inglorious death, not at the hands of the worker and peasant masses, but at the hands of bourgeois reaction. What is more, with such a policy the Hankow government, before it ‘collapses’, will most probably unite with Chiang Kai-shek – against the workers and peasants.” See: Leon Trotsky, 1976, pp. 247–48.

15th, Trotsky's "prediction" turned into a "matter of fact". The Wuhan GMD government launched another coup against the Communists. The GMD-initiated "White Terror", aiming at eliminating Communism, covered a large part of China. Consequently, as a pro-Trotskyist historian Deutscher pointed out, the Chinese Communist movement was "made to pay their tribute to the sacred egoism of the first workers' state", and was sacrificed to "the interest of the consolidation of the Soviet Union".⁵³ The GMD's anti-Communist coup demonstrated the failure of the "bloc within" policy imposed by the Soviet directors in China, whereas it justified a range of the Opposition's anti-"bloc within" suggestions, particularly Trotsky's.

Nevertheless, Deutscher's comments might exaggerate Moscow's detrimental impact on the 1927 Communist debacle in China. It should also be admitted that the "bloc within" strategy was not, as Trotskyists claimed, a "suicidal policy" foisted on Chinese Communists by the "Stalinists", but this inter-party united front gave the CCP advantages to organise Communist activities in the national-revolutionary movement. Before the establishment of the inter-party united front, the CCP had a weak influence on Chinese politics. By infiltrating the GMD and engaging in the political activities under the banner of the GMD, the Communists had expanded their political-ideological impact and strengthened the party power in labour struggle and other forms of mass movement. In the 1925-27 revolution, the CCP demonstrated a great capacity to agitate amongst workers and independently led the workers' movement. In the case of Communism in Shanghai, Smith has shown that the CCP actually "gained a wealth of experience from working through the GMD, gaining

⁵³ Issac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 273.

insight into and practice in negotiating the social, political and military forces that determined politics in China”.⁵⁴ Moreover, from some other historiography on the GMD’s attitudes towards the inter-party united front, it can be also seen that a group of GMD seniors regarded that the GMD was becoming the “appendage” of the CCP within the “bloc within” structure, as Communist activities grew so fast in China during the period of the national-revolutionary movement.⁵⁵

When the Communist movement failed in its involvement in the 1925-27 national revolution, and was brutally attacked by the GMD, their internal disputes echoed the split on the “bloc within” issue in the Soviet leadership within the CCP once again. Since the 1927 debacle, questions regarding who was responsible for the Communist defeat, whether Moscow’s policy or some other cause, had a disastrous impact on Chinese Communism. A debate about whether there was a new revolutionary upsurge, was under fierce discussion among a group of the “defeated” Communists who previously advocated an organisational withdrawal from the GMD. They wanted to explore a reasonable explanation for the defeat, but they remained in confusion until the spring of 1929. Some Trotskyists later recalled that this failure of Communism in China in the 1920s was the major reason for the rise of an indigenous Chinese Trotskyism.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Steve Smith, 2000, p. 214.

⁵⁵ Wang Qisheng, *Dangyuan, dangquan yu dangzheng: 1924-1949 nian Zhongguo guomindang de zuzhi xingtai* (Party Members, Party Power, and Party Struggle: The Organisational Form of the GMD, 1924-1949) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2003), pp. 48–91.

⁵⁶ In an interview with Peng Shuzhi conducted by Joseph Miller, Peng stated: “the single most important reason for the beginning of the Trotskyists movement in China was the failure of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27”, cited in Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism*, p. 124.

But even before the 1927 debacle, there was actually much interaction between the Chinese Communist students in Soviet Russia and comrades on the ground concerning the Stalin-Trotsky disputes. According to Pantsov, the earliest formation of the Left-Opposition's Chinese supporters was triggered by the anti-Trotskyist campaigns launched by the dominant Stalin faction at international schools in the Soviet Union, such as the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) and at the Sun Yat-sen University (UTK), in October 1926: a number of curious Chinese students who wanted to explore the reasons for the anti-Trotskyist struggle within the Soviet party approached the teaching staff at international schools who held oppositional views in order to explore the questions and arguments raised by Trotsky and other leading figures of the Left-Opposition in the party debates; but the students' interest in the oppositionist thoughts remained "purely academic" until the April anti-Communist coup in 1927. (However, judging from other evidence, a Chinese historian Sun Huixiu takes the view that in March 1926, some Chinese students had already tended to Trotskyist ideas).⁵⁷

After the April 12th coup in Shanghai, it seemed that Chinese students in Moscow had an increasing desire to gain knowledge about the split over China between the Stalin majority and the Left-Opposition. A minority of the students eventually chose to side with Trotsky's Opposition while involving themselves in the Opposition's activities.⁵⁸ Later, some pro-Trotsky Chinese

⁵⁷ Pantsov, 2000, pp. 177-179 and Sun Huixiu, *Jindai Zhongguo tuopai lishi zai yanjiu* (A Further Research on the History of Trotskyism in Modern China) (PhD Thesis, Renmin University of China, 2017), p. 35.

⁵⁸ See more details about the formation and activities of Chinese Trotskyists in the Soviet Union in Pantsov, 2000, pp. 163-208; Pantsov, "From Students to Dissidents: The Chinese Trotskyists in Soviet Russia", *Issue & Studies*, 1994, vol. 30, no.3, pp. 97-112; no. 4, pp. 56-

students at the KUTV and UTK (1925-30) were among the first dissidents to be packed off to Soviet labour camps.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, before the purge of Chinese Trotskyists in the Soviet Union in 1930-31, a group of Trotsky's supporters had returned to China from Russia, and they brought back a range of the documents of the Opposition that elaborated Trotsky's and other key oppositionists' views on China, stressing the importance of organisational independence in Chinese Communist activities. In the spring of 1929, by circulating several key oppositionist documents written by Trotsky and others concerning the problem of the 1925-27 Chinese revolution,⁶⁰ a minority group of pro-Chen Duxiu Communists began to reconsider the previous "bloc within" strategy imposed by the Comintern.

After a period of discussion,⁶¹ Chen Duxiu and his close supporters were more or less persuaded by Trotsky's view on China for two main reasons. Firstly, they agreed with Trotsky that Stalin and the Soviet leadership should be blamed for the debacle of 1927. Secondly, Trotsky and the Oppositionists offered them a theoretical justification for why the current Chinese Communist movement had not yet sped up a "new revolutionary upsurge", but suffered a

73; no.5, pp. 77-109; Sheng Yue, *Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow and the Chinese Revolution, A Personal Account* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1971); Gregor Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 327-96.

⁵⁹ Pantsov, 2000, pp. 205-208.

⁶⁰ See a part of Zheng Chaolin's memoirs in English in Benton, 2015, pp. 451-52. According to Benton, Wang Pingyi did not bring any Trotskyist documents directly from Russia, but he collected a few from his Oppositionist friends who returned to China earlier, and kept in touch with a young Chinese Trotskyist group *Women de hua* (Our Word) in China, which was the first Chinese Left-Opposition organisation established in 1928 by a number of Communist students who previously engaged in the Opposition's activities in the Soviet Union. Gregor Benton, 1996, pp. 29-30.

⁶¹ Benton, 2015, p. 452.

massive defeat and remained in an ebb-tide.⁶² Nevertheless, according to Zheng Chaolin and Benton, the conversions of Chen Duxiu and his supporters to Trotskyism “differed from individual to individual; different people put out different interpretations regarding what Trotsky said.”⁶³ In spite of this, Trotsky’s argument largely corresponded to the demand that Chen and others in the CCP frequently wanted to articulate, that is, to pursue an independent role for the CCP in the Chinese revolution and to retain full party autonomy for the indigenous Chinese Communist organisation. Therefore, their conversions to Trotskyism were not because a small group of Chinese Communists were persuaded by Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution,⁶⁴ but because Trotsky and other Oppositionists’ criticisms of Moscow’s China policy “correctly” responded to the needs of the “Trotskyists before Trotsky” in China. By making use of Trotsky’s ideas, they could claim their previous autonomous position in the early Chinese Communist movement to some degree.

As a result, the Chinese Trotskyist movement emerged from these reconsiderations on the failure of 1927. More importantly, the “birth” of Trotskyism in China was also a reflection of the indigenous logic of Chinese Communism, which is to say, a consistent pursuit of party autonomy. In Pantsov’s words, the radical approach of “post-February 1917 Bolshevism”

⁶² Peter Kuhfus, “Chen Duxiu and Leon Trotsky: New Light on Their Relationship”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 102, 1985, p 261; and Benton, 1996, p. 31. After the 1927 failure, Chen Duxiu did not agree that the time was ripe to call for armed uprisings to “smash” the GMD: see a part of Chen’s view on whether there was a new “high-tide” or an “ebb-tide” in the Chinese revolution in Chen, 1993, p. 8; Zheng Chaolin, “An Ebbing or a Flowing Tide”, in Benton, 2015, pp. 417-450.

⁶³ Benton, 1996, p. 31. See Zheng Chaolin in Benton, 2015, pp. 458-464.

⁶⁴ For example, after Chen’s conversion to Trotskyism, he still doubted whether the social condition in China was ripe for Trotsky’s formula of proletarian dictatorship. See Zheng Chaolin, *An Oppositionist for Life: Memoirs of the Chinese Revolutionary Zheng Chaolin*, translated by Gregor Benton, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997) p. 229.

had by no means disappeared amongst a small percentage of Chinese Communists and they would later “revive” this concept and maintain their organisational independence in the future Trotskyist movement.⁶⁵

Indeed, under these conditions of failure, by adopting Trotsky’s views to re-examine their own defeat in the Chinese national revolution, a minority of the CCP members recognised themselves as Left Oppositionists, that is, Trotskyists. From the second half of 1929, a group of pro-Chen Duxiu Communists took a political position that was identical with Trotsky’s, and they severely criticised the CCP and the Comintern’s former and current strategies.⁶⁶ Their criticisms that challenged the supreme authoritarianism of the Soviet rulers eventually led to an expulsion. From autumn 1929, the Left Oppositionists within the CCP were accused of adopting the “liquidationist” or “opportunist” line, and were soon expelled from the party.⁶⁷ After the expulsion, the Chinese Left Oppositionists felt that it was the time to re-organise a radical Left group as well as to reemploy the radical approach of “post-February 1917 Bolshevism” in their revolutionary practice.

However, like Trotskyists everywhere, the grouping of a Trotskyist organisation in China, at the very beginning, was riven by sectarianism, dogmatism, prejudice, and personal ambitions. In the summer of 1930, there were four small Trotskyist groups in China: *Proletarian* Group – mainly established by the experienced senior cadres of Chinese Communists who

⁶⁵ Pantsov, 2000, p. 69.

⁶⁶ For example, in Chen Duxiu, 1993, pp. 37-57, 67-137.

⁶⁷ See some of these accusations from the central committee of the CCP and the resolutions regarding the expulsion of the Oppositionists in *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* (The Collected Material of the CCP Central Committee), Vol. 5 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe [Central Party School Press], 1990), pp. 495–506, 543–55.

were expelled from the CCP, and the other three, *Our Word*, *October*, *Militant* – founded by returned students from Soviet Russia and other inexperienced younger Communists. Since these small factions were formed, they had opposed and attacked each other. According to Benton and some Chinese Trotskyists' recollections, internal squabbles and hostility can be clearly seen in the whole progress of the Trotskyist grouping in the early 1930s. For example, the young Trotskyists considered that the senior Communists who formed the *Proletarian* were responsible for the 1927 debacle, as they were amongst the implementors of Moscow's policy in China, while they criticised Chen Duxiu's and other seniors' "Trotskyism" as no more than a variant of "opportunism".⁶⁸ Such a prejudice and hostility towards the *Proletarian* from the young Trotskyist radicals might indicate that there were some ideological divisions between the senior and younger generations of Chinese Trotskyists. Furthermore, several non-ideological factors also prevented these four groups from forming a unified Trotskyist organisation. Zhao Ji, a leader of the *Militant* group, later recalled in the early 1980s that the formation of his small faction was to "get a better position for its members in the future unified organisation".⁶⁹ And Wang Fanxi and Zheng Chaolin⁷⁰ argued in their memoirs that a few Trotskyist figures both from the Russia-returned groups or

⁶⁸ Benton, 1996, pp. 33-34; Wang Fanxi, *Shuang Shan huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Shuang Shan), Chapter 7, 1957, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/1957book/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1957book-7.htm>. Zheng Chaolin, *Zheng Chaolin huiyilu, 1919-1931* (The Memoirs of Zheng Chaolin, 1919-1931), Chapter 10, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/zhengchaolin/1900-1931/2-10.htm>.

⁶⁹ Ren Jianshu and Tang Baolin, *Chen Duxiu zhuan* (A Biography of Chen Duxiu) (Shanghai: Shanghai remin chubanshe, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 83 [cited by Benton, 1996, p. 33].

⁷⁰ Please refer to Wang and Zheng's brief biographies in the section "Key organisations and figures".

senior generation, such as Liu Renjing and Peng Shuzhi,⁷¹ attempted to fulfil their own ambitions in the organisational unification. That is to say, what made a small number of people on the Left join the Trotskyist groups was their “lust for power”. When their personal interests were not satisfied, they began to oppose the organisational reconciliation and hinder the negotiation of the unification among the four groups.⁷²

In spite of the prejudice, hostility, factionalism and personal interests within small Trotskyist factions, as a result of Trotsky’s appeal, in May 1931, these four groups of Chinese Trotskyists, representing 483 Trotskyists in China, were eventually integrated into a unified organisation -- the Left-Opposition of the Chinese Communist Party.⁷³ This Chinese Trotskyist organisation was also one of the biggest Trotskyist groups in the world at the time.⁷⁴

3 The activities and ordeals, 1931-1952

Since the establishment of the unified Trotskyist group in China, the Trotskyists had begun to prepare their own independent way for re-building the Chinese Communist movement. Politically, their main tasks were, on the one hand, to rebuild the connection with the urban proletariat in cities; on the other hand, to regain popular support under the democratic slogan of

⁷¹ Liu Renjing (1902-1987): A founding member of the CCP. He became a Left-Oppositionist in Russia. In 1929, he visited Trotsky in Istanbul. When he returned to China, he was involved in the Trotskyist activities. In 1935, he was arrested and later recanted to the GMD. For more information about Liu, see Benton, 1996, p. 219. For Peng Shuzhi’s biography, see “Key organisations and figures”.

⁷² Wang Fanxi, *Shuang Shan huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Shuang Shan), Chapter 7, 1957, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/1957book/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1957book-7.htm>. Zheng Chaolin, *Zheng Chaolin huiyilu, 1919-1931* (The Memoirs of Zheng Chaolin, 1919-1931), Chapter 10, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/zhengchaolin/1900-1931/2-10.htm>.

⁷³ See “Report No.1” on the Unification Congress of Chinese Trotskyists, a copy of letter from the Left-Opposition of the Chinese Communist Party to Trotsky and the Left Opposition’s International Secretariat, May 9th, 1931, *Wang Fanxi Archive, MS 1709 11*.

⁷⁴ Benton, 1996, p. 109.

“national assembly” in order to “rally the revolutionary forces against the [GMD] military dictatorship, and to prepare the way for a new revolutionary upsurge”,⁷⁵ while trying to keep an internal democratic life alive within their organisation.⁷⁶

Moreover, a group of Trotskyists were active in the academic field. In the early 1930s, they got involved in a scholarly polemic with the GMD leftists and Communists concerning the nature of contemporary Chinese society.⁷⁷ In this polemic, most Trotskyist debaters believed that capitalism was already dominant in China, or that China, at least, was “a transitional society with capitalist forces shaping social relationships”.⁷⁸ Such Trotskyist views regarding the character of society in China in the early 20th century were to justify the “correctness” of the group’s proletariat-centred struggle strategy, and these views strongly implied that, from the Trotskyists’ perspectives, in the capitalist society of contemporary China, the Chinese urban proletariat would uncompromisingly undertake a leading role in the next stage of the Chinese revolution against the bourgeoisie. But Arif Dirlik argues that this sort of Trotskyist implication assumed a broad class struggle against “the Chinese

⁷⁵ Wang Fan-hsi (Wang Fanxi), *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 88 [cited in Benton, 1996, p. 70]. However, some other Trotskyists interpreted the strategy of “national assembly” differently. Zheng Chaolin wrote: “some Chinese Trotskyists believed that the next revolutionary high tide was distant and uncertain, that China’s bourgeois state would probably enjoy a long period of stability, and that the present system of military dictatorship would gradually give way to parliamentary democracy, which in their view would be long-lasting.” See: Zheng Chaolin, “Chen Duxiu and the Trotskyists”, in Benton, 1996, p. 196.

⁷⁶ In Benton’s view, the pursuit of democracy was a main theme of the Chinese Trotskyist movement, both in its internal and public politics. He argues: “[o]n the whole in China, Trotskyism stood historically for the democratic movement” [p. 72]. See, Benton, 1996, pp. 68-77.

⁷⁷ See this scholarly polemic and the Trotskyists’ role in this debate in Sun Huixiu, 2017, pp. 232-294, and Arif Dirlik, *Revolutionary and History: The Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 57-94.

⁷⁸ Dirlik, *ibid*, p. 85.

bourgeoisie, urban and rural, which seemed to include all but the proletariat and peasantry”, and thus, the Trotskyist implication “made their strategy less popular than it might otherwise have been”.⁷⁹

Indeed, Trotskyists’ proletariat-centred strategy in cities was not as popular and fruitful as the CCP’s “guerrilla” strategy in the countryside that the Trotskyists vehemently repudiated. In political reality, urban Trotskyists had to confront two main enemies in China – the GMD and the CCP, and therefore, had to survive in a crack between the repression of the Nationalists and the hostility of the CCP.

In the big cities governed by the Nationalists, like Shanghai where the Trotskyists were active in organising workers’ activities, the anti-Communist terror remained prevalent in the 1930s. Under such a circumstance, the anti-GMD Trotskyist activity was perceived as just another intolerable Communist threat.⁸⁰ Thus, the Trotskyist activities in cities were constantly harassed and sabotaged by highly-organised Nationalist raids: shortly after the unification congress in May 1931, the main Trotskyist leadership body was raided and destroyed.⁸¹ And on October 15th, 1932, in collaboration with the Nationalist police, the International Settlement police captured Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzhi and other leading Trotskyists in Shanghai. Most of the captured Trotskyists were imprisoned for several years, some of whom, such as Wang Fanxi, were

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 90.

⁸⁰ According to Tang Baolin, the GMD authorities indeed characterised the urban Trotskyist movement as an intolerable anti-Nationalist threat which was equivalent to the anti-GMD armed struggle led by the Communists in the countryside. Tang Baolin, *Zhongguo tuopai shi* (The History of Chinese Trotskyism) (Taipei: Dongda Books, 1994), p 171.

⁸¹ See Wang Fanxi, *Shuang Shan huiyilu*, Chapter 7: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/1957book/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1957book-7.htm>; Zheng Chaolin, *Ji Yin Kuan* (The Remembrance of Yin Kuan), 1983, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/zhengchaolin/marxist.org-chinese-zhengchaolin-19830514.htm>; Benton, 1996, p 35.

not released until some months later after the Sino-Japanese War broke out.⁸²

Despite the fact that a handful of Trotskyists who escaped from raids or were released from gaol continued to engage in re-organising their activities and tried to establish new Trotskyist organisational bodies,⁸³ the urban activities of Trotskyism in China were severely shattered by the GMD repression before the Sino-Japanese war. In reality, Chinese Trotskyists were unable to lead the labour movement in Chinese cities and to spread their influence amongst urban industrial workers. Finally, the GMD's harsh punishments and relentless repressive measures made the Trotskyist group's urban proletariat-centred strategy impossible.

Furthermore, the Trotskyists needed to face an additional enemy in their political struggles in China, that is, the Communist Party. To contain the Trotskyist influence, the CCP from the 1930s launched several political campaigns against Trotskyism.⁸⁴

Patricia Griffin points out that during the era of the Chinese Revolution prior to 1949, political groups like the Trotskyist group in China were seen as "favouring reform rather than revolution...[and] were identified as threats to

⁸² Wang Fanxi, Wang Fanxi, *Shuang Shan huiyilu*, Chapter 9: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/1957book/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1957book-9.htm>

⁸³ For example, in 1935, Wang Fanxi, with his comrades Yin Kuan, Chen Qichang, Jiang Zhendong and a South-African Trotskyist Frank Glass, established a new provisional central committee. From the spring of 1936 to late 1942, they persisted in propagating their political opinions mainly through publishing activities. Wang Fanxi, *ibid*; Benton, 1996, p 38.

⁸⁴ According to Benton, in the 1930s, the pro-Stalin faction within the CCP launched two major anti-Trotskyism campaigns. The first one generated a massive purge within the CCP's rural bases: a large number of party cadres who were labelled as "Trotskyites", "anti-Bolsheviks" and "Guomindang agents" were executed. The latter one took place during the Sino-Japanese War 1937-45, which was also operated by the pro-Stalin group within the CCP. Benton, 1996, pp. 58-63.

the Communists because they were competing with the CCP for the support of the workers, peasants, intelligentsia, and political activists.”⁸⁵ Zheng Xuejia, an eminent Chinese historian, shares a similar view to Griffin. In the 1970s, when he reviewed the origin of the anti-Trotskyism campaign launched by the CCP in the late 1930s from an “anti-Communist” point of view, he assumed that though the political opinions of Trotskyists were “ultra-left”, their critical views that exposed the “dark side” of the CCP, such as no democracy within its party, would have been sufficient to take “mass” support away from the CCP. Thus, the CCP’s propagation of an anti-Trotskyist propaganda campaign, which accused Trotskyists of being “bandits” and “national traitors”, was an attempt to distance the patriotic and leftist-leaning people from Trotskyism especially during the Sino-Japanese War.⁸⁶

Indeed, in the past, when Chinese Trotskyists in the 1930s promoted their left-wing activities and put themselves in direct competition with the Communists for the support of working people in urban areas, the Communists naturally perceived this as a political threat. Concurrently, Stalin’s Soviet party was carrying out the particular “Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre” trials in Moscow, in which an anti-Trotskyist discourse asserted Trotskyism to be a form of “fascism” and a political programme for the “restoration of capitalism”.⁸⁷ At the same time, the Comintern’s leadership began to direct Communist parties outside the Soviet Union to conduct

⁸⁵ Patricia E. Griffin, *The Chinese Communist Treatment of Counterrevolutionaries: 1924-1949* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 28. However, Chinese Trotskyists regarded their own organisation as a “revolutionary” group rather than a reformist group during the Nationalist period.

⁸⁶ Zheng Xuejia, *Suowei “tuofei Hanjian” shijian* (The So-called “Trotskyite-Bandits--National Traitors” Incident) (Taipei: The Research Society of International Communism, 1976), p. 55.

⁸⁷ *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre* (Moscow, 1937), p. 464, 492. [cited in Robert McNeal, “Demonology: The Orthodox Communist Image of Trotskyism”, *International Journal* 32, no. 1, 1976/77: pp. 23–24.]

campaigns against Trotskyism. For example, a resolution document of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) sent to member parties entitled “On Carrying Out the Campaign Against Trotskyism” dated February 5th, 1937, the Comintern’s leadership urged the Communist parties abroad to “develop a broad, mass campaign against Trotskyism so as to destroy it completely”.⁸⁸ In a same document, Trotskyism and Trotskyists were defined as “an agency of fascism”, “the most dastardly enemies of the USSR”, “enemies of the people’s liberty and independence”, “advocates of the restoration of capitalism in the USSR”, and “warmongers”.⁸⁹

Thus, to counteract the Trotskyist influence upon potential Communist supporters, and also to meet the anti-Trotskyist directive from the Comintern,⁹⁰ from the late 1930s, “exposing the evils of Trotskyism” became a major task in Chinese Communist policy,⁹¹ so that Chinese Trotskyists were treated by the Communists as one of main political enemies during the war against Japanese aggression. Soviet-style anti-Trotskyist discourse was imported and modified to suit a Chinese context. Hence, in wartime Communist propaganda, it can be seen that “notorious” Trotskyists in China were deliberately labelled as a certain group of “national traitors”, “bandits”, “Japanese agents”, “running dogs of Japanese aggressors” or

⁸⁸ William J. Chase, *Enemies within the Gates?: The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 202.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Furthermore, in a telegram from the ECCI Secretariat to American and British Communist parties on February 7th, 1937, Trotskyism was also labelled as an agency of “German fascism” and of “Japanese militarism”. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁹⁰ See the connection between the Third International and Chinese Communists for launching an anti-Trotskyism campaign within the Chinese party in Wang Xincheng, “Gongchan guoji yu Zhongguo kangzhan shiqi de fantuoluocijipai yundong” pp. 56–67.

⁹¹ *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji, 1936-38* (The Selected Documents of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, 1936-38), Vol. 11 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe [Central Party School Press], 1989), pp. 173–74.

“counterrevolutionaries”.⁹² Moreover, shortly after the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* was published under Stalin’s direction in 1938, it was immediately translated into Chinese and introduced to the Chinese Communists.⁹³ This Communist textbook became a propaganda instrument which elaborated the Stalinist view of anti-Trotskyism and contained a large range of historical accusations against Trotskyism. In Yan’an, this book “served as a model for the study of party history”, and became “the first major document to be studied by senior [party] cadres.”⁹⁴ Consequently, the *Short Course* had a significant impact on party leaders, cadres and ordinary members.⁹⁵ Hence, it is not surprising that the “crimes” of Trotskyism were widely known among the Chinese Communists.

Though the Trotskyists had to face two main enemies in Chinese politics since the formation of their movement, and a group of them disengaged from

⁹² For example, see a collection of anti-Trotskyist articles from a Communist propaganda organ, *Au Secours de La Patrie in Li ci cun zhao* (The Archived - the Anti-Chinese Trotskyist Materials Collected from Au Secours de La Patrie) (Hong Kong: Makesizhuyi yanjiu cujinhui [The Research Society of Marxism], 2007). Moreover, in 1938, Mao Zedong in his article *On Protracted War* explicitly pointed out that the Trotskyists were equivalent to the national traitors, which meant Chinese Communists already treated the Trotskyists as a political source of enemies during the Sino-Japanese War. See Mao Zedong, “Lun chijiuzhan” (On Protracted War), in *Mao Zedong xuanji* (The Collected Works of Mao Zedong), Vol. 2, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991), pp. 404–38.

⁹³ See the translation and propagation of the *Short Course* in China, for example, in Zhu Baoqiang, “Liangong(bu) dangshi jianming jiaocheng zai Zhongguo de fanyi, chuban yu chuanbo (The Translation, Publishing and Propagation of the *Short Course* in China),” *Dangshi yanjiu yu jiaoxue* (Studies and Teachings of Party History) 4 (2012), pp. 48-56.

⁹⁴ David Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao’s Republic* (London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 275.

⁹⁵ On July 15th, 1939, the head of the Comintern, Dimitrov sent a dispatch to the Central Committee of the CCP. In this dispatch, it revealed that at that time, ten thousand copies of the *Short Course* had been sent to China, while it stressed that “[t]he distribution and study of this book marks a turning point and is a powerful tool in raising the ideological level of the Party, and an extremely forceful way of ensuring the penetration of ideas of Marxism-Leninism into the largest possible numbers of the masses”. See this quotation in Fridrikh Firsov, Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *Secret Cables of the Comintern, 1933-1943* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 130. And the *Short Course* indeed had a great impact on CCP leaders, like Mao Zedong: see Andrew Walder, *China under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 26.

Trotskyist movement or joined the GMD camp, most Trotskyists showed extraordinary courage in challenging the GMD regime, while many of them eventually sacrificed their lives. However, because of dual repression from the GMD and CCP, lacking both material and human resources, and internal squabbles, the political development of Trotskyism belied the expectations of all the Trotskyists in the 1930s and 1940s. During the resistance war against Japanese aggression, a handful of Trotskyists put great efforts in participating in resistance activities and organising guerrilla action against Japanese troops in Shandong, Guangdong, and other part of China.⁹⁶ But most of their attempts eventually failed. As the Trotskyists' ambitions were not satisfied in the Chinese political context, they had been forced back to focus on their own small organisation and internal discussions, which led to infighting.

In 1942, there were political differences concerning the nature of the anti-Japanese resistance war, with factional divisions within the Trotskyist party (at that time, the party had changed its name to the Chinese Communist League [CCL]) between a *Majority* faction and a *Minority* group.⁹⁷ The *Minority* faction suggested that the Sino-Japanese War was no longer progressive after the Pacific War between Japan and the United States broke out: *Minority* members such as Zheng Chaolin and Wang Fanxi viewed the "anti-Japanese War" as having become a war between "imperialist" countries.

⁹⁶ Benton, 1996, p 83; Wang Fanxi, *Shuang Shan huiyilu*, 1957, Chapter 10: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/1957book/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1957book-10.htm>;

Frank Glass, "The Communist League of China", in *Revolutionary History*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1990, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/china/china07.htm>; Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), 2005, Chapter 7, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/liupingmei/2005book/marxist.org-chinese-LauPingMUI-2005book-7.htm>.

⁹⁷ As Gregor Benton points out, the differences between different factions within the CCL on the nature of the war against Japan "meant nothing in practice, for neither was ever in a position to try its strategy out". Benton, 1996, p. 87.

The *Majority* faction led by Peng Shuzhi, however, insisted that the Chinese resistance war against Japan under the circumstance of “imperialist war” remained progressive. Therefore, they supported the war of resistance, although Chiang Kai-shek’s leadership of the resistance was seen as “corrupt”. The *Minority* members wanted to continue expressing their views within the CCL by publishing their own internal discussion bulletins, while they suffered the authoritarianism of Peng’s *Majority* imposed on them. Indeed, when the *Minority* published their internal paper *Guojizhuyizhe* (Internationalist), the *Majority* began to condemn their publishing activities, which “violated the organisational discipline”, and thus considered imposing the disciplinary measures on the *Minority* members.⁹⁸

Internal conflict between two factions escalated in May 1942: on one side, the *Minority* Trotskyists were extremely dissatisfied with Peng Shuzhi and his *Majority* allies’ high-handedness and authoritarianism. On the other side, the *Majority* insisted on taking the view that the *Minority* had violated Trotskyist discipline by operating their own publishing activities. As a result, the CCL split into two groups: the *Majority* led by Peng, which formed a new Trotskyist

⁹⁸ See more details about the factional debate between the *Majority* and the *Minority* and the 1942 organisational split in Peng Shuzhi, *Peng Shuzhi xuanji* (The Collected Work of Peng Shuzhi), Vol. 2, (Hong Kong: October Bookshop, 1984), pp. 148-184; Peng Shuzhi, *Peng Shuzhi huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Peng Shuzhi), Vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2016), pp. 386-391. Wang Fanxi, *Shuang Shan huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Shuang Shan), 1957, Chapter 11, Marxist Internet Archive:

<https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/1957book/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1957book-11.htm>. Later, in 1973, Wang Fanxi re-examined the *Minority* viewpoints towards the Chinese resistance war against Japan. In his re-examination, he indicated that their point of view did not mean the *Minority* did not support the resistance war, but they thought during the resistance war, the Trotskyists should not abandon their “revolutionary task” of overthrowing the domestic “bourgeois” enemy, i.e. the Chiang Kai-shek regime, in principle. See Wang Fanxi (Shuang Shan), *Lun zhongguo disanci geming zhong sidalinpai shengli yu tuopai shibai de yuanyin—jianda Peng Shuzhi fufu* (On the Causes of the Stalinist [CCP’s] Victory and the Trotskyist failure in the Third Chinese Revolution and A Reply to Peng Shuzhi and Chen Bilan), 1973, p. 21. See also this article in English in Gregor Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 1001–24.

party in 1948 named the *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RCP), and the *Minority* led by Zheng Chaolin and Wang Fanxi, which established the *Internationalist Workers' Party* (IWP) in 1949. This sort of sectarian politics between Trotskyist factions in China further weakened the Trotskyist role in the politics of the Chinese revolution. Moreover, internal quarrels that originated in the 1930s and 1940s and continued to rankle later between Trotskyists from the older generation became one of the disadvantages for the political development of the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement in the 1970s. But it is worth noting that not a great deal of these internal squabbles remained relevant in the 1970s in the Hong Kong situation.

After the civil war between the GMD and the CCP broke out in 1946, the Trotskyists had some small recovery and development in cities, such as Wenzhou and Shanghai.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, they did not join the Communist army to sweep away the GMD troops. At that moment, none of the leading Trotskyist figures expected that a Red Army of peasants led by the CCP would bring social revolution from the countryside to the cities in 4 years, because they “vested their main hopes and exclusive effort in the urban proletariat”,¹⁰⁰ not in the peasantry, as did the Communists. As a result, many Trotskyists were taken by surprise and confused when the Communists eventually overthrew the GMD regime in 1949: Was the Chinese revolution led by the Communists a socialist revolution? Was the CCP a proletarian party? What factors made the CCP win the military victory over the GMD? What was the character of the new China state established by the

⁹⁹ See more details about the Trotskyist activities in Wenzhou in Xu Wuzhi, *Yanmo de gemingzhe: Wenzhou tuopai de xingqu yu fumie, 1933-1952* (The Rise and Fall of Wenzhou Trotskyists) (MA Dissertation, East China Normal University, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ Benton, 1996, p. 111.

Communists? All these questions haunted the Trotskyists for a very long time, as this thesis will demonstrate.¹⁰¹

Before many Trotskyists who remained in mainland China after the establishment of the Communist regime in 1949 thought carefully about these questions and explored the answers to them, a great misfortune befell them. From early 1952, the Communists began to prepare an elimination of the remaining Trotskyist activities on the mainland.¹⁰² In late December 1952, all the Trotskyists and Trotskyist sympathisers remaining in the Communist state were arrested in highly-organised Communist raids. The mass arrests entirely destroyed the Trotskyist activities in mainland China. From that moment, Chinese Trotskyists had nowhere to voice their oppositional views under the rule of Chinese Communism. With the negative effect of the split of the Fourth International in 1953, the small group of surviving Chinese Trotskyists in exile became more isolated and demoralised.¹⁰³ Until the rise of young New Left rebels in Hong Kong in the early 1970s, Trotskyist activities had barely recovered from the demoralisation.

4 The new making of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong

Following another 22 years' struggle after 1927, the CCP eventually overthrew the GMD regime and seized state power in 1949. At the same time,

¹⁰¹ Please also refer to Benton, 1996, pp. 85-90.

¹⁰² For example, see "Zhonggong Wenzhou diwei guanyu tuofei huodong gaikuang ji wodui wentuo chuli chubu yijian" (The Situations of the "Trotskyite-bandit" Activities and Our [Wenzhou Municipal Party Committee's] Preliminary Suggestions of Handling Wenzhou Trotskyists), March 10th, 1952; "Zhonggong Wenzhou dishiwei pizhuan sutuowei guanyu Wenzhou diqu sutuo gongzuo de jiben zongjie"(The Committee of Eliminating Trotskyites' Summary on the Elimination Work of Trotskyites in Wenzhou Reposted by the Wenzhou Municipal Party Committee), April 1953, in *Zhonggong Wenzhou di (shi) wei wenxian xuanbian* (The Collected Documents of the Wenzhou Municipal Party Committee), unpublished.

¹⁰³ See some details in Chapter 1.

the Trotskyist organisation as a whole in China remained a marginal political group, which did not achieve any political goals of its own. On the eve of the CCP's seizure of state power in 1949, a number of Chinese Trotskyists retreated to colonial Hong Kong under British rule, because as a common "enemy" of both the CCP and the GMD, there was nowhere to go for the Trotskyists. Either on the mainland or in Taiwan, the Trotskyists were unable to preserve their own political organisation, but Hong Kong and Macao were the only refuges for political dissidents that could provide them a space for political survival. As mentioned in last section, Trotskyists and Trotskyist sympathisers remaining in Communist China were all imprisoned in late 1952. This purge completely destroyed the Trotskyist movement in the Communist regime. From then on, there has been no political existence of Chinese Trotskyists in mainland China.

However, the stories of Chinese Trotskyists did not end there. As Joseph Miller points out, the Trotskyists were unwilling to "go away" from the Chinese context, and the movement preserved "its political stamina" in Hong Kong, where they started a new political "long march".¹⁰⁴ But Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong in the 1950s were fragmented and later became inactive, serving as a symbolic and vocal continuation of Chinese Trotskyism.

In the 1970s, there was a new emergence of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong. Compared to contextual causes of the formation of the older Chinese Trotskyists in the late 1920s, the contextual situation for the making of the younger and newer Trotskyist force in Hong Kong was different.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism* (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979), p. vii.

By contrast with the tiny political existence in Hong Kong of the emigre Chinese Trotskyists from the mainland, the newer existence of a Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the 1970s was formed by a group of local young radicals, not as an ideological-political continuation of the older generation, but rather as a new phenomenon of Chinese Trotskyism rooted in Hong Kong and influenced by the radical New Left movement from the West.

During the post-war era from the 1950s, the problems of social inequalities, corruption, exploitation, poverty, injustices were exposed in Hong Kong society under the undemocratic British rule, and were to be reflected in the 1966-67 social disturbances. A post-war generation educated in and growing up in Hong Kong was inspired by changes in the outside world in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Various sections of Hong Kong's younger generation wanted to adequately address existing socio-political problems in Hong Kong and to resolve them through reforms. Consequently, with the aim of reforming and changing Hong Kong society, the younger generation was keen to look for new political identities, and a variety of socio-political tendencies emerged. By means of social protests, some issue-driven youth reformist groups expected to direct the colonial government's attention to some specific social problems and anticipated that the colonial authorities could immediately implement reform measures aiming at resolving them. Some student factions during this period identified with the pro-Communist PRC elements in Hong Kong and viewed Chinese Communism as an ideological tool, giving them the ability in the local political-ideological battlefield to participate in Hong Kong's socio-political affairs. They sought a way of reforming Hong Kong that depended upon mainland Communist developments.

However, the chaotic pro-Communist riots in 1967 resulted in a widespread public rejection of Chinese Communism amongst a considerable number of Hong Kong Chinese. Later, influenced by this rejection of Chinese Communism and inspired by the New Left movement worldwide, a group of radical students and young people prepared to seek a third way of participating in local politics, which neither stood with the colonial government, nor stood with the pro-PRC groups, but challenged both political powers. In so doing, the non-Communist New Left force, such as the “Seventies” group, appeared in Hong Kong politics. Moreover, when a number of Hong Kong New Left radicals studied abroad in Western countries in the early 1970s, they were more profoundly affected by various ideas of different New Left tendencies in the West, and they wanted to confront the British establishment. Later, a relatively large part of the young radicals found that Trotsky’s version of socialism was far more attractive, since it could provide them a radical “weapon” to challenge the capitalist and colonialist status quo of Hong Kong. From then on, by making use of Trotskyism, a small group of young Hong Kong New Leftists entered Hong Kong’s political arena in the 1970s. They formed local Trotskyist groups and attempted to undertake a vanguard role in engaging in Hong Kong socio-political movements aimed at challenging British colonialism, as well as in re-organising the local labour movement.

Unlike the formation of the early Chinese Trotskyists based upon their reconsiderations of the Communist failure during the 1925-1927 Chinese revolution, the contextual situation of this later wave was that various sections of the Hong Kong younger generation wanted to demand local reforms aiming

at resolving Hong Kong's socio-political problems; in addition, a certain part of them were attracted to and influenced by the Western New Left tendencies. This was the historical basis for the making of the newer and younger generation of Trotskyists in Hong Kong. For this new generation of Trotskyists, Trotskyism was a perfect ideal to justify their anti-establishment claim, and the "Trotskyist" symbol could facilitate their playing a role in the local socio-political movement. Though it later became politically marginal, the Trotskyist force became one of the most radical ultra-left wings in the socio-political movement of Hong Kong society in the 1970s.

As the main theme of this thesis, the formation and political development of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong will be elaborately explored in the following core chapters.

Key organisations and figures

Before going on to the main chapters, to help the readers have the background knowledge of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong, key organisations and figures in its activity will be introduced at the start:

Organisations:

Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP): In 1931, the Trotskyists established a unified Trotskyist political party in China—the *Left Opposition of the Communist Party*, which was later renamed the *Chinese Communist League (CCL)*. In 1942, the CCL split and divided into two small factions, the pro-Peng Shuzhi's majority and the minority group led by Zheng Chaolin and

Wang Fanxi. In 1948, based on the majority faction, Peng Shuzhi and his supporters founded a new Trotskyist party body—the Revolutionary Communist Party—in Shanghai. On the eve of the Communist military victory over the GMD, the party leadership of the RCP left mainland China for Hong Kong, where the Trotskyist activities continued and survived in the British colony. Nevertheless, the rest of the RCP members remaining in Communist China were all arrested and imprisoned in December 1952, and its Hong Kong branch became fragmented and inactive in the mid-1950s. In the 1970s, the RCP began to be re-organised. Until the new central committee was elected at the second congress of the RCP in 1977, the Hong Kong branch was led by a so-called “Provisional National Committee” (PNC) from 1954. In 1977, according to the party minutes, the RCP had 33 members. Furthermore, it had two affiliated youth organisations, the *Revolutionary Communist Youth* (RCY) and the *Young Socialist Group* (YSG; all the RCY members were YSG members). In September 1978, the YSG and a few old Trotskyists split off from the RCP, and joined the unified RML. The RCP still exists in Hong Kong and continues to publish its party organ-- *October Review*.

Internationalist Workers’ Party (IWP): In 1949, the IWP was founded by the *Chinese Communist League’s* minority faction members in Shanghai. After the Communist seizure of national power, the IWP Trotskyists remained active to some extent in mainland China. However, they were rounded up in late 1952 by the Communists. A few surviving members, such as Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua, were in exile by that time. They could not continue further organisational activity in mainland China or Hong Kong. In 1978, a few

surviving IWP individuals organisationally joined the unified RML. At the same time, another eminent IWP leader Zheng Chaolin remained imprisoned in Communist China until 1979.

“Seventies”: In January 1970, while publishing their own political magazine *70’s Biweekly*, a small group of Hong Kong young radicals affected by Western New Left political-ideological tendencies created a local New Left-oriented political group named “Seventies”. In the early 1970s, influenced by anti-establishment, anti-authoritarian New Left ideologies, this Seventies group launched various political activities and protests against the British colonial establishment. From 1972, a group of the Seventies core activists went abroad to learn more of the New Left movement in the West. During their stay in the West, many Seventies radicals accepted Trotskyism as their own ideological source of identity. After they returned to Hong Kong in 1973, these activists, such as Wu Zhongxian, split off from the original “Seventies”, and formed two new small Trotskyist groups—*Revolutionary Internationalist League* (RIL) and *International Young Socialist Alliance* (IYSA)—respectively.

Revolutionary Marxist League (RML): In mid-1974, the RIL and a few IYSA members fused together and established a new Trotskyist youth group called the *Socialist League* at the beginning, which later changed its name to the Revolutionary Marxist League. From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, this group organised a variety of socio-political activities, such as the “anti-four” movement and solidarity campaigns with the Chinese Democracy movement, in order to express their political positions against British colonialism and the current Chinese Communist regime. In Hong Kong media, it was widely recognised as the *Combat Bulletin* group as it published the Trotskyist

tabloid/journal *Combat Bulletin*. In September 1978, the RML unified with a small number of the members of the IWP and the RCP from the first generation of the Chinese Trotskyists as well as with other two Trotskyist youth groups, i.e. the *Re-awaken* group formed in Britain and the *Young Socialist Group*. This new unified group remained named the RML. It had its own youth organisation called the Young Socialist Group (before the unification, its youth league was called Progressive Students). In the 1970s, the RML perhaps had no more than 100 members. In December 1980, this party split, and its political activities finally died down in the late 1980s.

Young Socialist Group (YSG): The YSG was a Trotskyist youth group of around 20 members in Hong Kong in the 1970s. At the beginning, this group was affiliated to the RCP as its 'mass' youth organisation. In September 1978, the YSG split from the RCP and combined with the RML's youth group, the Progressive Students. After the organisational unification, the YSG became the youth league of the RML. In December 1980, 7 YSG members were expelled from the group (and one resigned). The expelled young Trotskyists and others established a small political group called the *Pioneer Group* in early 1982, which was active in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s.

Figures:

Peng Shuzhi (1895-1983): a former CCP leader and a key Trotskyist figure in the history of Chinese Trotskyism. He was expelled from the CCP together with the party founder Chen Duxiu in 1929 as they had shifted their political position to Trotskyism. In 1931, he also attended the Trotskyist unification congress. In the party disputes during the Sino-Japanese War, he rejected

Wang Fanxi, Zheng Chaolin and others' 'minority' views. In 1942, he organised the majority factions, and in 1948, founded the RCP together with his comrades. Before the CCP seized national power, along with other RCP leaders, Peng decided to move the RCP central committee to Hong Kong. In the early 1950s, Peng with his family fled from Hong Kong and finally arrived in Paris. During his exile in France, he became a key figure in the Trotskyist *Fourth International* (FI). In the 1950s, Peng played an important role in opposing Michel Pablo's FI leadership,¹⁰⁵ and after the 1953 FI split (this split divided the FI into two main tendencies, the *International Committee of the Fourth International* [ICFI] and the *International Secretariat of the Fourth International* [ISFI]), he joined the ICFI. But when a large majority of international Trotskyist groups from the ICFI and the ISFI re-unified and formed a new Trotskyist international body called *the United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI) in 1963, he joined the USFI. In the later FI debates, he sided with the international minority faction. In the 1970s, he also exerted his influence on a group of Hong Kong young leftists, such as the Seventies members, who studied in Europe. At that time, he remained recognised as the key leader of the RCP by the surviving RCP Trotskyists in Hong Kong. In 1973, he moved to Los Angeles and died there in 1983.

Aliases: Xi Zhao; Ou Bo, and many others.

Zheng Chaolin (1901-1998): a former senior cadre of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He became a Trotskyist in 1929. After the 1942

¹⁰⁵ Michel Pablo (1911-1996): A Trotskyist of Greek origin. In the early 1950s, he was a key member of the FI leadership. He was a controversial figure in the 1953 FI split. After that split, he continued to serve as a leading member of the ISFI. In 1963, a large majority of the international Trotskyist groups affiliated to the ISFI and the ICFI formed a reunified Fourth International, i.e. the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI). But Pablo opposed this new unification. Later he and his supporter broke with the USFI.

Trotskyist split, he led the minority faction. During the Nationalist period, he was kept in prison for 7 years under the Guomindang (GMD). In 1952, he was arrested by the Communist police and stayed for 27 years in gaol, but he never gave up his Trotskyist beliefs. He was released in June 1979 in Shanghai. Aliases: Yi Yin; Ze Lian, and many others.

Luo Guohua (1906-1995): A former member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He became a Trotskyist in 1928. In the 1942 Chinese Trotskyist split, he sided with Wang Fanxi and Zheng Chaolin and became a member of the minority faction (later the IWP). He was “one of the few survivors of the first generation of Chinese Trotskyists”.¹⁰⁶ In Hong Kong, he ran some publishing ventures and thus published a range of Trotskyist literature in Chinese. In the early 1970s, he sought to disseminate Trotskyism among the New Left-leaning young radicals in Hong Kong. In the mid-1970s, he sided with his old close comrade Wang Fanxi to call for an organisational unification of the Chinese Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong. Aliases: Zi Chun; Yi Ding, and many others.

Wang Fanxi (1907-2002): a former Chinese Communist Party member and a life-long Trotskyist. He became a Trotskyist during his studies in Moscow in 1928. In 1931, as a delegate, he attended the Trotskyist unification congress in Shanghai and was elected to become a member of the central committee. He was arrested and imprisoned by the GMD twice in 1931 and in 1937. During the Sino- Japanese War period, in the Trotskyist internal disputes on organisational issues, the nature of the resistance war and movement strategies, Wang sided with Zheng Chaolin and others to oppose Peng

¹⁰⁶ Benton, 1996, p. 220.

Shuzhi and his supporters' standpoints. As a result, in 1942, the Trotskyist CCL spilt into two small groups, the majority and minority factions. Wang was a leader of the minority group. In 1949, he and his comrades from the minority faction established the IWP. In the same year, he was sent to Hong Kong to continue Trotskyist activity, but was arrested and deported by the British colonial authority. In late 1949, he went to live in Macao, and in 1975, he moved to Leeds, UK. In the early 1970s, he put a great effort to exert his personal influence on a small number of Hong Kong left-leaning radicals and persuaded them to learn from Trotskyism. During his exile both in Macao and in Britain, he kept touch with the international Trotskyists as well as with the later younger generation of the Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong. In the debates of the Fourth International in the 1970s, he was sympathetic to the international majority faction's stance. He died in Leeds in 2002, having never returned to Communist China. Aliases: Wang Wenyuan; Lian Gen; Shuang Shan, and many others.¹⁰⁷

Xiang Qing (1922-): a veteran Trotskyist. He became a Trotskyist in 1947. In the 1950s, he was one of leading figures in the RCP in Hong Kong. In 1955, he was deported by the British authority and then settled in Macao. In the early 1970s, together with Wang Fanxi, he was also involved in the discussions with the young Hong Kong radicals about the theory and history of Trotskyism. Later, he was in favour of an organisational unification between the RCP and the RML. In 1978, he quit the RCP and joined the unified RML.

¹⁰⁷ Please also refer to Peng Shuzhi, Zheng Chaolin, Lou Guohua, Wang Fanxi and some other Chinese Trotskyists' brief biographies in Benton, 1996, pp. 214-226.

In the 1980 RML split, he sided with Ou Longyu and resigned from the RML.

In 1982, he became a member of the Pioneer Group. Alias: Su Da.

Wu Zhongxian (1946-1994): a social movement activist, a Trotskyist organiser, and a leader of the RML. In 1969, as a student movement activist, he was involved in the Chu Hai College sit-in protest. In 1970, together with other young New Left-leaning radicals, he founded the Seventies group. In the early 1970s, he went to Europe to study. During his stay in Europe, he became a Trotskyist. In 1973, he split from the “Seventies” group and organised a Trotskyist youth group, the RIL, which later became the well-known RML. From 1973 to 1981, as a Trotskyist, he organised and participated in various kinds of socio-political movement. In March 1981, he was arrested by the Chinese secret police when he went to mainland China to visit pro-democracy dissidents. While in custody, he decided to make a “confession” to the public security officials. In April, he was allowed to go back to Hong Kong, and he told the story of his “deceitful surrender” to his RML comrades, which triggered an internal discussion regarding “revolutionary loyalty” amongst the Hong Kong and international Trotskyists. Though he resigned from the RML in August 1981, following the USFI’s statement that condemned his “surrender” as representing “a real political capitulation (to the Communists)”, the RML officially expelled him in November 1981. He died in Hong Kong in 1994. Aliases: Hu Congshan, Mao Lanyou.

Liu Shanqing (1951-): a RML activist. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was a liaison between the RML in Hong Kong and the Chinese Democracy Movement activists in mainland China. In late 1981, during his visit of the families in Guangzhou of pro-democracy activists who had been arrested

earlier, he was detained by the Communist secret police. In 1983, Liu was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. He was released from prison in December 1991. Nowadays, Liu is still active in Hong Kong politics.

Ou Longyu (1956-): a YSG leading figure. He began to contact local Trotskyists in 1975 and joined the YSG in 1976. In 1978, along with the other YSG activists, he joined the RML. He was one of the important debaters in the YSG-RML dispute in 1980. In late September 1980, he and his close comrade Yu Chunli (alias: Bu Xue) ended their membership of the RML (and he was also expelled from the YSG in December); in 1982, he and other expelled YSG Trotskyists established the Pioneer Group. Alias: Yue Zhi.

Li Huaiming (? – still alive): a former Seventies radical, a RML leader. In the early 1970s, during his studies in Canada, his ideological position had shifted to Trotskyism. In 1973, he quit from the Seventies and founded the IYSA. At the same time, he was also a member of the RCP and organised YSG activity. In 1978, he led the YSG to break with the RCP and joined the RML. Later, he became a member of the RML standing committee. In 1980, Li played a key role in the organisational dispute between the YSG and the RML. In that internal conflict, he accused Ou Longyu, a YSG leader, of operating “clique activities”. Alias: Ye Ning.

Plan of chapters

This thesis is organised as follows. Firstly, to gain a better understanding of how people depict Chinese Trotskyism, a prologue looks into previous

literature on Chinese Trotskyism and sees how this history is interpreted from various Chinese and Western perspectives. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 offer the socio-political background of colonial Hong Kong prior to the 1970s up to the emergence of new Hong Kong Trotskyist activities. The following five chapters are the main body of this thesis, explicitly responding to the thesis' research questions mentioned above. Chapter 3 discusses the origins of the new formation of Trotskyists in the 70's Hong Kong. Chapter 4 explores the Trotskyist "vanguard" role in local protest actions, such as the "anti-four" campaign, and other forms of socio-political movement, while it also presents the public responses and the colonial government's reactions to the rise of the Trotskyist activities. Chapter 5 mainly discovers the ideological-political confrontation between the newer generation of Trotskyists and the pro-PRC establishment in Hong Kong. And Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 elaborate the international connection between Chinese Trotskyists in the "diaspora" and the internal struggle within the circle of Hong Kong Trotskyists where the reader can acquire an understanding of the downfall of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the early 1980s.

In the end, to address the democratic values in Chinese Trotskyism, an epilogue draws attention to the Trotskyists' view on "incomplete" democracy in today's China.

Prologue: Different Perspectives on Chinese Trotskyism

In order to deepen our understanding of how people depict Chinese Trotskyism, before going on to the main body of this thesis, we should look through previous studies completed by Chinese and Western historians. Since the late 1970s, there has been a small range of scholarship and other literature on the history of Chinese Trotskyism, but different people interpret this history in different ways, guided by authors' sympathies and biases. Thus, this chapter presents the research on Chinese Trotskyism from its various perspectives.

Chinese perspectives on the history of Trotskyism in China

The Chinese Trotskyist movement has remarkably been absent in historical accounts of the Chinese revolution for more than half a century. From the 1930s to the very end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Chinese Trotskyists were defined as dangerous political "enemies" in the official historiography of Chinese Communism. For example, in Mao Zedong's famous essay, *On Protracted War*, written in 1938 during the Sino-Japanese War period, Mao depicts "Trotskyites" and "national traitors" as equivalent terms, which is a

common idea amongst Chinese Communists who have treated Chinese Trotskyists as “traitors”.¹⁰⁸

When China ended the tumultuous Mao era and entered a new era of reform, the political climate became more liberal. From the very late 1970s to 1989, the period between the end of the Cultural Revolution and the Crackdown on Tian’anmen Protest in 1989, Chinese intellectuals started to enjoy limited freedoms of speech and thought. During this period, many intellectuals were allowed to be more creative and productive in their output in their professional fields, while they began to show interest in investigating the unknown past, expressing diverse opinions towards the past, the present and the future of China.¹⁰⁹ In the middle of 1979, the last group of imprisoned Chinese Trotskyists was freed by the Communist state.¹¹⁰ From that moment, at the same time as ending their long-term political ordeals and re-embracing their personal freedoms, the Chinese Trotskyists immediately devoted themselves towards a new “battle”, i.e. reflecting on and reappraising their political life as Trotskyists, re-examining the past of Chinese Trotskyism and observing the current situation of Communist China, and demanding rehabilitation from the Communist regime.¹¹¹ Despite the fact that there was no official reply from the

¹⁰⁸ Mao Zedong, *On Protracted War*, 1938, Marxist Internet Archive:

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm

¹⁰⁹ For example, see Perry Link, *Evening Chats in Beijing: Probing China's Predicament* (London: Norton, 1992).

¹¹⁰ A prominent Trotskyist, Zheng Chaolin was one amongst the last group of the freed Trotskyists. According to his recollection, he was released on June 5th, 1979. See Zheng Chaolin, *Shishi yu huiyi* (The History and Recollection), Vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 1998), p. 182.

¹¹¹ For example, after his release, Zheng consistently wrote open letters to the CCP to demand a rehabilitation of Chinese Trotskyists, see those letters in *ibid*, pp. 352-355, 538-540.

leadership of the CCP, their efforts attracted a number of Chinese writers¹¹² and historians to pay attention to the unknown stories of Chinese Trotskyism.

Meanwhile, mainland historians were keen to grasp the opportunities to re-interpret Chinese revolutionary history in the 20th Century in their own ways in contrast to the propaganda under Communist rule for more than 30 years.

However, there was little scholarship on the general history of Chinese Trotskyism until the end of the 1980s.

From the end of 1980s onwards, Tang Baolin, a party historiographer of Chen Duxiu, has been undertaking a key role in the historical study of Chinese Trotskyism. In order to integrate a “new” account of Trotskyism into the historiography of the CCP, in 1989, Tang completed a short research paper on the overall history of the Trotskyist movement in China, *A Brief Survey of Trotskyism in China*,¹¹³ which is one of the pioneering works in this specific field of historical research since China’s opening up. In 1994, relying on a

¹¹² In Chinese literature, Wang Ruowang, a renowned leftist dissident within the CCP, wrote a short but very sympathetic piece of reportage about “a story of a Trotskyist” in 1989. In this reportage, based on *Shuang Shan huiyilu*, i.e. the Memoirs of Wang Fanxi, a notable Chinese Trotskyist in exile, Wang sympathetically portrays a semi-fictionalised Trotskyist figure, Qiao Keren, and describes his imprisoned life; Wang partially reflects a repressive political atmosphere under Chinese Communism during the Mao era. A year later, a Chinese novelist Zhou Meisen finished his novelette *Zhong'e* [“Heavy Yoke” in English], based on another prominent Trotskyist, Zheng Chaolin, describing a positive Trotskyist character, Ji Boshun, who had a strong political faith in the Trotskyist version of Communism in his lifetime and never changed in this. In these “new” images of Chinese Trotskyists, it seems that a small number of contemporary Chinese writers begin to show their open-minded attitudes towards the past of Chinese Trotskyism and present a positive picture of Chinese Trotskyists to their readers in literature. See: Gregor Benton, *China’s Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 123. Wang Ruowang, *Yige “tuopai fenzi” de gushi* (A Story of a “Trotskyist”), 1989, online version: <http://beijingspring.com/wang/8-47.htm>. Zhou Meisen, *Zhong'e* (Heavy Yoke), (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2011). The English name of this book is translated by Benton, see: Gregor Benton, 1996, note 419, p. 249.

¹¹³ See Tang Baolin, “Jianlun Zhongguo tuopai” (A Brief Survey of Trotskyism in China), *CPC History Studies*, Vol. 1 (1989): http://jds.cass.cn/ztyj/gms/201605/t20160506_3324772.shtml. From the 1980s on, Tang has published several research essays on Chen Duxiu and Trotskyists in China.

vast variety of his previously collected first-hand materials, he enriched his former research and brought out a new 400-page monograph on the historical development of Chinese Trotskyism, *The History of Chinese Trotskyism*, published in Taiwan.¹¹⁴ We can say that Tang's research contribution to the history of Chinese Trotskyism is the academic work that led to open discussion on this subject in mainland China.

However, Tang's research on Chinese Trotskyism does not go beyond an "orthodox revolutionary narrative", which is a storytelling system constructed by the CCP for the purpose of meeting the Party's particular politico-ideological needs. In order to defend the CCP's "revolutionary correctness" during the Chinese revolution as a "victor", this narrative would not draw a complex picture of the whole political progress of the revolution, but it would present a political classification which defines the CCP as a historical "winner" on its "correct" way to the seizure of national power compared with "losers" who were "doomed" to fail in the revolutionary process; there are those on the "revolutionary" side and those who were allied with the "counterrevolutionary" forces.

In Tang's 1989 paper, he delivers such an "orthodox" point of view. At the very beginning of his research, he argued that as a "dogmatist" group, the Chinese Trotskyist organisation, which advanced a contradictory policy in its political practice, i.e. a strategical "ultra-leftism" and a tactical "extreme-rightism", was "doomed" to fail in the Chinese revolution.¹¹⁵ Tang notably quotes extensively from several political articles written by a leading Chinese

¹¹⁴ See: Tang Baolin, *Zhongguo tuopai shi* (The History of Chinese Trotskyism) (Taipei: Dongda Books, 1994).

¹¹⁵ See Tang Baolin, "Jianlun Zhongguo tuopai".

Trotskyist, Zheng Chaolin, which not only reflect a fierce internal dispute amongst the Chinese Trotskyists regarding the political nature of the Sino-Japanese War during wartime, but also reveal that a handful of Trotskyists did not believe that the Chinese resistance against Japan's invasion was "progressive" any longer after the United States as an "imperialist" state got involved in the Second World War, as they considered that the Sino-Japanese War had become an integral part of a world "imperialist" war, and that China had become subordinated to a wing of the imperialist camp since the American "intervention".¹¹⁶ As a result, Tang asserts that the Chinese Trotskyist group during the Sino-Japanese War as a whole had played a role in sabotaging the "anti-Japanese national united front" between the Communists and the Nationalists and in sabotaging the anti-Japanese activities.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, by making use of a small range of first-hand but controversial documents written by a handful of Trotskyist individuals after the CCP overthrew the GMD's rule on the mainland, such as *a Summary of Problems in the Civil War*, published in *Rebels*, a regional Trotskyist pamphlet from Wenzhou, in which the Trotskyist author alleged that the character of the civil war between the CCP and the GMD was "reactionary",¹¹⁸ Tang decides that after the CCP was in power, Chinese Trotskyists became an "anti-Communist, anti-revolutionary" group, and the "contradiction" between the

¹¹⁶ For example, see Zheng Chaolin's point of view in Zheng Chaolin, *Zai gemingde shibaizhuyi daqi zhixia!* (Under the Banner of Revolutionary Defeatism!), 1941, MIA: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/zhengchaolin/marxist.org-chinese-zhengchaolin-194102.htm>

¹¹⁷ Tang Baolin, "Jianlun Zhongguo tuopai" (A Brief Survey of Trotskyism in China).

¹¹⁸ "Neizhan wenti de zongjie" (A Summary of Problems in the Civil War), in *Pannizhe* (Rebels) [quoted in Tang Baolin, "Jianlun Zhongguo tuopai"].

Trotskyists and the Communists, at that point, had been transformed into a “contradiction between ourselves (the CCP) and the enemy (Trotskyists)”.¹¹⁹ Overall, Tang, from an “orthodox Chinese Communist” point of historical view, comes to a conclusion in which the organisation of Chinese Trotskyism is categorised as a small “ultra-left” faction before the Chinese Communists’ seizure of power, which turned into an “anti-revolutionary bloc” after the establishment of the PRC.¹²⁰ In Tang’s *Brief Survey*, we can hardly find an academic way of writing, but the discourse of “revolutionary correctness” with a strong anti-Trotskyist bias that portrays the Chinese Trotskyists as “counterrevolutionaries”.

When it comes to Tang’s 1994 book, *The History of Chinese Trotskyism*, the language Tang adopts consistently reveals his “hatred” of Trotskyism. When opening the contents page, from each title of the book’s chapters, such as “A bizarre baby conceived amid wind and storm”, “Chen Duxiu went astray by error”, and “Striking wrong chords during the War against Japan”, etc.,¹²¹ readers will sense Tang’s strong bias against the Chinese Trotskyist movement. Reading the main chapters of his book, we can perceive that Tang merely depicts the Trotskyist group in China as an “unrealistic” and “dogmatic” faction in the politico-ideological field. Following the main argument presented in his 1989 research paper, Tang still regards the small group of Chinese Trotskyists whose political position was in opposition to the CCP’s revolutionary strategy as “doomed” to turn into “counterrevolutionaries” while the Communists who were on the “right” way of the Chinese revolution

¹¹⁹ Tang Baolin, *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Those chapters’ names in English are translated by Benton, see Benton, 1996, p. 4.

overthrew the corrupt Nationalist regime in China.¹²² From what he has presented in the book, it seems that his research outcome is merely to justify the tremendous Communist victory in mainland China by denigrating a political “loser”. Portraying the negative “counterrevolutionary” image of Chinese Trotskyism is a consistent train of thought in his research, though Tang adopts a large range of primary sources for his study.¹²³

¹²² Tang Baolin, *Zhongguo tuopai shi* (The History of Chinese Trotskyism), p. 127.

¹²³ In Tang’s narrative, there are plenty of negative representations of the history of Chinese Trotskyism prior to 1952, which can be largely reflected in his three main arguments: 1. Despite the fact that in this book, Tang concentrates on recasting the founder of the CCP, and a prominent Trotskyist leader, Chen Duxiu as an outstanding revolutionary figure in the Chinese revolution, and although Tang intends to rehabilitate Chen as not being a Japanese “agent” during the Sino-Japanese War, a fabricated accusation imposed by the Moscow-trained Communists, such as Wang Ming and Kang Sheng (Tang Baolin, *ibid*, pp. 271–77), he argues that the role Chinese Trotskyists played in the Sino-Japanese War was as the “*de facto* accomplice” of Japanese invaders because, from Tang’s point of view, the Trotskyist voice was an act of “sabotaging” anti-Japanese activities. Tang argues this by mainly analysing the political manifestoes of Chinese Trotskyists published during wartime, in which the Trotskyists revealed a radical hostility towards the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek’s leadership, and fiercely opposed the political collaboration between the CCP and the GMD during the resistance war against Japan, based on the lesson of the political failure of the previous two-party alliance in the 1920s (*ibid*, pp 222-228). 2. Relying on several police interrogation transcripts regarding the “round-up” of Chinese Trotskyists in 1952 he collected, Tang asserts that during the civil war between the CCP and the GMD, 1946-49, the Trotskyists had chosen to stand with the GMD against the Communists. In his description, the Trotskyist organisations, including the pro-Peng Shuzhi’s *majority* faction, the main Trotskyist group since the 1942 organisational disintegration, and a small *Minority* group led by Zheng Chaolin and Wang Fanxi, frequently kept in contact with some particular GMD senior officials, which implies that the Trotskyists in China engaged in an anti-Chinese Communist political network. For instance, he uses the testimony of a youthful member of the *Minority* group, Ye Chunhua’s interrogation transcript, to argue that Trotskyist activities during the civil war period were not suppressed by the GMD, but instead were sheltered by the Trotskyist “apostates” who worked for Chiang Ching-kuo, the eldest son of Chiang Kai-shek, while several Trotskyist youngsters joined the GMD and received money from the GMD’s military organisations as they engaged in building the Trotskyist organisation (*ibid*, pp 319-321). Moreover, according to Ye, Sun Ke, the President of the Executive Department at the Nationalist government from late 1948 to early 1949, once praised the Trotskyist journals published by the majority faction as of good quality (*ibid*, pp 298). Such uncorroborated testimony from Ye’s interrogation is taken as key evidence by Tang in support of his argument that Chinese Trotskyists had “closely” associated with the GMD during the civil war. 3. Following his main argument in the 1989 article, Tang, from an “orthodox Communist” perspective, negatively portrays the Chinese Trotskyists as having organised underground “counterrevolutionary” activities against Chinese Communism since the establishment of the PRC. To support this argument, he attempts to make use of harsh “anti-Communist” criticisms published in Trotskyist underground mimeographs. However, apart from the fact that a handful of Trotskyists remaining on the mainland, from an ultra-leftist view, categorised the nature of the Communist regime as “state capitalism”, and literally criticised the CCP’s involvement in the Korean War and other political campaigns launched by

After publication, Tang's book soon became controversial and caused an uproar amongst veteran Chinese Trotskyists, as well as among the Chinese and foreign scholars who were also interested in this research issue. To most researchers who are familiar with the topic of Chinese Trotskyist history, Tang's narrative, to a great extent, is negative and guided by his bias. After reading Tang's monograph, they profoundly doubt his narrative and the credibility of the testimonies he utilised, coming from a range of uncorroborated materials, such as the interrogation reports of imprisoned Trotskyists. For example, Gregor Benton, a British historian, whose focus is also on Chinese Trotskyism in history, harshly criticises Tang's research:

“[I]t peddles the same mixture of misunderstandings, crude misrepresentations, and mindless copying of familiar Stalinist and Maoist smears, alongside a substantial but erratic complement of truthful investigation and fair reporting that lends spurious credence to the residual lies. It is beset by mutually contradictory assertions and resorts habitually to a double standard, one—harsh and cynical—for the Trotskyists, who can do little right, and another—fawning and indulgent—for the official party [the CCP], which can do nothing wrong.”¹²⁴

And for a handful of veteran Chinese Trotskyists and a small group of scholars, it is difficult to accept Tang's historical narrative from an “orthodox”

the Communists in the early 1950s, we can hardly see “anti-Communist” subversive moves from the Trotskyists in his book (*ibid*, pp 334-339).

¹²⁴ See Benton, 1996, p. 4.

Communist point of view. Hence, a number of Trotskyists and researchers raise their criticisms of his book.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Usually, such individuals refute Tang's negative representations of the history of Chinese Trotskyism in three aspects. Firstly, despite the fact that Chinese Trotskyists theoretically did not agree with the second united front between the CCP and the GMD during the Sino-Japanese War, from some researchers' perspective, this does not demonstrate that the Trotskyists either played the role of "accomplice of Japanese invaders" or that they were not keen to engage in the resistance activities against the Japanese aggression during wartime. On the contrary, historians like Gregor Benton attempt to indicate that the Trotskyists put great effort into the anti-Japanese resistance, in spite of their military failures. Benton finds a small range of evidence either from Trotskyist memoirs or from archives to demonstrate that a few courageous Trotskyists who cut off connections with the Shanghai central organisation launched guerrilla warfare in Shandong and Guangdong, but those activities were later eliminated by the CCP or the Japanese armies respectively [Benton, 1996, p. 83 and Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 27. Tang also mentions the military resistance against Japanese troops organised by the Trotskyists, but from a negative point of view. Tang Baolin, 1994, p. 256]. Moreover, some recent research shows that other Trotskyists, such as Trotskyists in Wenzhou, also made a contribution to the anti-Japanese publicity campaigns by making local people aware of the significance of the resistance activities against the Japanese aggression and inspiring them to strengthen the fighting will and to engage in the resistance [For example, see Xu Wuzhi, *Yanmo de gemingzhe: Wenzhou tuopai de xingqu yu fomie, 1933-1952* (The Rise and Fall of Wenzhou Trotskyists) (MA Dissertation, East China Normal University, 2014), pp. 25–42]. Secondly, a few researchers demonstrate that there was no strong link between the Trotskyists and the GMD side. For example, in his book, Tang accuses Chen Qichang, a Trotskyist leader in Shanghai who was executed by the Japanese, of assisting the GMD's intelligence agency in collecting information. In Tang's understanding, Chen was executed not because he participated in the anti-Japanese resistance activities but because he was an information provider to the GMD [Tang Baolin, 1994, pp. 257–58]. However, according to a Japanese scholar, Yuzo Nagahori, Chen Qichang as a loyal Trotskyist had no connection with the GMD's intelligence apparatus [Yuzo Nagahori, *Lu Xun yu tuoluociji: wenxue yu geming zai Zhongguo* (Lu Xun and Trotsky: Literature and Revolution in China) (Taipei: Renjian Press, 2015), pp. 186–97]. Furthermore, when a junior Chinese scholar Xu Wuzhi probed Trotskyist activities in Wenzhou as a case study, he explored how Chinese Trotskyists during the Sino-Japanese War merely criticised the CCP in literature, whereas their political priority was to overthrow the GMD's rule, and they attempted to put this task into practice [Xu Wuzhi, p. 33]. In addition, Wu Jimin, a senior journalist from Shanghai, discovered that young Trotskyist activists in Shanghai also participated in the anti-GMD student campaigns launched by local Communists, some of whom were nearly executed by the GMD agents [Wu Jinmin, "Purgatory: the Chinese Trotskyists' Ordeal and Struggle", in Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 145–46. Wu's work is originally in Chinese, see Wu Jimin, *Lianyu: Zhongguo tuopai de kunan yu fendou* (Purgatory: The Chinese Trotskyists' Ordeal and Struggle) (Singapore: Bafang wenhua chuanguozhishi, 2008)]. And regarding the credibility of Ye Chunhua's testimonies that Tang frequently uses to support his arguments, in an oral interview with Ye, he denies that his "confession material" for the police's interrogation is credible, because his "confession" is largely based upon rumours and anecdotes, which have nothing to do with historical research [Ye Chunhua Interview, July 2nd, 2014, Shanghai]. Thirdly, a number of Trotskyist survivors in mainland China vehemently criticised these charges against Trotskyists in Tang's book, such as the view that they were a group of anti-Chinese Communism's "counterrevolutionaries", as "false propositions". According to a few Trotskyist veterans' recollections, they once expressed their political support [at least critical support] for the new

Nevertheless, in spite of criticisms from Trotskyist survivors and academics, Tang's book is still worth reading for readers who are interested in the "forgotten" history of Trotskyism in China. Firstly, his research provides us with a considerable number of primary sources that readers can take advantage of for a background study or for further research on Chinese Trotskyism.

Tang's controversial research raised interest in the subject of Trotskyism. Subsequently, a small number of Chinese researchers, writers, and Trotskyists themselves begin to look into the history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. We thus find more research on Trotskyism in China from various perspectives and with new approaches.

For the purpose of refuting Tang's negative representations of Chinese Trotskyism and re-writing Trotskyist history from a Trotskyist perspective, Liu Pingmei, a Trotskyist veteran, brought out a new book, *The Party History of*

Communist China before and after the PRC's establishment. For example, after reexamining internal materials, a veteran Trotskyist, Liu Pingmei discovers that before the eve of the Communist victory over the GMD in 1949, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), i.e. the former *Majority* group, founded by Peng Shuzhi and his comrades, decided to critically support the CCP in the civil war, while the RCP also decided to cease its political activities and member recruitment on the mainland [See Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), Chapter 11, 2005, MIA: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/liupingmei/2005book/marxist.org-chinese-LauPingMUI-2005book-11.htm>]. On an individual level, we can find some memoirs written by Trotskyist survivors that recall that when they remained in the newly-established Communist regime, they began to devote themselves to the building-up of this new nation [For example, see Hu Luoqing, *Shiren Xie Shan he tade tuopai pengyoumen* (Poet Xie Shan and his Trotskyist Friends), (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2009), p 39; and Huang Gongyan, *Wamingzhai wenji* (The Writings of Huang Gongyan), no date, unpublished, pp 1-6, collected from the author in 2015]. Indeed, from what some researchers have found in local archives, they confirm that after the CCP's seizure of power, a small group of youthful Trotskyists continued underground activities in some cities like Wenzhou, such as mimeographing publications, organising reading groups in schools, and accusing new Communist rulers of "betraying the working class" from an ultra-left view, etc., but they do not attempt to count the Trotskyists as "counterrevolutionaries" [For example, Xu Wuzhi, pp. 57–61]. To be fair, from both Trotskyists' and scholars' perspectives, Chinese Trotskyists during the civil war were "cynical" but innocent.

Chinese Trotskyism, in 2005.¹²⁶ As a victim of the Communist repression and insider of the Chinese Trotskyist movement, there is no handicap for Liu in collecting testimonies of historical witnesses and internal documents from his former comrades. Based on the materials he has obtained, his attempt is to unearth the “justice” of Chinese Trotskyism in historical events Tang may largely “ignore” in his 1994 book. Unlike Tang’s negative representation of Chinese Trotskyists, Liu draws a positive “revolutionist” image of the Trotskyists. However, due to lack of academic training, Liu’s book looks like a compilation of his collected materials, and a large range of quotations and primary sources in his research cannot be exactly located. Overall, Liu’s Trotskyist version of Chinese Trotskyism in history offers readers a more sympathetic and comprehensive account of the progress of the Trotskyist movement in China from the 1920s to the 1980s.

In the last 10 years, an oral history approach has been adopted by Chinese independent researchers for doing historical studies on Trotskyism. In 2008, a Chinese journalist from Shanghai, Wu Jimin, published a short documentary history of Chinese Trotskyism in Singapore, named *Purgatory: The Chinese Trotskyists’ Ordeal and Struggle*, which provides personal accounts of the Chinese Trotskyist movement from the mainland Trotskyist survivors’ oral interviews.¹²⁷ In this documentary history project, Wu records the early development of the Trotskyist movement in China, and he depicts 9 different leading Trotskyist figures by largely employing a variety of oral history data

¹²⁶ Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), 2005, Marxist Internet Archive.

¹²⁷ Wu Jimin, *Lianyu: Zhongguo tuopai de kun’an yu fendou* (Purgatory: The Chinese Trotskyists’ Ordeal and Struggle) (Singapore: Bafang wenhua chuanguoshi, 2008). Please read the English version in Benton, 2015, pp. 43–156.

that he previously collected from veteran Trotskyists. Following an oral history approach, a Chinese independent researcher, Duan Yue, also contributed to an oral history project on the history of Chinese Trotskyist activities. In her research, she attempts to re-portray the political careers of a small group of surviving Chinese Trotskyist individuals as an integral part of Chinese intellectuals' reflections regarding the historical progress of modern Chinese society.¹²⁸

From independent researchers' point of view, both Wu and Duan strongly express their deep sympathies towards the tragedy of the Trotskyist movement in China as well as towards the innocent Trotskyist veterans who witnessed the whole progress of the Chinese Communist movement from the 1930s. In Wu's *Purgatory* as well as in Duan's oral history with Wang Guolong and Xiong Andong, readers cannot see a "counterrevolutionary" image of Chinese Trotskyists, but see a lively picture of a small group of "revolutionist" figures who once entirely devoted themselves to the Chinese revolution, but through a particular "revolutionary" practice, which is to say, Trotskyism. In general, their oral history projects on Chinese Trotskyist figures enrich the studies of Chinese Trotskyism, and they are valuable for further academic use.

In recent years, pundits and researchers on the mainland in the field of revolutionary history in 20th century China can explore a range of "sensitive" research themes, such as the Chinese Trotskyist activities prior to 1952, while some of them are willing to fit those themes into popular research directions,

¹²⁸ Duan Yue, *Wang Guolong koushu shengmingshi* (The Oral Narrative of Wang Guolong, A Bio-history), 2010, unpublished; Duan Yue, *Caifang shouji* (The Interview Notes on Xiong Andong's Life), 2012, unpublished.

such as local history. In 2014, Xu Wuzhi brought out an uncommon but sympathetic thesis on local Trotskyist activities in Wenzhou—*The Rise and Fall of Wenzhou Trotskyists (1933-1952)*. In this thesis, Xu turns his central focus on the Trotskyist movement on a local level by adopting a research orientation focused on *local history*. In order to re-investigate Tang’s previous representations of the Wenzhou Trotskyist movement, Xu aims to uncover the traces of Trotskyist activities in Wenzhou from local archives. From his re-investigation, he implies that Chinese Trotskyists were neither “national traitors” nor “counterrevolutionaries” in revolutionary history. Despite the fact that, in the eyes of Chinese Communists, the political measures and strategies of Chinese Trotskyists were aimed at “anti-Communism” in the era of the revolution, he concludes that the Trotskyists were rather a small group of “dissidents” disseminating Marxism in a particular revolutionary time.¹²⁹

In Taiwan, a small group of researchers have also demonstrated interest in undertaking studies on the ignored history of Chinese Trotskyism in modern China. Kun-Teng Cheng is one among them. In his research thesis, *A Desolate Path Taken by the Chinese Trotskyists: Their Interpretations and Practices of the Permanent Revolution*, Cheng’s aim is to reexamine Trotskyism in China as a particular strand of political thought. In order to analyse the theory and practice of Chinese Trotskyism, starting from looking into the core theory of Trotskyism, that is, permanent revolution, he profoundly explores the Trotskyist movement at an intellectual level, his study ranging from the theoretical origin of the Trotskyist movement in China,

¹²⁹ : Xu Wuzhi, *Yanmo de gemingzhe: Wenzhou tuopai de xingqu yu fumie, 1933-1952* (The Rise and Fall of Wenzhou Trotskyists) (MA Dissertation, East China Normal University, 2014), pp. 74-75.

Trotskyist involvement in the intellectual debate regarding the nature of Chinese society in the 1930s, the internal disputes between different Trotskyist factions, to the Trotskyists' theoretical contribution to understanding the Chinese Communist movement and its socio-political evolution in contemporary China.

In his main arguments, Cheng, on one hand, considers that the failure of Chinese Trotskyism “was not because of their radical application of the permanent revolution, but because they had transplanted to China the model of Russian urban revolution without necessary modification”¹³⁰. On the other, by adopting Arif Dirlik’s argument regarding the origins of Chinese Communism,¹³¹ he argues that the emergence of the Chinese Trotskyist movement may reflect a “reversion to origins”, i.e. adopting an approach of urban proletarian revolution,¹³² an argument compatible with Gregor Benton’s.¹³³ Following this argument, he reaffirms that a “ghost” of Trotskyism continues to haunt China in regard to the Chinese socio-political transformation under the current CCP’s rule.¹³⁴ To conclude, Cheng’s thesis offers readers an essential source on the theoretical evolution of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in modern Chinese history.

¹³⁰ Kun-Teng Cheng, *Huangmo de geming zhilu: Zhongguo tuopai de buduangeminglun yu geming juezhe, 1925-2952* (A Desolate Path Taken by the Chinese Trotskyists: Their Interpretations and Practices of the Permanent Revolution, 1925-1952) (MA thesis, National Taiwan University, 2008), p. iv.

¹³¹ Please refer to Arif Dirlik, *The Origin of Chinese Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 232.

¹³² Kun-Teng Cheng, pp. 61-72. The phrase of “reversion to origins” is initially used by Al Richardson in his review of Dirlik’s in *Revolutionary History*, vol. 2 no.4, 1990, pp. 48-49 [cited in Gregor Benton, 1996, note 42, p. 230].

¹³³ Benton, 1996, pp. 113-114.

¹³⁴ Kun-Teng Cheng, pp. 144-147.

Above all, we have examined the very recent studies on Chinese Trotskyism in mainland China and Taiwan. Despite no rehabilitation of Chinese Trotskyism by Chinese Communists, as an integral part of radical Left history in China, this history deserves to be re-investigated and re-written by Chinese researchers.

Western views on Chinese Trotskyism

Compared to the strict ideological control of academia in China, Western scholars enjoy more academic freedom. Since the late 1960s, a group of Western historians have recognised the “forgotten” history of Chinese Trotskyism as a radical interpretation of the Chinese Communist movement. The first glimpse of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in the field of historical research originates from historical studies on the founder of the CCP, Chen Duxiu. From the 1960s onwards, Western historians have realised that if they attempt to vividly depict Chen Duxiu as a leading character of the Chinese Communist/radical Left movement, and also hope to fully discuss his intellectual contributions to modern Chinese history, they cannot avoid Chen’s political career in his later years as a leading Trotskyist. Thus, much research on Chen more or less demonstrates Chen’s crucial role in the early stage of the Chinese Trotskyist movement, and argues for the political relationship between Chen and Trotskyism.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Please refer to these Chen Duxiu studies in Yu-ju Chih, *The Political Thought of Ch'en Tu-hsiu* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1965, unpublished). Richard Kagan, *The Chinese Trotskyist Movement and Ch'en Tu-hsiu: Culture, Revolution, and Polity* (PhD dissertation,

Among those Western historians undertaking Chen Duxiu studies, Richard Kagan was the first scholar who revealed a great research interest in the Chinese Trotskyist movement from its birth. In 1977, he brought out a research journal article, "Trotskyism in Shanghai, 1929-1932: The Politics of Iconoclasm". In this article, he initially focused on the Chinese Trotskyist movement on the level of culture, and asserted that Chinese Trotskyists were a group of loyal followers of Western culture who had embraced European revolutionary theories, and that they attempted to use social revolution as a weapon to undermine the old norms of Chinese culture.¹³⁶ Therefore, he points out that the Trotskyist movement in China represented a symbol of "cultural iconoclasm against Chinese tradition" by embracing the Western approach of socialist revolution.¹³⁷

Moreover, in regard to historical research on Chinese Trotskyism in the West, we must mention two leading historians with expertise on this subject, Joseph Miller from the United States and Gregor Benton from Britain. These two eminent sinologists have outstandingly "dominated" contemporary research programmes on Chinese Trotskyism for over 35 years, and they continually make huge impacts on this research theme at present.

In the mid-1970s, Joseph Miller, an American researcher, decided to undertake a PhD study on Chinese Trotskyism. Despite having difficulties in accessing primary Chinese sources from mainland China, Miller employed

University of Pennsylvania, 1969, unpublished). Thomas Kuo, *Ch'en Tu-hsiu (1879-1942) and the Chinese Communist Movement* (New Jersey: Seton Hall University Press, 1975). Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu, Founder of Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). Peter Kuhfus, "Chen Duxiu and Leon Trotsky: New Light on Their Relationship", *The China Quarterly*, No. 102, 1985, pp 253-276.

¹³⁶ Ricard Kagan, 'Trotskyism in Shanghai, 1929-1932: The Politics of Iconoclasm', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 1&2, 1977, p. 106.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 87.

sources he collected from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the West for his research. Furthermore, due to keeping in contact and being friends with Peng Shuzhi, one of the towering figures of the Chinese Trotskyist movement, who was living in exile in the U.S. at that time, Miller was able to access a range of the first-hand materials provided by Peng. By taking advantage of this, in 1979, he completed his PhD thesis, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism*.

According to Miller, within American intellectual circles, the academic framework of social science is preoccupied by research focused on “winners”, whilst writing about a group of “losers” or a defeated movement would be “illogical”, because readers apparently prefer stories from the “victorious” side.¹³⁸ In this thesis, Miller profoundly doubts this point. From his perspective, “Chinese Trotskyists (or even Trotskyists, in general) cannot really be considered as ‘losers’ or ‘defeated’ since they continue to struggle for the establishment of a social system which is based upon their understanding of the Marxist prescription for fundamental social change through world revolution”.¹³⁹ Moreover, he finds that amongst “socialist states”, “only China has a functioning Trotskyist organisation...within its ‘territory’ (i.e. Hong Kong)”.¹⁴⁰ This particularity was what led to his special interest in doing a study on Chinese Trotskyism.

In his thesis, Miller, at the very beginning, clarifies the theoretical relevance of permanent revolution for modern China’s historical changes. Then, he

¹³⁸ Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism* (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1979), p. 3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

subsequently investigates the origin of Chinese Trotskyism, its theory and practice in mainland China, and its political activities in diaspora. In his main argument, he argues that Chinese Trotskyism has constantly played two primary roles in the history of the Chinese Communist movement. One is the role of “movement conscience”, which is a positive side of the Trotskyist political existence based upon the Trotskyists’ intransigence and persistence in holding to the fundamental principles of Marxism, which is to say, *Class Struggle, Proletarian Internationalism, and World Revolution*; another is that of “universal scapegoat”, which is a label negatively assigned by the CCP.¹⁴¹ Regardless of the latter point, Miller concludes that in a Chinese political context, the role of Chinese Trotskyism as “movement conscience” is “unsullied”.¹⁴²

When lecturing at the University of Melbourne, Miller presented a new research paper on the Chinese Trotskyist movement in the past and present, “Trotskyism in China: its Origins and Contemporary Program”. In this paper, Miller intended to uncover the new political movement of Chinese Trotskyism in Hong Kong in the late 1970s and very early 1980s, and to demonstrate that the Trotskyist pursuit of socialist democracy, internationalism and world revolution, the fundamental principles of Marxism, was consistent.¹⁴³

To conclude, in Miller’s sympathetic description of Chinese Trotskyism in history, he argues that Chinese Trotskyists were not a bunch of anti-Communists, but a group of idealistic and uncompromising “revolutionary”

¹⁴¹ See Miller’s discussion on the two roles of Chinese Trotskyism in *ibid*, pp. 252-279.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p 276.

¹⁴³ See Joseph Miller, ‘Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program’, in the 4th National Conference, the Asian Studies Association of Australia (Melbourne, 1982).

intellectuals committed to China's transformation. Primarily based on Miller's research findings, Robert Alexander in 1991 produced a brief history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in his great volume of *International Trotskyism*.¹⁴⁴

As a close friend of a prominent Chinese Trotskyist outcast, Wang Fanxi, who had been living in Leeds since 1975, and by taking advantage of this, Gregor Benton in Britain acquired a large range of knowledge about Chinese Trotskyism. From the late 1970s onwards, he has been engaged in translating political memoirs of Chinese Trotskyists,¹⁴⁵ and he has decided to make an academic contribution to the "forgotten" history of Chinese Trotskyism in the field of historical research in the West. After long-term preparation for his study and undertaking the collection of a large amount of various primary sources on Chinese Trotskyism, in 1996, he brought out an academic but sympathetic history of Chinese Trotskyism, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1921-1952*.

In this monograph, Benton attempts to draw an overall picture of the Trotskyist movement in China, intending to depict a positive image of Chinese Trotskyists as "China's urban revolutionaries". He, on one hand, carefully explores the roots of the failure of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. As he points out, compared with the highly organised CCP's pragmatic revolutionary strategy regarding the peasant movement and armed struggle, Chinese

¹⁴⁴ Robert J. Alexander, pp. 201–23.

¹⁴⁵ Benton's efforts into the translations of Chinese Trotskyists' memoirs in Wang Fanxi, *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). Zheng Chaolin, *An Oppositionist for Life: Memoirs of the Chinese Revolutionary Zheng Chaolin* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997).

Trotskyists in cities, on the one hand, lacked a feasible movement strategy, stating that “in strategy and tactics, the Trotskyists were...short-sighted and doctrinaire”.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, they lacked material and human resources, such as the financial and military support needed to “wage armed struggle” in the course of the Chinese Communist movement.¹⁴⁷ In addition, he emphasises that the main reason for the failure of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in the Chinese “revolutionary” period is that “whatever strategy they pursued”, Chinese Trotskyists had to contend with two enemies, the GMD and the highly organised Communist Party in China. As Benton states, it is “probably impossible to find the same pattern anywhere else in the world save Vietnam”.¹⁴⁸ In short, we can find in Benton's research that despite the Trotskyists wanting to recover the “struggle of the urban proletariat” in Chinese cities from an “orthodox” Marxist perspective, they were unable to achieve their political aims in reality.

However, Benton, on the other hand, never underestimates the ideals and practical values of Chinese Trotskyism in Chinese modern history as well as in contemporary Chinese politics. In his book, he was to unearth the valuable part of Chinese Trotskyism, and thus, he links the Chinese Trotskyists’ legacy with a pursuit of democracy for Chinese society:

“The Trotskyists’ legacy for China is that they upheld the standard of urban revolution and socialist democracy and pointed to a way of releasing Chinese society from the endless chain of repression, risings,

¹⁴⁶ Benton, 1996, p. 110.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 112. Gregor Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 32.

and repression. Because of their democratic critique of Chinese society and Stalinist politics, they have become metaphors incarnate for a host of unresolved problems in Chinese Politics.”¹⁴⁹

Benton’s work brings readers a comprehensive account of the Chinese Trotskyists’ positions on urban revolution, democracy, art and literature etc. When reading his book, we can strongly perceive that Benton’s attitude as a historian of the history of Chinese Trotskyism is profoundly sympathetic, because he attempts to academically “rehabilitate” the innocent Trotskyists in Chinese modern history from a Western historian’s point of view as well as from his pro-Wang Fanxi position. In this sense, his way of writing is both rational and emotional.¹⁵⁰

Above all, we can see that most academic research on Chinese Trotskyism in the West wants to reappraise the Chinese Trotskyist movement from a more sympathetic point of view. Additionally, because a range of Russian archives became open to historical researchers after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, a small number of Russian-speaking historians can have an access to primary sources on the origin of Chinese Trotskyism in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s. After looking through those new materials, in 2000, a Russian historian, Alexander Pantsov, brought out a study on the political partnership

¹⁴⁹ Benton, 1996, p. 118.

¹⁵⁰ However, there is a problem presented in Benton’s book and in his other research papers on Chinese Trotskyism: in some part of his research, he reveals a “bias” against a leading Chinese Trotskyist, Peng Shuzhi. From what he has found, he argues that Peng displayed “opportunism”: “[i]f anyone became a Trotskyist for lack of an alternative, it was Peng Shuzhi”. It seems that the reason of Benton’s “bias” towards Peng might be that as a close friend of Wang Fanxi, Benton partly sides in an old polemic between Wang Fanxi and Peng Shuzhi [For Trotskyist polemics between Wang and Peng, see Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 851-882; 985-1024.]. Hence, he reveals an “anti-Peng” stance in his research. See Benton, 1996, pp. 52–55. Benton, ‘Two Purged Leaders of Early Chinese Communism’, *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 102, 1985, pp. 317-328.

between the Soviet Union and Chinese Communists, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927*, where he explores the very early stage of Chinese Trotskyist activities in the Soviet Union and the political tragedy of the Russia-based Chinese Trotskyists.¹⁵¹ Apart from Pantsov's academic contributions to the early history of Chinese Trotskyism in Russia, very recently, Benton completed a 1200-page sourcebook on Chinese Trotskyism, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo*, which has collected a large range of Chinese Trotskyists' memoirs, political writings, and previous research on the Chinese Trotskyist movement brought out by both Chinese and Western researchers. This sourcebook is highly valuable for further academic study.

Though scholars like Miller also draw attention to the "new growth" in Chinese Trotskyism the 1970s,¹⁵² there is no systematic monograph about the "hidden" history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the 1970s, which leaves an academic space for this thesis to look into the "unknown" historical course of Chinese Trotskyism. Based on newly available archival materials and other primary sources, the Trotskyist role in Hong Kong politics can be explicitly discovered. This will enrich readers' understanding of the overall neglected history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement and its relationship to Trotskyism internationally.

¹⁵¹ See Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

¹⁵² Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism*, pp. 236-251.

Chapter 1: Hong Kong after 1949 as a *Lifeboat* and *Battlefield*, and the Decay of Trotskyist Activities in the 1950s

Before exploring the political existence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong in the 1970s as the main focus of this thesis, the socio-political context of post-war Hong Kong under British colonial administration in the 1950s will be briefly introduced in order to make readers easily understand why Colonial Hong Kong became a uniquely *Chinese* place for the survival of Chinese Trotskyists.

The paradoxical island: Hong Kong as a lifeboat and as a political battlefield during the 1950s

The Chinese Civil War, which lasted from 1946 to 49 between the Communists and Nationalists, devastated many Chinese intellectuals', merchants' and ordinary people's hopes of building up a peaceful and stable China after the defeat of Japan in 1945. The continuous war led to massive chaos in mainland China. By comparison, Hong Kong under British rule was an unusual place, which was neither occupied by the Communist army nor governed by the Nationalist regime. Most Chinese who either pursued social stability or feared the victory of Communism wanted to escape from the chaotic mainland. In staying out of the Civil War, they saw Hong Kong as one of few safe refuges that could offer them a temporary shelter to keep away from the turmoil of war. Consequently, the influx of Chinese refugees and

migrants into Hong Kong resulted in a huge expansion of Hong Kong's population from approximately 600,000 in 1945 to more than 2 million in 1950.¹⁵³

After the short interval at the end of World War II, the superpower competition between the USSR and the United States profoundly changed the post-war political order, and the world consequently began to enter the Cold War, dividing the nations of the world into two major political camps: the Communist camp and the capitalist one--the so-called "free world" camp in Western propaganda, or "imperialist camp" as termed by the former--respectively headed by the USSR and the US. Though the British rulers of Hong Kong predicted that Chinese Communists would sooner or later rule over China,¹⁵⁴ the rapid defeat of the GMD under Chiang Kai-shek, the CCP's siding with the Soviet Union, and the Communist military march to south China put the British government under pressure. In particular, the HMS *Amethyst* Incident on April 20th, 1949, in which a British warship sailing up the Yangtze River was shelled by Communist artillery led to worries on the part of

¹⁵³ Fan Shuh Ching, *The Population of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: The Committee for International Coordination of National Research in Demography, 1974), p. 2. Census and Statistics Department, *Hong Kong Statistics, 1947-67* (Hong Kong, 1969), p. 14.

¹⁵⁴ *Cabinet Office papers*, CAB 129/31, CP (48)299,9, "Recent Developments in the Civil War in China", Dec 1948 [cited in Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p. 154.] According to James Tang, CP (48)299 is "a most important document in the formation of Britain's policy towards revolutionary China", which concluded that the British would not abandon their interest in China and Hong Kong, but would "keep a foot in the door". As the Cabinet paper shows, "our best hope lies in keeping a foot in the door...we should endeavour to stay where we are, to have de facto relations with the Chinese Communists in so far as these are unavoidable, and to investigate the possibilities of continued trade in China." Following this line, Britain diplomatically recognised the Communist PRC in January 1950. See James Tang, *Britain's Encounter with Revolutionary China, 1949-54* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 33.

London.¹⁵⁵ In order to deter potential Communist attack and to strengthen the colony's security, the British garrison in Hong Kong was massively reinforced.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, London had to immediately assess and discuss Hong Kong's future. As the Cabinet papers outlined, Hong Kong's colonial rulers refused to hand Hong Kong over to the Communists unless the new Chinese government were "friendly, democratic, stable and in control of a united China".¹⁵⁷ Thus, under the shadow of the Cold War, Hong Kong remained in the hands of the British. As belonging to the Western bloc, the city of Hong Kong was rhetorically described as a "Berlin of the East", "a fortress of democracy"¹⁵⁸ or "the bastion of freedom", which were widely recognised by the Westerners during the Cold War period.

On the other side, Communist China also played a crucial role in making Hong Kong a "bastion of freedom". A historian John Carroll demonstrates, "Hong Kong's survival depended on working out a good relationship with the

¹⁵⁵ See a detailed analysis on this incident in Malcolm Murfett, *Hostage on the Yangtze: Britain, China and the Amethyst Crisis of 1949* (London: Naval Institute Press, 1991).

¹⁵⁶ By 1950, the British military strength in Hong Kong was increased to 30,000, see the figure in Prasenjit Duara, "Hong Kong and the New Imperialism in East Asia, 1941-1966," in *Twentieth-Century Colonialism and China*, ed. S.G. Goodman and Bryna Goodman (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), p. 207. According to Cabinet papers, a British brigade was sent to Hong Kong to protect British interests. See CAB 128/15, CM 30 (49)4, "China-Despatch of Reinforcements to Hong Kong", Apr 28th, 1949 [cited in Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p. 155.]

¹⁵⁷ *Arthur Creech-Jones Papers*, Box 57, file 1, CP (49)177, August 19th, 1949 [quoted in Steve Tsang, 2003, p. 156.]

¹⁵⁸ Christopher Rand, *Hong Kong: The Island Between* (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 9. However, by depicting a number of complex factors in Hong Kong in the 1950s, Steve Tsang makes a detailed critique that Hong Kong under the British colonial rule, at that moment, did not enjoy democracy, but failed to reform the Hong Kong political system, because London had no interest in pushing through the democratisation in Hong Kong and feared that the democratic Hong Kong would gain the Communist power in the colony. Rather, the British bureaucrats somewhat advocated a "benevolent autocracy" in their governing practice of the colony. Please refer to Steve Tsang, *Democracy Shelved: Great Britain, China and Attempts at Constitutional Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

PRC rather than alienating it”.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, though the colonial administration, acting on behalf of Britain’s interests, certainly worried about a full-scale Communist attack, the victorious Communists adopted a rather pragmatic policy towards the colonial existence of Hong Kong, not attempting to take it back whilst intending to maintain “peaceful coexistence” with the British authorities, which assured the survival of British governance in Hong Kong. But why did the Communists tolerate colonialism in their backyard?

At the time of December 1946, the CCP did not expect to regain Hong Kong from British hands in the short term. Mao Zedong reportedly told a British journalist, Gordon Harmon, that neither he nor the CCP had an interest in talking about the return of Hong Kong, and that as long as the British did not mistreat the Hong Kong Chinese, Mao promised to not allow this issue to become “a bone of contention” between Britain and the Chinese Communists.¹⁶⁰ More importantly, after the establishment of the Communist-PRC, in the eyes of the PRC policy-makers, the implementation of “leaving Hong Kong alone” would be of considerable value to the newly-established Communist regime.

Diplomatically, the PRC’s pragmatism would not provoke the British to overtly implement an anti-Communist policy; moreover, the Communist leaders like Zhou Enlai considered that this policy would create a gap between London

¹⁵⁹ John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 142.

¹⁶⁰ *Foreign Office papers*, FO 371/63318, Boyce (Peking) to Chancery (Nanking), Dec 30th, 1946 [citing from Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, 153.], see also John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, p. 135.

and Washington in their foreign policies on China.¹⁶¹ Economically, on the eve of the Communist victory, Mao Zedong and other founders of the PRC recognised Hong Kong as an important trade port that would help the Communists with overseas connections.¹⁶² Because of this, the PRC wanted to make Hong Kong a place where the Communists would receive significant assistance from various overseas channels to rebuild China's economy, torn up by the war turmoil as it was. In doing so, Hong Kong was successfully made into a vital economic "window" for China. By making use of this "window", the PRC was able to obtain valuable foreign exchange resources¹⁶³ and to import industrial and commercial goods it urgently needed; furthermore, the PRC officials like Premier Zhou Enlai reminded their Hong Kong comrades to utilise the colony to assist the PRC in breaking the embargoes imposed by the Western bloc in the Korean War.¹⁶⁴ Later on, Hong Kong continued to serve as a vital *lifeline* for Communist China's economy. Politically, Hong Kong was used as a central base for operating a wider united front network so as to keep in touch with overseas Chinese communities and to weaken the impact of the Republic of China (ROC) in

¹⁶¹ Xu Jiatur, *Xu Jiatur Xianggang huiyilu* (Xu Jiatur's Hong Kong Memoirs), Vol. 2 (Taipei: Lianjing Press, 1993), pp. 473–74. Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 28.

¹⁶² Jin Chongji, *Mao Zedong zhuan 1893-1949* (The Biography of Mao Zedong, 1893-1949) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2005), p. 948. Also, because of mutual economic needs, despite the Cold War pressures, the trade relations between two countries continued. See the British and Chinese views on the Anglo-Chinese economic relations in the early 1950s in James Tang, *Britain's Encounter with Revolutionary China, 1949-54*, pp. 148–69.

¹⁶³ According to Jao, Hong Kong played a crucial role in financing the PRC's "modernisation", and it contributed nearly one third of the PRC's foreign exchange earnings. See: J.C. Jao, "Hong Kong's Role in Financing China's Modernisation," in *China and Hong Kong: The Economic Nexus*, ed. A.J. Youngson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 58.

¹⁶⁴ Jin Yaoru, *Zhonggong Xianggang zhengce miwen shilu* (A Secret Record of the CCP's Policy in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1998), pp. 4–5. John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, p. 137. Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949-1957*, p. 28.

Taiwan, etc.¹⁶⁵ Above all, owing to Hong Kong's great importance to China, the Communists maintained the status quo of the colony.

The PRC's "non-confrontation" policy towards Hong Kong that did not intentionally aggravate Sino-British relations, therefore, created a good external socio-economic environment for the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. Despite the fact that border controls between the mainland and Hong Kong were tightened around the late 1940s and early 1950s, large numbers of Chinese people who feared Communism or social instability took risks to flee to Hong Kong. As an immediate result, the influx of migrants and refugees brought this British colony a huge expansion of population, as mentioned above, and it also increased the labour force for local industrial development and contributed to subsequent economic growth. For example, according to figures provided by England and Rear, there were only 972 industrial factories in Hong Kong employing 51,338 people in March 1947, whereas in 1951, the figure of factories had risen to 1,788, and in March 1957, the colony had 3,290 industrial undertakings employing 148,135 workers.¹⁶⁶ This figure may demonstrate how the rapid industrialisation of Hong Kong largely benefited from cheap and skilled labour emigrants from the mainland.¹⁶⁷ More importantly, since the social stability of Hong Kong

¹⁶⁵ Cindy Yik-Yi Chu, *Chinese Communists and Hong Kong Capitalists: 1937-1997* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 39, 42–46. Xu Jiatun, *Xu Jiatun Xianggang huiyilu* (Xu Jiatun's Hong Kong Memoirs), Vol. 2, p. 67.

¹⁶⁶ J. England and J. Rear, *Industrial Relations and Law in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 36.

¹⁶⁷ According to Chun Wing Lee, the influx of Chinese refugees from the mainland was not the sole factor that contributed to the industrialisation of Hong Kong, but the United Nation's embargo on mainland China during the Korean War also helped Hong Kong transform from an entrepot trade centre to a manufacturing city, and the fleeing industrialists from the mainland invested in the expansion of Hong Kong manufacturing industry in the 1950s. See

created conditions for the survival of incoming migrants, new sojourners from the mainland saw Hong Kong as a *lifeboat* that provided them with a place to survive where they could temporarily settle down.¹⁶⁸

However, living in this *lifeboat* brought the problem of a refugee mentality for those new residents, something which has been perceived by scholars. As Gordon Mathews and others point out, “living in the lifeboat” reflected “a sense of transience and rootlessness” of Chinese migrants, which meant that they did not recognise Hong Kong as a permanent *home*.¹⁶⁹ However, the refugee mentality of the Chinese, who escaped to Hong Kong feeling psychologically afraid of the political turmoil they experienced in mainland China, sought long-lasting stability in Hong Kong and tried to eschew any political involvement. Consequently, the effects of this refugee mentality helped shape Hong Kong inhabitants’ political aloofness or apathy.¹⁷⁰ In other words, in the early years of postwar Hong Kong, incoming Chinese migrants did not want to participate in politics; instead, they tried to resolve pressing issues by relying on *kin* rather than depending on the local British

Chun Wing Lee, *Labor and Class Identities in Hong Kong: Class Processes in A Neoliberal Global City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ The notion of Hong Kong as a “lifeboat” might firstly be raised by J.S. Hoadley, see J.S. Hoadley, “Hong Kong Is the Lifeboat: Notes on Political Culture and Socialisation,” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 8 (1970): pp. 206–18.

¹⁶⁹ Gordon Mathews Eric Ma and Tai-lok Lui, *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 28.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 29. See other detailed analysis on the effect of *refugee mentality* and the political aloofness or apathy in Hong Kong, for example, in J.S. Hoadley, “Hong Kong Is the Lifeboat: Notes on Political Culture and Socialisation”, Richard Hughes, *Borrowed Place Borrowed Time: Hong Kong and Its Many Faces* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1976), p. 28. Lau Siu-kai, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982), pp. 67–120. On the other hand, some scholars also make critiques of the concept of political indifference in Hong Kong, see Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 8–27.

government.¹⁷¹ Generally, a majority of Hong Kong residents' attitude towards local socio-political transformation was rather individual- or family-centred and non-ideological.

Nevertheless, it cannot be simplistically concluded that the Hong Kong people as a whole absolutely had no interest in political expression and participation. According to Tak-Wing Ngo, the history of Colonial Hong Kong is complex and cannot be demonstrated and explained by one or several dominant narratives provided by ruling powers and historians; rather, he concludes that Hong Kong's complicated socio-political landscape and its socio-economic development after the establishment of the PRC, on one hand, was created and affected by the British, Chinese and other major factors; on the other hand, the differing agencies of socio-political players, local inhabitants and migrants jointly contributed to shaping Hong Kong history.¹⁷²

From this point of view, we need to profoundly explore the complexity of Hong Kong political history under British rule and to examine various socio-political actors that affected its political transformation during a particular period. Especially, in the context of Cold War in East Asia, we can see that the outcome of the Chinese Civil War made Asia and the world more polarised between two camps; moreover, this also brought about profound political consequences for Hong Kong society. As a Crown Colony, not a part of Communist or Nationalist China, Hong Kong provided space and freedom for political struggle between adversaries. Hence, a variety of political forces,

¹⁷¹ Please refer to Lau Siu-kai, "Utilitarianistic Familism: The Basis of Political Stability," in *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong*, ed. Ambrose Yeo-chi King and Rance Lee (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981), pp. 195–216.

¹⁷² Tak-Wing Ngo, "Colonialism in Hong Kong Revisited," in *Hong Kong's History: State and Society under Colonial Rule*, ed. Tak-Wing Ngo (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1–12.

including local organisations affiliated to both the Communist-PRC and Nationalist-ROC governments and foreign intelligence agencies like America's *Central Intelligence Agency* (CIA),¹⁷³ etc., infiltrated Hong Kong society at different levels to conduct lawful activities or covert operations on behalf of their own interests. Consequently, to attain certain political goals, various political actors turned Hong Kong into a *battlefield*, by establishing an indigenous network and by conducting politics, aiming at gaining popular support or at fomenting resistance against "enemies". At the time, as P. Duara noted, Hong Kong "was equally the seat of covert operations [for political aims] as of free trade".¹⁷⁴ In other words, Hong Kong had become an important base for the operations of various political actors in the context of Cold War.

Hong Kong as a *battlefield* made a great impact on the everyday life of colonial society. In spite of that a majority of Hong Kong people living in the *lifeboat* stayed aloof from participating in any sort of political activities, but it was not easy for them to either completely stay out of politics or keep away from political influence. Apart from other political agencies, there were three main players that profoundly affected Hong Kong political development and everyday life in the 1950s, which we will highlight in this chapter, that is, the

¹⁷³ See the U.S. intelligence's covert activities in Hong Kong in Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949-1957*, pp. 177–215. However, the British did not favour the Americans using Hong Kong as a "front-line base for operations against world communism". See *Foreign Office Papers*, FO 371/83560/12, telegram from Hong Kong to Colonial Office, Nov 23rd, 1950. [quoted in David Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited: Political and Economic Relations between Britain and China, 1950-54* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) p. 116.]

¹⁷⁴ Prasenjit Duara, "Hong Kong and the New Imperialism in East Asia, 1941-1966," p. 207.

pro-Communist PRC camp, pro-Nationalist ROC presence and the British-Hong Kong ruling power.

After the end of the Civil War, political confrontation between Communists and Nationalists had never ceased, but became a key component of the Cold War. And the CCP-GMD conflict in Hong Kong was regarded as a continuation of the unfinished Civil War, i.e. so-called “Chinese politics on Hong Kong’s soil”.¹⁷⁵

Before 1949, the Communists had a long history of employing Hong Kong as a key regional centre for their activities,¹⁷⁶ and they had penetrated into different layers of Hong Kong society, ranging from the local banking system, educational institutions, news agencies to industrial groups, and other aspects of society.¹⁷⁷ At that time, local Communist-PRC organisations were substantial and the Communist activities to some extent could exert a strong impact on Hong Kong society. We might take the pro-Communist trade union federation as a typical example: in 1948, the pro-Communist *Hong Kong and Kowloon Federation of Trade Unions* (FTU) was established. This union’s task was to contend for workers’ support with the pro-GMD *Hong Kong and Kowloon Trade Union Council* (TUC, also established in 1948) and to lead industrial actions struggling for both particular economic and political

¹⁷⁵ Alexander Grantham, *Via Ports: From Hong Kong to Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), pp. 158–59.

¹⁷⁶ See the Communist history in Hong Kong, for example, in Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010). Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang, 1921-1949* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1921-1949) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2011).

¹⁷⁷ See the Communist infiltration into Hong Kong society in detail in Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), pp. 326-393.

demands.¹⁷⁸ In the British eyes, this pro-Communist union was always suspected of organising subversive anti-colonial activities. As a government report asserted, “the political orientation of... the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions is far too obtrusive.”¹⁷⁹

In late 1949 and early 1950, a wave of industrial strikes led by the affiliated unions of the FTU inflamed the colonial administration. Despite the unions ostensibly claiming that local workers demanded more economic benefits from their companies, the Labour Department saw those workers’ strikes as “labour disputes where politics dominates economics”.¹⁸⁰ The Tramway Workers’ Strike was the largest and most influential strike during the period. In demanding an increase in workers’ living allowances, tramway operation was stopped by thousands of strikers. Meanwhile, a number of the FTU’s member unions and other leftist-oriented groups organised solidarity activities with the tramway workers. On January 30th, 1950, confrontation between pro-Communist unions and the colonial government came to a climax. Thousands of strikers and supporters gathered in Russell Street, the police confronted the participants, and this resulted in a violent clash between two sides. During that clash, over a hundred people were injured, while 47 strike participants were arrested, several of whom were subsequently deported as

¹⁷⁸ According to Sephen W.K. Chiu and David Levin, the goals and methods of both the FTU and the TUC crystallised in the very early 1950s: “One goal was political, not in the sense of pursuing power and influence in the Hong Kong polity, but rather in terms of expressing and mobilising support for the policies of the PRC and Taiwan respectively. A second goal was to expand their influence among workers, which required demonstrating a concern for workers’ welfare”. Stephen Chiu and David Levin, “Contestatory Unionism: Trade Unions in the Private Sector”, in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), p. 94.

¹⁷⁹ *The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labour*, Mar 31st, 1950 (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1950), pp. 19-20.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 50.

punishment.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, this wave of strikes demonstrated that the pro-Communist PRC presence in Hong Kong was capable of mobilising local labour people, and led London to become concerned that “such a symbolic dispute between capital and labour might allow communism to extend its influence”.¹⁸²

From then on, to continue to maintain its united front network with local communities and to expand its influence amongst the public, the pro-PRC force changed its confrontational strategy. For most of the 1950s, local pro-PRC groups did not intentionally challenge the British authorities. Instead, they tried to win over popular support by adopting moderate demands. According to some researchers, the FTU and its affiliated unions mainly concentrated on providing their workers’ members with welfare benefits and other social services.¹⁸³ As a result, in the 1950s, the “militant” collective actions organised by leftist-oriented groups declined dramatically, and Hong Kong enjoyed a short “period of industrial peace”.¹⁸⁴ In general, apart from a

¹⁸¹ See some details about the Tramway Workers’ Strike in Benjamin Leung and Stephen Chiu, *A Social History of Industrial Strikes and the Labour Movement in Hong Kong 1946-1989* (Hong Kong: Social Sciences Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 1991), p. 24. Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012), pp. 51–57. Zhou Yi, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi* (The History of Leftist Movement in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Lixun Publisher, 2002), pp. 53–58.

¹⁸² David Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited: Political and Economic Relations between Britain and China, 1950-54*, p. 103.

¹⁸³ J. England, “Trade Unionism and Industrial Disputes in Hong Kong: An Explanatory Framework,” in *Social Tensions and Industrial Relations Arising in the Industrialisation Process of Asian Countries* (Tokyo: Japan Institute of Labour, 1979), p. 94.

¹⁸⁴ Benjamin Leung and Stephen Chiu, *A Social History of Industrial Strikes and the Labour Movement in Hong Kong 1946-1989*, pp. 25–33.

few small anti-British incidents,¹⁸⁵ the pro-PRC groups in Hong Kong largely refrained from challenging the colonial order until 1967.

In the meantime, the PRC-ROC political rivalry in Hong Kong was intense. Compared with pro-PRC activities, some overt anti-Communist clandestine operations and occasional excesses organised and provoked by the pro-ROC force were more violent. During that period, the ROC agents in Hong Kong frequently planned deliberate sabotage activities against the PRC. In April 1955, the Nationalist agents attempted to assassinate the PRC premier Zhou Enlai on his flight journey to Bandung via Jakarta from Hong Kong. Though this attempt failed, the aircraft “Kashmir Princess” exploded in the air. 16 people were killed, including the PRC officials, journalists and crew members.¹⁸⁶ The Communist government vehemently accused Taiwan of directing this assassination attempt, while it requested the British-Hong Kong authorities to investigate the plot and capture Taiwan agents who took part in organising this attempted assassination.

Under pressure from Beijing, the colonial administration arrested and deported a considerable number of ROC agents.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the pro-

¹⁸⁵ For example, see the anti-British March 1st, 1952 confrontation in Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012), pp. 61–64. Zhou Yi, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi* (The History of Leftist Movement in Hong Kong), pp. 81–94. Because a local pro-Communist paper *Ta Kung Pao* tried to stir up anti-British sentiment during this incident, the British suspended its publication for six months and several principals of this press were imprisoned. See this case in Lu Yan, “Limits to Propaganda: Hong Kong’s Leftist Media in the Cold War and Beyond,” in *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, ed. Zheng Yangwen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 104–12. Zhou Yi, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi* (The History of Leftist Movement in Hong Kong), pp. 90–94.

¹⁸⁶ See more details and analysis in Steve Tsang, “Target Zhou Enlai: The ‘Kashmir Princess’ Incident of 1955,” *The China Quarterly* 139 (1994): pp. 766–82.

¹⁸⁷ Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012), pp. 82–92.

ROC faction also deeply took root in Hong Kong. In October 1956, the long-simmering political struggle between “two Chinese regimes on Hong Kong soil” reached its climax. Since a group of residents and workers who were ROC sympathisers fiercely opposed the removal of Nationalist symbols on the ROC’s “Double Ten” National Day ordered by local administration and factory managements, riots in Kowloon and Tsuen Wan incited by ROC supporters broke out on October 10th, which lasted a week. Regardless of that a number of inhabitants who did not feel satisfied with their current living conditions under colonial rule, and expressed discontent towards the British-Hong Kong government also involved themselves in the riots, which revealed an overt anti-Communist aim.¹⁸⁸ The pro-Nationalist rioters intentionally targeted for pro-PRC leftist premises, schools and shops sponsored by the pro-PRC organisations. They looted the local businesses that had strong ties with the PRC, and beat up workers and other individuals attached to leftist-oriented groups. When the anti-Communist riots gradually grew out of control, British troops were sent in by the colonial authorities to suppress them, which resulted in approximately 60 deaths and 443 injuries.¹⁸⁹ The series of violent riots clearly expressed political resentment towards the pro-PRC presence from the ROC supporters and sympathisers in Hong Kong. Though the colonial power attempted to depoliticise the pro-ROC riots and thus

¹⁸⁸ A mainland historian Liu Shuyong argues that apart from the ROC supporters and sympathisers, local residents dissatisfied with their living conditions also played a violent role in the 1956 riots, see Liu Shuyong, *Jianming Xianggang shi* (A Concise History of Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Sanlian Press, 1998), p. 273.

¹⁸⁹ The figure to casualties comes from Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization*, p. 35. See more details of the riots in Zhou Yi, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi* (The History of Leftist Movement in Hong Kong), pp. 123–56. Hong Kong Governor, *Report on the Riots in Kowloon and Tsuen Wan, October 10th to 12th, 1956* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1957).

condemned local “non-political” triad societies, such as 14K and Wo On Lok, as a “scapegoat”,¹⁹⁰ the British admitted that a sizeable number of the participants were pro-ROC, and subsequently expelled a number of the rioters.¹⁹¹

At that juncture, the pro-PRC and pro-ROC groups not only engaged in political rhetoric, they also had an ability to mobilise their supporters politically. This fierce political contest in the 1950s between pro-PRC and pro-ROC forces that mainly focused on past Chinese politics made Hong Kong a distinctive *battlefield*. However, as a key player in Hong Kong politics, the colonial administration did not ignore the PRC-ROC confrontation in Hong Kong, but acted to contain or repress any subversive activities from both sides against the colonial order.

Despite the fact that the British were concerned about the imminent Communist threat to Hong Kong security in the late 1940s, it is interesting to note that from a pragmatic perspective, the primary task for colonial authorities was not to engage in large scale anti-Communist operations, but to maintain Hong Kong’s status quo by adopting a series of feasible policies towards the Communist presence on the mainland and the Nationalist presence in Taiwan.¹⁹² In short, the British wanted to preserve its colonial rule in its fragment of China that was still somewhat contested in an unfinished

¹⁹⁰ Lam Wai-Man argues that “[d]espite the government’s attempts to depoliticise the event by blaming the triads, the political nature of the riots stands because even a quick glance at the background of groups like 14K reveals them to be political actors.” See: Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depolitization*, p. 91.

¹⁹¹ Hong Kong Governor, *Report on the Riots in Kowloon and Tsuen Wan, October 10th to 12th, 1956*, p. 9, 17.

¹⁹² Liu Shuyong, *Jianming Xianggang shi* (A Concise History of Hong Kong), p. 174.

Civil War between pro-Communist and pro-Nationalist camps under the conditions of the Cold War in East Asia. On the one hand, the colonial government to a large extent tolerated both the pro-PRC and pro-ROC political presences in Hong Kong and had no intention of provoking each side's irredentism to intensify their conflict. On the other, the colonial power also played a crucial role of "suppressor" of disorder resulting from the continuation of "Chinese politics on Hong Kong's soil". Thus, in order to preserve colonial rule, the British had to adopt a policy of strict "neutrality" in combination with repressive measures, balancing toleration of both the pro-PRC and pro-ROC presences while suppressing their subversive activities.

As Tsang points out, in order to maintain British rule, the British adopted a policy of "neutrality" and regarded this as one of the most important guiding principles for colonial governance from the 1950s.¹⁹³ For example, Governor Grantham during his governorship said that it was absolutely necessary for the British to strengthen their position in Hong Kong by maintaining "neutrality":

"The strength of our position in Hong Kong depends largely upon non-involvement in political issues. This can be achieved only by maintaining strict legality and impartiality in any issues with a political tinge. We have followed this attitude in relation to Chinese political activities in the colony, e.g. treating both [the Guomindang] and Communists exactly

¹⁹³ Steve Tsang, "Strategy for Survival: The Cold War and Hong Kong's Policy towards Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Activities in the 1950s," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, no. 2 (1997): p. 311.

similar[ly] and absolutely according to law. Any departure from this...would weaken our position, both externally and internally.”¹⁹⁴

Although the Korean War escalated the Cold War between the Communist and the capitalist blocs, the colonial state firmly adhered to this line without provoking each of the Chinese regimes already involved in the “bipolar” conflict. Nevertheless, it was difficult for the British to implement the strategy of “impartiality” regarding the PRC-ROC confrontation in Hong Kong. Tsang notes that “[t]o maintain strict neutrality when precariously placed between two parties engaged in a civil war was tantamount to walking a tight rope”.¹⁹⁵ Thus, by way of “walking a tight rope”, the colonial regime was very careful in handling the issues regarding Chinese politics between the local pro-PRC and pro-ROC factions. At times, the British side was not absolutely “neutral” and would have its own views regarding “Chinese politics on Hong Kong’s soil”.

Though Governor Grantham stressed that based on the “impartiality” strategy, colonial authorities would treat the two major Chinese political forces in Hong Kong “equally”, he also dismissed the ROC as “no longer a formidable menace to the security and order of the Colony”,¹⁹⁶ and there was no absolute “neutrality” undertaken by the colonial officials towards the pro-PRC

¹⁹⁴ *Colonial Office papers*, CO537/5628, Hong Kong to Colonial Office, 230, Mar 5th, 1950 [quoting from Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p. 158.]

¹⁹⁵ Steve Tsang, “Strategy for Survival: The Cold War and Hong Kong’s Policy towards Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Activities in the 1950s,” p. 311.

¹⁹⁶ See: *Foreign Office papers*, FO 271/75806, F 3662/10129/10g, Hong Kong to Colonial Office, dispatch 8, Feb 24th, 1949 [quoted in Steve Tsang, *ibid*, 304.] Additionally, according to Tsang, though London had no particular interest in forming a “partnership” with Taiwan in the 1950s, “as the PRC launched an intensive attack on Jinmen in 1958, Britain found itself inadvertently becoming a passive supporter of the ROC”. Steve Tsang, “Unwitting Partners, Relations between Taiwan and Britain, 1950-1958.,” *East Asian History* 7 (1994), p. 110. And please refer to more analysis on the relation between London and Taipei in the 1950s in *ibid*.

and pro-ROC factions in practical terms. Tsang demonstrates that as the British did not regard Taiwan as a major threat to the colony in the 1950s, the colonial state inclined to treat the ROC as more friendly than the Communist “enemy” from the mainland. Meanwhile, many colonial officials who had a hatred of Communism revealed their anti-PRC sentiments to ROC personnel in Hong Kong, and the officials from both sides commonly shared an anti-Communist bias.¹⁹⁷

This anti-PRC sentiment shared by the colonial officials and the ROC personnel might have encouraged the ROC agents to strengthen their Hong Kong base to continue their anti-Communist activities, and the “Kashmir Princess” explosion proved that ROC agents used colonial Hong Kong as a base for anti-Communist covert operations to “hoard arms and explosives for employment on the mainland.”¹⁹⁸ Consequently, colonial officials’ anti-PRC preferences affected the implementation of “neutrality”, which might have given the pro-PRC leftists an impression that the colonial power would suppress pro-PRC activities more so than the pro-ROC ones.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, the Trotskyists who retreated to Hong Kong perceived that the colony’s anti-

¹⁹⁷ See: Steve Tsang, “Strategy for Survival: The Cold War and Hong Kong’s Policy towards Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Activities in the 1950s,” pp. 304–6.

¹⁹⁸ Waichiaopu 301.1, Wu Wen-hui (Hong Kong) to Foreign Ministry of the ROC, telegram substitute FM (46)642,23, Nov 23rd, 1957, and CO 1030/676, “Deportations from Hong Kong” [quoted in Steve Tsang, *ibid*, p. 304.]

¹⁹⁹ However, according to Tsang, when the colonial government discovered that ROC personnel “misbehaved”, it would give no quarter to the ROC officials and agents, and promptly notified the Taiwan side to stop their subversive activities, deported the ROC agents or impounded their hidden arms. For example, when the colonial authorities detected that the ROC was using a Taiwan-based Central Air Transport Company to carry orders from Taipei to Hong Kong, they warned the ROC to immediately stop this activity. See Tsang, *ibid*, p. 306. On the other side, in some cases, for example, the “Kashmir Princess Incident”, the colonial administration did not discriminate against the PRC, but cooperated greatly with the PRC officials to investigate the incident. See Steve Tsang, “Target Zhou Enlai: The ‘Kashmir Princess’ Incident of 1955,” pp. 766–82.

Communist favouritism at the practical level had produced a detrimental effect on the survival of Chinese Trotskyism in the 1950s that will be shown in the next section.

On the other hand, for the colonial state, “political repression could be justified as a necessity for the survival of freedom”.²⁰⁰ In other words, as a “suppressor”, to maintain Hong Kong’s stability and the British order, the colonial administration would also employ repression when it assessed either the pro-Communist or pro-Nationalist power as endangering its regime in Hong Kong. In the 1950s, various British intelligence agencies, including the Hong Kong police’s counter-intelligence arm *Special Branch* and Britain’s *Joint Intelligence Bureau*, began to collect information on these two political factions in Hong Kong, and kept a close watch on their activities to assess to what extent each side would pose a security threat to colonial rule.²⁰¹ As mentioned above, as long as the colonial security forces detected potential and actual subversive elements created by both the pro-PRC and pro-ROC presences, the state would promptly respond to overt or covert subversive actions by arresting suspects, granting warrants for searching private residences, shutting down political groups and issuing deportation orders, etc.

²⁰⁰ Tai-lok Lui and Alan Smart, “Learning from Civil Unrest: State/society Relations in Hong Kong before and after the 1967 Disturbances,” in *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967*, ed. Robert Bickers and Ray Yep (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), p. 152.

²⁰¹ See HKMS 187-1-2, HKMS 187-1-4, CO1035/78, “Vulnerability of Hong Kong to non-military aggression: Chinese Communist activities in Hong Kong”, 1955-57; CO1035/108, “Reports by Security Intelligence Advisers: report on organisation of intelligence in Hong Kong by A M MacDonald”, 1956; CO1035/11, “Annual meeting between Special Branch representatives and Security Liaison Officers: Barbados, 7-8 Jun 1956; minutes and comments”, 1956; CO1035/49, “Organisation of Intelligence Services in the Colonies: Hong Kong”, 1956-57 [quoted in Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012), pp. 97–102].

Above all, we can clearly see the political rivalry between the pro-PRC and pro-ROC presences and the relations between these two main political actors and the colonial government intertwined “on Hong Kong’s soil”. Furthermore, Hong Kong as a unique political *battlefield* was not only utilised by these three key players, but various other forces also contributed to creating political space in colonial Hong Kong, in which, though a majority of Hong Kong people might psychologically keep a distance from politics, they were more or less affected by diverse political forces and involved in different sorts of socio-political activities organised by different political actors for certain political purposes.²⁰² And the political complexity and diversity of Hong Kong also provided “shelter” to the Trotskyists for survival.

The decay of Trotskyist activities in the 1950s

Like the CCP, Chinese Trotskyists conducted clandestine activities in Hong Kong from their political emergence in China. Trotskyist activities there prior to 1949 were to put an effort into exerting impact on local workers. Though this attempt was unsuccessful, through over 20 years of hardship and persistence in Hong Kong, the Trotskyists formed their largest national section there, led by the pro-Peng Shuzhi faction (the later RCP) in the late 1940s.²⁰³ Meanwhile, the marginal Trotskyist radicals on the mainland foresaw Communist victory over the GMD regime in China, but based on a political line mainly focusing on the urban proletariat, they were consistently in

²⁰² See the criticisms of the Hong Kong people’s political passivity in Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization*.

²⁰³ Tang Baolin, *Zhongguo tuopai shi* (The History of Chinese Trotskyism) (Taipei: Dongda Books, 1994), p. 322.

opposition to the CCP's peasant-centred strategy, while they always vehemently criticised the CCP as lacking internal democracy. A number of Trotskyists worried that the Communists would conduct retaliation against Trotskyists after their seizure of power and so felt that they had to leave the mainland. Moreover, because of their attempt to overthrow the GMD, Taiwan was not an option either. Hence, to survive they had nowhere to go, and only recognised Hong Kong under British rule as the "last soil" of survival, where they could continue Trotskyist activities. Shortly after the pro-Peng faction founded a new Trotskyist body, the *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RCP) in Shanghai in September 1948, its leadership decided to leave the mainland for Hong Kong on the eve of the Communist victory.

However, the political survival of Trotskyism in Hong Kong was not easy. In the early 1950s, though the Hong Kong branch was the largest section of Chinese Trotskyists, the maximum number of the RCP membership was 200 to 300.²⁰⁴ Hence, the RCP in Hong Kong could be only regarded as a small political group operating its clandestine activities. As mentioned before, despite the colonial administration claiming to maintain strict "neutrality" towards "Chinese politics on Hong Kong's soil", the colonial personnel's anti-Communist bias made the survival of leftist organisations in Hong Kong

²⁰⁴ According to Tang Baolin, in 1952, there were up to 250 party members in the Hong Kong branch of the RCP. Moreover, on the basis of Liu Pingmei's testimony, in the summer of 1950, around 50 Trotskyist cadres and members voluntarily returned to the mainland for a political task in compliance with an "entryist" strategy directed by the *Fourth International*, i.e. a penetration into the CCP. In total, it is estimated that at the very early stage of the 1950s (1950-1952), the maximum number of the RCP membership in Hong Kong was 200-300. See: Tang Baolin, *ibid*, p. 343. Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), 2005, Chapter 12, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/liupingmei/2005book/marxist.org-chinese-LauPingMUI-2005book-12.htm>

harder. Without exception, as a part of the “subversive” leftists, from their retreat to Hong Kong, the underground Trotskyists were kept under watch by colonial intelligence agencies, and were pursued by the colonial police force.

On September 14th, 1949, letterboxes rented by local contacts of the Trotskyists, which were used to receive information from the *Fourth International* (FI) including official bulletins, newspapers and documents, were discovered by Hong Kong’s secret police.²⁰⁵ Following this, the police arrested several key Trotskyists, such as Wang Fanxi,²⁰⁶ and Lu Ji, and immediately deported them. Consequently, Trotskyist clandestine activities were exposed. According to Peng Shuzhi and Chen Bilan’s self-recollections, as the RCP leaders, they were harried by the British secret agents and policemen.²⁰⁷ Eventually, Peng decided to escape to Vietnam, and later, arrived in Paris.

Unlike the RCP leaders, who fled, the remaining Trotskyists in Hong Kong painstakingly struggled for survival and endeavoured to carry on a small scale of underground activities. In the 1950s, they had difficulties continuing as Trotskyists. In their daily life, they could not disclose to the others, even family members, that they engaged in Trotskyist political activities. Instead, according to several veteran Trotskyists, at that time, to a large extent, the

²⁰⁵ Hu Luoqing, *Shiren Xie Shan he tade tuopai pengyou men* (Poet Xie Shan and His Trotskyist Friends) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2009), pp. 35–38. Chen Bilan, *Zaoqi zhonggong yu tuopai: wode geming shengya huiyi* (The Early CCP and Chinese Trotskyists: My Revolutionist Memoirs) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2010), p. 507.

²⁰⁶ Wang did not join the RCP. Wang, Zheng Chaolin and others split from their former Trotskyist organisation, i.e. the *Chinese Communist League*, in 1942. In April 1949, they formed a new Trotskyist group, the *International Workers’ Party* (IWP). Wang was one of the key leaders of the IWP.

²⁰⁷ Chen Bilan, pp. 507–9. Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), Chapter 12. Peng Shuzhi, *Peng Shuzhi huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Peng Shuzhi), Vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2016), pp. 421–22, 426.

Trotskyist party organisation “replaced family and friends whilst offering an equivalent comradeship” to them.²⁰⁸ From this point, we can perceive that the Chinese Trotskyist group in Hong Kong was rather a relatively-closed political circle, but in this small closed circle, the “intimacy of comradeship” generated a political enthusiasm.

Keeping focus on the urban proletariat, the Trotskyists aimed in Hong Kong to exert their influence on local industrial workers, and to take on a leading role in the indigenous labour movement. For the sake of attaining these goals, core Trotskyist sections were established in major industrial zones, such as Tsuen Wan and Shau Kei Wan. Moreover, they put effort into intervening in local labour disputes by infiltrating trade unions, and by calling for Hong Kong workers to strive for better labour conditions and living standards, etc.

According to Liu Pingmei, the Trotskyists stated that from 1948 to 1952, they intentionally engaged in a number of workers’ collective actions, particularly, they participated in the largest workers’ strike at the time, i.e. the Tramway Workers’ Strike, at the beginning of 1950.²⁰⁹ However, the Trotskyist intervention in local industrial actions exacted a heavy price. In the meantime, the colonial authorities never lost sight in assessing the anti-colonial threat posed by the leftists. At times, to eliminate subversive attempts against the colonial order, the Hong Kong government repressed left-wing activities and captured the “suspects” involved. As long as the colonial police force discovered the “subversive” existence of the Trotskyists, arrest orders were made; and once the Trotskyists were captured, they were forced to

²⁰⁸ Zhang Yun, *Zhang Yun Interview*, Aug 20th, 2014. Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014.

²⁰⁹ Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), Chapter 12.

immediately leave Hong Kong.²¹⁰ As a result, member attrition in the Trotskyist organisation was unavoidable.

Internal disputes within the Trotskyist group also created a barrier for its survival. Regarding external social change, different interpretations will often distinguish one tendency from the others within a radical political force. And controversy over how to interpret the external change will often consequently involve internal conflict between different tendencies, which might produce a negative effect on party members. Such a scenario always occurs in left-wing politics, including Trotskyist politics. Indeed, in the 1950s, external political changes in mainland China triggered chaos inside the RCP in Hong Kong. On the basis of different perspectives, the Trotskyists were involved in an “endless” dispute concerning whether the PRC establishment and the CCP’s socio-economic reforms would lead China to a “socialist” transformation, which eventually divided the group into two wings.

In the context of the CCP’s seizure of power in China, a sizeable number of the RCP Trotskyists neither regarded the CCP as a “proletarian” party, nor believed that through depending on the “petty-bourgeois” peasants, the CCP would succeed in leading a “socialist revolution”. Thus, before the key leaders of the RCP, such as Peng Shuzhi and Liu Jiangliang, left Hong Kong, the RCP had adopted a political resolution written by Peng on the new Communist regime in China in January 1950, in which the Communist

²¹⁰ For example, Xiang Qing, one of core members of the RCP’s provincial committee of Guangdong, was followed and arrested by the *Special Branch* in December 1954, and then the colonial administration immediately issued him a deportation order in February 1955. See: Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014. See also the deportation of Trotskyists in Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), Chapter 12.

leadership of the PRC was categorised as a “Bonapartist military dictatorship” with a “bourgeois” character.²¹¹ Nevertheless, after witnessing change under Chinese Communism, in the name of the editors of the RCP’s organ, a number of experienced Trotskyist cadres remaining in Hong Kong published their own views on Communist China in early 1951, which were different from the previous 1950 resolution. In this party organ article, they concluded that the CCP would not “be able to maintain its petty-bourgeois basis in the long run” and the Communist victory would possibly be “the prelude to the proletarian revolution”, i.e. “the first stage of the permanent revolution” in a Trotskyist sense.²¹² Their oppositional views promptly resulted in a controversy over the political nature of Communist China, which soon divided the RCP between the members who agreed with “the party organ” view and the members who objected to it. Consequently, the RCP separated into two main factions: based upon assenting to the “the party organ” view, a majority of the Shau Kei Wan party branch that was largely composed of the local members formed a *Foundation Faction*; whilst Peng’s supporters from Shanghai who later organised the Tsuen Wan division established a *Mission Faction*, which fiercely opposed the former’s point of view on Communist

²¹¹ The “Bonapartist dictatorship” was a typical Trotskyist phrase that was usually used in criticising the Soviet regime under Stalin. Peng Shuzhi, *Dui zhonggong tongzhi Zhongguo de zhengzhi jueyi* (The Political Resolution on China under the CCP’s Rule), 1950, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/pengshuzhi/mia-chinese-peng-19500117.htm>.

²¹² “The Third Chinese Revolution and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Communist Party”, by the Editors of the Chinese Party’s Organ, *International Information Bulletin*, March 1952, pp. 2-4. Also, please refer to the original Chinese document in: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/marxist.org-chinese-chinatrots-195103.htm>

China.²¹³ Later, six pro-Peng Trotskyists from the *Mission Faction* jointly published an article in opposition to the “party organ” stance. Following the 1950 resolution, they argued that the new China was not established “on the basis of working class power”, and that the victory of the “peasant army” led by the Communists was not a “revolution” by all accounts.²¹⁴

According to Xiang Qing,²¹⁵ the main contributor of the party organ, the leadership body of the RCP intended to call for a broad discussion between the two opposing factions. However, the *Mission Faction* refused, and it did not allow further discussion on the nature of Communist China in its Tsuen Wan division; on the other hand, some pro-Peng Trotskyists employed aggressive language, such as accusations of “pessimism and capitulationism to the party of peasantry [i.e. the CCP]”, to humiliate the representatives of the *Foundation Faction*.²¹⁶

Despite the fact that the Fourth International finally adopted a resolution on China in May 1952 that showed the International’s support of the *Foundation Faction*,²¹⁷ the rift between two factions still existed, and Peng Shuzhi bluntly

²¹³ When the RCP retreated to Hong Kong, it organised five local district committees. The Shau Kei Wan branch was the *1st District Committee*, while the Tsuen Wan was the *5th District Committee*. This controversy intensified an internal conflict between the *1st District Committee* and the *5th District Committee*, i.e. between the local cadres and the Shanghai faction. See: Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), Chapter 12. This was also confirmed by some veteran Trotskyists. See: Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014. Zhang Yun, *Zhang Yun Interview*, Aug 20th, 2014.

²¹⁴ “The Rule of the Chinese CP and the Task of our Party”, *International Information Bulletin*, April 1952, pp. 14-29.

²¹⁵ See Xiang Qing’s biography in “Key organisations and figures”.

²¹⁶ Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014.

²¹⁷ It is cited in a Chinese version of Fourth International, *Disanci Zhongguo geming jueyi’ an* (The Political Resolution on the Third Chinese Revolution), 1952, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/marxist.org-chinese-chinatrots-1951.htm#5>.

expressed his discontent towards the International: “the Resolution of the International is correct, but there is no perspective for us Trotskyists”.²¹⁸ Moreover, in the 1950s, international Trotskyists fell into deep frustration, because due to divergent attitudes towards the leadership of the Fourth International and the International’s policy of entryism that required the Trotskyists to participate in the Communist and Social Democratic parties, in 1953, the Fourth International split into two major tendencies, *the International Secretariat of the Fourth International (ISFI)* and *the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI)*.²¹⁹ This split enormously lowered the morale of the Trotskyists. In this split, along with his American and British allies, Peng joined the newly-established ICFI, but his Chinese comrades on the mainland and Hong Kong could not easily express their own views towards the split of the Fourth International.

Generally speaking, in the 1950s, pessimism pervaded Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong. Internally, the dispute surrounding the character of the new Chinese Communist regime exhausted the enthusiasm of the Trotskyists; externally, the 1952 round-up of the mainland Trotskyists and the international division of the movement deeply affected Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong. As a result, the Trotskyist individuals were thoroughly demoralised. A number of the frustrated activists either left the organisation and returned to the mainland,²²⁰ or became inactive in Hong Kong. From

²¹⁸ Peng Shuzhi, *The Chinese Experience with Pabliste Revisionism and Bureaucratism, A Letter to James. P. Cannon*, December 30th, 1953, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/peng/1953/dec/30.htm>

²¹⁹ See some details in Chapter 6.

²²⁰ Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism), Chapter 12. Zhang Yun, *Zhang Yun Interview*, Aug 20th, 2014. Jiang Junyang, “Renwu zhi (Biographical List),” in *Guangxi tuopai shihua* (A History of Guangxi Trotskyists), 1999,

1955, the RCP was fragmented, and there was very little organisational life within it.²²¹ According to an old Trotskyist, You Xiangming, “[t]hroughout the ‘50s and ‘60s, there were no regular meetings, no attempts to involve the Party (RCP) in the labour movement”; and from his personal account, the RCP became an “intellectual society”, mainly writing articles about “what was happening in China”.²²² In 1965, there were no more than 80 Trotskyists in the RCP.²²³ Though the “loyalists” endeavoured to maintain their politics, the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the 1950s was mainly a symbolic and verbal continuation of Chinese Trotskyism. Nevertheless, under a deep influence of the radicals of 1968, a younger and newer Trotskyist force would emerge in Hong Kong politics in the 1970s.

Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/jiangjunyang/marxist.org-chinese-TinSu-1999.htm>

²²¹ Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Mar 24th, 2012. Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014. Zhang Yun, *Zhang Yun Interview*, Aug 20th, 2014.

²²² Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 31.

²²³ Tang Baolin, *Zhongguo tuopai shi* (The History of Chinese Trotskyism), p. 344. This figure might be exaggerated.

Chapter 2: The Socio-political Context of Colonial Hong Kong, 1966-1972: The Riots, the Rise of Local Consciousness, and the New Left Influence on the Younger Generation

Though the remnants of Chinese Trotskyist groups clandestinely existed in the colony of Hong Kong since the Trotskyists fled from mainland China in the late 1940s, their political activities almost ceased from the mid-1950s. Thus, “Trotskyism” seldom appeared in the socio-political domain of Hong Kong society between the mid-1950s and late 1960s.

Nevertheless, a small level of Trotskyist activity began after the emergence of the New Left-oriented local young radicals who identified themselves as Trotskyists in Hong Kong in the early 1970s. This new emergence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong, at times, could challenge key political players in the local arena of colonial politics, such as the pro-Communist PRC elements and the colonial government, etc., and forced them to keep a close watch on the political development of Trotskyist activities, though the influence of Trotskyist politics in Hong Kong remained limited and intermittent.

However, before exploring the “re-birth” of Chinese Trotskyism in Hong Kong, we should understand the socio-political basis as to why this took place. What happened between the 1960s and 1970s before the new formation of a Trotskyist movement? First, it should be noted that, compared to the Hong Kong political struggle in the 1950s, in the 1960s, the 1966 disturbances and the 1967 leftist riots were the two major socio-political events that changed

Hong Kong's political development, and which marked "a temporary farewell to politics played out within the framework of 'Chinese politics.'"²²⁴ A majority of Hong Kong people had kept away from Communist China during the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 and from its representatives in Hong Kong, i.e. local pro-Communist PRC organisations. Meanwhile, there was a new boom in the post-war younger generation in Hong Kong, which recognised Hong Kong as *home* and identified themselves as locals. These elements shaped a new type of Hong Kong politics that mainly focused on the domestic affairs of Hong Kong.

Secondly, a powerful wave of left-leaning political campaigns triggered by students and young people swept across the globe in the late 1960s, which culminated in the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and the civil rights movement in the United States, the "Red May" in France, the massive civil protests against the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the Cultural Revolution in Communist China, etc. As such, it should be also noted that this political tendency of global left-wing radicalism inevitably spread to Hong Kong, in which the local younger generation, which was also a generation full of curiosity, looked to transformations taking place in the outside world. Consequently, the impact of the *New Left* encouraged Hong Kong's younger generation to bravely express different sorts of demands of their own by engaging in a number of forms of political activism, including Trotskyism.

²²⁴ Gordon Mathews Eric Ma and Tai-lok Lui, *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 33. See also Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu, 'Social Movements and Public Discourse on Politics', in *Hong Kong's History: State and Society under Colonial Rule*, ed. by Tak-Wing Ngo (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 105.

In brief, this chapter will discuss which socio-political factors created preconditions for a new emergence of Trotskyist activities in the Hong Kong area.

The 1966-1967 riots and social impacts

If readers want to enrich their understanding of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the 1970s, it is worth noting that what occurred before the "re-invention of Trotskyism" likely affected the Trotskyist formation and other Hong Kong political movements thereafter. Thus, it is important to look into two major events in the 1960s, that is, the Star Ferry Riots in 1966 and the 1967 disturbances instigated by pro-PRC leftists, and their aftermaths.

Some scholars argue that not only did the disturbances of 1966 and 1967 trigger Hong Kong's subsequent socio-political changes, but previous incidents prior to the mid-1960s also challenged British colonial rule and prompted Hong Kong's reforms in the 1970s.²²⁵ However, the riots in 1966 and 1967, particularly the 1967 pro-Communist riots, have been widely regarded as a watershed in contemporary Hong Kong's socio-political transformation and as a catalyst for a series of social reforms carried out by the colonial government in the 1970s.²²⁶ But what actually happened during

²²⁵ Tai-lok Lui and Alan Smart, "Learning from Civil Unrest: State/society Relations in Hong Kong before and after the 1967 Disturbances", in *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967*, ed. by Robert Bickers and Ray Yep (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), pp. 145–59.

²²⁶ For example, see Ian Scott, *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong* (London: Hurst, 1989), pp. 81–126. Zhang Jiawei, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011). Gordon Mathews Eric Ma and Tai-lok Lui, p. 32.

the riots? These two major disturbances will be briefly introduced in the following part of this chapter.

In the 1960s, Hong Kong remained unreformed under British rule. As Ian Scott observes, “some sections of the [local] community perceived the government to be discriminatory, high-handed if not oppressive, and an all too visible manifestation of foreign domination.”²²⁷ At that time, many people’s livelihoods did not improve, and they remained under poor living and working conditions. For example, by 1964, “almost 500,000 squatters were living in hillside shacks or rooftop huts”.²²⁸ Moreover, the labour-intensive manufacturing industry was one of the mainstays of the local economy in the 1960s, and workers working in the manufacturing industry and other labour-intensive industries helped promote the rapid economic growth of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, because the government implemented a “non-intervention” policy towards the local employment market, and a large part of local business groups and bureaucrats opposed labour reforms out of economic interest, there was little protection for labour rights enacted by the government prior to the 1967 riots.²²⁹ Thus, it is not surprising that Hong Kong

²²⁷ Scott, p. 81.

²²⁸ John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 149. See much details about squatters’ life in Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s in Alan Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950-63* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006)

²²⁹ For example, Elsie Elliot in a speech recollected that in the 1960s, there was no protection for workers regarding their work hours, accident protection/compensation, and wages. Elsie Elliott, “Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s”, *Elsie Elliot Digital Speeches, Hong Kong Baptist University*, p. 1 <<http://libproject.hkbu.edu.hk/trsimage/elsie/speech/>>. Furthermore, until 1967, local business interest groups and bureaucrats “blocked the lowering of a statutory cap on the hours of factory work undertaken by women”. Even though the 1967 riots were a catalyst for social reforms, the colonial labour policies were not completely changed. David Clayton, “The Riots and Labour Laws: The Struggle for an Eight-Hour Day for Women Factory Workers, 1962-1971”, in *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967*, ed. Ray Yep and Robert Bickers (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), pp. 127–45.

workers might work 11 hours per day, and up to 30 days per month;²³⁰ in some extreme cases, they had to work 14-16 hours a day, 7 days a week.²³¹ At the same time, the colonial authorities invested little in education²³² and social welfare,²³³ but the corruption in many government departments, particularly the police force, was prevalent and notorious.²³⁴ Consequently, the gap in wealth between the rich and the poor was widening. Different sections of local communities and a large range of local people were increasingly disappointed with the inequality and corruption, and the government failed to communicate with them. Later, Jack Cater, a former senior official of the Hong Kong government, admitted that “[b]efore 1967, there was no real channel of contact between the government and the people.”²³⁵ Consequently, public discontent towards British rule as a whole continued fermenting. This was the context of the forthcoming riots.

²³⁰ See more details in S.W.K. Chiu and D.A. Levin, “Prosperity without Industrial Democracy? Developments in Industrial Relations in Hong Kong since 1968”, *Industrial Relations Journal*, 27.1 (1996), pp. 24–37.

²³¹ Elsie Elliott, “Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s”, p. 1.

²³² In 1966, the colonial government only invested 4.5 per cent of its expenditure on education. See Zhang Jiawei, *Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots*, p. 134.

²³³ According to Elliot, the social welfare system in the 1960s was “almost non-existent”. Elsie Elliott, “Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s”, p. 2. And quoting a local historian Cindy Chu, Carroll points out that the colonial government in the 1950s relied heavily on religious and charitable organisations for social welfare. John Carroll, p. 146.

²³⁴ See the police’s “syndicated corruption” in Elsie Elliott, *The Avarice, Bureaucracy and Corruption of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Friends Commercial Printing, 1971). H.J. Lethbridge, ‘The Emergence of Bureaucratic Corruption as a Social Problem in Hong Kong’, *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 12.1–2 (1974), pp. 17–29. Tak-sing Cheung and Chong-chor Lau, “A Profile of Syndicate Corruption in the Police Force”, in *Corruption and Its Control in Hong Kong*, ed. by Rance P. L. Lee (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981), pp. 199–221. Peter Lee, “The Causes and Effects of Police Corruption: A Case in Political Modernization”, in *Corruption and Its Control in Hong Kong*, ed. by Rance P. L. Lee (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981), pp. 167–98.

²³⁵ Zhang Jiawei, *Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots*, p. 149.

In 1965, the Star Ferry, a transport company which provided a ferry service between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, made an application to the government for a fare increase. The company wanted the government to permit a 5-cent increase for first class seats and a 2-Hong Kong dollar increase in monthly tickets. This plan promptly received a vast number of negative responses from the public. According to a government report on the 1966 disturbances, before the fare increase application was sent to the government, many Hong Kong people worried that any fare increase would produce an inflationary chain effect, and their livelihoods would be affected as part of the economic crisis.²³⁶ In addition, a certain section of the public perceived that “the government and the public utilities had mutual interests”.²³⁷ As a result, in order to protect themselves from overexploitation by public utility companies and the colonial government, while expressing their discontent, a sizeable number of people reacted swiftly and took actions against the fare increase.

Shortly after the Star Ferry’s announcement of its application for a ticket increase, Elsie Elliott, an urban councillor, a social activist, and a renowned public figure in the 1960s and 1970s, called for signature campaigns against the proposed fare increase, which could show the colonial administration substantial public opposition on this issue. The campaigns were successful.

Additionally, at least 50 social organisations were involved in organising anti-fare increase activities.²³⁸ Nevertheless, in March 1966, the government

²³⁶ *1966 nian Jiulong saodong diaocha weiyuanhui baogaoshu* (Kowloon Disturbances, 1966: Report of Commission of Inquiry) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government Printer, 1967), p. 76.

²³⁷ Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depolitization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), p. 124.

²³⁸ Lam, p. 122.

refused to take public opinion into account, and approved the ferry company's proposal for the ticket increase. As a result, this triggered a chain effect. Many other public services also increased their charges.²³⁹ Meanwhile, local residents continued to express their discontent. Some young people were furious and went to the streets to display their frustrations and dissatisfactions.

On April 4th, 1966, a young man, Su Shouzhong, voiced his personal discontent towards the fare increase by staging a hunger strike outside the Star Ferry terminal. A day later, he was arrested by the police with the charge of "obstruction", which quickly escalated the small scale of anti-fare increase demonstrations to date into a violent clash between the police and a number of young men on the streets.

While a series of lawful actions in support of Su and in opposition to the increase continued on Hong Kong Island, from April 6th, a considerable crowd of young people gathering at different places in the Kowloon area, such as Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok, started to confront the police. Subsequently, a fierce battle broke out, with young rioters throwing stones and glass bottles at the police, and the police beat them back by firing tearing gas. In addition, some properties, including shops and government buildings, were attacked and damaged by the rioters, and both private and government-used vehicles were burned and smashed. A few hours after the riots began during the night of April 6th, the government announced a curfew. Eventually, because the

²³⁹ Zhang Jiawei, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots*, p. 10.

police force swiftly re-established order in Kowloon, street violence only lasted three nights.²⁴⁰

The disturbances led to 27 casualties (including one death and 26 injuries) and a total of 1,465 arrests, 905 of whom were charged.²⁴¹ It should be noted that on the one hand, as there was no evidence to demonstrate that any organisation intentionally planned and directed the young crowds' violent actions, it might be thought that the riots were spontaneous; on the other hand, unlike the later 1967 disturbances, the pro-PRC groups were neutral towards the rioting and did not support the riots. On the contrary, the leftist newspapers, such as the local *Wen Wei Po* and *Ta Kung Pao*, even supported the colonial authorities in restoring public order.²⁴² It is also interesting to note that according to some senior pro-PRC leftists' recollections, the reason that the pro-PRC establishment did not take part in the riots was that the leftists suspected that the "Trotskyists" instigated the street disturbances, though there is no information to confirm the reliability of this "testimony".²⁴³

Shortly after the street violence ended, the Hong Kong government organised a commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the riots. The commission did not entirely agree with a popular explanation that the disturbances were directly caused by poor economic, social or political

²⁴⁰ See the details on the 1966 street riots in *1966 nian Jiulong saodong diaocha weiyuanhui gaogaoshu* (Kowloon Disturbances, 1966: Report of Commission of Inquiry).

²⁴¹ Zhang Jiawei, p. 11.

²⁴² Zhang Jiawei, p. 15.

²⁴³ This sort of "testimony", for example, came from Luo Fu, the deputy chief of *Ta Kung Pao* by then. *Ibid.*

conditions.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the commission offered the government a range of recommendations to improve communication and fill the gap between the government and the public. Before the colonial administration could seriously take these warnings into account and work out a feasible reform plan for Hong Kong society, however, the pro-Communist disturbances broke out in the middle of 1967.

Before discussing the 1967 riots, it should be noted that the Star Ferry riots of 1966 would be regarded as a sign that the post-war generation, who had grown up in Hong Kong since 1949, would begin to play an important political role. This might also be seen as a sign of the younger generation's awareness of local affairs. Wu Zhongxian,²⁴⁵ a later Trotskyist in the 1970s, described the effects of the 1966 disturbances and the following leftist riots in 1967, stating that "[t]he greatest impact of this riot and the one instigated by the leftists the following year was its power to unite all the rootless floating souls, place them before cruel reality and make them face it...Turning back from their illusion, for the first time, the youths of Hong Kong opened their eyes and examined the place where they were born and had grown up."²⁴⁶

The pro-PRC leftist riots in 1967 marked a turning point in the contemporary political history of Hong Kong. Compared to the Star Ferry disturbances, the 1967 riots were more fierce and violent. This event was rather complicated in that it involved a massive number of participants from different socio-political

²⁴⁴ *Kowloon Disturbances, 1966*, English version, P. 148 [quoted in Scott, p. 92. Zhang Jiawei, p. 11]; see also John Carroll, p. 150.

²⁴⁵ Please refer to Wu's biography in the section "Key organisations and figures".

²⁴⁶ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing (Our Work's Not Finished)* (Hong Kong: Lewen Bookshop, 1997), p. 251. His words in English here are translated by Lam, see Lam, p. 124.

backgrounds. As scholars have written at length about the riots in Hong Kong history,²⁴⁷ this will be only briefly discussed.

It is stated that the 1967 disturbances were caused by the pro-PRC establishment in Hong Kong, which was heavily influenced by the ongoing Cultural Revolution in Communist China and was later encouraged by the “victory” of pro-PRC leftists in Macao in late 1966.²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, a labour dispute in May 1967 directly triggered the riots, as a number of workers from the Hong Kong Artificial Flower Works at San Po Kong demanded that the factory management increase their wages and secure job opportunities. On May 6th, these workers clashed with the management and the police at San Po Kong. In this scuffle, 21 workers were arrested. Shortly after this clash occurred, the local pro-PRC groups including trade unions, news agencies and other organisations quickly became involved in the dispute, and attempted to politicise workers. For example, in the 1960s, the pro-Communist FTU and its affiliated trade unions became the dominant labour organisations in Hong Kong. In 1966, compared with 23% for the pro-GMD

²⁴⁷ For example, see a detailed history of the 1967 riots in Zhang Jiawei, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots*. See also *Hong Kong Disturbances 1967* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government, 1968). William Heaton, “Marxist Revolutionary Strategy and Modern Colonialism: The Cultural Revolution in Hong Kong”, *Asian Survey*, 10.9, 1970. John Cooper, *Colony in Conflict: the Hong Kong Disturbances May 1967-January 1968* (Hong Kong: Swindon Book Company, 1970). For a leftist perspective on the 1967 riots, see also Zhou Yi, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi* (The History of Leftist Movement in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Lixun Publisher, 2002).

²⁴⁸ See the details of the Dec 3rd anti-Portuguese Incident in Macau in Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), pp. 199-205. Zhang Jiawei, “Gaixie Xianggang lishi de liuqi baodong (The 1967 Riots: The Changing Point of Hong Kong History)”, in *Women zouguo de lu* (The Way We've Passed), ed. by Guan Yongqi and Huang Zicheng (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2015), pp. 134–37. Zhou Yi, pp. 211-222. Cathryn Clayton, ‘The Hapless Imperialist? Portuguese Rule in 1960s Macau’, in *20th Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday and the World*, ed. David Goodman and Bryna Goodman (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 212-223.

TUC, 60% of declared union members coming from utilities, service sectors, transport, and part of manufacturing industry were members of the FTU or its affiliated unions.²⁴⁹ Unlike the poorly-organised Star Ferry riots, the 1967 riots were backed and engineered by those pro-Communist trade unions.²⁵⁰ The FTU and its affiliated unions played a key role in calling for anti-British labour strikes during the riots.²⁵¹

Accordingly, the leftist newspapers, such as *Ta Kung Pao*, started to intentionally denounce the colony's "atrocities" against factory workers,²⁵² while by using radical Communist slogans, such as referring to "the workers and compatriots armed by Mao Zedong Thoughts", they aimed to divide Hong Kong Chinese from the colonial ruling power and to escalate labour disputes into large-scale anti-colonial activities by organising "anti-British persecution struggle committees" and calling for mass actions. As they desired, the actions soon escalated, which finally led to violence.

From late May to June, the pro-PRC camp organised a number of demonstrations (usually waving the *Little Red Book* written by Mao Zedong, and chanting anti-British slogans), strikes and labour stoppages against colonial rule, most of which erupted into fierce violent confrontations between the PRC supporters and the police force that led to casualties on both sides.

²⁴⁹ Stephen Chiu and David Levin, "Contestatory Unionism: Trade Unions in the Private Sector", in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), p. 94.

²⁵⁰ Benjamin Leung and Stephen Chiu, *A Social History of Industrial Strikes and the Labour Movement in Hong Kong 1946-1989* (Hong Kong: Social Sciences Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 1991), p. 34.

²⁵¹ More details about the FTU's role in the 1967 riots see Zhou Yi, *Xianggang zuopai douzhengshi*, Chapter 23.

²⁵² For example, see "Editorial", *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong, May 8th, 1967), p. 1.

In July, the situation became more intense. On July 8th, hundreds of demonstrators from the PRC crossed the border and assaulted the Hong Kong police in Sha Tau Kok, which led to five policemen being shot dead.²⁵³ In response to the pro-PRC provocations, the colonial state decided to counterattack. In the following days, a large number of leftist establishments including newspaper offices, schools, unions, etc., were raided by the police. Subsequently, many leftist leaders were put into custody.

In return, the leftists escalated violent actions by planting bombs, mixed with false bombs, and by threatening and attacking anti-Communist public figures.²⁵⁴ Not only did these retaliatory actions lead policemen and “anti-Communists” to lose their lives, but they also disrupted ordinary life and killed or injured a number of civilians. Moreover, the leftists’ terrorism and media reporting on bomb attacks strengthened fear of Communism amongst the general public. A majority of Hong Kong residents were indignant about the violence and supported the government and the police force’s suppression of the pro-PRC elements.²⁵⁵ Public outcry against the violence caused by pro-PRC leftists demonstrated that the pro-PRC camp in Hong Kong did not win popular support from the public by taking “bloody revenge” against the colonial state, but that this instead turned a large number of local people’s sympathies for anti-colonial activities into hatred and fear of Communism. As

²⁵³ More details on the rioting in July and August, see Zhang Jiawei, pp. 71–94. Zhou Yi, pp. 273–304.

²⁵⁴ For example, during the riots, pro-PRC leftists sent threatening letters to Chinese business leaders, and on August 24th, an anti-Communist radio commentator Lin Bin was set on fire by pro-PRC rioters, dying in a hospital the following day. Zhou Yi, pp. 299–300. Zhang Jiawei, pp. 119–20.

²⁵⁵ At the time, more than 620 social organisations expressed their support for the colonial government in the riots. *Annual Departmental Report, 1967-68* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1968), p. 3.

Ian Scott points out, “[i]ronically, in the light of communist objectives, the end result[s] of the disturbances was to increase the support for, and the legitimacy of, the existing order. Faced with a choice between communism of the Cultural Revolution variety and the, as yet, unreformed colonial capitalist state, most people chose to side with the devil they knew [i.e. the colonial government].”²⁵⁶

Gradually, the disturbances subsided. Society returned to normal in December 1967. According to a government report, the leftist riots, in total, led to 51 deaths and 832 injuries.²⁵⁷ As a result, the riots profoundly affected various levels of Hong Kong society. As to the aftermath of the leftist disturbances, two important points are noteworthy. Firstly, a series of violent attacks directed by pro-PRC rioters that challenged the colonial order indeed disrupted the normal lives of most Hong Kong people to a large extent. This led to widespread anger against the violence caused by the pro-PRC leftists and strengthened the dislike of Communism among various sectors of local communities. Moreover, as some researchers argue, by utilising “leftist terror” and public anger against the riots, the British authorities in Hong Kong purposefully adopted the strategy of “winning the hearts and minds” of the people in order to paint a negative image of Communism and mainland China. In this sense, an ideological “Other”, the pro-PRC establishment in

²⁵⁶ Scott, p. 104.

²⁵⁷ *Hong Kong Disturbances 1967*, pp. 84–85. See also Hong Kong Police Force, *Police History* (Hong Kong, 2015), chap. 2
<http://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/01_about_us/ph.html>.

Hong Kong, was portrayed as “a common enemy” of Hong Kong society by making use of western Cold War discourse against Communism.²⁵⁸

Consequently, “fear of the left” was collectively formed by both the public and the colonial government, and this subsequently became a popular view amongst a large number of Hong Kong inhabitants. Meanwhile, on the other side, the pro-Communist camp was largely discredited by their own violent acts during the riots and the dissemination of the “fear of the left”.

Consequently, after the disturbances subsided, the pro-PRC leftist force was isolated and marginalised from the mainstream society,²⁵⁹ and it was forced to gradually abandon its provocative anti-colonial propaganda, though not entirely. For example, it was reported that in the early 1970s, 42 pro-PRC schools had to focus more attention on conventional education than to

²⁵⁸ Hung Ho-fung, “Lunshu liuqi: kongzuo yishi dixia de Xianggang bentuzhuyi, Zhongguo minzuzhuyi yu zuoyi sichao” (Discourse of 1967: Hong Kong Localism, Chinese Nationalism, and Left Wing Thoughts Under the “Fear of the Left”), in *Shuide chengshi?: zhanhou Xianggang de gongminwenhua yu zhengzhilunshu (Whose City? Civic Culture and Political Discourse in Post-War Hong Kong)*, ed. by Law Wing-Sang (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press HK, 1997), pp. 89–112. Clement Tsz Ming Tong, “The Hong Kong Week of 1967 and the Emergence of Hong Kong Identity through Contradistinction”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 56 (2016), pp. 40–66 (pp. 47–51). Jiang Shigong, *Zhongguo Xianggang: wenhua yu zhengzhi de shiye* (The Chinese Hong Kong: From the Perspectives of Culture and Politics) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 33. Xu Chongde, “Gongxin weishang: Xianggang zhengfu yingdui liuqi baodong de wenxuan celue” (Winning the Hearts: The Hong Kong Government’s Propaganda Policy in the 1967 Riots), *Ershiyi shiji* (The 21st Century), 2015, pp. 64–81. During the riots, the government established a propaganda committee to guide public opinion to stigmatise the leftist activities. Zhang Jiawei, *Liuqi baodong: Xianggang zhanhou lishi de fenshuiling* (Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), pp. 11–12.

²⁵⁹ Here, it is interesting to mention that, as Lam re-discovered, Hong Kong since the 1950s had been characterised not only by political activism, but also by a culture of depoliticization under the conditions of Cold War politics. This culture assumed that the Hong Kong people were not interested in politics. Moreover, for the colonial government and pro-ROC organisations, this culture of depoliticization served as a tool to contain the spread of pro-leftist groups’ influence and to discourage left-wing radicalism. Later, the discourse and culture of depoliticization also affected the political development of Trotskyism in the 1970s. Lam, pp. 105–6, 138–39.

“revolutionary ideas”.²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Hong Kong’s pro-PRC stronghold ought not to be underestimated. They maintained dominance in local leftist politics, and played a crucial role in the “Communist-Trotskyist” ideological-political contention in the 1970s. After the riots, the colonial administration still kept its eyes on pro-PRC leftist activities.²⁶¹

Secondly, it should be stated that the social disturbances, including the Star Ferry riots of 1966 and 1967 leftist violence, which exposed long-existing social problems and public discontent in Hong Kong society, were a catalyst for Hong Kong’s social reforms in the 1970s. After the riots, the government was forced to take seriously the causes of the social disturbances into account and to gradually introduce social reforms. First of all, the City District Officer Scheme (CDOS) was approved and launched in 1968. Ambrose King once stressed, “The explicit goals of the CDO Scheme are many-sided”.²⁶² One remarkable point of the CDOS was that, as the British authorities now clearly recognised local people’s grievances during the riots, they aimed to establish a communication network between the ruler and the ruled, to defuse social discontent, and more importantly, absorb well-educated local elites into the colonial administration system.²⁶³ This suggests that at that stage, the government, for the purpose of stabilising colonial power, was preparing to address existing social problems in Hong Kong.

²⁶⁰ Hong Kong Standard, "Reform in Leftist Schools", *Hong Kong Standard*, Dec 4th, 1972, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKMS 189-1-229 (FOC 40/364)* (Hong Kong: Public Records Office).

²⁶¹ For example, see: "Left-Wing Political Activities", *HKRS 734-4-1*.

²⁶² Ambrose Yeo-chi King, "Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level", *Asian Survey*, 15.5 (1975), pp. 422–39 (p. 432).

²⁶³ Ambrose Yeo-chi King, pp. 422-39. See also Scott, pp. 107–10.

However, as King observes, this scheme was not sufficient to resolve all important issues, particularly political ones, for “all important political issues tend to be escalated to a level which could only be solved at the centre of the political system. The CDO Scheme is good at handling personal problems but not political issues.”²⁶⁴ In other words, Hong Kong under colonialism required further reforms to deal with its socio-political problems. When Hong Kong was under Murray MacLehose’s governorship in the 1970s, an ambitious series of social reforms were initiated. The colonial government massively invested in expanding public services, such as public housing, free primary education, public transport, etc.²⁶⁵ The changes triggered by the colonial ruling power provided the local post-war generation, i.e. the new generation in Hong Kong, a good social environment to express their own voices. Under this climate of social reforms, a proportion of young people began to draw attention to unsolved local socio-political issues. To challenge social injustice and social inequality, they organised various socio-political campaigns. In so doing, local consciousness about Hong Kong affairs became increasingly prominent, which changed the old pattern of “Chinese politics on Hong Kong’s soil” between the Communists and the Nationalists in the 1950s. From then on, Hong Kong politics became more localised.

Above all, although the Star Ferry Riots of 1966 and the 1967 disturbances were caused by different factors, both incidents reflected social grievances and demonstrated that Hong Kong society needed change. However, could the context of local social change after the riots create an opportunity for a

²⁶⁴ Ambrose Yeo-chi King, p. 438.

²⁶⁵ John Carroll, pp. 160-163

new formation of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong? This will be explored in the following sections.

The rise of local consciousness

Many researchers argue that, since the 1966-1967 disturbances, a “Hong Kong identity” gradually developed under conditions of rapid economic development. But what are the characteristics of “Hong Kong identity”? In brief, Gordon Mathews once concluded: “‘Hongkongese’ [i.e. Hong Kong identity] as a cultural identity involves a ‘Chineseness’ plus that has three clusters of meaning: ‘Chineseness plus affluence/cosmopolitanism/capitalism,’ ‘Chineseness plus English/colonial education/colonialism,’ and ‘Chineseness plus democracy/human rights/the rule of law’.”²⁶⁶ In other words, despite being Chinese descendants or possessing “Chineseness”, compared to Communist China, a considerable part of the Hong Kong people have a strong sense of being “Hongkongese”, which brings them “privileges” to enjoy the outcomes of capitalist development, human rights, and the rule of law, etc. In the meantime, this identity is ambiguous, as it is not a sense of either being British, or of being “Chinese” [that is in terms of PRC citizenship] in Hong Kong’s contemporary history.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Gordon Mathews, “Heunggongyahn: On the Past, Present and Future of Hong Kong Identity”, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 29.3 (1997), p. 3.

²⁶⁷ See: Hugh D. R. Baker, “Life in the Cities: The Emergence of Hong Kong Man”, *The China Quarterly*, 95, 1983, pp. 469–79 (p. 478). See also Gordon Mathews, 1997, pp. 3–4. Lau Siu-kai also points out that “Hong Kong identity” as a concept is nebulous and multi-dimensional, see Lau Siu-kai, “Hongkongese or Chinese: The Problem of Identity on the Eve of

Many scholars argue that the factors that affected the formation of “Hong Kong identity” are multi-dimensional and complex.²⁶⁸ However, the socio-political context of the late 1960s and early 1970s was too early and fluid for this to emerge.

Nevertheless, after the 1967 riots, the younger Hong Kong generation embraced the “local consciousness”. It should be noted here that there are two important elements that promoted the rise of local consciousness, which

Resumption of Chinese Sovereignty over Hong Kong”, in *Social Development and Political Change in Hong Kong*, ed. by Lau Siu-kai (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2000), p. 255. Lau Siu-kai, “Zhongguoren” huo “Xianggangren”: Xianggang huaren de shenfen rentong, 1985-1995” (“Hong Kong” or “Chinese”: The Identity of Hong Kong Chinese, 1985–1995), *Ershiyi shiji* (The 21st Century), 41 (1997), pp. 43–58 (p. 43). Further, some scholars suggest that the ambiguity of “Hong Kong identity” might strongly be affected by a “refugee mentality” that we have mentioned in the last chapter. See Zheng Hongtai and Huang Shaolun, “Xianggang huaren de shenfen rentong: jiuqi qianhou de zhuanbian” (The Identity of Hong Kong Chinese: Before and after 1997), *Ershiyi shiji* (The 21st Century), 73 (2002), pp. 71–80 (p. 72).

²⁶⁸ Different scholars discuss the formation of “Hong Kong identity” in different ways: some of them argue that the colonial government did play an important role (either as a policy maker or as an ideological instructor) in promoting a local identity. For example, see: Agnes S. Ku, “Immigration Policies, Discourses, and the Politics of Local Belonging in Hong Kong (1950-1980)”, *Modern China*, 30.3 (2004), pp. 326–60. Clement Tsz Ming Tong, pp. 40-66. Sai-wing Leung, “Social Construction of Hong Kong Identity: A Partial Account”, in *Indicators of Social Development: Hong Kong 1997*, ed. by Lau Siu-kai and Lee Ming-kwan, Wan Po-san, Wong Siu-lun (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999), pp. 111–34. Ho-fung Hung, pp. 89–112. Some stress that this identity formation is strongly related to a contradistinction between an “advanced” Hong Kong society and a “backward” mainland China, in which a majority of Hong Kong people have a sense of “superiority” by contrast to their mainland compatriots. For example, the mainlanders were always negatively portrayed as “Ah Chan” on social media who were less civilised and disciplined as a whole compared to more civilised and educated Hong Kong citizens. See Lau Siu-kai, “Hongkongese or Chinese: The Problem of Identity on the Eve of Resumption of Chinese Sovereignty over Hong Kong”, p. 257. Gordon Mathews Eric Ma and Tai-lok Lui, pp. 63–66. And some others suggest that the roles of local lifestyle, fashion and popular culture are also crucial in the birth of the “Hong Kong identity”. Matthew Turner, “60s/90s: Dissolving the People”, in *Hong Kong Sixties: Designing Identity*, ed. by Matthew Turner and Irene Ngan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Arts Centre, 1995), pp. 13–36. Tse also summarises several important factors that affected the formation of the local identity. Hiu-Hin Tse, *Contesting the “Local”: Identity Politics in Hong Kong* (MPhil thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2014), pp. 36–38.

might later precipitate the new formation of Hong Kong Trotskyism and indigenous social movement in the 1970s.

Firstly, the colonial government, after 1967, sought to articulate the identity of Hong Kong residents and construct a local identity by promoting *Hong Kong Week*,²⁶⁹ *Hong Kong Festival* and other local celebration activities, by disseminating a “fear of the left”, and by implementing a de-ethnicisation policy.²⁷⁰ At the same time, a certain part of the Hong Kong population could spontaneously be described as strongly perceiving that pro-PRC leftists and their “motherland”, i.e. China, posed a threat to their livelihoods as observed in the leftist riots which lasted for over half a year. The 1967 disturbances, indeed, led various sections of ordinary people in Hong Kong to a negative image of the Communist “motherland”.

Despite the fact that the riots were not as traumatic an ordeal for the majority of local residents as the mainlanders suffered during the Cultural Revolution, the violence and chaos of 1967 made them fearful of disruptions from the pro-PRC camp. Since then, general public resentment against Communist China had been widespread in Hong Kong society. Meanwhile, the dark side of the Cultural Revolution, such as with regards to its violence also strengthened different sections of local communities’ dislike of Communist China. For example, an interviewee of Gordon Matthews, who grew up in the era of the Cultural Revolution, recalled, “I remember seeing some of the murdered bodies that floated down from China into Hong Kong waters. I still remember

²⁶⁹ Clement Tsz Ming Tong, pp. 40-66.

²⁷⁰ Sai-wing Leung, pp. 111-34.

how they stank...At that time there were so many people risking their lives to escape and come to Hong Kong, so many sad stories..."²⁷¹

During that period, many inhabitants in Hong Kong sensed the "terror" of the Cultural Revolution in Communist China by witnessing the disruptions of their daily life caused by the leftists, seeing the floating corpses from the Pearl River Delta, and hearing or reading news of the violence that occurred on the mainland. Thus, a considerable number of Hong Kong Chinese could not easily identify themselves with a chaotic and violent China under Communism.²⁷² They might love China and recognise themselves as ethnic Chinese, but the "China" they loved was not the PRC.²⁷³ Therefore, under the climate of social reform, the public rejection of Communist China in Hong Kong promoted the rise of local consciousness. Especially from the late 1960s, "locals" began to primarily concentrate on resolving Hong Kong's problems, which was clearly reflected in various forms of Hong Kong student activities. At that moment, different sections of young students were eager to seek social change in their society. Student slogans, like "Caring for Hong

²⁷¹ Gordon Mathews, 1997, p. 7. See similar recollections on the trauma of the Cultural Revolution from a Hong Kong perspective in Rey. Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 20.

²⁷² Even a young New Left radical, Wu Zhongxian conceded that "most Hong Kong people" (at least the people he knew and his friends) had a psychological fear of Communist China and would reject Communist rule over Hong Kong. See Wu Zhongxian, p. 141.

²⁷³ Steve Tsang notices that being an ethnic and cultural Chinese did not mean being a national of the PRC. Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p. 195. Moreover, the *Hong Kong Federation of Students* in the early 1970s adopted a student declaration, which stressed identification as a nation was different from identification with a regime. This declaration is mentioned in Chen Yuxiang, "Cong xuelian de xuanyan kan women de luxiang" (Where to Go: From a Perspective of Assessing the Student Declaration), *Undergrad* (Hong Kong, March 1974), p. 23.

Kong, Reforming Society”,²⁷⁴ were advanced in order to express students’ determination to engage in local socio-political affairs.

Secondly, it cannot be ignored that the new younger generation of Hong Kong played a crucial role in the rise of local consciousness. Since the end of the Chinese Civil War, Hong Kong’s demographics had been widely changed by the influx of the Chinese immigrants, but those born and who had grown up in Hong Kong constituted a new younger generation in the post-war era.²⁷⁵

Unlike their parents’ generation escaping from the mainland and only seeing the British enclave as a *lifeboat*, by growing up and reaching adulthood in Hong Kong, the younger generation no longer saw its birthplace as a *lifeboat*, but recognised Hong Kong as a permanent *home*.²⁷⁶ In the meantime, during the post-war period, education developed rapidly in Hong Kong, shaping the the younger generation.²⁷⁷

From the 1950s, the education policy of the colonial government had recommended an emphasis on Chinese culture, which was a scheme “for Chinese culture and British colonialism to survive together in the shadow of

²⁷⁴ It is mentioned in Xiao Qi, “Cong dafangxiang dao xianzhuan yu geren” (Orientation, Status Quo and Individual), *Undergrad*, May 1973, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ By 1961, the government estimated that about half of the residents in Hong Kong were between the ages of 5 and of 29. *Hong Kong Census 1961: Population Projection 1961-1971* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1961), p. 3.

²⁷⁶ Gordon Matthews marks this transformation of the Hong Kong people’s perceptions from recognising Hong Kong as a lifeboat to recognising the same place as a home. See his argument in Gordon Mathews, 1997, p. 7.

²⁷⁷ For instance, as Helen S. Fiu noted, “[m]ost of the successful among Hong Kong’s post-war generation went to missionary schools.” In 1948, there were only 23 missionary schools with 12,000 students, but 20 years later, the schools run by missionaries increased to 454 with 400,000 students. See Alan Chan, “Xianggang jidujiao chunti shiming de shenxue fanshi”, in *Cangzao Xianggang xin jiyuan* (A New Hong Kong Era--The Symposium of ‘I Love Hong Kong Campaign’), Vol. 2, ed. by Joseph Cheng (Hong Kong: Breakthrough Ltd., 1991), pp. 68–86. [quoted in Helen F. Siu, “Remade in Hong Kong: Weaving Into the Chinese Cultural Tapestry”, in *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China*, ed. by Tao Tao Liu and David Faure (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), p. 183.]

the Communist threat.”²⁷⁸ However, this educational project of teaching Chinese culture to Hong Kong’s next generation merely produced “a Chinese identity in the abstract...because it was not connected to tangible reality”.²⁷⁹ As Carroll emphasises, this curriculum “shaped a sense of Hong Kong being at the periphery of both the Chinese and the Western worlds”.²⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, “a sense of Hong Kong being at the periphery of both the Chinese and the Western worlds” might well shape a local mentality that encouraged the new Hong Kong generation to put a central focus not on mainland China or on the West, but mainly on their permanent *home*. Nevertheless, this local-centred mentality did not mean that local younger generation did not concern themselves with the transformations in the outside world. On the contrary, the impact of the development of Chinese teaching and Westernised education in Hong Kong during the post-war era made the younger generation capable of enriching its understanding of both the Chinese and Western worlds. The growth of the educated post-war generation of Hong Kong paved the way for the rise of the socio-political movement at the local level in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

Moreover, it is also noteworthy that the rejection of the Communist regime in China by a majority of Hong Kong people might also have helped cultivate the independent thinking of the younger generation to some degree. Later young radicals with an anti-colonial sentiment understood that the undemocratic structure of Hong Kong with regard to inequality, corruption and injustice, solidified a two-tiered society between the rich and the poor, which

²⁷⁸ Bernard Hung-kay Luk, “Chinese Culture in the Hong Kong Curriculum: Heritage and Colonialism”, *Comparative Education Review*, 35.4 (1991), pp. 667–68.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, see this quotation also in John Carroll, p. 148.

²⁸⁰ John Carroll, p. 148.

constrained the career development of the younger generation. But the rejection of Chinese Communism led them to recognise the problems caused by the chaotic Cultural Revolution and the 1967 leftist riots. Thus, later inspired by the worldwide New Left movement, a group of radical students and young people tried to find a third way of participating in local politics, which neither stood with the colonial government, nor stood with the pro-PRC groups, but challenged both. In this sense, it can be assumed that the rejection of Chinese Communism would become an indirect cause of the emergence of the non-Communist New Left that also consisted of a Trotskyist element in Hong Kong in the early 1970s.

The Hong Kong student movement is a very good example in demonstrating the rise of local consciousness. From the late 1960s to early 1970s, there was a significant upsurge of the student movement in Hong Kong. Through this channel, more people from the younger generation could express their different voices in the political scene. In March 1968, a student journal, *Undergrad*, edited by a group of students from the University of Hong Kong brought out an editorial in which the student writers considered that though they recognised themselves as Chinese, because Hong Kong was a society with massive inequalities and injustice, before building up an idealistic China, the younger generation of Hong Kong should firstly undertake responsibilities of reforming the inequalities of Hong Kong so that workers' rights could be protected and Hong Kong people could have opportunities to participate in the process of legislation and public administration.²⁸¹ This student view that reflected a strong sense of local awareness soon became popular in the circle

²⁸¹ Editorial Board, "Yi zerengan dai guishugan" (Replacing the Sense of Belonging by the Sense of Responsibility), *Undergrad* (Hong Kong, March 1968).

of local young students. The expression of a will to engage in social change was not enough. Subsequently, various sections of students started to take actions aimed at reforming Hong Kong society.

In August 1969, 12 college students were expelled by the administration of the Chu Hai College since these students accused the college management of restraining student autonomy and campus democracy. This expulsion of students at the Chu Hai College immediately provoked local students' anger. In solidarity with the dismissed students, a number of student organisations from different universities and colleges made statements to vocally protest against the decision of the Chu Hai College. As such, the dismissal triggered a small-scale student movement in September. A crowd of local students participated in a sit-in protest in support of the dismissed students outside the College that partially attracted attention from the public.²⁸² Eventually, a few dismissed students were forced to leave school because they refused to make an "apology" to the college administration after negotiations between student groups and the college management. In spite of this, the Chu Hai sit-in protest had its significance in the contemporary history of the student movement in Hong Kong: it had become the first protest (but on a very small scale) organised by local students since the outbreak of the 1967 riots, and it was also a starting point of local youth radicalisation in the late 1960s and the

²⁸² There were some reports on the student sit-in protest in *South China Morning Post*, and according to this newspaper, the dismissed students and about 30-40 students from other colleges and universities staged this sit-in. *South China Morning Post*, Sep 16th, p. 6, Sep 17th, p. 6.

1970s, which subsequently inspired some of the younger generation to challenge injustice and inequalities within the colonial state.²⁸³

In the early 1970s, more Hong Kong students engaged in local reform-oriented social movements. On campuses, the students campaigned for educational reforms, the right to participate in college or university administration and the right to organise student autonomous activities, etc. Among these demands, educational reforms became a main concern. First of all, a considerable number of college and university students wanted to push the colonial government to confirm the official status of the Chinese language and emphasise the importance of Chinese in the local educational system. From the early 1960s, the public had been concerned that the predominant use of English caused difficulties in many areas of daily life and social practice. In order to alleviate discrimination against the Chinese language by the colonial government on the one hand, and to enhance the dignity of Hong Kong Chinese on the other, some put a great effort into making Chinese an official language under British rule. In 1970, a number of students played a pioneering role in escalating the campaign for Chinese as an official language. They expressed different voices on this issue from different student platforms, and tried to form concrete pressure groups to persuade the colonial

²⁸³ See much details on the Chu Hai protest in Ruan Miu, "Zhuhai shijian zhuanji" (The Special Issue on Chu Hai Incident), *Daxue shenghuo* (College Life) (Hong Kong, October 1969), pp. 14–25. Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu* (A Review of Student Movement in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 9–28. Luo Yongsheng and Liu Lining, "Zhuhai shijian--you yipian daonian Yin Haiguang wenzhang erqi de Xianggang xuesheng yundong (The Chu Hai Incident--A Student Movement in Hong Kong Triggered by An Article in Memory of Yin Haiguang)", *Thinking Hong Kong*, 8 (2015) <<http://www.thinkinghk.org/v81->>. Wu Zhongxian, pp. 255–58.

authorities to confirm the official language status of Chinese.²⁸⁴ In the end, their attempt failed in 1971, but a range of student participation in the Chinese language campaign excited various sections of the younger generation to involve themselves in the process of politicisation on a local level in the 1970s.

However, the rise of local consciousness among a particular section of Hong Kong's younger generation did not mean that the young did not follow the global trend of socio-political transformation during that period of time. On the contrary, the global factor had a profound effect on indigenous Hong Kong politics, which radicalised the student movement, and precipitated the new emergence of Chinese Trotskyism in Hong Kong.

The global New Left's impact on Hong Kong's younger generation

After the Cold War began, a number of left-wing intellectuals such as Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, who kept their distance from the anti-Communist bloc and the pro-Soviet leftist camp in the West, intended to form a third "New Left" position, which was different from Social Democracy and Soviet socialism in exploring various new theoretical explanations of Marxism and other currents of leftist ideologies. If this group of left-wing intellectuals in

²⁸⁴ For discussion on the Chinese language campaign and other student movement campaigns from 1969 to 1971, please refer to Benjamin. K.P. Leung, "The Student Movement in Hong Kong: Transition to a Democratizing Society", in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, ed. by Stephen Wing Kai Chiu and Tai-lok Lui (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), pp. 212–15. Lam Wai-man, pp. 125–35. Steven. C. F. Hung, "Political Participation of Students in Hong Kong: A Historical Account of Transformation", in *New Trends of Political Participation in Hong Kong*, ed. by Joseph. S.Y. Cheng (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong, 2014), pp. 247–49. For a young leftist perspective on the student movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, see also Wu Zhongxian, pp. 249–71.

the West were the theoretical pioneers of the New Left between the 1950s and the 1960s, a huge number of young people in the late 1960s from the Western post-war generation who were profoundly influenced by the “theoretical New Left pioneers” became the “New Left rebels” who tended to take swift direct actions against authoritarianism, capitalism and imperialism by shifting from the traditional Left’s concern with the urban proletariat to their own focus on “ending racial oppression, militarism, and male supremacy or patriarchy [in Western Europe and North America, particularly in the United States]...”²⁸⁵ Indeed, during the 1960s, the outbreak of the Vietnam War caused a new wave of participation in anti-establishment, anti-capitalist activism on the part of many amongst the Western younger generation, which was regarded as the “New Left Movement” in the West.

In this Western youth movement, various forms of radical activism, including campaigns for cultural radicalism, for social justice, for black power, for equality and human rights, for sexual liberation, for feminism, etc., were shaped by a vast number of young men, women, students and workers etc. It is also interesting to note that Western Trotskyists did play a role in this new political formation of the New Left. During the New Left Movement, they attempted to claim that an orthodox ideological position of “Marxism-Leninism” was “falsified” by the Soviet hierarchy, and sought to rehabilitate this. Furthermore, following the climax of the New Left Movement, i.e. “the 1968 revolt” in France, different factions of French Trotskyists played a key role in the student movement and struggled for political support from the

²⁸⁵ Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 29.

young students who participated in the “revolt”.²⁸⁶ However, the point of this section is not to elaborate the events, or the significance, and the complexities of the New Left Movement in Paris or in New York,²⁸⁷ but to examine the global impact of the New Left on Hong Kong’s younger generation, as strongly relevant to the new formation of local Trotskyist activities.

At first, the ideological effect of the New Left, as imported from the West was limited in Hong Kong, but three main elements contributed to the indigenous propagation of New Left ideas.

Firstly, Western expatriates partially played a key role in disseminating New Left thoughts amongst the Hong Kong student circle. In 1969, a group of foreign teachers and research students from the United States who worked and studied in Hong Kong formed a small anti-war committee named the *Ad Hoc American Committee on Vietnam*, and they sometimes organised anti-war protests outside the US Consulate. But the scale of these protests was small, while the anti-war protests attracted little local response from the

²⁸⁶ See the Trotskyist role in the New Left Movement in Maureen McConville, Patrick Seale, *French Revolution, 1968* (London: Penguin Books, 1968). Angelo. Quattrocchi and Tom. Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968* (London: Verso, 1998). Daniel Bensaïd, *An Impatient Life: A Political Memoir* (London: Verso, 2013).

²⁸⁷ To know more about the student “revolt” worldwide in the 1960s, please refer to Martin. Klimke, Joachim. Scharloth, and Palgrave Connect (Online service), *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (London: Verso, 2005). Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003). Daniel Singer, *Prelude to Revolution: France in May 1968* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013). Stanley. Aronowitz, *The Death and Rebirth of American Radicalism* (London: Routledge, 1996). George. Vickers, *The Formation of the New Left: The Early Years* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1975). Caroline. Hoeffler, *British Student Activism in the Long Sixties*. (Taylor and Francis, 2012). Gerard J. De Groot, *Student Protest: The Sixties and after* (London: Longman, 1998).

general public.²⁸⁸ However, most Western protesters were also university or college lecturers and students. By taking advantage of their teaching work and closeness to local students on campuses, New Left messages could easily be delivered to a number of young university students, which was probably their very first encounter with the anti-war, anti-establishment, and anti-capitalist tendencies of the New Left. A government report also noted that “[t]he influence of expatriate lecturers in universities and colleges was also important in giving respectability to criticism of the Hong Kong Government and social environment.”²⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the *Special Branch* of the Hong Kong police discovered that a small number of young British academics in Hong Kong who opposed the colonial administration founded a dissident group named the *Revolutionary Group*. Similarly to the American leftist expatriates, this British radical group intended to influence local students, the report stating that “they have deliberately tried to arouse dissatisfaction [towards the colonial government] among the various [Chinese] student groups in their charge.”²⁹⁰ And some British colonial officials believed that “[t]he current ‘new left’ movement [in Hong Kong] is seen as starting in 1969 with a group of dissident expatriates”.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ See the brief information on the anti-war activities in Hong Kong organised by American expatriates in “The ‘New Left’ and Hong Kong”, 30th June, 1971, by Special Branch, Royal Hong Kong Police, pp. 23-24, *HKRS 934-3-30* (Hong Kong: Public Records Office). Also, in the same British confidential document, we can see that the foreign clergy also took part in anti-war demonstrations in Hong Kong, see *ibid*, p. 24.

²⁸⁹ Colonial Secretariat, “The New Left, SCR 3/3571/71”, p. 2, *HKRS 934-3-40*.

²⁹⁰ “The ‘New Left’ and Hong Kong”, 30th June, 1971, by Special Branch, Royal Hong Kong Police, p. 23, *HKRS 934-3-30*.

²⁹¹ “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong”, from R.B. Crowson, Hong Kong and Indian Ocean Department to Mr Wilford, Mr Logan, Jul 31st, 1972, pp. 1-2, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

Secondly, Western language media in Hong Kong broadcast a range of reporting on the global youth movement ranging from the 1968 “revolt”, and the anti-Vietnam War protests to the opposition to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia, which attracted Hong Kong students’ attention.²⁹² A British document also confirmed that “no doubt affected by television, people’s expectations rose disproportionately. Young people became readier to take a critical interest in social and political problems.”²⁹³ Indeed, shortly after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, a small group of students at the University of Hong Kong who received news about this from the media organised a student rally on campus in solidarity with Czechoslovakia and in opposition to the Soviet Union. The scale of the rally was small, but some observers considered the student rally as meaningful because it showed that, on the one hand, a number of Hong Kong students in the late 1960s had less “fear of politics” than suggested by the prevailing mood that had taken shape since the 1967 riots; on the other, this revealed their interest in global political change and interest in politics.²⁹⁴ In the meantime, a range of progressive criticisms of the Hong Kong government also appeared in English language media. A huge number of local people from the educated younger generation had the ability to learn about those criticisms and keep their eyes on the ongoing Western socio-political transformations. Furthermore, from the late 1960s, the post-war “baby-boomers” sincerely expected that local reforms would improve Hong Kong people’s living-working conditions, and resolve the

²⁹² Helen F. Siu, p. 183.

²⁹³ “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong”, from R.B. Crowson, Hong Kong and Indian Ocean Department to Mr Wilford, Mr Logan, Jul 31st, 1972, p. 3, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

²⁹⁴ Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu* (A Review of Student Movement in Hong Kong), pp. 16–17.

injustices and inequalities within the society. As a result, a vast majority of local students “had expectations for a more responsive and accountable government”,²⁹⁵ whereas a small radical part of the “baby boomers” influenced by leftist tendencies imported from the West distrusted the colonial government with a strong undercurrent of anti-establishment sentiment.

Thirdly, Hong Kong students who studied abroad and become involved in Western New Left activities brought the impact of the New Left to their compatriots in Hong Kong. In the very early 1970s, a number of Hong Kong students abroad in the US were strongly affected by the New Left tendencies. For example, influenced by the Black Power movement, Chinese students from Berkeley began to organise radical-oriented community service activities in San Francisco, while young overseas Chinese and students in New York established a youth civil rights group, the “Yihequan” (Boxers) to promote a leftist community movement.²⁹⁶ In this way, the Chinese overseas student movement contributed to the radical politicisation of the Hong Kong younger generation in the early 1970s. For instance, following the steps of Chinese students in the US who staged a widespread nationalistic “Baowei Diaoyutai” movement (“the Protection of the Diaoyu Islands” or *Baodiao* for short), various Hong Kong student groups organised their own *Baodiao* demonstrations.²⁹⁷ More importantly, when a small group of Hong Kong students abroad who had declared their political positions to be profoundly

²⁹⁵ Helen F. Siu, p. 183.

²⁹⁶ Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu*, pp. 53–54.

²⁹⁷ For the origins and the course of events of *Baodiao* demonstrations in North America and Hong Kong see the next chapter.

affected by Western New Left politics²⁹⁸ returned home, they began to introduce the New Left ideological-political tendencies to the members of a local younger generation that had demonstrated their interest in local socio-political reforms, while also expressing discontent towards the colonial state.

In the very early 1970s, influenced by various left-leaning tendencies, there were a diverse range of existing student organisational bodies or newly-established youth groups in Hong Kong, such as the *Hong Kong Federation of Students* (HKFS), *Chong Kin Experimental College*, and *Pan Ku* group, etc., which organised or were involved in reform-inclined or New Left activities. Amongst these left-leaning groups, a radical youth platform, the *70's Biweekly*, played a key role in propagating the New Left thinking among the Hong Kong's younger generation. This New Left-leaning youth magazine was first brought out in January 1970 by a small group of Hong Kong New Left radicals, such as Mo Zhaoru,²⁹⁹ a former student who had become influenced by New Left politics when studying in Australia, and Wu Zhongxian, a student expelled from the Chu Hai College who had engaged in student protest against the college administration, and others. Through this magazine, these young Hong Kong New Left activists established an action-oriented youth group, the "Seventies", which centrally sought to bring about

²⁹⁸ Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu*, p. 64. In a symposium held in 1980 by the former activists of the Hong Kong youth movement, Wu Zhongxian stressed that under the atmosphere of the worldwide radical youth movement influenced by the New Left, a group of local activists and Wu overtly leaned to New Left or Anarchist tendencies. "Zuotanhui: Xianggang xueyun yu qingnian sichao" (A Symposium: The Student Movement and the Thoughts of Youths in Hong Kong), *The Seventies* (Hong Kong, February 1980), p. 66.

²⁹⁹ Mo Zhaoru: a close friend of Wu Zhongxian. In 1970, he and Wu founded the *70's Biweekly*, and became one of the leading figures of the "Seventies" group. In this group, his political stance was pro-anarchism. Today, he is a renowned cultural worker and theatre performer in Hong Kong.

local socio-political change and disseminated anti-colonial messages. Mo and Wu, the founders of the 70's *Biweekly*, became the leading figures of this radical New Left group. Later, the "Seventies" group became a significant element in the rebirth of Trotskyism in Hong Kong, which will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

By means of publishing anti-Chinese Communist and anti-British colonialist articles, staging political discussions with a number of university students and young people, operating a leftist bookshop, and organising anti-establishment youth protests,³⁰⁰ the 70's *Biweekly* propagated a large range of Western radical thought to a part of Hong Kong's younger generation that pursued reform of social injustices and social inequality in Hong Kong. As a radical New Left magazine, the 70's *Biweekly* tried to exert a profound ideological impact on the local younger generation. Since it was published in 1970, various political ideologies of the New Left, such as anti-imperialism, the Frankfurt School, Maoism, anarchism, left-wing progressive nationalism, etc., were introduced at length or highly recommended in this radical youth magazine. Since Trotskyists played a crucial role in the 1968 "revolt" in France, Trotskyism became one of the influential leftist tendencies in the global New Left movement. The 70's *Biweekly* editorial board recognised Trotskyism as one of the popular left-wing political schools in New Left politics worldwide. Therefore, in order to briefly introduce the young readers to the

³⁰⁰ See the "Seventies" group's protest actions in Hong Kong in "The 'New Left' and Hong Kong", 30th June 1971, by Speical Branch, Royal Hong Kong Police, pp. 25-31, *HKRS 934-3-30*. "A Chronology of the Main Events in Hong Kong since September 1969 Connected with the New Left Movement", pp. 1-10, *HKRS 934-3-30*.

fundamental principles of Trotskyism, such as permanent revolution,³⁰¹ and to Trotskyist political activities internationally, such as the Trotskyist movement in Sri Lanka,³⁰² a range of articles written by Western Trotskyist theorists or others appeared in the different issues of the *70's Biweekly*. Nevertheless, Trotskyism as a leftist ideology did not attract New Left activists from the “Seventies” group or other leftist-leaning Hong Kong radicals until 1972.

By disseminating anti-colonialist criticisms aimed at changing Hong Kong society dominated by British rule as well as various radical New Left concepts, the *70's Biweekly* indeed attracted and influenced a certain proportion of young people, and from reading the magazine, they started to get in touch with New Left politics.³⁰³ Subsequently, a certain number of the “Seventies” readers shifted from being “readers” to “activists”, which meant that they later joined the “Seventies” group and engaged in its political activities in the early 1970s.

Given its commitment to an action-oriented political platform, the *70's Biweekly* group was actively involved in and organised a various range of

³⁰¹ Ernest Mandel, ‘Tuopai shi shenme?’ (What Is Trotskyism?), *70's Biweekly* (Hong Kong, November 1971), pp. 30–31. Fansi, ‘Buduan geming yu shijie geming’ (The Permanent Revolution and the World Revolution), *70's Biweekly* (Hong Kong, November 1971), pp. 32–33. ‘Tuoluociji de lilun’ (The Theory of Trotsky), *70's Biweekly* (Hong Kong, January 1971), p. 13.

³⁰² ‘Xilan shishi yixi tan (On Sri Lanka)’, *70's Biweekly* (Hong Kong, August 1971), p. 16.

³⁰³ See the *70's Biweekly* magazine’s influence amongst the local younger generation in Zhong Yaohua, “Gediao jiaguo de huohong - Yang Baoxi” (An Interview with Yang Baoxi), *Initium Media*, Hong Kong, Aug 7th, 2015: <<https://theinitium.com/article/20150808-opinion-yeungpohi-a/>>.

Zhong Yaohua, Meiyou yichan de qishi niandai - Hou Wanyun (An Interview with Hou Wanyun), *Initium Media*, Hong Kong, Sep 2nd, 2015: <<https://theinitium.com/article/20150905-opinion-houmanwan-a/>>. Moreover, in a British confidential report, some colonial officials confirmed that the *70's Biweekly* magazine was an important tool for propagating radical anti-Hong Kong establishment ideas. “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong”, from R.B. Crowson, Hong Kong and Indian Ocean Department to Mr Wilford, Mr Logan, Jul 31st, 1972, p. 4, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

social campaigns and public demonstrations, overtly making clear its anti-colonial establishment, anti-authoritarian positions. For example, on April 19th, 1972, the Hong Kong police raided a radical publishing premise in Kowloon City. During the raid, a range of anti-colonial, anti-monarchy material with slogans, such as “Down with the Colonial Government”, “Long X the Queen and Throw British and Foreigners out of Hong Kong”, etc., and a quantity of fireworks were discovered. Moreover, 11 young people who planned to disrupt Queen Elizabeth II’s birthday celebration activities in Hong Kong were arrested, of whom five were active members of the “Seventies” group.³⁰⁴ This abortive anti-British action that the “Seventies” members had planned soon aroused Hong Kong Governor MacLehose’s concern. In a confidential report, he clearly recognised the “Seventies” as a locally important anti-authoritarian New Left group. He said:

“The 70’s *Bi-weekly* group is composed of young radicals (very few of whom are students) who consistently organise protest here [i.e. Hong Kong]. It forms the hard core of the local quote New Left unquote and its leaders are quite prepared to flout the law.”³⁰⁵

MacLehose’s view of the “Seventies” was not uncommon amongst the colonial officials. In other government reports we have found, the “Seventies” was regarded as a “hard-core” group of the New Left in Hong Kong.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ See some detail of this police raid aiming at smashing anti-British activities in “Police Smash Anti-British Student Move”, *South China Morning Post*, Apr 20th, 1972, Newspaper Cuttings; “Quote New Left Unquote Activities”, from Hong Kong Governor MacLehose, Apr 20th, 1972, p. 1, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

³⁰⁵ “Quote New Left Unquote Activities”, from Hong Kong Governor MacLehose, Apr 20th, 1972, p. 2, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

³⁰⁶ Colonial Secretariat, “The New Left, SCR 3/3571/71”, p. 2, *HKRS 934-3-40* (Hong Kong: Public Records Office). “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong”, from R.B. Crowson, Hong

Furthermore, its anti-colonial activities also drew attention from the British domestic media. As the English *Daily Telegraph* noted, the anti-colonial movement organised by small Hong Kong New Left groups like the “Seventies” “is a form of the militant political action that is well known in Western countries” [in other words, the form of the anti-British movement in Hong Kong was in the mould of the Western New Left]; and the young New Left activists “do not appear to be orthodox Communist, ... Their activities show them as being ... disillusioned with the present government and Soviet system ...”³⁰⁷ Hence, from a British perspective, the “Seventies” was obviously directed by “New Left” politics. And the New Left activities that the “Seventies” or other local leftist youth groups or student organisations, such as the *Chong Kin Experimental College* and the *Hong Kong Federation of Students* (HKFS) organised or engaged in was “already a nuisance and represents a potential threat to [the colony’s] security. The biggest danger at present is that the movement’s public meetings or demonstrations may lead to disorder.”³⁰⁸

Above all, the social consequences of the 1966-67 disturbances, the rise of local consciousness among the younger generation, and the influence of the New Left from the West together created the preconditions for the radicalisation of young people of Hong Kong’s post-war generation who were keen to reform local society and challenge social injustices and social

Kong and Indian Ocean Department to Mr Wilford, Mr Logan, Jul 31st, 1972, p. 2, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

³⁰⁷ “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong (Daily Telegraph)”, single-paged, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*.

³⁰⁸ “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong”, from R.B. Crowson, Hong Kong and Indian Ocean Department to Mr Wilford, Mr Logan, Jul 31st, 1972, p. 5, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

inequality in the 1970s. More importantly, in this context, the “Seventies” group emerged and played a dominant role in radicalising the local younger generation, and as affected by a variety of New Left tendencies, a small group of young radicals in Hong Kong began to get in touch with Trotskyist elements. In the next chapter, we will present what were the political dynamics of the local left youth movement and how the Trotskyist movement re-emerged at the local level of Hong Kong politics.

Chapter 3: The Struggle of Two Major Lines in the Local Youth Radical Movement and the New Formation of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong: 1971-1974

As discussed, by the end of the 1960s, a younger generation in Hong Kong wanted to adequately address existing local problems of social inequalities, injustices, corruption, exploitation, poverty, which had been long-term issues under British rule, and so they strongly demanded socio-political reforms.

They were also inspired by the radical New Left movement in the West.

Different forms of political activism thus began in Hong Kong in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As one form of political activism at the local level,

Trotskyism emerged in Hong Kong.

In 1973, a small number of Hong Kong young left-leaning radicals established two small but vigorous local Trotskyist youth groups, i.e. the *Revolutionary Internationalist League* (RIL) and the *International Young Socialist Alliance* (IYSA), which marked a new start for the Chinese Trotskyist movement outside of Communist China. Why and how did the Trotskyist movement re-emerge in Hong Kong in the 1970s? What sorts of factors stimulated the new formation of Trotskyists there? This chapter aims to explore what important elements precipitated the new emergence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong in the 1970s.

The struggle of two major movement lines: “identifying with the Communist motherland” versus “anti-British colonialism”

First of all, we will investigate the political dynamics of the local youth movement, which affected the development of the new Trotskyists in Hong Kong. In the very early 1970s, along with the global New Left movement, the indigenous struggle regarding movement strategies also had a profound effect on the local youth movement, which radicalised a certain part of Hong Kong students, as well as factionalising and dividing young people who engaged in local reform-inclined activities into various sections. The student movement of “defending the Diaoyu Islands” (in Chinese, we call it Baowei Diaoyutai, in brief, *Baodiao*) is a good example that can epitomise the dynamics and struggles within the local radical youth movement.

In 1970, Japan and the United States reached an agreement that the U.S. government would return the administration of the Ryukyu Islands, including the Diaoyu Islands, to Japan. This agreement immediately provoked anger from overseas Chinese students. They strongly opposed the American resolution, as they insisted that the sovereignty rights to the Diaoyu Islands should belong to China, and this agreement, from their perspective, was “collusion” between the US and Japanese governments. In the US, a considerable number of Chinese students originally from Hong Kong and Taiwan promptly prepared to organise a series of peaceful demonstrations for “defending the Diaoyu Islands”.

A small group of Chinese students at Princeton University and the University of Wisconsin took a lead in organising student protest concerning the

sovereignty problem of the Diaoyu Islands. In late 1970, the first “Defending China’s Diaoyu Islands Action Committee” was founded at Princeton. On January 29th, 1971, more than 500 Chinese students and migrants in San Francisco and 200 Chinese students in Los Angeles participated in a street march to demonstrate their determination to assert China’s sovereignty rights over the Diaoyu Islands. On the following day, the *Baodiao* protest became a nationwide demonstration that occurred in many larger cities in the US, as organised by the different sections of Chinese communities.³⁰⁹

In Hong Kong, the British colonial officials were worried that a majority of Hong Kong Chinese felt “resentful at what they regard as the inferior position in Hong Kong of the Chinese and the Chinese language”, and they further pointed out that “[t]his feeling, linked with Chinese patriotic sentiments, is likely to develop”.³¹⁰ Indeed, when news of peaceful Chinese demonstrations in the US against Japan’s occupation of the Diaoyu Islands reached Hong Kong, this led to Chinese patriotic sentiment amongst a large part of Hong Kong’s younger generation. Following the American demonstrations, from February 1971 to May 1972, a considerable number of Hong Kong students

³⁰⁹ For more details about the *Baodiao* movement in the US, please refer to Kong Deming, “70 niandai ‘Baodiao yundong’ jianjie” (A Brief History of the Baodiao Movement in the 1970s), *Taiwan yanjiu jikan* (The Taiwan Research Journal), no. 1 (1991), pp. 98-100, 104. Zhou Daji and Liu Peibao, “20 shiji 70 niandai Zhongguo liumei xuesheng ‘Baodiao yundong’ shulun” (An Overview of the Baodiao Movement held by Chinese Students in the US in the 1970s), *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* (The Journal of Studies of China’s Resistance War against Japan), no. 3 (2006), pp. 215-249. Lu Minghui, “Liumei xuesheng de ‘Baodiao yundong’ he zuguo heping tongyi” (The Chinese Student Movement of “Defending the Diaoyu Islands” in the US and the Peaceful Reunification of China), *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu* (Overseas Chinese History Studies), no. 4 (2009), pp. 52-60. Liu Yushan, “Shangshiji 70 niandai Taiwan liumei xuesheng de Baodiao yundong” (The Taiwan Students’ Baodiao Movement in the US in the 1970s), *Xiandai Taiwan yanjiu* (Modern Taiwan Studies), no. 3 (2012), pp. 59-62.

³¹⁰ “Anti-British Movement in Hong Kong”, from R.B. Crowson, Hong Kong and Indian Ocean Department to Mr Wilford, Mr Logan, Jul 31st, 1972, p. 3, *HKMS-189-1-229 (FCO40/364)*

and local young people energetically participated in a series of peaceful protests launched by different student and youth organisations aimed at “protecting the Diaoyu Islands”, among which the April 10th protest and the July 7th demonstration in 1971 led to violence. Namely, a crowd of the young protestors were assaulted by the police and dozens of demonstrators were arrested.

Especially in the latter protest, according to the media reports, the anti-riot squad, led by its foreign police superintendents, attacked the young demonstrators with batons. Subsequently, 21 protestors were arrested, 6 were sent to hospital, and two reporters were also hurt by the police’s baton attack.³¹¹ Shortly after the assault on July 7th, in a police report, the police admitted that they used violence when the demonstrators “ignored repeated requests to disperse”.³¹² After those student protest actions, since the anti-Japanese appeals of the young *Baodiao* activists and student participants were not responded to and ignored by the colonial authorities, and since student demonstrators were violently assaulted by the police, students’ unions from different Hong Kong universities and colleges and other *Baodiao* movement groups jointly made a statement to clarify what happened during the demonstrations and to condemn the police brutality and the government’s “anti-human rights behaviours”.³¹³

³¹¹ See: *Hong Kong Standard*, *Kung Sheung Kat Po*, *Commercial Daily*, *Ching Pao* (8/7/71), Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-2-324* (Hong Kong: Public Records Office).

³¹² “Roundup Victoria Park Demonstration”, Police Report No. 19, July 7th, 1971, single-paged, *HKRS 70-2-324*.

³¹³ For example, see “Lianhe Haowai: Baowei Diaoyutai, Qiqi Dashiwei, Xuesheng Xueran Gongyuan” (The Joint Extra: Defending the Diaoyu Islands, July 7th Demonstration, Students’ Blood in Victoria Park), 8/7/1971, p. 2. *HKRS 163-9-717*.

In solidarity with Hong Kong *Baodiao* demonstrators, after the April 10th protest, overseas Chinese students from certain American universities sent open letters to the then Governor of Hong Kong, David Trench, in which the students protested against the colonial government's suppression of the local *Baodiao* demonstrations, and demanded that the Hong Kong government consider the *Baodiao* movement as engaged in a set of legally justified actions, and calling upon it to release the arrested protesters.³¹⁴ In general, the *Baodiao* movement in Hong Kong revealed a strong but unsophisticated and vague nationalistic sentiment amongst elements of the local younger generation, i.e. hatred of Japan and self-recognition of being "Chinese".

During the yearlong *Baodiao* movement in Hong Kong, various sections of the local younger generation participated in and were involved in different sorts of "patriotic" demonstrations, and there were three major youth or student groups that undertook the leading role in organising the *Baodiao* activities, i.e. the *Hong Kong Federation of Students* (HKFS), the *Hong Kong Baodiao Action Committee* (BAC), and the *United Front of the Protection of the Diaoyu Islands* (UF). However, because these groups' political positions were diverse, the *Baodiao* movement was always fragmented in Hong Kong, and there was an internal struggle amongst these *Baodiao* youth organisations. Through analysis of certain sources,³¹⁵ we can discover the distinction between different *Baodiao* factions.

³¹⁴ See Open Letters to the Governor of Hong Kong both in Chinese and English from Chinese Students at Purdue, Arizona, Brown universities, in *HKRS 163-9-717*.

³¹⁵ Please refer to Lei Jingxuan, "Xianggang de diyici baodiao yundong" (The First Movement of "Defending the Diaoyu Islands" in Hong Kong), in *Women zouguo de lu* (The Way We've Passed), ed. Guan Yongqi and Huang Zicheng (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2015), pp. 182–

Firstly, the HKFS was a representative student body having a strong capacity for mobilisation in the circle of Hong Kong universities and colleges. It represented over 10,000 students, and had eight affiliated students' unions including the Hong Kong University Students' Union and the Chinese University Students' Union.³¹⁶ The reason that it involved itself in "the protection of the Diaoyu Islands" was rather simplistic and idealistic. That is to say, despite the fact that the younger generation recognised Hong Kong as their permanent *home*, the HKFS and a sizeable number of university students it represented regarded themselves as patriotic Chinese, and from their unsophisticated nationalistic perspectives, they insisted that the Diaoyu Islands would be a part of China. In its practical actions, the HKFS cautiously avoided getting involved in any past issues of Chinese politics between the Communists and the Nationalists, but this did not last too long.

Apart from the HKFS, the other two leading *Baodiao* groups were overtly political, and they represented two diverse movement lines in their respective *Baodiao* activities that were competing with each other: one attempted to adopt a moderate "non-confrontation" strategy towards the colonial power, while its major aim was to persuade different parts of the younger generation to identify with the "Communist motherland" through the channel of the *Baodiao* movement. On the contrary, the UF opposed the former group's

211. Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing* (Our Work's Not Finished) (Hong Kong: Lewen Bookshop, 1997), pp. 264–69.

³¹⁶ According to British confidential materials, around 1972, the HKFS claimed to represent over 12,000 university and college students and had eight affiliated students' unions. In the 1970s, the HKFS continued to expand. In mid-1975, it was reported that the HKFS represented more than 17,000 students in Hong Kong, which revealed its strong potential for mobilising students. See "Annex A: Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS)", p. 1, *HKRS 934-3-30*. "The Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS)", July 8th, 1975, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

movement line, and its intention in its *Baodiao* activities was to challenge current British rule.

The BAC was a pro-Communist PRC youth organisation, which was formed by a group of writers and readers of pro-PRC patriotic publications and youth magazines, such as *Pan Ku*, who were impressed by the ongoing Cultural Revolution on the mainland. Regarding reforms in Hong Kong, the hard-core members of the BAC believed that only by relying on the development of Communist China and waiting for Hong Kong's return, could the existing socio-political problems of Hong Kong be resolved. Thus, the BAC adopted a movement strategy of "identifying with the Communist motherland" in its *Baodiao* activities, and its members, during the *Baodiao* movement, ardently endorsed the achievements of Chinese Communism since 1949 in public, and put effort into persuading a sizeable number of local students to "embrace" the Communist "motherland" rather than the Nationalist one. In particular, in demonstrations against Japan's administration of the Diaoyu Islands launched by the BAC, the group did not expect any confrontation with the British colonial power, and it often took a moderate stance towards the colonial government to avoid direct confrontation.

Compared to the moderate BAC, the UF organised by the "Seventies" group took a more radical position towards British colonialism. Similarly to the "Seventies", during the *Baodiao* movement, the UF revealed a strong anti-colonial, anti-authoritarian stance. On the one hand, unlike the BAC, the UF and the "Seventies" group rejected Communist rule on the mainland and

regarded the CCP as a “ruling bloc of bureaucracy”;³¹⁷ on the other hand, members of the UF and the “Seventies” considered that only the overthrow of British colonialism would be a viable approach to resolve Hong Kong’s problems. Thus, by conducting the practical work of the *Baodiao* activities, the UF and the “Seventies” manifested an overt anti-colonial position, and their attempt was to challenge the powerful colonial order.

On May 4th, 1971, after the Hong Kong police rejected an application from the members of the “Seventies” to hold a rally at Queen’s Pier, the “Seventies” radicals still decided to carry on with the demonstration to re-emphasise “the Hong Kong young people’s determination to protect the Diaoyu Islands”.³¹⁸ However, the “Seventies” activists were in breach of the law, as they organised an illegal rally that was not allowed by the police authority. Consequently, 12 “illegal” demonstrators who participated in the May 4th rally were placed under arrest, three of whom were editors of the *70’s Biweekly*.³¹⁹ The “Seventies” had attempted to overtly oppose the existing colonial authorities. In the following wave of demonstrations against Japan’s administration of the Diaoyu Islands, the “Seventies” and the UF continued to express such anti-colonial appeals. In the July 7th protest, two young editors of the *70’s Biweekly* were arrested as they, again, engaged in organising an “unlawful assembly”.³²⁰ And on October 25th, in a public statement, while protesting against the political suppression by the colonial administration of

³¹⁷ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing*, p. 267.

³¹⁸ Wu Zhongxian, “Xianggang baowei Diaoyutai yundong de shikuang (The Real Situations of the Protection of the Diaoyu Islands in Hong Kong),” in *Diaoyutai qundao ziliao* (The Reference Materials on the Diaoyu Islands) (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Monthly, 1972), p. 292.

³¹⁹ “Jingwuchu gongbao” (The Daily Bulletin of the Hong Kong Police), 4/5/1971, single-paged, *HKRS 70-2-324*.

³²⁰ “Police Report No.11”, 9/7/1971, single-paged, *HKRS 70-2-324*.

the *Baodiao* demonstration, the UF straightforwardly expressed its anti-colonial political demand:

“Colonialist, we are shouting aloud to awake you: ruse to sabotage the great consolidation of the Chinese People will be completely smashed.”³²¹

As we described above, from mid-1971 onwards, during the *Baodiao* movement and local radical youth activities after it, there was a major two-line competition between a nationalistic line of “identifying with the Communist motherland” advanced by the BAC and other pro-PRC organisations and an overt anti-British colonialist line represented by the “Seventies”, the UF and other radical youth groups amongst a considerable number of Hong Kong students in universities and colleges and local young people who participated in the *Baodiao* movement. Hence, throughout the local radical youth movement in the 1970s, putting a high priority on the anti-colonial activities or putting a priority on the movement of “identifying with China and knowing China” became a focal point of dispute between a certain number of indigenous young people who endorsed the Communist regime and those who doubted its “socialist development” and rejected Communist rule on the mainland.

When the *Baodiao* movement was moving on, Murray MacLehose, who had an ambitious plan for reforming Hong Kong society, succeeded David Trench to become the new Governor of Hong Kong in late 1971. From the early

³²¹ “The Translation of an Open Letter to the Acting Governor of Hong Kong from the H.K Protect Tiaoyutai United Front”, Date of Receipt: Oct 25th, 1971, Date of Translation: Oct 28th, 1971, single-paged, *HKRS 163-9-717*.

1970s, under MacLehose's governorship, a series of social and welfare reforms were pushed forward by the government aiming at maintaining British colonial rule. Nevertheless, inspired by the New Left movement worldwide, various parts of Hong Kong's younger generation mobilised by the *Baodiao* movement saw colonialism as a root cause of Hong Kong's woes, while a considerable number of students who participated in the *Baodiao* demonstrations viewed the colonial power as a repressive force preventing them from seeking a way to social equality and justice, and thus, they wanted to challenge the colonial state and social injustice by means of protest actions.

Gradually, in the 1970s, profoundly affected by a variety of New Left tendencies, criticisms of colonialism and capitalism were regarded as a guiding principle in various parts of the indigenous radical student and youth movement, and under New Left influence, some pioneers of the student movement recognised that the leftist ideologies would help them form their own conceptions and criticisms of colonialism and social injustice.³²² More importantly, the *Baodiao* movement aroused a basic sentiment of Chinese patriotism amongst many Hong Kong youths, and the movement line of "identifying with the Communist motherland" advanced by the BAC and other pro-PRC groups soon became popular among a large number of university and post-secondary students. Later, through many student activities, the pro-PRC groups gained popular support on campuses.

³²² For example, see Li Tingyao, "You xueyun dao sheyun—xianshi jijinzhuyi jueqi" ("From Student Movement to Social Movement—the Rise of Radicalism in Reality"), Guan Yongqi and Huang Zicheng, ed., *Women zouguo de lu* (The Way We've Passed) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2015), pp. 218–22.

Because of a lack of understanding regarding Communist China's complexity, the patriotic line of "identifying with the Communist motherland" seemed attractive to a number of Hong Kong students, and as Helen Siu points out, a part of the younger generation's "restlessness towards social injustice around them and the newly acquired sense of responsibility were fuelled by a renewed curiosity towards a 'motherland' they hardly know".³²³ Particularly, the PRC's admission into the United Nations on October 25th, 1971 was a large stimulus for a sizeable number of local students' interests in the "motherland". Thus, in this context, there is no surprise that a rise of the "Know China" movement soon spread widely on campuses, and the HKFS and its affiliated students' unions shifted their attitudes from a neutral position towards the Communist-Nationalist confrontation to a pro-PRC stance.

In order to meet the increasing number of local students' needs of having a better understanding of the Chinese Communist regime, from mid-1971, several affiliated students' unions of the HKFS organised a variety of "Know China" activities, such as lectures, seminars and student forums on the situation in Communist China, etc. At that moment, a popular pro-PRC "Know China" movement emerged in universities and colleges, which led to a sizeable part of Hong Kong students recognising themselves as Chinese while disseminating pro-PRC propaganda.³²⁴

³²³ Siu also points out that the younger generation's turn to China "was not motivated less by primordial concerns and more by leftist politics worldwide, combined with an almost religious fervour to believe". Helen F. Siu, "Remade in Hong Kong: Weaving Into the Chinese Cultural Tapestry," in *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China*, ed. Tao Tao Liu and David Faure (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), p. 183.

³²⁴ See more details about the "Know China Movement" in the British documents in The "Know China Movement", 20th August 1973, two-page document, The "Know China Movement", 17th December 1973, three-page document, by the Special Branch, Royal Hong

In early December 1971, the Hong Kong University Students' Union decided to organise a tour of the Communist "motherland", which was the first student visit to the mainland made by a Hong Kong student organisation in the 1970s. During the tour, the student representatives from the University of Hong Kong (HKU) had their first impression of Communist China under the impact of the Cultural Revolution, which was mainly positive. By means of talking with patriotic professors and intellectuals who devoted themselves to the scientific and educational construction of the Communist "mother country", and through visiting "socialist achievements" like the main construction projects completed in the "new socialist period" etc., representatives strengthened their patriotic sentiment while they endorsed China's achievements under Chinese Communism. For example, after the HKU delegation returned to Hong Kong, a representative, Mai Huazhang, who later became owner of a local newspaper, said that he firmly believed that the Communist line in China was "correct".³²⁵

The HKU's visit to the mainland was successful. This visit excited students' unions to organise more "Know China" activities aimed at "identifying with the motherland". Between 1972 and 1974, different students' unions, as well as the HKFS organised more trips to the mainland, while more exhibitions and shows on PRC socialist development were displayed in Hong Kong's universities and colleges. Gradually, in the early and mid-1970s, the pro-PRC "Know China" activities became a mainstream movement on campuses, and by involving themselves in such a movement, a large number of Hong Kong

Kong Police. "Know China Movement", , the Office of the City District Commissioner, 28th November 1974, three-page document, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

³²⁵ Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), p. 284.

students deepened their own identity and recognition of being Chinese, and they could be deeply affected by pro-Communist influence.

But the “Know China” movement organised by the students’ unions was not a spontaneous development. In order to change the hostile attitude of the younger generation towards mainland China since the 1967 riots, as well as to grasp an opportunity to advertise the “bright side” of Communist China during the Cultural Revolution, the local pro-PRC groups involved themselves in the student movement. This they did through the “Know China” campaign. Though, as the British observed, there was no clear evidence to demonstrate that local “Communists” controlled the student activities,³²⁶ and it thought that the pro-PRC enthusiasm of students was mainly spontaneous,³²⁷ the British also discovered that there was still a close tie between students’ unions and local “Communist” organisations.³²⁸ According to several colonial government files, it was evident that the pro-PRC groups sponsored the “Know China” student activities and offered the student organisations a range of assistance.³²⁹ By keeping close ties with student organisations and sponsoring their activities, the pro-PRC force indeed exerted pro-Communist influence on the Hong Kong students to some degree. Under the impact of the pro-PRC groups, various groups of students involved themselves in and

³²⁶ J. A. Harrison for Secretary for Security, The “Know China Movement”, 10th Jan 1974, single-paged, *HKRS 890-2-36*. Ki-on Hui, Memo: The “Know China” Movement, from Commissioner of Police to Secretary for Security, 17th Dec 1973, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

³²⁷ The Special Branch of Royal Hong Kong Police, The “Know China Movement”, 20th August 1973, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

³²⁸ J.A. Harrison for Secretary for Security, The “Know China Movement”, 10th Jan 1974, *HKRS 890-2-36*. Ki-on Hui, Memo: The “Know China” Movement, from Commissioner of Police to Secretary for Security, 17th Dec 1973, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

³²⁹ For example, see: The Special Branch of Royal Hong Kong Police, The “Know China” Movement, 17th Dec 1973, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

helped form a relatively strong pro-China student faction on campuses.³³⁰ Between 1973 and 1976, the pro-China faction was active at the level of universities and colleges. About that time, the HKFS and some of its main affiliated students' unions, such as the *Hong Kong University Students' Union* and the *Chinese University Students' Union*, were controlled by the pro-China faction students. Those students also published newspapers, such as the *Undergrad* of the HKU and the *Chinese University Student Newspaper*, as the pro-PRC mouthpieces on campuses. Furthermore, the pro-China faction organised some youth activities outside the campuses and published a range of youth magazines for the public, such as *Pan Ku*, *Youth Knowledge*, and *New Learning Monthly*. In the mid-1970s, without a doubt, the pro-China student faction was a driving force in the local student movement. Pro-PRC nationalism spread by this student group served as a major ideological source of political identity in student circles. Later, this faction also played an important role in launching anti-Trotskyism campaigns on campuses.

In the pro-China faction's activities, on the one hand, it insisted on the student movement line of "identifying with the Communist motherland", and it mainly disseminated positive news of mainland China, which probably aroused more students' interest in the "Know China" movement. On the other hand, drawing a lesson from the 1967 leftist riots, in order to avoid intensifying tension with the colonial government, the pro-PRC groups employed a moderate "non-

³³⁰ For example, the pro-Communist influence on the Hong Kong student movement has been confirmed by some former student activists, such as Li Yi, a former editor of a pro-China youth magazine called "the Seventies". See "Zuotanhui: Xianggang xueyun yu qingnian sichao (A Symposium: The Student Movement and the Thoughts of Youths in Hong Kong)," *The Seventies* (Hong Kong, February 1980), p. 68.

confrontation” policy towards the British power.³³¹ On campuses, the pro-China faction also adopted this moderate strategy in its student work. For example, from some pro-PRC student activists’ point of view, the anti-colonial task would become secondary and subordinate to the agenda of “identifying with the Communist motherland” in the student movement.³³² Later, some young PRC supporters even suggested that Communist China should constitute a “united front bloc” with particular capitalist countries, like Great Britain, against world “hegemonism” represented by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and temporarily give consent to British governance in Hong Kong.³³³ Eventually, by adopting such a “non-confrontation” policy, the anti-colonial position of the pro-China student faction only was a matter of words. From the case of the pro-China faction, we might discover that the pro-PRC stronghold as a whole in Hong Kong indeed made concessions to colonial rule so as to continue its pro-Communist activities in the local area.

However, because the pro-China faction adopted this “non-confrontation” policy, while a number of young pro-PRC activists viewed the political agenda of “identifying with China” as more important than any anti-colonial or anti-government agenda, under the banner of pro-PRC nationalism, diverse demands in the student and youth movement could not be easily articulated.

³³¹ Due to the lack of Communist sources, there is no clear evidence that the Hong Kong Communists officially adopted a so-called “non-confrontation” policy. However, from another angle, materials coming from the colonial administration and student movement can confirm the implementation of such a “non-confrontation” policy advanced by local pro-PRC groups. For example, colonial documentation stated that the connection between pro-Beijing student groups and local Communists, and their “non-confrontation” line “would cause no security problem in the short term”. See Home Affairs and Information Branch, “Note of a Meeting of the Steering Group on Student Affairs Held on Friday, 25th October 1974”, five-page document, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

³³² For example, see *Pan Ku*, June 6th, 1972, p 5.

³³³ *Pan Ku*, Nov 1st, 1975, pp. 11-17; Jan 1st, 1976, pp. 33-36.

Thus, the line of “identifying with China” could not meet all needs of various sections of the younger generation.

Moreover, the whole picture of the Hong Kong radical youth movement in the early 1970s cannot be observed only through examining the pro-China student faction and its pro-PRC line of “identifying with China”; the variety of indigenous radical youth groups and other movement lines adopted by separate groups also need to be taken into account. For example, a small part of local New Left-inclined young radicals who engaged in the *Baodiao* movement found out that the anti-British colonialist line was also a substantial struggle strategy of the youth movement, and they adopted this movement line, which competed with the pro-PRC line of “identifying with China”. Unlike the pro-China student faction, the UF, the “Seventies”, and other youth groups were profoundly sceptical of the rise of the “Know China” movement among students. As mentioned above, during the *Baodiao* movement, these groups did not recognise the pro-PRC strategy of “identifying with China” as a solution to Hong Kong’s existing socio-political problems, but they insisted that the crux of local problems was mainly caused by British colonialism. Thus, to change the status quo of Hong Kong colonial society, compared with a policy of the “non-confrontation” with the British administration employed by the pro-PRC groups, these groups adopted a more radical approach, i.e. fighting against colonialism in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, from an anti-colonial stance, not only did several members of these groups consistently look at the pro-PRC groups’ and the pro-China student faction’s “non-confrontation” strategy with scepticism, but also they bluntly questioned whether a pro-PRC groups, which only attempted to disseminate pro-PRC propaganda and to

advertise its agenda of “identifying with China”, was a progressive force in the local socio-political movement. For instance, Wu Zhongxian, one of leading figures of the “Seventies”, from his anti-colonial position, sharply condemned the pro-PRC groups’ “non-confrontation” policy and accused it of playing a “reactionary” role in the Hong Kong political struggle, which, as he said, was “left-wing in form but right-wing in essence”.³³⁴

In the meantime, concerning existing social problems at the local level, a group of students during the *Baodiao* movement tended to pay more attention to local change, and they wanted to pragmatically promote social reforms for a better Hong Kong society. In their eyes, the stronger pro-China faction in the student circle showed insufficient interest in handling local issues but mainly called for the recognition of the PRC “motherland”. As a result, this aroused dissatisfaction from reform-oriented students who cared more about local change. Later, they formed an “actionist group” in opposition to the pro-China faction in the universities.³³⁵

Though the *Baodiao* movement gradually subsided in 1972, the competition between the pro-PRC line of “identifying with China” and the anti-colonial struggle strategy continued. Different orientations of the local youth movement, i.e. involvement in “Know China” activities, promoting local reforms, or continuing to fight against British colonialism, led distinct youth groups to choose different struggle options. Eventually, the struggle of

³³⁴ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing*, p. 205.

³³⁵ See this internal rivalry within the Hong Kong student movement in the 1970s between pro-China faction and “actionist” group in Benjamin Leung, “The Student Movement in Hong Kong: Transition to a Democratizing Society”, in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, ed. by Stephen Wing Kai Chiu and Tai-lok Lui (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), pp. 215-217.

movement lines factionalised a considerable number of students and young activists, and divided them into different parts of the radical youth movement. For example, by adopting the pro-PRC line of “identifying with China”, a majority of student activists chose to engage in the “Know China” activities and helped form the pro-China student faction, while another group of young New Left-inclined activists who insisted on an anti-colonial position chose to go abroad so as to gain experience of socio-political movements from an international outlook and to exchange ideas with Western leftists, which subsequently precipitated the re-emergence of Chinese Trotskyism in Hong Kong.

The new formation of Trotskyists in Hong Kong—A Trotskyist shift in the circle of local young radicals

Compared to the tiny existence of the Chinese Trotskyists who retreated to Hong Kong in the 1950s, the resurgence of Trotskyists in Hong Kong in the 1970s was a new political phenomenon profoundly affected by the Western New Left movement adapted to the context of colonial Hong Kong.

Trotskyism provided a theoretical basis and an ideological weapon for a small group of local New Left-inclined radicals to stage their political activities in expressing critiques against, and discontent with British colonialism and Chinese Communism, challenging both the colonial power and the pro-PRC presence. In the following sections, we will explore why Trotskyism was “attractive” to a certain group of local young radicals and made them recognise themselves as Trotskyists.

1 The Seventies activists' "journey" to the West

This section will discuss how those young Hong Kong radicals who went to the West later became Trotskyists. But it is also important to note that by the early 1970s some old Trotskyists were once again becoming active, which is discussed in the next section.

First of all, we might return to the point of the New Left influence on a part of Hong Kong's younger generation in the 1970s. At that time, various thoughts of diverse New Left tendencies, ranging from the Frankfurt School, existentialism, anarchism, Maoism, to Trotskyism, etc. were not only influential and popular throughout the Western radical youth movement, but they also created an impact on a portion of Hong Kong's younger generation. It is interesting to note that unlike traditional leftist ideologies which were influenced by Stalin's version of socialism, New Left ideology was not bound to "Stalinist" orthodoxy. As Grant Farred points out, the New Left "was determinedly anti-Party bureaucracy and committed to renovating and democratising the socialist project", and it "was shaped by a renovated socialism, an anti-Stalinist politics that believed in an ideologically reconfigured and newly mobile and empowered working class".³³⁶ That is to say, the New Left movement in general was to renovate "socialist democracy" and to reconfigure the theory of "proletariat", while it tended to be in opposition to the Soviet style of bureaucratic politics.

Additionally, as most New Left tendencies contained anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist ideological elements, they gained support from various action-

³³⁶ Grant Farred, "Endgame Identity? Mapping the New Left Roots of Identity Politics," *New Literary History* 31, no. 4, 2000: pp. 633–34.

oriented and reform-inclined youth groups in Hong Kong. Hence, from different points of view, distinct youth radical groups would readily accept a particular New Left tendency, ranging from Maoism (i.e. pro-PRC nationalism in a Hong Kong context), anarchism, to Trotskyism, as an ideological-political source of inspiration that could provide them an ideological weapon to organise a particular socio-political movement which would meet their ideological-political needs. Through the “Know China” activities, a large number of university students who engaged in the *Baodiao* movement joined the pro-China faction, while they accepted pro-PRC nationalism as their own ideological source of political identity in the student movement. On the contrary, as described in the last chapter, after the 1967 pro-Communist riots, there was an increasing dislike of Chinese Communism amongst a majority of Hong Kong ordinary people. Under this influence, a crowd of the New Left-inclined youth movement activists took the view that as an ideological source, pro-PRC nationalism or Maoism resembled the Stalin/Soviet version of socialism, which also represented an absolute authoritarian order. As shown above, when participating in the *Baodiao* movement, various groups of student activists and young radicals at the grassroots level questioned the pro-PRC line of “identifying with China” and the pro-China faction’s “non-confrontation” strategy. For them, pro-PRC nationalism was not an ideological option to resolve Hong Kong’s socio-political issues. To meet various political-ideological needs of their own, they had to seek solutions from other ideological sources.

As also demonstrated in the last chapter, in 1970, the small *70’s Biweekly* group emerged in local politics and played a dominant role in disseminating a

variety of New Left thinking in Hong Kong. More importantly, the “Seventies” group was profoundly impacted by anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment views stemming from the ideological source of anarchism. Why would a group of “Seventies” activists readily accept anarchism as their ideological source of political identity?

During the rise of the radical youth movement in Hong Kong, the “Seventies” members judged the British ruling power to be a repressive force, and they wanted to challenge the colonial order. With their anti-establishment “instincts”, it was impossible for them to politically stand with the pro-PRC groups and pro-China student faction, since these groups had adopted a “non-confrontation” policy towards the colonial power.

As for the origin of Chinese anarchism, Arif Dirlik points out, “anarchists demand our attention, not for who they were or what they accomplished, but because against a revolutionary strategy that presupposed a necessary compromise of revolutionary goals in order to confront the demands of immediate political necessity, they reaffirmed a revolutionary consciousness that provides an indispensable critical perspective from the Left on the unfolding of the Chinese revolution.”³³⁷ Dirlik’s words might also describe the emergence of the “Seventies” group’s pro-anarchist activities in the context of Hong Kong during the early 1970s. As Dirlik states, the reason that anarchist elements attracted a small group of the “Seventies” radicals was possibly because anarchist elements from the New Left movement, in the conditions of the Hong Kong political struggle, addressed an uncompromised and clear

³³⁷ Arif. Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (University of California Press, 1991), p. 198.

anti-establishment principle against colonialism, capitalism and imperialism. Consequently, an anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist “consciousness” reaffirmed by anarchist principles inspired a number of “Seventies” radicals to challenge the colonial status quo, and provided them with an ideological critique of the repressive colonial system.³³⁸

Nevertheless, a few other “Seventies” activists still had an interest in finding other ideological sources to help them shape political identities and further their political activities. As the *Baodiao* movement gradually subsided, in order to gain their own experience in the New Left movement and learn something more from various New Left tendencies from the Western world, a small group of young radicals, mainly from the “Seventies”, began their new political “journey” to the West. Some of them went to Canada, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Norway and Britain. Since late 1971, they had been in close contact with radical left-wing groups in these Western countries when they stayed.³³⁹ A majority chose France as their next destination. Why France? Audrey Tin, a member of the “Seventies” at that moment, perfectly answered this question:

“First, it was much easier to get into France than either the US or Britain.

Second, the 1968 revolution seemed to bode well for learning

³³⁸ See a handful of the “Seventies” activists’ pro-anarchist position, for example, in the Editorial Board of the *70’s Biweekly*, “Gei Geng Xin jun de gongkai fuxin (A Reply to Geng Xin),” in *70niandai wang hechu qu?* (Where is the 70’s Biweekly Going?) (Hong Kong: Chunyan Press, n.d.), pp. 35–49.

³³⁹ “Hong Kong Marxists and European Connection”, *Sunday Post-Herald* (SCMP), Sep 22nd, 1974.

something. Third, there was simply the ‘romantic’ attraction of France.”³⁴⁰

During their stay in France, several “Seventies” radicals got in direct contact with French Trotskyists and subsequently linked up with a French Trotskyist organisation, the *Ligue Communiste*. This was banned by the French government in June 1973, but re-established in 1974 as *La Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire* (LCR), which was one of the largest regular sections of the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI); the LCR was led by Alain Krivine, who was a “heroic” figure in the 1968 “revolt”.³⁴¹ By keeping in touch with the *Ligue*, the “Seventies” radicals in France learnt a large range of extensive information on the political development of the Trotskyist movement. For example, according a founder who was also a leading figure of the “Seventies”, Wu Zhongxian, when he stayed in France from January to May 1973, he spent most of his time with the *Ligue* Trotskyists.³⁴² After Wu received a range of information about French Trotskyist politics, he wrote a few short articles to introduce the present *Ligue*’s activities, which were immediately published in some Hong Kong student newspapers in 1973.³⁴³ Meanwhile, during Wu’s stay in Paris, he

³⁴⁰ An interview with Audrey Tin on November 19th, 1976 by Joseph Miller, cited in Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 17, unpublished.

³⁴¹ See more details about the LCR in A. Belden. Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States* (Autonomedia, 1988), pp. 49–64.

³⁴² “An Interview with Wu Zhongxian” taken by Joseph Miller, in Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 27.

³⁴³ See Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing*, pp. 556–69.

sometimes arranged meetings between the “Seventies” fellows and the leading Trotskyists from the *Ligue*, such as Pierre Frank.³⁴⁴

After a period of communication and discussion with French Trotskyists, a group of the “Seventies” activists in France began to recognise that Trotskyism could provide them with a concrete theoretical framework which might meet their ideological-political tastes, particularly, their anti-establishment emphasis: The PRC continued to adhere to Stalinism whereas Trotskyism conceived of Stalinism as its major ideological-political opponent alongside the capitalist class. International Trotskyists had understood “Stalinist” politics as responsible for destroying the “workers’ state” and sabotaging the “socialist democracy” established in the 1917 Russian Revolution. All of this immensely appealed to the Hong Kong radicals in their struggle against both PRC and British colonial authoritarianism.

To “restore the workers’ state” in the Soviet Union as well as to globally promote an anti-capitalist political struggle, an international Trotskyist organisation, the *Fourth International* (FI) was established in 1938. Though, from then on, there were a vast number of distinct international Trotskyist organisations that emerged worldwide, the Trotskyist force as a whole remained powerless and marginal in world politics. Nevertheless, the fundamental ideological position of international Trotskyists against both capitalism and Soviet style of socialism was consistent.

³⁴⁴ Cen Jianxun (He Ren): *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan* (The Experience I worked for *October Review*), Sep 12th, 1978, p. 1. Pierre Frank (1905-1984): A French Trotskyist. In the 1970s, he served as a member of the leadership of the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI).

The “Seventies” radicals in France shared an intense anti-colonial, anti-capitalist sentiment. Trotskyism, with its anti-bureaucratic, anti-“Stalinist”, anti-capitalist principles, was a perfect ideological “ideal” for them because it largely suited their youthful mentality of rebellion against the establishment.

After the collapse of the *Baodiao* movement, a few “Seventies” activists recognised that if their movement wanted to gain popular support and develop its anti-establishment radical activities, it would need to mobilise mass participation. They began to view indigenous working people as the backbone of Hong Kong’s socio-political movement at the grassroots, because it seemed that local industrial “proletariat” had become a concrete class force. At that time, local manufacturing industry was one of the main contributors to Hong Kong’s economic growth, with nearly 50% local labour force working in manufacturing.³⁴⁵ Particularly, in late 1971, while supporting a local blind workers’ struggle against “capitalist and colonialist exploitation”, in the magazine articles of the 70’s *Biweekly*, some young radical writers strongly perceived that there was a rise of an indigenous workers’ movement for better working conditions. They further stressed the importance of solidarity with local workers in an anti-colonial social movement.³⁴⁶ Later, Wu Zhongxian suggested that the “Seventies” and the UF should attempt to encourage local young working people to join and support their radical activities, while the radical groups should also learn more from the past and present situations of Hong Kong workers. They should communicate with

³⁴⁵ England and Rear calculated that in 1971, 47.4% of Hong Kong’s workforce was employed in the manufacturing industry. J. England and J. Rear, *Industrial Relations and Law in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 36.

³⁴⁶ See *70’s Biweekly*, Dec 1971, pp. 2-3.

local workers and support the workers' struggle in particular labour disputes.³⁴⁷

Unlike various New Left tendencies in the West and in Maoist China that downplayed the role of the industrial proletariat, or showed no interest in reclaiming the essence of the working-class power, international Trotskyists consistently asserted the leading role of the "proletariat" in the leftist movement based on orthodox Marxist principles. Trotskyist groups insisted that only the working-class power could act as the "motor of historical change". Thus, an exclusive focus on the workers' movement became a fundamental principle in the theoretical structure of Trotskyism throughout the history of the international Trotskyist movement.³⁴⁸

As the Trotskyists' exclusive focus on the proletariat could meet what the group of the "Seventies" radicals hoped for in their future movement, they paid more attention to education in Trotskyist theory. Under Trotskyist direction, the "Seventies" radicals came to the conclusion that, in order to fulfil their political ambition of challenging the colonial status quo, the education

³⁴⁷ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing*, pp. 211–12.

³⁴⁸ As Benton points out, in the past Trotskyist movement in China, the older generation of Trotskyists "vested their main hopes and exclusive effort in the urban proletariat". See: Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 111. Indeed, in the history of Chinese Trotskyism prior to 1952, the first generation of Trotskyists affirmed the essential leading role of the Chinese industrial proletariat in the upcoming Chinese socialist revolution in their political programme. Therefore, in their political practice, it put an exclusive focus on the workers' struggle. In the major Chinese industrial cities, such as Shanghai and Hong Kong, they established Trotskyist party branches in factory areas aimed at organising labour activities. For example, see: "Zhongguo gongchandang zuopai fandui pai gangling" (the Programme of the Left-Opposition of the Chinese Communist Party), from Chen Duxiu, *Chen Duxiu wannian zhuzuo xuan* (The Collected Works of Chen Duxiu in His Later Years) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), pp. 108–18. Liu Pingmei, *Zhongguo tuopai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism) (Hong Kong: Marxist Internet Archive, 2005). Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014. Zhang Yun, *Zhang Yun Interview*, Aug 20th, 2014.

and mobilisation of the Hong Kong working class would be an essential task of their radical activities.

Many “Seventies” radicals were not only individually attracted by Trotskyist theory from the texts, but they were also inspired by a political interest in Trotskyist practice during the New Left movement. According to Li Huaiming, a key member of the “Seventies” who later became a Trotskyist, during his study of Trotskyism in the West, he was impressed by the key figures of the Trotskyist pioneers in the 1968 “revolt”, such as Ernest Mandel, Alain Krivine and Daniel Bensaid, who energetically and fully devoted themselves to the Western Trotskyist movement.³⁴⁹

Consequently, the “journey” to the West of many Hong Kong radicals, especially those who went to France, triggered an ideological shift to Trotskyism. On the one hand, Trotskyism helped the young Hong Kong radicals form their own anti-colonial, anti-capitalist movement; and on the other hand, Trotskyism as a dissident ideology provided them with the tools to question the pro-PRC movement line with a critical perspective on the “Stalinist” nature of the Chinese Communist regime and challenge the dominant position of the pro-PRC groups within the Left through adopting a Trotskyist position.

Before the “Seventies” radicals in France returned to Hong Kong in 1973, within their organisation, Trotskyism had become an ideological mainstream of the “Seventies” members. However, the pro-anarchist activists within the group did not want to turn the 70’s *Biweekly* into a platform for disseminating

³⁴⁹ Li Huaiming, *Li Huaiming Interview*, June 14th, 2014.

Trotskyist ideology. According to Li Huaiming, in 1973, the “Seventies” editorial board convened a meeting in Paris to discuss whether Trotskyism or anarchism would be the guiding ideology of the “Seventies”, and as a result, the pro-Trotskyist wing of the “Seventies” won the debate.³⁵⁰ Moreover, according to the recollection of the eminent Japanese Trotskyist activist Sakai Yochishi, after communicating with French Trotskyists, Wu Zhongxian and a few others from the “Seventies” also established a “collaborative link” between the Brussels office of the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI) and a small group of Hong Kong Trotskyist-leaning radicals. What is more, Wu stopped in Tokyo on his return journey from Europe to Hong Kong, where he directly contacted the *Japanese Revolutionary Communist League* (JRCL), the Japanese section of the USFI, which was the largest national branch in East Asia, hoping to build a contact network between the Japanese Trotskyist organisation and Hong Kong pro-Trotskyist radicals.³⁵¹ Moreover, after the “Seventies” members returned to Hong Kong in 1973, some of them immediately identified themselves as Trotskyists. For example, Wu Zhongxian claimed that he and three other young radicals who returned from Paris joined the USFI.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Li Huaiming, *Li Huaiming Interview, June 14th, 2014*. This meeting is also mentioned in a documentary film: Evans Chan, *Wu Zhongxian de gushi* (The Stories of Wu Zhongxian) (Hong Kong, 2004). However, there is one thing that is different from Li’s recollections: this meeting was not called for by the editorial board of the *70’s Biweekly*, but as a general meeting of the “Seventies” French branch. Nevertheless, most key members of the “Seventies” attended this meeting, including Mo Zhaoru, one of the founders and key leaders of the “Seventies”, who flew to Paris just for the meeting.

³⁵¹ Sakai Yochishi, *My FI Activities towards Hong Kong and Macao* (Tokyo, 2015), single-paged. Also, a Hong Kong English newspaper, *South China Morning Post*, mentioned the international link between the newer generation of Trotskyists in Hong Kong and Japanese Trotskyists. See: “Hong Kong Marxists and European Connection”, *Sunday Post-Herald*, Sep 22nd, 1974, and “The New Left in Hong Kong”, Jan 10th, 1975, p. 7, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

³⁵² Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 27.

In the second quarter of 1973, despite its small size, the “Seventies” remained a dominant New Left group in Hong Kong, which ideologically recognised both anarchism and Trotskyism as the group’s guiding ideologies. However, the “harmony” between the pro-anarchist wing and pro-Trotskyist wing within the “Seventies” did not last too long. After Wu Zhongxian returned from Europe, he used the “Seventies” postal address as a means of contact with the USFI, where the International’s documents and letters would be received.³⁵³ However, some pro-anarchist members, such as Fu Lubing and Jian Furong, discovered Wu’s actions, and they did not accept that Wu had the right to use the postal address of the “Seventies” for this purpose. This discontent with Wu Zhongxian within the “Seventies” showed that the pro-anarchists could not tolerate the propagation of Trotskyism among the “Seventies” members. Hence, an organisational split in the “Seventies” was inevitable. As Wu Zhongxian and his close comrades wanted to stand for a clearer Trotskyist position, around May or June 1973, Wu decided to lead a small group of the Trotskyist-inclined activists to split off from the “Seventies”, and founded a new independent Trotskyist youth group in Hong Kong, named the *Revolutionary Internationalist League* (RIL). And around September, for a similar purpose, Li Huaiming led a dozen of the “Seventies” members to leave the group. With the assistance of the older generation of Trotskyists in Hong Kong, they established another small Trotskyist organisation called the *International Young Socialist Alliance* (IYSA).

³⁵³ Zhong Yaohua, *Meiyou yichan de qishi niandai - Hou Wanyun* (An Interview with Hou Wanyun), *Initium Media*, Hong Kong, Sep 2nd, 2015: <<https://theinitium.com/article/20150905-opinion-houmanwan-a/>>. And see Mo Zhaoru’s recollection in Evans Chan, *Wu Zhongxian de gushi* (The Stories of Wu Zhongxian).

As well as those who had become Trotskyists in the West, a number of individuals eventually decided to shift their position to Trotskyism once they had returned to Hong Kong. Hence, a new generation of Trotskyists in Hong Kong had taken shape, and from mid-1973, the new formation of Trotskyist movement began to emerge in Hong Kong's political arena.

2 The efforts of the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists in exile

In addition, the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists who had left mainland China exerted a Trotskyist impact on some Hong Kong young radical activists. This contributed to the new emergence of Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong.

In the very early 1970s, the rise of Hong Kong's New Left youth movement attracted the attention of a small group of old Chinese Trotskyists who had settled in Hong Kong and Macao. As the "Seventies" group played a dominant role in disseminating various New Left ideas and in organising anti-establishment protests in the local radical youth movement, several old Chinese Trotskyists wanted to exert a Trotskyist influence upon the "Seventies" activists by contacting and communicating with them. These veteran Trotskyists viewed the 70's *Biweekly*, as a good communication platform of exchange with the new generation of radicals. As contributors, they provided their own Trotskyist analysis to this radical magazine.

For example, in an issue published in October 1971, an old Trotskyist, Xiang Qing, brought out an article regarding the next step of the *Baodiao* movement. From a Trotskyist perspective, Xiang stressed that the central problem of the Communist regime on the mainland was the "bureaucratic

dictatorship". He suggested that the task of student protestors in the *Baodiao* movement should be to call for "socialist democracy" and universal suffrage in China instead of promoting pro-PRC nationalism.³⁵⁴ Moreover, in order to persuade the anarchist-inclined "Seventies" radicals to look into Trotskyist theory, Wang Fanxi, a prominent exiled Chinese Trotskyist, wrote a long open letter to the 70's *Biweekly* in late 1971, in which he sharply criticised the "Seventies" members' pro-anarchist position. In his letter, on the one hand, Wang, from his Trotskyist point of view, made a critique of the anti-class struggle principles of anarchism, whilst he listed a number of renowned anarchists in Russia and China who had "betrayed" the revolution to warn the "Seventies" radicals to keep distance from involving themselves in the anarchist movement; on the other hand, Wang expected the "Seventies" members to deepen their understanding of Trotskyism, and so, he briefly introduced Trotsky's analysis on the Soviet "bureaucracy".³⁵⁵ In response to Wang, the "Seventies" editorial board drafted a reply, which, while largely agreeing with the Trotskyist analysis on "Stalinist bureaucracy" in the Soviet Union and China, insisted on their pro-anarchist viewpoint, and endorsed the autonomy of the anarchist movement during the 1917 Russian Revolution.³⁵⁶

Nevertheless, a few old Trotskyists did not abandon efforts to exert an impact on local New Left-leaning radicals. Through personal contacts, some local

³⁵⁴ Xiang Qing, "Baowei Diaoyutai yundong wang hechuqu?" (Where is the Protection of Diaoyu Islands Going?) *70's Biweekly* (Hong Kong, October 1971), pp. 10–12.

³⁵⁵ Geng Xin (Wang Fanxi), "70 niandai wang nali qu? (Where is the "Seventies" Group Going?), Dec 1971", in *70niandai wang hechu qu?* (Where is the 70's Biweekly Going?) (Hong Kong: Chunyan Press, n.d.), pp. 1–34.

³⁵⁶ The Editorial Board of the 70's Biweekly, "Gei Geng Xin jun de gongkai fuxin" (A Reply to Geng Xin), in *70niandai wang hechu qu?* (Where is the 70's Biweekly Going?) (Hong Kong: Chunyan Press, n.d.), pp. 35–49.

radicals would acquire knowledge of Trotskyism from old Trotskyists. For example, Lou Guohua, a veteran Trotskyist and Wang Fanxi's close comrade in Hong Kong, always brought Trotsky's books translated by the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists to the "Seventies" members.³⁵⁷

Though Wang Fanxi, Xiang Qing and other old Trotskyists tried to exert a Trotskyist impact on the "Seventies" members, they were not much affected by the older generation of Trotskyists until a group of them went abroad.³⁵⁸ As shown above, while a plenty of the "Seventies" activists went to France to learn some more from the Western New Left movement, not only did they get in close touch with French Trotskyists, but also some core "Seventies" members had direct contact with a key figure in the history of Chinese Trotskyism, Peng Shuzhi, who stayed in Paris as a delegate of the Chinese USFI section. Peng also played a key role in disseminating Trotskyist ideas amongst the young "Seventies" activists in France.

According to a former "Seventies" activist, Cen Jianxun (Johnny Shum),³⁵⁹ during their stay in France, three "Seventies" members, Wu Zhongxian, and Wu Jialin and Cen himself, decided to visit Peng and consulted him on a range of historical and theoretical questions on the history of the Chinese

³⁵⁷ Cen Jianxun, *Cen Jianxun Interview*, June 16th, 2014. Xiang Qing also mentioned the personal contact between Lou Guohua and the "Seventies" radicals. Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, August 17th, 2014.

³⁵⁸ See "An interview with Audrey Tin" on November 19th, 1976 by Joseph Miller, cited in Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 16. Li Huaiming, *Li Huaiming Interview*, June 14th, 2014. Later, in 1976, Xiang Qing admitted that the "Seventies" radicals were much more influenced by foreign Trotskyists rather than old Chinese Trotskyists, see Xiang Qing, "Qishi niandai qingnian jijinhua yundong de lailongqumai" (The Cause and Effect of the Youth Radical Movement in the 1970s), *Xinmiao*, 1976, <http://www.xinmiao.com.hk/0002/1301-0001T.htm>.

³⁵⁹ Cen Jianxun (1952-): In the 1970s, Cen was deeply involved in the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong. He was the founder of the *Re-awaken* group, a small pro-Trotskyist youth faction in Britain, which merged into the RML in 1978. Later, he disengaged from the RML and became a well-known comedian in the 1980s in Hong Kong. He is currently a film maker.

revolution and the Soviet dispute regarding the 1925-27 Chinese revolution between Stalin's majority and Trotsky's Left-Opposition. After constant communication and discussion with Peng, the three deepened their individual understanding of Trotskyism and its criticism of "Stalinism".³⁶⁰ Meanwhile, learning from Peng, Wu, Cen and others came to understand that there was already a small Trotskyist group founded by Peng, the *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RCP), in Hong Kong.³⁶¹ Under Peng's influence, a few "Seventies" activists in France gradually shifted their ideological-political positions to Trotskyism to some degree.

Later, according to Peng, at his recommendation, Wu Zhongxian, Cen Jianxun and Wu Jialin joined the RCP.³⁶² In the meantime, while being in close contact with French Trotskyists and Peng Shuzhi in France, several "Seventies" activists, such as Wu Zhongxian, also kept in touch with Wang Fanxi and exchanged on, there was an opinions with each other via correspondence.³⁶³ Despite the later animosity between Peng Shuzhi and a few Hong Kong radicals, such as Wu Zhongxian, who identified themselves as Trotskyists, regarding the USFI's internal disputes and other issues,³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Cen Jianxun, *Cen Jianxun Interview*, June 16th, 2014.

³⁶¹ Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 27. According to Cen, before going to France, they were not informed that there was a Chinese Trotskyist group existing in Hong Kong. Cen Jianxun (He Ren), *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan* (The Experience I worked for *October Review*), Sep 12th, 1978, p. 3.

³⁶² Peng recalled that the three young radicals "asked that we sponsor them for membership in the RCP". Peng Shuzhi, *A Letter from Peng Shuzhi to Joseph Miller*, June 29th, 1977, translated in English by Miller, pp. 2-3. However, according to Cen Jianxun, they did not ask for joining the RCP, but Peng suggested them to join. Further, Cen recollected that Wu Zhongxian later self-withdrew from the RCP, because he recognised that the RCP members under a strong influence of Peng Shuzhi were actually "discriminating" against him when he returned to Hong Kong for organising the Trotskyist youth work. Cen Jianxun (He Ren), *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan*, p. 1, 3.

³⁶³ For example, see Joseph Miller, 1976, p. 27.

³⁶⁴ See more details in Chapter 6.

from late 1972 to early 1973, Peng did exert his influence on a handful of the “Seventies” members, and persuaded them to look into Trotskyism.

Furthermore, during their communication and discussion with Peng Shuzhi, Wang Fanxi, and other leading Chinese Trotskyists from the older generation, a handful of the “Seventies” radicals might learn the political pursuit of “socialist democracy” in Trotskyism from the old Chinese Trotskyists.

Following Trotsky’s theoretical views, the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists believed that socialism could not be built up in one country, and the Communist regime in China under Mao Zedong was bureaucratic, having abandoned the principle of “socialist democracy” in its revolutionary practice.³⁶⁵ Most surviving Chinese Trotskyists from the older generation wanted to preserve democratic values in their Trotskyist vision of socialism. Amongst them, Wang Fanxi was a key Trotskyist figure who consistently addressed the democratic problem in socialist practice. During his exile in Macao since 1949, he devoted time reconsidering the relationship between democracy and socialism when looking back into the past of the Chinese Communist and Trotskyist movements. He once summarised that under the “proletarian dictatorship”, the organs of the dictatorship must be democratically elected by the toilers and under electors’ supervision; further, the organs of government should be separated to “prevent the emergence of an autocracy or monocacy”. More importantly, under socialism, various democratic rights including “habeas corpus; freedom of speech; the press; assembly; and association; the right to strike, etc.” must be protected.

³⁶⁵ For example, see Peng Shu-tse, *Chinese Communist Party in Power* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980). Wang Fanxi, *Mao Zedong sixiang lungao* (On Mao Zedong Thought) (Hong Kong: Xinmiao Press, 2003).

Additionally, as long as they support the socialist revolution, all political parties whether they are in power or in the opposition, should be allowed to exist, and different factions within the political parties should be tolerated.³⁶⁶

Compared to the dominant ideology of pro-PRC nationalism in the Hong Kong student movement, the old Chinese Trotskyists' reflections on "socialist democracy" seemed to offer a handful of Hong Kong radicals an alternative way to understand the nature of the Communist regime in China from a different ideological angle. Later, when a majority of the "Seventies" radicals identified themselves as Chinese Trotskyists, they also put effort into pursuing "socialist democracy" for China in their subsequent Trotskyist activities.

Above all, profoundly influenced by the Trotskyist element in the West as well as by the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists, a small group of the anti-authoritarian young radicals from Hong Kong recognised that Trotskyism contained an "anti-capitalist establishment" programme, an ideological critique of "Stalinist bureaucracy", an exclusive focus on the workers' movement, and a pursuit of "socialist democracy", etc., and this would meet their ideological-political needs and justify their rejection of Chinese Communism and anti-colonialism.³⁶⁷ Consequently, after personal considerations, a majority of radical activists from the small "Seventies" group

³⁶⁶ See the original Chinese version, please refer to Wang Fanxi, *Cong Chen Duxiu de zuihou yijian shuoqi* (On Chen Duxiu's "Last Views"), 1957, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/wangfanxi/marxist.org-chinese-wong-1950.htm>.

See the English translation in Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952*, pp. 76–77. Wang Fanxi, "Seven Theses on Socialism and Democracy", in *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire, China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942-1989*, ed. by Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 101-103.

³⁶⁷ According to some former Hong Kong Trotskyist activists, they recollected that the Trotskyist theoretical explanations were "persuasive" to them in the 1970s. See: *An Interview with Ou Longyu*, Aug 18th, 2014. *An Interview with Liang Yaozhong*, Jun 13th, 2014.

identified with Trotskyist ideology, and by making use of Trotskyism as a weapon to justify their anti-establishment political demands, a group of young New Left-inclined radicals entered the Hong Kong political arena. Meanwhile, they wanted to undertake a crucial role in local socio-political movements in the very near future.

As shown above, the organisational establishment of the two Trotskyist youth groups, i.e. the RIL and the IYSA, in Hong Kong indicated that a new Trotskyist movement and a newer generation of Chinese Trotskyists emerged at the indigenous level of Hong Kong politics. Because it was a political tradition in the past Chinese Trotskyist movement to establish its own press, and by circulating newspapers and other publications, Trotskyist ideas could be propagated and delivered to the local working people. A handful of Trotskyists from the older generation took the view that the establishment of the press was a central task for the new emergence of Hong Kong Trotskyist activities at that juncture.³⁶⁸

As a result, on January 5th, 1974, the hard-core of the IYSA, with financial assistance coming from the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists, began to operate a Trotskyist press and to publish a new Trotskyist periodical, *October Review*, in Hong Kong. The *October Review* became a propaganda mouthpiece for articulating what Trotskyism is, and what its political strategies in Hong Kong should be.³⁶⁹ In February and March 1974, the RIL led by Wu Zhongxian, joined the editorial work of the *October Review* to edit the second

³⁶⁸ *Xiang Qing Interview*, August 17th, 2014.

³⁶⁹ Later, *October Review* became a public mouthpiece of the RCP in the mid-1970s.

and third issues under cooperation with the IYSA.³⁷⁰ In addition, the RIL published its own mimeographed tabloid, the *Daily Combat Bulletin*, as another Trotskyist propaganda platform.³⁷¹ Though any Trotskyist press, at the moment, was illegal unless a registration fee of HKD 10,000 would be paid to the colonial administration,³⁷² young Trotskyists from both groups took advantage of the loose social environment under Murray MacLehose's governorship to continue publishing. In their publications, the Trotskyist writers from the older and newer generation eagerly introduced political affairs and leftist movements worldwide and clearly expressed their Trotskyist standpoint, while sending an anti-establishment message to the colonial government and the pro-PRC groups. Subsequently, the colonial administration began to pay its attention to the new emergence of the Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong and this propaganda work. The colonial authorities evidently regarded that the Trotskyist propaganda from the *Daily Combat Bulletin* "has at times been extremely inflammatory".³⁷³

The Trotskyists' anti-colonial, and anti-Communist PRC positions were not only present in words by means of publishing, but were also reflected in certain political actions. The younger generation of Trotskyists intended to undertake a vanguard role in organising the local socio-political movements.

³⁷⁰ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing*, p. 217.

³⁷¹ According to a veteran Trotskyist, Long Hair (Liang Guoxiong)'s recollections, *the Daily Combat Bulletin* was a fly sheet which was mainly distributed in industrial zones by the RIL members. Very few of the *Daily Combat Bulletin* can be found out among Hong Kong academic institutions for further research use. See *Interview with Long Hair (Liang Guoxiong)*, October 27th, 2015.

³⁷² Joseph Miller, "Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program", in the 4th National Conference, the Asian Studies Association of Australia (Melbourne, 1982), p. 10. It originally appears in Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 15.

³⁷³ "The New Left in Hong Kong", January 10th, 1975, p. 5, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

This was soon discovered by the colonial authorities. In the mid-1970s, in the British rulers' eyes, the Trotskyist youth groups, particularly the RIL, which had overseas contacts with European Trotskyists, replaced the "Seventies" as the new dominant New Left group in Hong Kong and the most active one.³⁷⁴ Indeed, since the newer Trotskyist force politically appeared in Hong Kong in mid-1973, the Trotskyist youths actively engaged in various social movements. For example, from the end of August to mid-September 1973, a handful of newly-proclaimed young Trotskyists vigorously participated in a series of student protests and petitions against governmental corruption, as revealed in the Godber case.³⁷⁵ And in the following years, more Trotskyist activities sprang up at the indigenous level. Thus, despite the fact that the newer Trotskyist force was always operating at a small scale, we should not underestimate it when researching Hong Kong political movement in the 1970s.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ For more details on the Godber case, please refer to Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depolitization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 156–63.

Chapter 4: Trotskyism as a Vanguard of Social Movements and Consequent Societal Responses – A Case Study of the “Anti-four” Campaign

Belden Fields summarises and distinguishes three levels of left-wing political practice within fully capitalistic societies. In his view, the third level is located at “one of surviving over time with sufficient members and resources to both offer a corrective model to Marxism gone astray and to attempt intermittent influence on the larger political universe...this is the level at which Trotskyist and Maoist formations have been operating”.³⁷⁶ When the newer generation of Chinese Trotskyists emerged in Hong Kong in the 1970s, its numbers never achieved a politically sufficient scale, but remained small and marginal.³⁷⁷ Nevertheless, when a political force emerges somewhere, whether or not it has enough manpower, it will express its political demands and pursuits by operating its own activities or by intervening/involving in various socio-political movements. In the case of Hong Kong Trotskyists, in spite of their organisational smallness, Trotskyist groups -- see the section “Key organisations and figures” at the beginning of the thesis -- attempted to immediately voice their anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-“bureaucratic” PRC establishment positions to the Hong Kong public. In order to exert such an influence upon Hong Kong society, particularly upon the local labour

³⁷⁶ A. Belden Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States* (Autonomedia, 1988), x.

³⁷⁷ According to former Trotskyist activists’ common recollection, the maximum number of the Trotskyist membership in the 1970s was no more than 100. See *Xiang Qing Interview*, August 17th, 2014. *Ou Longyu Interview*, Aug 18th, 2014. *Long Hair (Liang Guoxiong) Interview*, October 27th, 2015.

movement, young Trotskyists began to organise and involve themselves in various social movements by making use of their pro-workers', anti-colonial establishment propaganda as well as by promoting social protest actions at the grass-roots level. From 1973 to 1979, there were numerous Trotskyist interventions in social issues that can be found in local newspaper reports, such as the anti-corruption campaign in 1973, a series of anti-inflation campaigns in 1974, the May Day protest in 1975, the pro-Chinese democracy demonstration at Victoria Park in 1976, the involvement in the Yaumatei boat people's petition (a series of protests organised by local residents who were demanding land resettlement) in 1979, and other smaller scale issues.³⁷⁸

In the 1970s, the Hong Kong colonial state remained highly bureaucratic, and the government made no attempt to seek any democratic reform. (However, as we shall see later in this chapter, the colonial government's policy was changed to be highly interventionist in the matter of social housing, a fact that helps to account the limited impact of oppositional – including Trotskyist – campaigns in this decade). In the meantime, a variety of pressure groups, reformist organisations, and social movement groups at a grassroots level as the oppositional forces,³⁷⁹ ranging from student bodies, professional organisations to labour organisations, indeed emerged in Hong Kong society, most of which aimed at moderate socio-political change, but not at challenging the status quo. In a way, as Lui and Chiu note, “by the early

³⁷⁸ During the 1970s, mainstream English newspapers such as *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) and *Hong Kong Standard* (HKS) in Hong Kong widely reported on a number of social actions organised by the Trotskyist youth groups from different perspectives.

³⁷⁹ Lam Wai-Man called those local pro-reformist organisations “new central forces”, some of which ideological position was relatively progressive, the other of which was relatively conservative. Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), p. 182.

1980s..., there existed a loosely knitted network of pressure groups, social movement organisations and grass roots protest groups playing the role of an oppositional force to the colonial administration".³⁸⁰ In addition to those political groups that have been previously addressed by Lui, Chiu and other scholars in the studies of Hong Kong social movements,³⁸¹ we suggest that the role of Trotskyists in local social movements should also be rediscovered and re-examined: young Trotskyists were keen to undertake a vanguard role in workers' movement and other forms of social movements in Hong Kong. Thus, they put their efforts into engaging in diverse social activities in the 1970s. As an important component of Hong Kong social movement at that time, Lui and Chiu have also pointed out, the Trotskyists played a vanguard role in organising and participating in various social movements.³⁸² Despite the fact that the public and the colonial government largely treated the Trotskyists as "troublemakers" under a de-politicised cultural atmosphere, the "vanguard" image of Trotskyism was acknowledged by a small part of the Hong Kong people for a certain period. Here, by exploring the case of the "anti-four"

³⁸⁰ Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu, "Introduction—Changing Political Opportunities and the Shaping of Collective Action: Social Movement in Hong Kong" in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), p. 9.

³⁸¹ For more details about the pressure group politics and the student movement in Hong Kong during the 1970-80s, please refer to Ming Kwan Lee, "Yali tuanti yu zhengdang zhengzhi" (Pressure Groups and Party Politics), in *Bianqian zhong de Xianggang zhengzhi he shehui* (Hong Kong Politics and Society in Transition), ed. Ming Kwan Lee (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1987). Tai-lok Lui, "Yali tuanti zhengzhi yu zhengzhi canyu" (Pressure Group Politics and Political Participation), in *Guoduqi de Xianggang* (Hong Kong in the Transitional Period), ed. Joseph Cheng (Hong Kong: Sanlian Press, 1989), pp. 1–18. Chi-kong Wong, *The Role of Pressure Groups in the Politics of Urban Development of Hong Kong*, PG Thesis (Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, 1985). Benjamin.K.P. Leung, "The Student Movement in Hong Kong: Transition to a Democratizing Society", in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, ed. Stephen Wing Kai Chiu and Tai-lok Lui (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), pp. 209–26. Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu* (A Review of Student Movement in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Publishing Co., 1983).

³⁸² Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu, "Social Movements and Public Discourse on Politics," in *Hong Kong's History: State and Society under Colonial Rule*, ed. Tak-Wing Ngo (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 108.

campaign in 1974, we will investigate some major Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong, and demonstrate Trotskyism as an action-oriented radical force which attempted to act as an organiser as well as to undertake a vanguard role in social movements. Furthermore, in this case, we will also explore how the government and other forces, such as the mass media, responded to the activities organised by the newer generation of Chinese Trotskyists.

Trotskyist attempt to mobilise the working people: the “anti-four” campaign

In 1974, the continuous negative effects of the oil crisis, stock market crash and world economic recession created a sharp economic decline in Hong Kong. In a short period of time, inflation led to a tremendous increase both in commodity prices and manufacturing costs. As a result, a considerable number of Hong Kong workers lost their jobs and many of their families were reduced to poverty. This economic hardship also directed a tension between the “ruled” -- working people under exploitation -- and the ruling “non-interventionist” colonial state that was not willing to listen to people’s discontent. In order to articulate the grievances of the ordinary people and mobilise the working class, the newly-formed Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong organised a campaign of “anti-unemployment, anti-price increase, anti-poverty, and anti-suppression” (known as the “anti-four” campaign), which will be explicitly discussed in this section.

According to the colonial government reports, in 1974, Hong Kong’s export trade fell into “a rather more difficult period than had earlier been thought

likely”,³⁸³ and “employment in the manufacturing sector declined by about 2.25% in the second quarter of 1974”.³⁸⁴ In September, the official economic team pointed out, “it is now the case that workers are becoming increasingly fearful of losing their jobs”.³⁸⁵ This economic crisis brought Hong Kong into an era of “stagflation”, and the colonial administration admitted that “the two economic forces of inflation and stagnation are now exerting their strength side by side and giving rise to social effects which are profoundly felt in the community”.³⁸⁶ In a word, unemployment and inflation became two serious social problems that not only the government but also individuals had to cope with.

Thus, it can be perceived that the 1974 economic recession in Hong Kong not only created a barrier to local economic success, but also brought difficulties in satisfying a large part of the local population’s daily life needs, while disgruntling working people. At that moment, the younger generation of Trotskyists, who intended to play an important political role in organising social movements against the presence of British colonialism, believed that it was the time that they could present their anti-colonial opinions to local residents and working people. Furthermore, they organised pro-workers’ activities against inflation and unemployment that severely affected the daily life of the Hong Kong people and the urban “proletariat”. More importantly,

³⁸³ Economic Services Branch, “Paper for the Governor’s Committee: Report on Economic and Social Indicators, November 1974”, Dec 4th, 1974, p. 1, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

³⁸⁴ Economic Services Branch, “Current Economic Situation: Analysis”, Sep 18th, 1974, p. 3, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1.

³⁸⁶ Ophelia Rahmin, “A Report on the Decline of Economy in Hong Kong, by Ophelia Rahmin, Central District Office (Central)”, Oct 22nd, 1974, p. 1, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

they also attempted to exert their influence on the public by propagating their political stance against the capitalist colony in the anti-inflation movement.

In the 1970s, protests and mass rallies were a major tactic of social movements in Hong Kong.³⁸⁷ During that period, protest actions were very popular amongst local “new central forces”, i.e. the reformist groups, social movement organisations, etc. These groups expressed diverse social needs. Thus, it is not surprising that different types of protest actions organised by different social organisations broadly emerged in Hong Kong society. Why were the protest actions popular in Hong Kong then? According to a governmental document written by the Colonial Secretariat, “[t]he fact that...public demonstrations seemed to produce quicker actions by Government has given many the idea that results can best be obtained by this type of action”.³⁸⁸ However, Lui and Chiu note that protest actions as a major mode of social movements, “partly reflected the limited resources of the movement organisations—the main strategy was to rally the support of third parties for the purpose of exerting pressure on the government, which showed that their resources for mass mobilization were limited and that they had a relatively weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the colonial state”.³⁸⁹ Indeed, for the Trotskyist youth groups, their resources for mass mobilisation and socio-political activities were extremely restricted. For example, the

³⁸⁷ See Anthony Bing-leung Cheung and Ki-sheun Louie, “Social Conflicts: 1975-1986,” in *Social Development and Political Change in Hong Kong*, ed. Lau Siu-kai (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), p. 81. Also, Lui and Kung support this argument that protests and rallies were a main mode of Hong Kong social actions in the 1970s. According to their research, most cases of collective actions in social movements during that period were protest actions. See: Tai-lok Lui and James K.S. Kung, *Chengsi zongheng* (City Unlimited: Community Movement and Urban Politics in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Publications, 1985).

³⁸⁸ Colonial Secretariat, “The New Left”, May 3rd, 1972, p. 9, *HKRS 934-3-30*.

³⁸⁹ Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu, “Social Movements and Public Discourse on Politics,” p. 108.

Trotskyist organisations in Hong Kong were not sufficiently funded. Thus, they were unable to allow any young radicals to be full-time party activists.³⁹⁰

Nevertheless, unlike other reformist or social movement organisations, and despite the fact that Trotskyist groups “had a relatively weak position vis-à-vis the colonial state”, the Trotskyist radicals were completely unwilling to make a bargain with the colonial government. Trotskyists wanted to articulate a consistent popular support over social issues, and to challenge the colonial order by means of protest actions.

In 1974, before initiating a wave of anti-inflation protest actions that aimed at opposing against the colonial authorities, the Trotskyists, by means of publishing, overtly revealed their strong anti-colonial sentiment, and they offered an “exclusive” solution to inflation, i.e. raising the local workers’ movement. In the third issue of *October Review* published in March 1974, there was a piece of critical analysis of the worldwide economic recession and a global wave of workers’ strikes. In that article, a Trotskyist writer, Chen Sheng, suggested that the local hired workers ought to demand to increase working wages, whilst the laid-off workers should organise themselves in order to help each other and to strive for unemployment benefits.³⁹¹

Moreover, the same issue claimed that a Trotskyist-led Hong Kong *Anti-Price Increase Action Committee* had been founded so as to call for a widespread anti-capitalist, anti-inflation campaign for the public’s “better-off”.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Joseph Miller, *Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program*, in the 4th National Conference, the Asian Studies Association of Australia (Melbourne, 1982), p. 8.

³⁹¹Chen Sheng, “Jingji weiji, gongchan, Xianggang gongren” (Economic Recession, Waves of Workers’ Strike, and Hong Kong Workers), *October Review* (Hong Kong, March 1974), pp. 4–5.

³⁹² “Fan jiajia yundong yinggai kaishil” (The Anti-Price Increase Campaign Should Start), *October Review* (Hong Kong, March 1974), p. 2.

At the same time, regarding inflation as a serious social problem, student groups, trade unions and other social groups, from different angles, organised a number of discussion meetings, symposiums and public forums to voice their worries about the current stage of “stagnation” in Hong Kong and their opposition against the price increase in people’s daily life. But those groups rarely took further protest actions to promote a mass movement against the living crisis of inflation.³⁹³ On the other side, two action-oriented Trotskyist groups, the RIL and the IYSA, for the purpose of undertaking a leading role in mobilising a radical “Anti-Price Increase” mass movement, and in intervening in the local labour movement, came together to prepare a series of protest actions. Under a cooperative effort, on May 5th, with the support of a small number of students³⁹⁴ and young workers, the *Anti-Price Increase Action Committee* organised an anti-inflation rally at Victoria Park, which gathered thousands of participants and spectators.³⁹⁵ Shortly after the rally, the RIL

³⁹³ For example, see Xing He, “Xianggang tuopai yu qingnian xuesheng yundong” (Hong Kong Trotskyists and Student Youth Movement), *Feng Lei* (Hong Kong, July 1975), pp. 13–14.; *Zhongda xueshengbao* (The Chinese University Student Paper), May 15th, 1974, p. 11.

³⁹⁴ In 1974, the leading force of Hong Kong student movement had been divided into two major groups: the nationalistic pro-China faction and the local reform-oriented social “actionist” group. Concerning the particular issue of “anti-price increase campaign” led by young Trotskyists, one (the social “actionist” group) considered that local students should support the anti-inflation rally or seek cooperation with the rally organisers, though the political positions between student groups and Trotskyists varied; the other (pro-China student faction) thought that any support to the non-student oriented anti-inflation campaign was inappropriate when the political attempt and background of rally leaders did not become apparent. Such a discussion between different student groups, see *Zhongda xueshengbao*, May 15th, 1974, p. 7. See also the student debate between the pro-China faction and the social “actionist” group concerning the 1974 anti-inflation campaign in Benjamin Leung, “The Student Movement in Hong Kong: Transition to a Democratizing Society”, in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, ed. by Stephen Wing Kai Chiu and Tai-lok Lui (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), p. 216.

³⁹⁵ This rally was reported by *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), *Ming Pao* and other local newspapers, but those news reports did not mention too much information about the rally organisers. See: “Rally at Park Attracts 1,000,” *SCMP*, May 6th, 1974, p. 1.; “Yaoqiu pingyi zhangfeng” (Demanding for Curbing the Inflation), *Ming Pao*, May 6th, 1974, p. 9.

radicals and a few ISYA members³⁹⁶ fused together and founded a new small group called the *Socialist League* (also known as the *Combat Bulletin* group as it published a tabloid, the *Daily Combat Bulletin*).³⁹⁷ At this point, Trotskyist slogans, such as “fight[ing] against the government’s collusion with the capitalists”,³⁹⁸ began to appear on the street, which revealed a strong anti-capitalist, anti-colonial sentiment undergirding this Trotskyist youth group.

Then, the young Trotskyists decided to organise an extended campaign against unemployment and inflation. Hence, in September, the *Combat Bulletin* group (i.e. the Socialist League) called for a new “anti-four” campaign. When the campaign started, this quickly raised concerns and worries from the colonial administration, other political forces and mass media.

On September 12th, two unemployed labourers launched a hunger strike while holding anti-inflation, anti-unemployment placards in the Sanpokong industrial zone. This triggered the “anti-four” campaign. As an organiser of the event, along with the hunger strikers, a dozen Trotskyist radicals went on the street and passed out Trotskyist “anti-four” propaganda sheets to industrial workers passing, in which they persuaded local residents, for a common purpose of rejecting the inflation and demanding a better-off, not to pay rents, water, electricity or phone bills. The two-man hunger strike and the Trotskyist leafleting at Sanpokong soon gained the attention of the local police force.

³⁹⁶ According to Cen Jianxun, a small group of the ISYA members who did not join the *Socialist League* established a new small Trotskyist youth group named the *October Youths*, which was affiliated to the RCP. See Cen Jianxun (He Ren), *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan* (The Experience I worked for *October Review*), Sep 12th, 1978, p. 6.

³⁹⁷ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing* (Our Work’s Not Finished) (Hong Kong: Lewen Bookshop, 1997), p. 217. From mid-1974, the *Socialist League* (later changed the name to the *Revolutionary Marxist League*) was widely recognised as *the Daily Combat Bulletin* Group by the mass media.

³⁹⁸ “Workers in Slogan War against Unemployment”, *Sunday Post-Herald* (SCMP), September 8th, 1974, p. 2.

Later, the police interrupted the strike and attempted to end the protest and the Trotskyist leafleting that, from the police perspective, might create a chaotic situation at Sanpokong. Subsequently, three radical activists who were confronted by the police officers were arrested and sent to the Wongtaisin police station under detention.

However, this small protest action was escalated by the arrest. In the night, the Trotskyists continued a protest outside the Wongtaisin police office by making public speeches, leafleting, waving red and black flags and asking for local support, which attracted approximately over 1,000 young spectators and other followers, most of whom were children and teenagers.³⁹⁹ According to *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), a local pro-government English language newspaper, the demonstrators “led their child followers in a march back and forth in front of the police station, yelling slogans such as ‘fight inflation and unemployment’”.⁴⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the Trotskyist protestors failed to gain much sympathy from local residents generally.

During the September 12th protest, several “anti-four” campaigners were detained by the police⁴⁰¹, but this did not disappoint Trotskyist activists. The *Combat Bulletin* group did not want to halt the “anti-four” campaign so easily. On September 15th, in collaboration with a tiny action-oriented group of the

³⁹⁹ The number of spectators can be referred to in the *SCMP*, police reports and other news coverages. “Near Riot in Kowloon: Anti-inflation Demonstrators Incite Children”, *SCMP*, Sep 13th, 1974, p. 1; “Police Report No.11 Issued by P.P.R.B (Chief Inspector O’Byrne)”, 22:40, Sep 12, 1974, single-paged, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴⁰⁰ *SCMP*, Sep 13th, 1974, p. 26.

⁴⁰¹ According to *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (STJP), Sep 13th, p. 1 and *Ming Pao*, Sep 13th, p. 1, there were 7 radicals in total under arrest in the Sanpokong and Wongtaisin incidents, but it was recorded in police reports that only five were arrested at that night. Another three men were also arrested two days later due to posting anti-inflation placards “without the permission of the Secretary for Home Affairs”. They were all released later. “Police Report No.11 Issued by P.P.R.B (Chief Inspector O’Byrne)”, 22:40, Sep 12th, 1974; “Police Report No. 16, Issued by P.P.R.B (Chief Inspector O’Byrne), 22:45”, Sep 14th, 1974, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

70's *Biweekly*, young Trotskyists organised an "anti-four" mass rally at Kowloon Park, which had been permitted by the commissioner of police.⁴⁰² They aimed at gathering 5000-6000 participants for the rally,⁴⁰³ and meanwhile aimed at spreading political criticisms of British colonialism amongst the gathering crowd. During the rally, Trotskyist organisers made great efforts in explaining the anti-colonial intention of the "anti-four" campaign to the audience. They loudly criticised the government policies by highlighting the current situations of unemployment, inflation and high-rents, and urged the colonial administration to end the inflation as well as to put pressure on the government to fulfill the Trotskyist demand of promoting an unemployment pension for local workers. Despite the fact that the rally fell short of the Trotskyist expectations, the "anti-four" campaign still attracted several hundred demonstrators and gathered approximately 1,000 spectators.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² The rally organisers originally attempted to apply for a legal permission for the "anti-four" demonstration at Morse Park, because it was a more ideal public place for the Trotskyist campaigners to "hold the rally together with the poor". However, this application was turned down by the commissioner of police as "Morse Park was not considered suitable for any public meetings", and the police authority listed another five options for the use of public meetings, the Trotskyists eventually decided to select Kowloon Park as their rally point after holding an internal emergency meeting, and it was accepted and licensed. "Protest Rally Venue Changed", *SCMP*, Sep 14th, p. 1; "Police Report No. 9 Issued by P.P.R.B (Kenneth Lam S10)", 17:50, Sep 12th, 1974, single-paged; "Police Report No. 8 Issued by P.P.R.B (Chief Inspector Burrows)", 19:25, Sep 15th, 1974, single-paged, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴⁰³ "Protest Rally Venue Changed", Sep 14th, p. 1; "Kowloon Police Go on Full Alert", Sep 15th, p. 1; "Brawl Brings Big Rally to an Ugly End", Sep 16th, p. 1, *SCMP*, 1974.

⁴⁰⁴ "Brawl Brings Big Rally to an Ugly End", Sep 16th, p. 1, *SCMP*, 1974; "Don't Pay Phone and Water Rates, Public Told", Sep 16th, p. 1, *Hong Kong Standard* (HKS), 1974; "Weili mujuan (Illegal Donations)", Sep 16th, Vol 3, p. 1, *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, 1974. Nevertheless, *Ming Pao* estimated that there were no more than 1,000 audience at Kowloon Park, "Sifan fenzi pingji zuopai goujie gangfu" (The Anti-four Activists Criticising Leftists in Collusion with the Colony), Sep 16th, p. 1, *Ming Pao*, 1974. Furthermore, it was reported by the police that "there are about 30 organisers and ushers with some 200 participants around the rally point. Watching on are about 500 spectators at the rally." See "Police Report No. 9 Issued by P.P.R.B (T.R.Coombs)", 15:18, Sep 15th, 1974, single-paged, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

The “anti-four” rally at Kowloon Park was planned to be a peaceful protest, but it was marred by a brawl between some press photographers and anonymous young men.⁴⁰⁵ The policemen monitored the whole event of the rally, and they took no action against the demonstrators.⁴⁰⁶ The rally organisers wanted to continue their demonstration so as to urge more participants to express their discontent against the colonial government. Hence, the Trotskyists made efforts to maintain the order of the rally, and calmed down the situation. In the end, no disturbances took place. During this rally, the Trotskyist radicals considered that such an anti-inflation campaign that reflected the needs of the people’s daily life might gain sympathy from the public. They proposed to enlarge the influence of the “anti-four” campaign and to publicise their political involvement in the campaign. They took on an organising role in the local workers’ movement because they saw there was a lack of leading actors in local workers’ activities. On September 22nd, in an interview with a mainstream English newspaper, *Hong Kong Standard* (HKS), the leader of the *Combat Bulletin*, Wu Zhongxian referred to and reiterated the political attempt by his group:

“There is an absence of an organising element in Hong Kong’s labour movement as compared to those in Japan and Britain where most struggles are under the direction of trade unions. Struggles by Hong Kong workers are mainly isolated and sporadic...We believe workers in

⁴⁰⁵ *Ming Pao*, Sep 16th, 1974, p. 1; *SCMP*, Sep 16th, 1974, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁶ *SCMP*, Sep 16th, 1974, p. 1. Also, in a police report, the Hong Kong police confirmed that there was no police action against the “anti-four” demonstrators as “the rally...is presenting no problems to the police”. “Police Report, No. 9, Issued by P.P.R.B (T.R.Coombs)”, 15:18, Sep 15th, 1974, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*. However, according to *Ming Pao*, the police stopped the brawl in a timely manner when a fist fight took place between media photographers and young men. *Ming Pao*, Sep 16th, 1974, p. 1.

the present labour movement should have political ideas. Now is the best time for the workers to learn more about socialism. At the same time, they should be made to be aware of the problems of colonialism and capitalism.”⁴⁰⁷

That is to say, while the Trotskyist campaigners staged a demonstration on the “anti-four” themes, they had decided to put great effort into achieving their political aims, i.e. intervening in the labour movement in Hong Kong and being a vanguard of social movements.

Nevertheless, though young Trotskyists had an ambition to lead the workers’ movement in Hong Kong, it was difficult for them to either mobilise industrial workers’ support or engage in local trade union activities. Traditional trade unions remained dominant and played a crucial role in the local labour movement. According to the data on union membership, in 1974, the pro-Communist *Hong Kong and Kowloon Federations of Trade Unions* (FTU) had 67 affiliated trade unions and 184,440 declared union members. Though the scale of the pro-GMD unions was much smaller, *the Hong Kong and Kowloon Trade Union Council* (TUC) still had 85 affiliated unions and 32,099 declared members.⁴⁰⁸ In the mid-1970s, these traditional unions were capable of leading industrial action and mobilising local workers, but, as some scholars have pointed out, unlike the Trotskyists, neither the pro-Communist nor the pro-GMD unions were willing to adopt a confrontational strategy against the colonial administration: “Trade union leaders from both left and right, as well

⁴⁰⁷ “A Marxist Leader Speaks Out”, *Hong Kong Standard*, Sep 22nd, 1974, p. 17.

⁴⁰⁸ David Levin and Y.C. Jao, *Labour Movement in a Changing Society: The Experience of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1988), p. 3 [cited by Benjamin Leung and Stephen Chiu, *A Social History of Industrial Strikes and the Labour Movement in Hong Kong 1946-1989* (Hong Kong: Social Sciences Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 1991), p. 50].

as government officials at the highest level, told us that the message from China during this period, as before and since, was that the unions should avoid confrontation.”⁴⁰⁹

In the meantime, a few small-scale labour organisations emerged as a “third force”. The *Christian Industrial Committee* (CIC), which was founded in 1967 with the assistance of the Hong Kong Christian Council, was one of the most important “third force” labour groups at this stage. In the 1970s, in order to raise local workers’ consciousness, this pro-labour reformist group ran publishing activities (it published a weekly newspaper *Workers’ Weekly* from May 1970 to November 1973) and later launched a range of labour education programmes for workers. Moreover, for improving the working and living conditions of the labourers, the CIC also assisted workers in bargaining with the factory management in a number of labour disputes.⁴¹⁰ Nevertheless, though the CIC earned a good reputation amongst some local workers’ communities, this reformist “third force” group could not compete with the traditional pro-Communist FTU for workers’ support.

In the mid-1970s, the FTU remained the predominant trade union force and one of the most powerful pro-Communist organisations in Hong Kong, though it became politically isolated in the aftermath of the 1967 riots. Also, through publishing activities (it published a monthly newspaper *Hong Kong Workers* in the 1970s), the FTU advertised its non-confrontational union strategy while

⁴⁰⁹ J. England and J. Rear, *Industrial Relations and Law in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 167.

⁴¹⁰ For more details about the Christian Industrial Committee (CIC) see Benjamin Leung and Stephen Chiu, *A Social History of Industrial Strikes and the Labour Movement in Hong Kong 1946-1989* (Hong Kong: Social Sciences Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 1991), pp. 43-46.

aiming to consolidate its support amongst local working people. When the Trotskyist “militants” emerged in the local labour movement by organising pro-labour protests, the trade unionists from the FTU realised that the Trotskyist “penetration” of Hong Kong labour activities might pose a political-ideological threat from the Left. Therefore, to counteract the Trotskyist influence in the local workers’ movement, the FTU and other pro-Communist organisations launched several waves of anti-Trotskyism campaigns in Hong Kong in the 1970s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The culture of de-politicisation and the responses to the “anti-four” from mass media

There was a culture of de-politicisation rooted in Hong Kong society that originated either from the ordinary people’s “self-interested familism”, i.e. mainly caring for their own and family interests,⁴¹¹ or from anti-PRC discourses created and utilised by the Hong Kong government and pro-ROC political groups under an atmosphere of the Cold War.⁴¹² Under the influence of such a de-politicised culture, it is assumed that on the one hand, most Hong Kong people wanted a stable and prosperous society; and on the social basis of stability and prosperity, that they showed no interest at all in politics or in any social movement that contained political elements which might go

⁴¹¹ See: Lau Siu-kai, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982). Lau Siu-kai, *From Traditional Familism to Utilitarianistic Familism: The Metamorphosis of Familial Ethos among the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: Social Research Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1978). Lau Siu-kai, “Utilitarianistic Familism: The Basis of Political Stability,” in *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong*, ed. Ambrose Yeo-chi King and Rance Lee (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981), pp. 195–216.

⁴¹² See: Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization*, pp. 105–6, 221–26.

beyond lawful restrictions and create social disorders, such as the 1967 pro-Communist riots. On the other hand, any radical activities and activists would be easily stigmatised in the political context of Colonial Hong Kong: pro-PRC and radical politics was treated as an alien element which was imposed by outside forces, while left-inclined radicals were identified as “troublemakers” who would create disturbances and pose threats to the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong.⁴¹³

During the 1970s, this culture of de-politicisation remained dominant in Hong Kong and the “troublemaker” discourse “continued to be astonishingly prevalent”.⁴¹⁴ In the case of the “anti-four” campaign, we can clearly see such a dominant culture and discourse from public responses to a Trotskyist-led activity.

The “anti-four” protest actions that delivered a strong anti-colonial establishment message were largely covered in the front pages of the local press, such as *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), *Hong Kong Standard* (HKS), *Ming Pao*, and *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (STJP).⁴¹⁵ Though there were 2 or 3 local newspapers that voiced sympathy and support for the “anti-four” campaign,⁴¹⁶ the overall responses and reporting on the emergence of the Trotskyist-organised “anti-four” were mainly negative, which can be demonstrated in five aspects.

⁴¹³ *Ibid*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 214.

⁴¹⁵ According to *SCMP*, Sep 18th, p. 10, the Trotskyist-led anti-inflation campaign was also reported by the British media, such as the *Guardian* and the *BBC* radio programme.

⁴¹⁶ “Press Review: The Hunger Strike at Sanpokong and the ‘Four-anti’ Rally”, Sep 11-17th, 1974, p. 3, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

Firstly, a large proportion of the local press assumed that the Hong Kong public generally had no interest in anti-government politics or in any social movements backed by political forces like the “anti-four” campaign. For example, *Nan Wah Man Po* pointed out that if the Hong Kong people sensed there was a political flavour behind such an anti-inflation campaign, they would lose their interest, because the “anti-four” was too political.⁴¹⁷ Another newspaper, *Sing Tao Jih Pao* also noted that “[I]f the ‘Trotskyists’ want to start playing their tricks in Hong Kong, they will be doing the wrong thing in the wrong place.”⁴¹⁸ In a report from *SCMP*, readers were told that the organisers of the “anti-four” “did not get any physical or vocal support” from the Hong Kong residents,⁴¹⁹ which also implied that local people denied any interest in a politically-directed “anti-four” activities. Even pro-PRC newspapers such as *Ta Kung Pao* depicted locals as attending “out of curiosity” about the Trotskyist-motivated “anti-four”, i.e. that there was fundamentally no interest in “politically-tainted” activities from the public.⁴²⁰

Secondly, most local newspapers highlighted violent behaviour during the “anti-four” campaign, which might hint to local readers that the “anti-four” participators were potential “rioters” who would damage social order and stability. By highlighting violent actions in their headlines, reports from *Sing Tao Jih Pao* and *Express* depicted the “anti-four” participants as having damaged public property in the middle of the September 12th protest, such as destroying lamp-posts, damaging vehicles, overturning rubbish bins while

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴¹⁹ *SCMP*, Sep 13th, p. 26.

⁴²⁰ “Leftists Lash Rally Organisers”, *Hong Kong Standard*, Sep 21st, single-paged, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*

setting the contents ablaze.⁴²¹ Similarly by making use of prominent news titles or press photographs, the physical conflict between media photographers and unidentified persons during the “anti-four” rally at Kowloon Park was commonly highlighted by a number of mainstream newspapers.⁴²² All these news reports suggested that any form of violence was a negative phenomenon that might destabilise Hong Kong society.

Thirdly, a vast majority of the press was eager to stress the negative impact of the “anti-four” upon society: several newspapers by utilising the discourse of “stability” noted that the radical move of the “anti-four” campaign led by local young Trotskyists would incite people to aggravate social instability while bringing uneasiness and disturbances.⁴²³ Meanwhile, other newspaper comments like the editorial published by the *Wah Kiu Man Po* straightforwardly rebuked the “anti-four” campaign as a “riot”, which contained many dangerous elements against society.⁴²⁴ What is more, some reports pointed out that the “anti-four” movement might remind Hong Kong people, who had experienced the chaotic 1967 pro-Communist riots, of the psychological fear and trauma brought by the pro-Communist disturbances.⁴²⁵ In general, the majority of local media seems to have viewed the “anti-four”

⁴²¹ *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (STJP), *Express* (Kuaibao in Chinese), Sep 13th, both single-page cuttings, Newspaper cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*

⁴²² See those news titles and photographs in “Brawl Brings Big Rally to an Ugly End”, Sep 16th, p. 1, *SCMP*, 1974; “Don’t Pay Phone and Water Rates, Public Told”, Sep 16th, p. 1, *HKS*, 1974; “Weili mujuan” (Illegal Donations), Sep 16th, Vol 3, p. 1, *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, 1974; “Sifan fenzi pingji zuopai goujie gangfu” (The Anti-four Activists Criticising the Leftists in Collusion with the Colony), Sep 16th, p. 1, *Ming Pao*, 1974.

⁴²³ *Sing Tao Man Pao* (STMP, Xing Dao Wan Bao), Sep 13th, *STJP*, Sep 14th, 1974, *Star*, Sep 14th, 1974, *Kung Sheung Evening News* (KSEN), Sep 13th, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, and “Press Review”, Sep 11-17th, p. 2, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*

⁴²⁴ *Wah Kiu Man Po* (WKMP, Hua Qiao Wan Bao), Sep 14th, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴²⁵ *Kung Sheung Daily News* (KSDN), Sep 14th, *ibid*.

movement as a dangerous factor that posed a threat to the social stability of Hong Kong.

Fourthly, under the influence of a de-politicised culture, it was always believed in Hong Kong that politics/political activities with a “bad” anti-establishment or subversive purpose did not come from inside society but from the outside world. Whatever the degree to which Trotskyism in Hong Kong was inspired from abroad (by, for example, the New Left tendencies of the West), the “anti-four” movement was a local protest that reflected the locals’ discontent concerning economic crisis and subsequent “stagnation” in Hong Kong whilst also demonstrating Hong Kong people’s needs to resume normal economic life and standards of employment. However, in this case, from the point of view of some reporters affected by the culture of de-politicisation, the “anti-four” campaign that might create social disorder was “obviously” considered as something political from “outside” as usual. For example, political connections between local Trotskyists and international radical left groups notably from Japan and European countries was highlighted by some newspapers during the “anti-four” protest, which might imply that this campaign was organised by a group of young “rioters” who were deeply influenced by “bad” ideological elements from outside.⁴²⁶ Furthermore, the local pro-PRC groups, in order to stigmatise the Trotskyists and their activities, via their own propaganda platforms, also stated that the Trotskyist

⁴²⁶ “Hong Kong Marxists and European Connection”, *Sunday Post-Herald*, Sep 22nd, 1974, p. 1, also see Chinese version in *Kung Sheung Daily News*, Sep 23rd, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*. According to the colonial government files, the Hong Kong government believed that local Trotskyist groups had overseas contacts and received some form of foreign financial support. “The New Left in Hong Kong”, Jan 10th, 1975, p. 7, and “Notes of a Meeting of Steering Group on Student Affairs held on Friday”, Oct 25th, 1974, p. 4, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

group in Hong Kong was sponsored by the Soviet “enemy”.⁴²⁷ In response, the Trotskyists strenuously denied that they were backed by the Russians.⁴²⁸ In *Wen Wei Po*, a local pro-PRC mouthpiece, the Trotskyists were, nonetheless, labelled as the current “running dogs of Soviet Revisionism”.⁴²⁹ Lastly, though the Trotskyists publicly claimed that they made no attempt to create any trouble, but rather aimed to make the local people better-off,⁴³⁰ according to the prevalent “troublemakers” discourse, it was supposed that the Trotskyists remained a dangerous and negative element in the Hong Kong society. Shortly after the “anti-four” campaign took place, a local English newspaper *Star* began to accuse the Trotskyist activists in the “anti-four” of being “politically-motivated troublemakers”,⁴³¹ whilst it urged people not to go near the anti-inflation rally at Kowloon Park organised by the “troublemakers”.⁴³² The “troublemakers” word was widely used by the media to stigmatise the “anti-four” organisers. Some newspapers like *Kung Sheung Daily News* (KSDN) and *New Life Evening Post* (NLEP) urged the colonial administration not to tolerate but to take quick action against the Trotskyist “troublemakers”, while they advised the government to heavily punish those “troublemakers” in order to rule out social instability.⁴³³

To conclude from these five aspects: from the public responses to the “anti-four” campaign, mainly from the mass media, it was believed that when

⁴²⁷ Please refer to the Sino-Soviet hostility in Chapter 5.

⁴²⁸ “We’re not Soviet backed, say Sanpokong rally group”, *HKS*, Sep 15th, 1974, p. 1, 16.

⁴²⁹ *Wen Wei Po*, Sep 27th, p. 7, 1974. And see more details about the pro-PRC leftists’ stigmatisation of Trotskyism in Chapter 5.

⁴³⁰ “Protesters Split before Rally”, *Star*, Sep 14th, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*; also see “Kowloon Police go on Full Alert”, *Sunday Post-Herald*, Sep 15th, 1974, p. 1.

⁴³¹ “Caught with our pants down?” *Star*, Sep 13th, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴³² “Don’t go near demonstration”, *Star*, Sep 14th, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴³³ “Press Review”, Sep 11-17th, p. 3, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

Trotskyist activities re-emerged in the 1970s, the culture of de-politicisation constructed by the anti-Communist bloc in Hong Kong since the 1950s remained valid. Within a structure of the de-politicised culture, the discourses of “stability” and of “troublemakers” were used as a discursive weapon widely adopted by various news agencies (most of which were pro-colonial government) to negatively label any politically-motivated elements as potential or actual threats to “stability”, i.e. the colonial order. Consequently, it is of no surprise that as a socio-politically active radical group, the Combat Bulletin group left a negative impression amongst the local mass media. It was suggested that the Trotskyist organisers of the “anti-four” movement were negatively construed as a “politically-tainted troublemaker” group formed from “outside” who would damage Hong Kong’s stability (i.e. the colonial order) by means of violence; and that while the Trotskyist “troublemaker” was creating political troubles, the public would have no interest in becoming involved in trouble, and would keep distance away from the “troublemakers”. Nevertheless, those public responses that perceived that the emergence of Trotskyist activities were posing a threat to social stability also indirectly acknowledged that the younger generation of Chinese Trotskyists had entered the local political arena by taking protest actions and organising social movements, such as “anti-four” campaign. Additionally, some of the pro-colonial press revealed that the young Trotskyists’ “true” political attempt was to intervene in the local labour movement. For example, in a piece of report from *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a critical commentator, Raymond

Yao, bluntly mentioned that the Trotskyists attempted to mobilise local workers who were disgruntled by the 1974 economic hardship.⁴³⁴

Consequently, those anti-social movement discourses mentioned above were quite effective in spreading the stigmatisation of the Trotskyist-led anti-inflation campaign, since most local news agencies succeeded in persuading a large majority of local people not to participate in such a stigmatised politically-motivated activity by making use of the terminologies of “stability” and of “troublemakers”. Indeed, the prevalence of a de-politicised culture in Hong Kong became a barrier disconnecting Trotskyist campaigners from popular support by local working people, though the former claimed it was acting for the sake of the latter in the “anti-four” campaign. Furthermore, owing to the shortage of socio-political resources, the “anti-four” rally organisers were unable to respond to massive media suppression. Eventually, the *Combat Bulletin* could not articulate any concrete mass support from local people during the “anti-four” campaign. Without popular support, this campaign could not be sustained.

On September 29th, 1974, the Trotskyists staged a second “anti-four” rally at Kowloon Park. However, this achieved little public response: mainstream news reports depicted this final rally as having suffered a “big flop”,⁴³⁵ while the pro-PRC leftist media ridiculed the event as an embarrassment for the Trotskyists.⁴³⁶ Although the young Trotskyists blamed the colonial government’s suppression of the “anti-four” campaign during the rally, their

⁴³⁴ Raymond Yao, “Hongkong’s coffee-shop radicals”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Oct 18th, 1974, p. 39.

⁴³⁵ “Anti-unemployment rally at Kowloon Park a big flop”, *SCMP*, Sep 30th, 1974, p. 8; “Organisers blame police as second Kowloon Park rally flops”, *HKS*, Sep 30th, 1974, p. 16.

⁴³⁶ *Ta Kung Pao*, Sep 30th, 1974, p. 2.

voices were not loud enough to counter negative media responses.

Eventually, this rally put the whole campaign to a frustrating end.

Nevertheless, the “anti-four” campaign was a valid Trotskyist attempt to take on a leading role in workers’ movement as well as in other forms of social movements. Despite their failure in the “anti-four” campaign, they insisted that they were keen to be a vanguard force of the local labour movement. This was later explicitly stated by Wu Zhongxian, a prominent leader of the *Combat Bulletin*.⁴³⁷ Indeed, in practice, they continuously sought opportunities to play a key role in the workers’ struggle and other socio-politically-oriented activities. Thus, Trotskyist activists operated activities in industrial areas as well as in poor squatter areas, aiming at advertising their own pro-workers’ agendas and at mobilising local support from the working people and the poor. According to a particular Trotskyist veteran, in the 1970s, the Trotskyist activists always went to factories for leafleting, and contributed to community services in squatter areas.⁴³⁸ Moreover, organising protest actions was the major activity of the Trotskyist movement. After the “anti-four” campaign failed, young *Combat Bulletin* Trotskyists intended to apply for a political organisation license from the Hong Kong government to register as a formal political party, named the *Revolutionary Marxist League* (RML).⁴³⁹ A spokesman of this “65-member” RML said to the media that its attempt to register as a local political party “came from a strong desire to play a role [in] representing Hong Kong’s working class” as local workers’ voices were silent

⁴³⁷ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing* (Our Work’s Not Finished), p. 380, 402.

⁴³⁸ *Ou Longyu Interview*, Aug 18th, 2014.

⁴³⁹ *SCMP*, Oct 2nd, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

in the political arena.⁴⁴⁰ As the next chapters will reveal, this organisation was to assume great prominence amongst Hong Kong Trotskyists.

In an interview with a local periodical, Wu Zhongxian once again pointed out that the actual work of the Trotskyist group was to intervene in labour disputes and to benefit workers' interests.⁴⁴¹ Obviously, this attempt revealed young Trotskyists' ambition in organising the labour movement in Hong Kong and in mobilising local working people. Shortly thereafter, by constantly organising and participating in a variety of social protest actions mostly regarding local issues, the Trotskyists continued to self-justify their attempt to become a leading catalyst in local labour struggles. For example, in 1975, for the purpose of protecting labour rights, the *Combat Bulletin* radicals met with a small group of students and workers to hold a small May Day protest in opposition to the "unreasonable" Labour Relations Bill and other labour decrees at Sanpokong, which they thought gave the Labour Department ultimate power to intervene in industrial disputes in the colony. Also, the Trotskyist protesters requested traditional trade unions (mainly the FTU) to focus on the protection of labour rights and to exert their traditional influence in solving labour disputes on behalf of the working people. In contrast, the pro-PRC and pro-ROC trade unions ignored all these Trotskyist demands and kept silent on the issue of a May Day demonstration. In the meantime, the FTU was busy with organising a wine reception for professional unionists while the TUC cancelled all May Day events to mourn the passing-away of

⁴⁴⁰ *HKS*, Oct 1st, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴⁴¹ *Dong Nan Feng*, Nov 1974, p. 20

the ROC president, Chiang Kai-shek.⁴⁴² As far as Trotskyists were concerned, these responses demonstrated the failure of both pro-PRC and pro-ROC trade unions to take the actual needs of workers in Hong Kong seriously.

Moreover, another social event that should be noted is the Trotskyist involvement in the Yaumatei boat people's protest. On January 7th, 1979, owing to the requirement of improving poor housing conditions of the Yaumatei boat people, a group of boat people who demanded that colonial housing authorities should immediately solve their resettlement needs organised a petition march to the Hong Kong Governor's residence in Hong Kong Island. As the boat people did not apply for governmental permission to stage a demonstration, the police interrupted the petition march and arrested 76 participants including an Italian priest, two social workers, four students, one director and 68 local boat people who were later charged with "unlawful assembly"⁴⁴³ although the demonstration remained peaceful.⁴⁴⁴ This petition march soon raised public concern, and the arrested boat people immediately received sympathy and support from various local social movement organisations, most of which were students' associations, labour groups, and social workers' services. On the same day as the arrest, ten social organisations made a joint statement in which they jointly condemned the police's "misuse of power" while demanding the colonial authorities to withdraw the charges of "unlawful assembly" against the boat people as well

⁴⁴² See details of the May Day demonstration in *SCMP, HKS*, May 2nd, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴⁴³ *SCMP*, Jan 9th, 1979, p. 9

⁴⁴⁴ See details about the boat people's petition in *SCMP*, Jan 8th, 1979, p. 1

as to meet their resettlement needs.⁴⁴⁵ At the same time, the Trotskyist groups voiced their support to the Yaumatei boat people. They called for the boat people and the other oppressed to fight for the living needs, democratic rights and political freedoms which they deserved to own and enjoy.⁴⁴⁶ On February 12th, the day the arrested appeared in court, student groups along with social workers and other boat people supporters staged a sit-in protest outside the Causeway Bay Court in order to show their solidarity with the arrested petitioners. Trotskyist RML members also participated in this solidarity action. Outside the court, the RML radicals held up a protest banner calling on the authorities to “withdraw the unreasonable charges, support the boat people’s demand of resettlement” and to end the police’s suppression of the boat people. The police warned the RML protesters to cover up the protest banner, but they continued to shout anti-establishment slogans and hold up the banner. Consequently, two young Trotskyists were taken away by the police, including Liang Guoxiong, who is now a popular political figure in Hong Kong.⁴⁴⁷

But in this boat people’s protest and other social movements that the Trotskyists were involved in, the Trotskyists continued to be treated as “troublemakers” as before. What is more, according to an RML writer, it was said that the police spread the rumour that every person who participated in the protest march to the Governor’s residence on January 7th received a 25-

⁴⁴⁵ “Ten Organisations’ Joint Statement on the Boat People’s Protest”, Jan 7th, 1979, reproduced by *October Review*, Feb 5th, 1979, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁶ See *Combat Bulletin* Special Issue on the Boat People’s Protest, Jan 12th, 1979, *Zhanxun yuekan* (Combat Bulletin Monthly), Feb 15th, 1979, p. 6, *October Review*, Feb 5th, 1979, p. 2

⁴⁴⁷ See *SCMP*, Feb 13th, 1979, p. 8; Old HK photos: <http://oldhkphoto.com/longhair/>. Liang Guoxiong (1956-): A social activist and a politician, also known as “Long Hair”. He became a Trotskyist in 1975 and participated in many protest actions led by the RML in the late 1970s. He is currently a pro-democracy politician and a leader of the *League of Social Democrats* in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong dollar bribe from the RML.⁴⁴⁸ Though there were a large range of “troublemaker” rumours surrounding the Trotskyists, they did not give up taking every opportunity to organise or intervene in various social movements, especially to involve themselves in local labour activities, and to denounce or challenge the “anti-workers” policies of the colonial government. By means of arresting and taking “troublemakers” to court, the colonial government and the police force suppressed the rise of Trotskyist “street activism”. But such a suppression of the Trotskyists from the colonial authorities was not casual or contingent. The colonial ruling power had a tradition to keep a close watch on anti-establishment political groups in order to maintain the rule of British colonialism in Hong Kong. Consequently, Trotskyist group was obviously not an exception.

The colonial government’s attitude and reactions to the Trotskyist activities

Trotskyist persistence in engaging in social movements and in playing a vanguard role in “representing Hong Kong’s working class” made the “masses” aware of the political existence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong, though local Trotskyists at most time were regarded as “troublemakers”. Also, the Hong Kong government did not ignore the Trotskyist presence. In general, despite the fact that the New Left’s political influence tended to be minimal in Hong Kong, the colonial administration consistently held a particularly negative and hostile attitude towards the grouping of the New Left and

⁴⁴⁸ *Zhanxun yuekan* (Combat Bulletin Monthly), Feb 15th, 1979, p. 6.

Trotskyism in Hong Kong since it considered radical New Left politics as a whole, including the Trotskyist element, as a political threat to the colonial power.⁴⁴⁹

According to the colonial government files, since the New Left political tendency emerged in Hong Kong in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the colonial authorities had begun to assess the Trotskyist ideology as a part of the rise of New Left⁴⁵⁰. What is more, when young Trotskyist radicals appeared in the Hong Kong political arena, the intelligence and watch groups of the Hong Kong government paid attention to their organisational existence and radical activities. After the “anti-four” campaign, it was clear that the Trotskyist group represented an extremely oppositional force to the colonial government, and the colonial authorities noticed that Trotskyist groups like the RML was keen to undertake a leading role of local labour activities, and “is currently endeavouring to establish a workers’ movement in local industry”.⁴⁵¹

Moreover, in an assessment from the City District Office, the “anti-four” rallies were clearly marked as a signal of instability: “This should be taken as the first sign that the stability of the social structure is at stake”.⁴⁵² In the same

⁴⁴⁹ In 1971, the intelligence agencies and police watch groups of the colonial government, such as the *Special Branch* and the *Security Branch*, had regarded the threat from the New Left movement as a whole as “more potential than actual”, or was “still more of a potential than a major threat”. However, in 1975, the *Special Branch* re-assessed the New Left politics in Hong Kong, and it concluded the New Left movement including the grouping of the Trotskyists “poses a threat to the internal security of Hong Kong...” “The New Left and Hong Kong”, *Special Branch*, Jun 30th, 1971, p. 40, *HKRS 934-3-30*; “The New Left”, *Security Branch*, Nov, 1973, p. 1; “The New Left in Hong Kong”, *Special Branch*, Jan 10th, 1975, p. 7, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

⁴⁵⁰ “The ‘New Left’ and Hong Kong”, *Special Branch*, June 30th, 1971, pp. 13-14, *HKRS 934-3-30*.

⁴⁵¹ “The New Left in Hong Kong”, Jan 10th, 1975, p. 5, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

⁴⁵² “Quarterly Assessment (July-September 1974)”, Office of the City District Commissioner (H.K.), Nov 14th, 1974, p. 8, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

document, by continuously making use of the “stability” discourse, the organisers of the “anti-four” rallies, i.e. the Trotskyists, were described by the officials as “extremists” who damaged social “stability”. This may reveal that the colonial authorities initially shaped the Trotskyists as a “troublemaker” or a new “enemy” of the Hong Kong society because the Trotskyists might potentially incite social disorders, which posed a threat to the British rule in Hong Kong. In the 1970s, not only the Trotskyist groups like the RML, but also local moderate reformist and pressure groups were frequently spied on by the government. According to Carroll, the government “bugged the telephones of political and social activists, often trying to intimidate them by denouncing them as radical leftists”.⁴⁵³ Hence, we may clearly see that the Hong Kong government had ably discredited local political groups who practically challenged or could potentially challenge colonial rule by labelling them as “troublemakers” or “radical leftists”.

Subsequently, Trotskyist groups were indeed listed as a target of repression by the colonial state. The punitive measures taken by the government against a small group of anti-colonial young Trotskyists were straightforward: arrest the “troublemakers”, and send them to court. Since protest actions were popular amongst local reformist groups, the colonial authorities had recognised that there was a possibility that an anti-colonial, anti-establishment political element might infiltrate the “peaceful demonstration[s]”.⁴⁵⁴ Once there were a group of people who opposed the police at the scene of protest actions, they would be immediately punished by means of arrest. In so doing, it was clear that the colonial government

⁴⁵³ John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 164.

⁴⁵⁴ Colonial Secretariat, “The New Left”, May 3rd, 1972, p. 11, *HKRS 934-3-30*.

counteracted the social movements the Trotskyists organised or engaged with by treating the Trotskyist “troublemakers” as a major target of police repression. In the “anti-four” campaign, several police reports confirmed that the whole process of the hunger strike, protest, and mass rally were closely under the police’s watch, and that from September 12th to 15th, the police arrested 8 persons who were directly confronted with the epitome of the colonial power in daily life, i.e. the police.⁴⁵⁵ Even after the “anti-four” campaign halted, the repression of the Trotskyists from the government continued: once the Trotskyist’s activities emerged, the colonial administration would counteract such a “New Left” initiative by all means.

Take another example from the view of Trotskyists: on April 22nd, 1979, the RML prepared to launch a rally for commemorating the 3rd anniversary of the democratic protest in the Tian’anmen Square, Beijing⁴⁵⁶ without permission from the colonial authorities. On the grounds of “unlawful assembly”, seven activists were arrested at different places. They were charged with unlawfully protesting in front of the office of the Communist *Xinhua News Agency* on April 5th, although the RML Trotskyists believed they had obtained a lawful rally permit from the police authority.⁴⁵⁷ Trotskyist activists were deeply involved in various social movements aiming at local reforms. They took a common stance against the “capitalist exploitation” and the “oppression of

⁴⁵⁵ “Police Report”, Issued by P.P.R.B, No. 9, 11, 16, Sep 12-15th, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*.

⁴⁵⁶ Regarding the issue of the 1976 pro-democracy protest in Beijing, we will discuss it in next chapter.

⁴⁵⁷ See Trotskyist youth publication *Xinsichao* (Rive Gauche), July 20th, 1979, p. 2; *SCMP* also reported the event of the April 5th protest organised by the RML in front of the *Xinhua News Agency*, *SCMP*, April 6th, 1979, p. 10. It seems to the Trotskyists that the police action against the April 22nd pro-democracy protest was odd, because the colonial authority could tolerate the Trotskyists’ pro-democracy activities aiming at expressing their criticisms of Communist China’s “bureaucracy” to some extent. See the police’s “tolerance” of the Trotskyists’ pro-democracy protest in the next chapter.

colonialism”, and strongly sensed direct repression against their activities from the colony. In a press interview, Liang Guoxiong made the point that “the crackdown of the RML is an important part of the repression of social movements by the colonial government.”⁴⁵⁸ From such a Trotskyist narrative, this can demonstrate that the government’s counteractions against Trotskyism were deliberate in nature and repressive.

In the 1972 “New Left” report, the authorities had realised that the effective way of preventing the political dissemination of the New Left radicals’ influence was “isolating them from their more moderate supporters and ensuring they do not win public sympathy”.⁴⁵⁹ Particularly, in the hard times of the 1974 economic recession, “to counteract the left-wing publicity”, the government established its own publicity measures aiming at constructing positive images of Colonial Hong Kong, such as depicting a “spirit of mutual preservation” between the government and the public to cope with the difficult times of the economic hardship.⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, mass media was important to help the colonial government to prevent the propagation of radical left-wing thought like Trotskyism, and to strengthen the hegemony of British colonialism. On the one hand, during the period of economic hardship in the mid-1970s, as the City District Officer pointed out, “[t]he mass media has done a valuable part in spreading the fact that economic recession is a worldwide phenomenon and the local situation is not as serious as other developed countries. In a way, people are psychologically prepared to accept

⁴⁵⁸ *Xinsichao*, July 20th, 1979, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁹ Colonial Secretariat, “The New Left”, May 3rd, 1972, p. 12, *HKRS 934-3-30*.

⁴⁶⁰ City District Commissioner (Kowloon), “CDOs impressions on unemployment with proposals on PR (Public Relations) strategy”, Jan 27th, 1975, p. 2, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

the situation.”⁴⁶¹ On the other hand, the press was an effective way of counteracting the New Left and Trotskyist political activities by making use of the “troublemakers” discourse. As demonstrated in the last section, during the “anti-four” campaign, the press in general had successfully shaped a negative image of the Trotskyist campaigners by denouncing them as “politically-motivated troublemakers”. Wu Zhongxian in 1979 recalled that because Trotskyism was a “dangerous” factor that posed a political threat to the colonial government on behalf of the “bourgeoisie”, the government had to isolate and suppress Trotskyist activities by means of the press as well as by other measures. Thus, he perceived “the making of Trotskyist troublemakers” [by the government and the press] as a political tradition of anti-Trotskyism in local social movements, which produced a “detrimental” impact on the advancement of the “anti-four”.⁴⁶² To take another instance, from November 23rd, 1976, the *Special Branch* detectives launched a series of raid operations in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. More than ten people were arrested in the first day of the raids, and it was reported that the arrestees were “believed to be Trotskyites” who were suspected of operating a spy network. What is more, the pro-PRC press *Wen Wei Po* immediately asserted that the “believed Trotskyites” had a connection with “Soviet Revisionists”.⁴⁶³ Despite

⁴⁶¹ City District Officer (Eastern), “Decline of Economy in Hong Kong”, Oct 14th, 1974, p. 1, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

⁴⁶² Wu also pointed out in the same article that the anti-Trotskyist attack organised by the pro-Communist groups, such as trade unions, was another important factor that disconnected the Trotskyist activists from local working people in the “anti-four” campaign. Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing*, pp. 477–78.

⁴⁶³ On November 24th, 1976, a day after the first wave of counter-espionage raids operated by the *Special Branch*, different news sources mainly described the arrestees as “Trotskyites” or “New Left agents”. On November 28th, according to *SCMP*, the number of the round-up increased to “about 80 more”. As the government kept tight-lipped on the identity of the arrestees, rumours had multiplied from different sources. Besides being suspected as “Trotskyites”, the identity of arrestees was diversely labelled, such as European Communist spies, Russian spies, German terrorists, university lecturers and so on. See: *SCMP*, Nov 24th,

the fact that from the very beginning of the Special Branch raids, the officials refused to disclose the political identity of the arrestees, and the local Trotskyist group, the RML, later, denied that their party members and political associates were involved in the police's counter-espionage raids,⁴⁶⁴ a negative image of "Trotskyist troublemakers" constructed by the local press had become influential amongst the public.

In a 1974 official assessment, the City District Commissioner suggested that "[b]y actual involvement, the Government would give the impression that the administration is in the same boat with the general public no matter what happens."⁴⁶⁵ Thus, to restrain anti-colonial political actions as well as to strengthen its hegemony, the Hong Kong government took measures to contain the economic recession and to promote the growth of local economy, whilst it positively responded to local discontent and reform needs, i.e. strategically asserting that "the administration is in the same boat with the general public" by implementing social welfare policies. Despite the lack of democratic reforms in Hong Kong politics, under MacLehose's governorship 1971-1982, the Hong Kong government made a great effort in addressing local social problems, such as providing new public housing, developing new town schemes, prompting education, welfare and medical care systems, and social services.⁴⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the colonial administration began to take the problem of government corruption seriously by creating a particular new anti-

p. 1, Nov 25th, p. 1, Nov 26th, p. 9, Nov 28th, p. 1; *Ming Pao*, Nov 24th; *Sing Tao Jih Pao*, Nov 24th; *Wen Wei Po*, Nov 24th; *Xianggang shibao* (Hong Kong Times), Nov 24th, 1976.

⁴⁶⁴ *SCMP*, Nov 25th, 1976, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁵ Office of the City District Commissioner (H.K.), "Quarterly Assessment (July-September 1974)", Nov 14th, 1974, p. 9, *HKRS 476-6-25*.

⁴⁶⁶ See Ian Scott, *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong* (London: Hurst, 1989), Chapter 4. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*, pp. 160–62.

corruption institutional organisation *Independent Commission Against Corruption* in February 1974. They continued to strengthen the communication work between the rulers and the ruled in Chinese communities by operating the City District Officer Scheme (CDOS).⁴⁶⁷

The 1970s was a period that a variety of social movements organised by the Trotskyists and other local political groups radically challenged the colonial order or moderately urged the government to make a socio-political change to better the position of Hong Kong people. Paradoxically, it was also during a period in which the colonial state's hegemony was restructured: "[T]he colonial government had been successful in meeting these challenges and at the same time through its own reform initiatives had been able to convince the public that it was an efficient government capable of bringing them prosperity and stability."⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, under the MacLehose's governorship, the public had been impressed by the colonial government because it invested in promoting the economic growth as well as in implementing social welfare policies. The achievements of social change in the MacLehose's era were remarkable, as Scott pointed out, "[l]iving and working conditions improved. A middle class began to emerge. Hong Kong became a cleaner, more cosmopolitan, more pleasant place to live".⁴⁶⁹ At last, the colonial government to a large extent won the credit of a majority of Hong Kong people. This enabled the government successfully to isolate the "rebels", like the

⁴⁶⁷ For more details about the CDOS and the government's anti-corruption effort, see Ambrose Yeo-chi King, "Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level," *Asian Survey*, 15, no. 5, 1975, pp. 422–39. Steve Tsang, *Governing Hong Kong: Administrative Officers from the Nineteenth Century to the Handover to China, 1862-1997* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 87-113.

⁴⁶⁸ Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu, "Social Movements and Public Discourse on Politics", p. 110.

⁴⁶⁹ Ian Scott, *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong*, p. 163.

Trotskyists, who attempted to challenge the colonial order, from the general public. It did so by means of suppression, stigmatisation, and by addressing the needs of the local population. Eventually, though the Trotskyists in the 1970s continuously put a great effort into local social movements, its influence was restricted, and it remained a marginal political force in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the government's suppression of Trotskyist activities also acknowledged that the Trotskyists were engaging in local social movements and tried to play a leading role in them.

To conclude, in the 1970s, because the younger generation of Trotskyists aimed to play a leading role in Hong Kong social movements and to challenge the colonial order, by organising a series of protest actions, such as the "anti-four" campaign, etc., it put its political energies and efforts primarily into intervening in labour activities as well as in other forms of social movements. Generally speaking, within an environment where the de-politicised culture was prevalent, Trotskyist-led social campaigns also attracted a small group of local people who wanted to express their own discontent towards the colonial government, particularly under an atmosphere of economic recession. In some way, the Trotskyists did undertake a vanguard role of promoting social movements aiming at reforming the colonial society, at the same time that it aimed eventually to end the colonial establishment altogether.

However, from the perspectives of the colonial government and the vast majority of the local press, young Trotskyists posed a political threat to the government and to the "stability" of Hong Kong society. They counteracted the Trotskyist initiative of taking a leading role of Hong Kong social movement by suppressing the Trotskyist activities and by making Trotskyists into

“troublemakers”. As a result, a large part of Hong Kong people are ignorant of the past that in the 1970s, the Trotskyists tried to take on the role of social movements. Rather, they received a clear message from the government and the press that the Trotskyist radicals were “troublemakers” who posed a threat to social stability. Nevertheless, the suppression of Trotskyists by both the government and the local press also acknowledged that the younger generation of Trotskyists was an active political force in the Hong Kong political arena during the 1970s.

Chapter 5: The “Propaganda War” between Trotskyists and Pro-PRC Leftists in Hong Kong in the 1970s

As a leader of the Trotskyist youth group stated, the Trotskyist political work in Hong Kong was fruitful in the year of 1974: “It was a year of great activity and the League (i.e. RML) experienced a rapid growth in membership”.⁴⁷⁰

Indeed, the colonial authorities in early 1975 regarded the Trotskyist group as “the most active of the New Left Groups to be found in Hong Kong”.⁴⁷¹

Furthermore, though the pro-colonial local press in general recognised the Trotskyists as a group of “troublemakers”, even from negative news reports on the “anti-four” campaign and other Trotskyist activities, in the mid-1970s, the public, in some way, could be aware of the rise of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong.

In Chapter 4, we described how in coping with New Left political groups as potential or actual political threats to the colonial power, the colonial authorities mainly concentrated on Trotskyists. Nevertheless, besides the

⁴⁷⁰ “An interview with Wu Zhongxian” conducted by Joseph Miller, in Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 29. However, generally speaking, though the RML leader claimed, “a rapid growth in membership”, the RML remained a small political group in the 1970s. During the “anti-four” campaign, Wu Zhongxian on September 14th, 1974 accepted a media interview with a local mainstream English language newspaper *Hong Kong Standard* (HKS) in which he said that the *Combat Bulletin* group, i.e. RML, had “more than 70 members—mostly workers and graduates”. Also, According to *HKS*, just two days after the “anti-four” failure on October 1st, 1974, it was estimated there were only “65 members” in the *Combat Bulletin*. In January 1975, the Special Branch supposed that the *Combat Bulletin* “comprises no more than a dozen hardcore members with some twenty to thirty regular supporters”. In 1976, it was told to *SCMP* that the number of a combined membership of the RML with its political associates was about 300. And according to the common memory of former Trotskyist activists, the maximum number of the membership of the Trotskyist group as a whole in the 1970s was no more than 100. *Hong Kong Standard*, Sep 15th, Oct 1st, 1974, Newspaper Cuttings, *HKRS 70-6-390-1*; “The New Left in Hong Kong”, January 10th, 1975, p. 5, *HKRS 890-2-36*. *SCMP*, Nov 25th, 1976, p. 1. *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014, *Ou Longyu Interview*, Aug 18th, 2014, *Long Hair Interview*, Oct 27th, 2015.

⁴⁷¹ “The New Left in Hong Kong”, January 10th, 1975, p. 5, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

Hong Kong government and the press, what were other local political actors' attitudes towards the political "growth" of the active action-oriented Trotskyist group?

In the 1970s, a small group of young socio-political movement activists, i.e. Trotskyists and their political associates, not only disseminated harsh criticisms of British colonialism by organising protest actions against the colonial administration at a grass-roots level, but also used Trotskyism as an useful ideological weapon to condemn the local pro-PRC moderate policy of "non-confrontation" with the British-Hong Kong government⁴⁷² as well as the Communist regime in mainland China.

Meanwhile, as an important player in the politics of colonial Hong Kong, local pro-PRC leftists⁴⁷³ strongly sensed a rise of Trotskyism in local social movements. They regarded the Trotskyist "growth" as a political threat from the Left. They believed that the Trotskyist network in Hong Kong might be able to compete with them for a leading position in local left-wing politics. As a government report from the *Special Branch* revealed, "as they [the pro-PRC leftists] saw them⁴⁷⁴ taking up (social) issues...the [C]ommunists have become increasingly critical [of the Trotskyists and other New Left groups]."⁴⁷⁵

Indeed, when "old leftist" forces perceived a "danger" from local Trotskyist group that might challenge its hegemonic position within the Left in Hong Kong, it swiftly launched a "propaganda war", which is to say, a series of

⁴⁷² See more about the pro-PRC leftist policy of "non-confrontation" with the colonial government in the 1970s in Chapter 3.

⁴⁷³ Following the descriptions used by the local press and by the Trotskyists, we can also refer to pro-PRC leftists as "old leftists", "Communists" or "Maoists".

⁴⁷⁴ Here, "them" refers to Hong Kong's New Left groups in general. In the mid-1970s, the Trotskyist youth group was the most active and main part of the New Left in Hong Kong.

⁴⁷⁵ "The New Left in Hong Kong", January 10th, 1975, p. 6, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

ideological attacks against the ideological-political existence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong. In this process, the pro-PRC press was frequently used by the pro-Beijing leftists as a useful propaganda instrument to propagate a deliberately constructed anti-Trotskyist discourse. When Trotskyism as an oppositional force emerged within Left political circles to oppose the “Old Left”, it was a tradition for the latter to spread fear of Trotskyism to limit the political development of Trotskyism and to minimise its influence amongst the “masses”.⁴⁷⁶

In coping with anti-Trotskyist campaigns organised by local “Maoists”, the Trotskyists counteracted the hatred of Trotskyism and defend their ideological-political stances through their own propaganda platforms and other means of mass media. Hence, in this chapter, we will explore a political confrontation within the Left between local pro-PRC leftists and Trotskyists by investigating two high points of this “propaganda warfare”, i.e. two periods of the ideological attacks deliberately launched by the pro-PRC leftists aiming at disseminating fear of Trotskyism and Trotskyist responses in 1974 and 1976. In this way, we can have a clear understanding of the hostile attitudes of local pro-Beijing leftist forces towards the political moves of Trotskyism in Hong Kong and of the responses and reactions from the Trotskyist group regarding the anti-Trotskyism campaigns.

⁴⁷⁶ See much detail about this “tradition” in the Introduction.

Background: the pro-PRC groups in Hong Kong in the 1970s

Since the 1967 pro-Communist riots subsided, local pro-PRC organisations had been politically isolated.⁴⁷⁷ In order to alleviate tensions with the colonial government, the pro-PRC leftists in the 1970s were forced to abandon “ultra-left” propaganda against British colonialism among the “Communist-dominated” organisations and institutions, while they adopted a moderate “non-confrontation” policy towards the colonial presence in Hong Kong. In general, they intended to keep a “peaceful” relationship with the colonial government. For example, the government’s intelligence agency, *Special Branch* confirmed that pro-PRC trade unions were “currently adopting an attitude of moderation: open confrontation with Government is discouraged and in any dispute ‘settlement through negotiation’ advocated”.⁴⁷⁸

However, in the 1970s, the pro-PRC groups remained a relatively strong political force in Hong Kong political arena and played a leading role in local left-wing activities. As the Communist groups had a long history in Hong Kong from the very beginning of the CCP’s establishment, it possessed plentiful socio-political resources in local society, and there were a variety of social organisations and institutions established by the “Communists” for *united front* objectives,⁴⁷⁹ including educational institutions, press, cultural facilities (e.g.

⁴⁷⁷ See Zhang Jiawei, *Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), and Chapter 2.

⁴⁷⁸ Hui Ki-on, Director of Special Branch, “an intelligence report on Communist activities in New Territories”, Dec 10th, 1974, Hong Kong Public Records Office [cited in Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), p. 368.]

⁴⁷⁹ As we know, the united front is a “Marxist-Leninist” strategy of forging a political coalition between Communists and other political forces in the Communist movement. In the case of Chinese Communism, Van Slyke in his *Enemies and Friends* argues that from a view of Mao Zedong, the united front is an essential strategy of Chinese Communists, because it “isolates the enemy by winning the vast majority to the side of the revolution; then through struggle,

film industry and football clubs), civil society groups (e.g. trade unions, commercial enterprises).⁴⁸⁰ Furthermore, according to the *Special Branch*, despite the failure of the 1967 riots, the leftists in the 1970s continued to conduct various left-wing activities and to exert Communist influences upon the local people through their civil society channels by increasing enrollment in the left-wing schools, absorbing new trade union members, providing loans to local farmers through the “Communist-controlled” banks, organising picnics and dinner parties for workers on holidays, and establishing a hawkers’ society and *kaifong* organisations so as to win over hawkers’ and transport workers’ support from the triads, etc.⁴⁸¹ As the *Special Branch* concluded, the pro-Communists “represent the largest single co-ordinated force in the area

the isolated and now vulnerable enemy is destroyed”. What is more, Van Slyke suggests that the united front is “an integral part of Chinese Communist thought and practice”, and that since the PRC was established, Chinese Communists have used the united front as “one form of expression of its patriotism; by asserting that the united front includes all patriotic Chinese, and by insisting that the Party leads the united front, it equates support of the Party with nationalism.” Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends: United Front in Chinese Communist History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 3, 256. In Colonial Hong Kong, by operating the united front work, the pro-PRC leftists could exert the Communist influence upon the “patriotic Chinese”. See the pro-Communist united front work in Hong Kong in Cindy Yik-Yi Chu, *Chinese Communists and Hong Kong Capitalists: 1937-1997* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁴⁸⁰ See the civil penetration of Chinese Communism in Hong Kong society in Man Cheuk-Fei, *Zhonggong dui Xianggang zuopai de kongzhi moshi: ‘feidi’ dangpai baozhi yanjiu 1947-1982* (Partisan Journalism in an Enclave: A Case Study of the Hong Kong Leftist Press, 1947-82) (Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1998). Lu Yan, “Limits to Propaganda: Hong Kong’s Leftist Media in the Cold War and Beyond,” in *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, ed. Zheng Yangwen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 95-118. Tai-lok Lui, “Tichu zhonggang zhengzhi lianxi: lengzhan, zuqiu zhengzhi he Xianggang shehui” (Football Connecting Politics between China and Hong Kong: Cold War, Football Politics and Hong Kong Society) in *Xianggang, lunshu, chuanmei* (Hong Kong, Narratives, Media), ed. Zhang Shaoqiang, Liang Qizhi and Chen Jiaming (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1–20. Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012), pp. 324-393.

⁴⁸¹ Special Branch New Territories, “Communist Activities in the N.T.”, 1971, *HKRS 534-4-28*. “Intelligence Report No. 1 (25)/69: Left-Wing Activities in Tsuen Wan District”, Dec 29th, 1969, single-paged, *HKRS 734-4-1*. The Special Branch, “Communist Influence in Resettlement Estates”, Oct 22nd, 1971, pp. 1-10, *HKRS 734-4-1*. “Leftwing Activities - Mui Wo Sub-division, 1967-1972”, *HKRS 915-1-2*.

[New Territories]. Consequently, their influence is already far greater than their strength implies”.⁴⁸²

What is more, as shown in Chapter 3, in 1971, the *Baodiao* movement launched by different groups of overseas Chinese and Hong Kong students aroused the strong sentiment of “Chinese patriotism” among a large part of the younger generation in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the PRC’s admission into the United Nations on October 25th, 1971 strengthened Chinese nationalist sentiment among the younger generation, and hugely stimulated a considerable number of Hong Kong young people’s interest in Communist China. From mid-1971, in order to meet more young students’ curiosity about the Communist-PRC, the pro-PRC’s “Know China” movement,⁴⁸³ supported by Hong Kong student organisations, had emerged on campuses, and became popular within student circles. By sponsoring and offering assistance to the student-oriented “Know China” activities,⁴⁸⁴ and by keeping a close tie with students’ organisations,⁴⁸⁵ local “old leftists” exerted pro-Communist influences on university and post-secondary students to some extent. Influenced by the leftists, a group of students who identified themselves as “patriotic Chinese” from different universities, colleges and schools formed a loosely organised pro-China student faction. The formation of this pro-China group in universities and colleges enhanced the strength of pro-PRC groups in Hong Kong.

⁴⁸² “Communist Activities in the N.T.”, p. 4, *HKRS 534-4-28*.

⁴⁸³ See the “Know China” movement in Chapter 3.

⁴⁸⁴ The Special Branch of Royal Hong Kong Police, “The ‘Know China’ Movement”, 17th Dec 1973, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

⁴⁸⁵ J.A. Harrison for Secretary for Security, “The Know China Movement”, 10th Jan 1974, single-paged, *HKRS 890-2-36*. Ki-on Hui, “Memo: The ‘Know China’ Movement”, from Commissioner of Police to Secretary for Security, 17th Dec 1973, p. 2, *HKRS 890-2-36*.

From 1973 to 1976, the pro-China faction was active on campuses. This student group put their main focus on advertising the good side of the Communist “motherland”, which attracted a considerable number of students to participate in “Know China” activities and arouse their interest in the PRC. In complying with the leftist line of “non-confrontation” with the colonial authorities, “the pro-Communist China faction of university students quietly subordinated its anti-colonial agenda to its unifying agenda”.⁴⁸⁶

From this, we can see that in the 1970s, Hong Kong remained a sturdy pro-PRC stronghold, and the leftists had the ability to exert a strong influence upon some part of the local population through their civil society channels. Compared with the “old leftist” force, the brand-new Trotskyist youth group was in a marginal and weak position within the Left. However, as we have demonstrated in Chapter 4, by organising and engaging in various social movements challenging the colonial order, young Trotskyists had shown an overt attempt to take a leading role in local workers’ movement and other forms of social movements. In doing so, the Trotskyists were in direct competition with the pro-PRC trade unions and other “old leftist” organisations for gaining support from local workers and some part of Hong Kong population. Thus, a political clash within the Left in Hong Kong between the “Old Left”, i.e. the pro-PRC power, and “New Left”, i.e. the Trotskyists, was inevitable.

⁴⁸⁶ Wai-man Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), p. 209.

The reasons behind anti-Trotskyism and the first wave of the anti-Trotskyism campaign in 1974

In January 1974, with the financial assistance from the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists, the younger generation of Trotskyists established their own press in Hong Kong, and began to publish a political periodical *October Review*. As a result, the Trotskyists had a propaganda platform to express their political opinions and deliver a Trotskyist vision to local people. In the first three issues of *October Review*, there were a series of articles written by the Trotskyists that demonstrated their anti-colonial, anti-capitalist views, and revealed a strong political desire to challenge colonial rule.⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, in those issues, following a doctrine of Trotskyism, the Trotskyist writers revealed their discontent with Communist China, and sharply criticised the CCP's "bureaucratic dictatorship" and its factional struggle in mainland China during the Cultural Revolution era.⁴⁸⁸ Particularly, in the second issue, from their "genuine Marxist" perspective, the Trotskyists provoked the largest local pro-PRC trade union, the *Hong Kong and Kowloon Federation of Trade Unions* (FTU), by denouncing the FTU's "non-confrontation" line towards the British-Hong Kong government and its "patriotic united front" policy towards local Chinese capitalists, as well as by condemning the FTU as "one of core pillars of maintaining the colonial order" and as "a bourgeois agent in the proletariat".⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ *Shiyue pinglun* (October Review), January 1974, pp. 12-13, February 1974, pp. 19-20, March 1974, pp. 3-5.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, Jan 1974, p. 14-18, March 1974, p. 6-9.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, Feb 1974, p. 22.

Furthermore, as we have shown in the last chapter, young Trotskyists founded an *Anti-Price Increase Action Committee* in March 1974, and this Trotskyist-led committee was, at the moment, preparing an anti-inflation campaign. On May 5th, with a small part of local students' and workers' support, young Trotskyist activists organised a successful public rally for calling on fighting against inflation at Victoria Park, which revealed their anti-colonial, anti-capitalist views. Local Trotskyist activities such as the May 5th anti-inflation rally soon aroused attention and vigilance from the pro-PRC leftist camp. And more importantly, political criticisms of Chinese Communism and of Hong Kong pro-PRC organisations from Trotskyists' *October Review* brought further anxiety to the pro-PRC groups. Therefore, the "old leftists" prepared to counteract the "growth" of Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong, which was posing an ideological threat from the Left to their stronghold.

As mentioned in the Introduction, to contain the Trotskyist influence, Chinese Communists launched the anti-Trotskyism campaigns in the 1930s and 1940s. For a similar purpose, the pro-PRC leftist camp absorbed a large range of traditional anti-Trotskyist discourse from past campaigns against Trotskyism, and made use of this "weapon" in a "propaganda war" against the Trotskyists in Hong Kong. As Joseph Miller summarises, "the immediate response of the local Maoist organisations [to the Trotskyists in the 1970s] was to mechanically repeat all of the old Stalinist charges against Trotsky and these Trotskyist activities, expecting that they would work again in isolating the [Trotskyist] movement."⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁹⁰ Joseph Miller, *The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism* (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979), p. 271.

Besides absorbing and regurgitating traditional anti-Trotskyist discourse from the past anti-Trotskyist movement that were used to condemn the Trotskyists as “national traitors”, “counterrevolutionaries”, etc., the leftists also added a range of new phrases, such as “running dogs of Soviet revisionism”, into anti-Trotskyist discourse to update this for the current political context in the 1970s. Why were the Trotskyists “running dogs of Soviet revisionism”? We need to briefly introduce the background of the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s.

The split in the Sino-Soviet Communist bloc in the 1960s had long roots in history, and there were many complex ideological-political factors which affected the split: the CCP worried about the agenda of de-Stalinisation carried out by the Soviet party since the 20th Congress of the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (CPSU). This questioned Mao’s own cult of personality in the CCP, the CCP itself and Mao Zedong’s ambition of leading the Communist bloc. It also involved the disagreements between the PRC and the USSR about each countries’ domestic and foreign policies on behalf of their own national interests. It included different understandings and interpretations of “Marxism-Leninism”. For example, regarding the issue of how to deal with the relations with the Western capitalist camp, Khrushchev and the Soviet party proposed a programme of “peaceful coexistence” with the West in the international Communist movement, while Mao and the CCP rejected such a policy and argued for a belligerent attitude towards Western capitalism.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ There is a range of recent English and Chinese scholarship on the fall of the Sino-Soviet bloc in the 1960s, for example, see Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008). Sergey. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Woodrow Wilson

From the early 1960s, both sides began to engage in a long-term polemic surrounding the ideological-political divergences between them. At the beginning and even during the mid-stage of the Sino-Soviet debate, the CCP and the CPSU warily criticised each other and politely referred to party members of the other country as “dear comrades”. That is to say, at this early period of the polemic, the criticisms from both sides were “comradely” warnings rather than slanderous attacks. Gradually, the debate escalated: each side picked up more provocative phrases and vehemently made accusations that the other party had betrayed “Marxism-Leninism”. From Chinese sources, we can see the process of escalation clearly. For instance, in a letter from the Central Committee of the CCP to the Central Committee of the CPSU on June 14th, 1963, the CCP did not openly and directly criticise the CPSU. Instead, it sharply attacked Tito’s regime in Yugoslavia as “Yugoslav revisionism”, and claimed it considered that “modern revisionism” was the main danger in the international Communist movement. This hinted that it was also warning the Soviet party to keep away from “revisionism”.⁴⁹² However, a few months later, the CCP published nine open letters on the CPSU in order to fiercely and provocatively criticise “Soviet revisionism”. In those letters, Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership were accused of being the “revisionist Khrushchev clique”, “apologists of neo-colonialism”, “agents of imperialism who have hidden themselves among the ranks of the international

Center, 2009). Shen Zhihua, *Zhongsu guanxi shigang, 1917-1991* (History of the Sino-Soviet Relations, 1917-1991) (Beijing: Shehuikexuewenxian chubanshe, 2011), pp. 279-374. Mingjiang Li, *Mao’s China and the Sino-Soviet Split: Ideological Dilemma* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁴⁹² For example, see *Guanyu guoji gongchanzhuyi yundong zongluxian de jianyi* (A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement) (Beijing: Renmin Press, 1963). In English, see *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1963).

working-class movement”, “the greatest splitters of our times”, “Khrushchev’s phoney Communism”, etc.⁴⁹³

On the other side, the CPSU, in response, also vehemently made accusations that the Chinese party had “*de facto*” conducted “subversive, splitting activities against the fraternal Marxist-Leninist Parties”, and “the anti-Soviet policy of Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong) group” was “adventurist” and “anti-Leninist”.⁴⁹⁴ In October 1964, though Khrushchev stepped down from the Soviet leadership, the Sino-Soviet polemic still continued, and in 1969, the border clash escalated the tension between two countries.⁴⁹⁵ Then, Sino-Soviet relations reached a new low point. On the 20th anniversary of the PRC’s establishment on October 1st, 1969, the CCP came up with a new anti-

⁴⁹³ For example, see *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (The Select Documents of the Party and the Government since the PRC’s Establishment) Vol. 17 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), pp. 314–44. *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (The Select Documents of the Party and the Government since the PRC’s Establishment), Vol. 18 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), pp. 81–125, 363–415. *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (The Select Documents of the Party and the Government since the PRC’s Establishment), Vol. 19 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), pp. 16–78. In English, see The Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily) and *Hongqi* (Red Flag), *Apologists of Neo-Colonialism: Comment on The Open Letter of The Central Committee of The CPSU (IV)*, October 22nd, 1963 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1963). The Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily) and *Hongqi* (Red Flag), *The Leaders of the CPSU Are the Greatest Splitters of Our Times: Comment on The Open Letter of The Central Committee of The CPSU (VII)*, February 4th, 1964 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1964). The Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao* and *Hongqi*, *The Proletarian Revolution and Khrushchev’s Revisionism: Comment on The Open Letter of The Central Committee of The CPSU (VIII)*, March 31st, 1964 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1964). The Editorial Departments of *Renmin Ribao* and *Hongqi*, *On Khrushchov’s Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU (IX)*, July 1964 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1964).

⁴⁹⁴ For example, see CPSU, “Fidelity to Principles of Marxism-Leninism”, April 3rd, 1964, in *Struggle of the CPSU for the Unity of the International Communist Movement* (Moscow: Novosti Press, 1964), pp. 105–10. “The Anti-Soviet Policy of Mao Tse-Tung and His Group, February 17th, 1967,” *Soviet News*, no. 5370 (1967), pp. 93–96.

⁴⁹⁵ See the Sino-Soviet border clash in Thomas Robinson, “The Sino-Soviet Border Dispute: Background, Development, and the March 1969 Clashes”, *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 4, 1972, pp. 1175-1202. Yang Kuisong, “The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American Rapprochement”, *Cold War History* 1, no. 1, 2000, pp. 21-52.

Soviet slogan: “Down with Social Imperialism”.⁴⁹⁶ From then on, in the Chinese Communist propaganda, the CPSU was always regarded as a “revisionist enemy” or “social imperialist”.

But it is also worth noting that the anti-Trotskyist element was important in the Sino-Soviet debate in the 1960s: both sides denounced each other for adopting “Trotskyite positions” or standing with the “Trotskyites”.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, in the eyes of Chinese Communists, the Soviet Union’s de-Stalinisation policy could connect the anti-Stalinist Trotskyists with the “Soviet revisionists”. The CCP quoted a few remarks out of their context from Trotskyist documents in which the *Fourth International* said the international Trotskyists would give a critical support to the progress of de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union. But in the same documents, the Trotskyists also criticised Khrushchev’s strategy of “peaceful coexistence” with the Western capitalist bloc, while giving the “Mao Tse-tung tendency” critical support as well, “where it (i.e. the CCP) defends a sharper attitude in relation to Imperialism and the colonial bourgeoisie,...where it abandons the whole Stalinist conception of the

⁴⁹⁶ “Dadao shehui diguozhuyi” (Down with Social Imperialism), *News of the Communist Party of China*, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64170/4467180.html>.

⁴⁹⁷ For example, the CCP condemned “Khrushchev’s revisionism”, i.e. the Soviet party, “converges with Trotskyism” and accused the Soviet leader Khrushchev of being a “disciple of Trotsky”, see *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (The Select Documents of the Party and the Government since the PRC’s Establishment), Vol. 18, p. 398. *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (The Select Documents of the Party and the Government since the PRC’s Establishment), Vol. 19, p. 53. The CPSU also accused the CCP of standing with Trotskyists. See CPSU, “Fidelity to Principles of Marxism-Leninism”, April 3rd, 1964, pp. 105–10. Moreover, international Trotskyists themselves witnessed the accusations of Trotskyism both from the CCP and the CPSU, in which they accused each other of adopting Trotskyist views and of being Trotskyists by citing passages from Trotskyist documents. See: “The 8th World Congress of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, 1965: The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Crisis of the International Communist Movement,” *International Socialist Review*, 27, no. 2, 1966, pp. 76–85. And as the CIA intelligence working paper on the Sino-Soviet dispute noted, Khrushchev in 1960 had mentioned that “the Chinese party’s strategy was more Trotskyist than Stalinist.” See Central Intelligence Agency, *Current Intelligence Staff Study: The New Stage of the Sino-Soviet Dispute* (Oct 1961-Jan 1962) (CIA, 1962), p. 3.

'revolution by stages' in the colonial countries and advances empirically".⁴⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the Chinese Communist writers depicted the Trotskyists as a key supporting force of the CPSU.⁴⁹⁹ In so doing, the CCP supporters could easily believe that the Trotskyist force was "a colluder of Soviet revisionism" in opposition to "the correct Marxist-Leninist line" carried out by the CCP, though the Trotskyists stood firmly against both Soviet and Chinese "bureaucratic rules". This fictive "collusion" between Trotskyists and "Soviet revisionists" made up by Chinese Communists in the Sino-Soviet dispute provided the Communist supporters in Hong Kong with a theoretical basis to launch and justify the campaigns against Trotskyism in the 1970s.

In reality, there is no clear evidence to demonstrate a political collaboration between international Trotskyists and the CPSU, as manufactured by the CCP in the polemic. Indeed, some researchers have found that in the Brezhnev era, there were a revival of anti-Trotskyism in the Soviet Union,⁵⁰⁰ and growing assertions that "most Trotskyists in the West have adopted a position of 'critical support' of China in the Sino-Soviet dispute".⁵⁰¹

Nevertheless, in the 1970s, to constrain the political development of Trotskyism in Hong Kong and limit Trotskyist influence upon local workers and left-wing sympathisers, Hong Kong's pro-PRC groups launched political

⁴⁹⁸ See the quotations in "The Repercussions of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU — Resolution Adopted by the International Secretariat," *Fourth International*, no. 14, 1961, p. 25.

⁴⁹⁹ For example, see *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (The Select Documents of the Party and the Government since the PRC's Establishment), Vol. 18, p. 101.

⁵⁰⁰ Robert McNeal, "The Revival of Soviet Anti-Trotskyism," *Studies in Comparative Communism* X, no. 1&2, 1977, pp. 5–17. From a collection of anti-Trotskyist and anti-Maoist articles published in the Brezhnev's era, McNeal explicitly points out "the polemics against Trotskyism frequently refer to its similarity to Maoism". See Robert McNeal, "Demonology: The Orthodox Communist Image of Trotskyism," pp. 32–33.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 36. Additionally, in an interview with Wu Zhongxian in 1976 on the political development of Hong Kong Trotskyism, Wu admitted that there was a favourable attitude in his *Combat Bulletin* group towards Mao and China's policies. Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 30.

campaigns against Trotskyism and accused young Trotskyists of being the “colluders of Soviet revisionists” or “running dogs of Soviet revisionism”.

In the mid-year of 1974, as a local political observer Xing He explicitly pointed out, the Trotskyist activities in local labour movement seemed beyond the leftists’ tolerance.⁵⁰² Consequently, the pro-PRC FTU started the first wave of the anti-Trotskyism campaign. On July 1st and August 1st, 1974, the FTU’s propaganda “mouthpiece”, *Hong Kong Workers*, published a series of propaganda articles and caricatures aimed at Trotskyism. In anti-Trotskyist propaganda materials, by making use of anti-Trotskyist discourse adopted either from the past anti-Chinese Trotskyism campaigns in the 1930s, from the anti-Trotskyist guidebook provided by the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* (Short Course),⁵⁰³ or from anti-Soviet articles during the Sino-Soviet dispute, the pro-PRC trade unionists concocted a variety of old and new accusations on Trotskyism and Trotskyist activities to stigmatise them in the past history of Communism and in the present stage of political struggle.

For example, in Issue 25 of *Hong Kong Workers* published on July 1st, the editor remarked that *October Review* Trotskyists in Hong Kong were conducting sabotage activities that “sell out their own country (i.e. China), and betray the class interest of the proletariat”; furthermore, they “worked for Soviet revisionism, and are a bunch of running dogs of imperialism”.⁵⁰⁴ In Issue 26 on August 1st, the stigmatisation of Trotskyism continued: the

⁵⁰² See Xing He, “Xianggang tuopai yu qingnian xuesheng yundong” (Hong Kong Trotskyists and Student Youth Movement), *Feng Lei* (Hong Kong, July 1975), p. 14.

⁵⁰³ For the information about the *Short Course*, see p. 41.

⁵⁰⁴ *Xianggang gongren* (Hong Kong Workers), Issue, 25, July 1st, 1974, p. 3.

“Maoist” columnists, at the current stage of political struggle, responded to Trotskyist criticisms from *October Review* of the CCP’s “bureaucratic dictatorship” and of the Communist domestic [i.e. the ongoing Cultural Revolution] and foreign [i.e. anti-Soviet Union] policies. Furthermore, they condemned how Trotskyism and Trotskyist activities were “anti-Marxist-Leninist”, and how Trotskyists attempted to “split and sabotage” the Communist Party as well as to conduct “counterrevolutionary” activities. Thus, the leftists “successfully” discovered that they, the Trotskyists in Hong Kong, were a group of “pseudo-Marxists”, “far right-wingers”, “tools of imperialism”, “and running dogs of Soviet revisionism”.⁵⁰⁵

Following the FTU’s anti-Trotskyist moves, from July to September 1974, there were a large range of anti-Trotskyist articles which appeared in local pro-PRC press, such as *Ta Kung Pao*, *Wen Wei Po* and *New Evening Post*. By continually employing the discourse of anti-Trotskyism, leftists repeated the old “crimes” of Trotskyism and new charges of being “colluders of Soviet revisionism”, and more anti-China, anti-Communist labels were imposed on Trotskyism and Trotskyists. Trotsky was deemed to be an “evil-doer in the October Revolution”, and Trotskyism and Trotskyists were not a political tendency or faction “on behalf of the working class”, but a bunch of “bandits”, “traitors”, and “spies”, etc.⁵⁰⁶ After the Trotskyist-led anti-four campaign started in mid-September, the ideological assaults launched by pro-China organisations against Trotskyism continued. There was an overt hatred of

⁵⁰⁵ *Xianggang gongren* (Hong Kong Workers), Issue 26, Aug 1st, 1974, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ See a collection of anti-Trotskyist articles produced by a group of the pro-China leftists in the mid-1970s in *Tamen ruhe fandui tuopai* (How They Oppose against Trotskyism), Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/marxist.org-chinese-chinatrotsandmaos-1970s.htm>.

Trotskyism in the reports from the pro-Beijing media on the anti-four campaign. On September 27th, *Wen Wei Po* published a long anti-Trotskyist article to warn the left-wing readers to keep distance from Trotskyism. In this article, the writer claimed that the Hong Kong Trotskyists were conducting “conspiracy activities” aiming at splitting workers from the pro-China camp, and in his conclusion, the author repeated that the Trotskyists who “worked for imperialists, fascists and counterrevolutionaries” were currently “a bunch of running dogs of Soviet revisionism”.⁵⁰⁷ Meanwhile, on September 30th, *Ta Kung Pao* also denounced the Trotskyists as carrying out “conspiracy activities” by making use of the excuses of “anti-employment”.⁵⁰⁸

Along with the rejections of the “anti-four” campaign from the majority of the pro-colonial press, the anti-Trotskyist propaganda activities advanced by the pro-China groups created a major impact on local working people who the Trotskyists sought the support of. Therefore, the creation of the fear of Trotskyism in Hong Kong impeded the Trotskyist political development in local labour activities. Wu Zhongxian later recalled that the massive anti-Trotskyism campaign conducted by the pro-PRC groups in society writ large was one of the key factors that caused the failure of the “anti-four” campaign, so that the Trotskyists could not achieve their purpose of winning over workers’ support in the local communities.⁵⁰⁹

In the meantime, the pro-PRC youth groups and student factions disseminated fear of Trotskyism in social circles of Hong Kong young people.

⁵⁰⁷ *Wen Wei Po*, Sep 27th, 1974, p. 7.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ta Kung Pao*, Sep 30th, 1974, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing* (Our Work’s Not Finished) (Hong Kong: Lewen Bookshop, 1997), p. 478.

Pan Ku, in particular, a pro-Beijing youth magazine,⁵¹⁰ from September 1st, 1974 to March 1st, 1975, continuously published various anti-Trotskyist articles in its 7 consecutive issues (i.e. from Issue 73 to 79. Issue 73, particularly, is a special issue on “Criticising Trotskyism”). In these issues, we can see that young pro-China writers perceived there was a rise of the Trotskyist tendency in the student movement, and in order to let their readers “recognise the dangerous nature of Trotskyism in the revolutionary activities”,⁵¹¹ they used the *Short Course*, early Soviet anti-Trotskyist materials coming from Lenin and Stalin’s passages, and other new forms of anti-Trotskyist discourse, and so attacked Trotskyism mainly from four aspects.

Firstly, in theory, Trotskyism and Trotsky’s permanent revolution that includes his criticisms of “socialism in one country” and of “Soviet bureaucracy”, etc. were “*de facto*” anti-“worker-peasant alliance”, anti-“united front”, anti-“proletarian dictatorship” and anti-“Marxism-Leninism”.⁵¹² In a word, from pro-PRC leftists’ perspective, Trotskyism was theoretically “Left in form, Right in essence”. Secondly, from what they learnt from the party history textbook, the *Pan Ku* columnists condemned Trotsky for being a “traitor of the revolution”. From their point of view, Trotsky had historically opposed Lenin and “deliberately” leaked the plans of the military uprising before the October Revolution began in Petrograd. They continued to accuse Trotskyists of conducting various sabotage activities in the Soviet Union and of

⁵¹⁰ See the origin of *Pan Ku* in a few recollection articles from Guan Yongqi and Huang Zicheng, ed., *Women zouguo de lu* (The Way We’ve Passed) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2015), pp. 58–64, 223–47.

⁵¹¹ “Editor’s Words”, *Pan Ku*, Issue 73, Sep 1st, 1974, back cover page.

⁵¹² *Pan Ku*, Issue 73, Sep 1, 1974, pp. 3-9; Issue 74, Oct 1st, 1974, pp. 12-15.

collaborating with Japanese aggressors during wartime.⁵¹³ Thirdly, such essayists, remarking on the present stage of politics in the 1970s, claimed that the Hong Kong Trotskyists were the “mouthpieces of bourgeoisie” and worked for “Soviet revisionism” as they openly opposed the “bureaucratic dictatorship” in China and highly criticised the Communist policies in the Cultural Revolution.⁵¹⁴ Furthermore, the Trotskyists were condemned by the leftists as “a tool of British-Hong Kong government” since the pro-colonial press, such as *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) and *Hong Kong Standard* (HKS), interviewed several Trotskyist leaders.⁵¹⁵ In addition, the leftists in *Pan Ku* addressed local Trotskyists’ overseas contact with the *Fourth International* in order to demonstrate that local Trotskyists were a part of an “international counterrevolutionary group” who proposed to “re-establish their anti-Communist base” in Hong Kong.⁵¹⁶

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 3, due to disagreements regarding the priority options for the local youth and student movement, i.e. whether putting a high priority of student movement on “identifying with the Communist motherland” or concerning local reforms while challenging the colonial order, the local young people and students who engaged in the *Baodiao* movement in the early 1970s eventually divided into two major student factions after the anti-corruption campaign in 1973: one was the pro-PRC faction which fully supported Communist China and complied with local leftists’ policy of “non-confrontation” with the colonial government in the student activities; the other

⁵¹³ *Pan Ku*, Issue 73, pp. 10-12; Issue 74, p. 15; Issue 78, Feb, 1st, 1975, pp. 16-19.

⁵¹⁴ *Pan Ku*, Issue 73, pp. 13, 15-16.

⁵¹⁵ *Pan Ku*, Issue 74, p. 29; Issue 75, Nov 1st, 1974, pp. 16-17; Issue 76, Dec 1st, 1974, pp. 10-11; see the reports and interviews with the Trotskyists in *Sunday Post-Herald*, Sep 22nd, 1974, pp. 1-2; *HKS*, Sep 22nd, 1974, p. 17.

⁵¹⁶ *Pan Ku*, Issue 74, p. 30; Issue 76, p. 10.

was the “actionist group” which deeply doubted the pro-PRC faction’s line of “identifying with Communist China”.⁵¹⁷ In 1974, the conflict between the pro-China faction and the actionist group on campuses intensified and resulted in an anti-Trotskyism campaign in the student movement.

As 1974 was the 25th anniversary of the PRC’s establishment, in summer 1974, the editorial boards of the student newspapers from 4 local universities and colleges, the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), the Baptist College, and the Polytechnic College, discussed and prepared to jointly publish a special issue on “New China”. However, the “actionist” editors of *Undergrad* from the HKU insisted that the joint student paper should publish three critical articles, the “Seventies Front” i.e. the former 70’s *Biweekly* Group’s *Our Position*, Wu Zhongxian’s *Whither China?* and Yuxue’s *Dusk of Rationale*, written from different radical New Left perspectives. Wu’s article was obviously written from a Trotskyist point of view. All three articles vehemently attacked the “bureaucratic” regime in mainland China, while Yu’s article argued against important Trotskyist ideas, like permanent revolution, from a New Left viewpoint.⁵¹⁸ The pro-China editors from the three other student newspapers rejected the proposal from the *Undergrad* editors on publishing these three articles. Then, since the editors of *Undergrad* realised that there was a “political prejudice” towards these New Left articles within the joint editorial board, that is to say, the majority of the board members regarded these articles as “anti-China” and

⁵¹⁷ See the disagreement in detail between these two student groups in *Xianggang xuesheng yundong: huigu ji jiantao* (Hong Kong Student Movement: A Review) (Hong Kong: Students’ Union, University of Hong Kong, 1978). Guan Yongqi and Huang Zicheng, *Women zouguo de lu* (The Way We’ve Passed), p. 217.

⁵¹⁸ See these three articles in *Undergrad*, Nov 1st, 1974, pp. 12, 14-15, 16-19.

anti-Communist”, they dropped out of the joint editorial board and independently worked on a special issue focusing on China.⁵¹⁹

Eventually, on November 1st, these three articles that expressed opposition to the PRC appeared in the *Undergrad*. Meanwhile, regarding the *Undergrad*'s exit from the joint board, the *Undergrad* “actionists” and the pro-China editors from the three other student newspapers made statements to blame each other.⁵²⁰ Furthermore, a group of pro-China students at the HKU wrote “big-character” posters to criticise the “actionists” within the editorial board of *Undergrad*.⁵²¹ As a result, the *Undergrad*'s exit became one of the key factors that triggered the anti-Trotskyism campaign on campuses. In addition, in November 1974, there was a student election for a new students' union leadership of the HKU.⁵²² At the end, Mai Haihua's “actionist” board beat Zhong Ruiming's pro-China board to serve as the next year's students' union leadership. This result provoked anger within the pro-China faction at the HKU against the “actionist” group and Trotskyists. When the pro-China members who served the students' union in the previous year left their posts in January 1975, by making use of the *Undergrad*'s exit, they launched several student activities against Trotskyism at the HKU. Meanwhile, the other pro-China student groups also spread the fear of Trotskyism in other universities and post-secondary schools.

⁵¹⁹ Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu* (A Review of Student Movement in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Publishing Co., 1983), p. 88.

⁵²⁰ See these statements in *Undergrad*, Nov 20th, pp. 2-3; *Zhongda xueshengbao* (Chinese University Student Newspaper), Feb 25th, 1975, p. 9.

⁵²¹ *Xianggang xuesheng yundong: huigu ji jiantao* (Hong Kong Student Movement: A Review), p. 13. Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu* (A Review of Student Movement in Hong Kong), p. 88. Zhong Yaohua, “Jiaguo, zeren, Xianggang--Mai Haihua” (An Interview with Mai Haihua), *Initium Media*, Aug 21st, 2015:

<https://theinitium.com/article/20150822-opinion-70s-makhoiwah-a/>

⁵²² In 1974, the pro-China faction held the leadership of the HKU students' union.

In a special communication report of the HKU students' union published in January 1975, the former pro-China board members explicitly presented their anti-Trotskyist point of view. Similarly to the pro-Beijing trade unionists and the *Pan Ku* columnists, they repeated that the Trotskyists were “a spy organisation”, “a tool of Japanese aggressors”, and a bunch of “Soviet agents”.⁵²³ Moreover, they accused those Trotskyists that intervened in the student and social movements of carrying out sabotage activities, and of trying to exert their “bad” influences on students among Hong Kong universities and colleges by publishing pro-Trotskyist articles in *Undergrad*. Therefore, the leading pro-China students at the HKU warned that if the HKU students did not keep eyes on the “dangerous” Trotskyists, the control of the students' union, which represented the interests of 3,000 students, would fall into the hands of the Trotskyists, from which we can also see that this obliquely alluded to a connection between the “actionist” student group and the Trotskyist youth organisation.⁵²⁴ Additionally, during the anti-Trotskyist push within local youth and student activities, young PRC supporters also accused several small anti-British colonial student groups, such as the *Jie Lu League* and the *Progressive Youths*, of being “in collusion” with the Trotskyists because those groups disagreed with the pro-China faction's lines of “identifying with Communist China” and of “non-confrontation” with the colony.⁵²⁵ In a word, in the eyes of the pro-China student faction, Trotskyism and any other elements against its student policies were detrimental to the youth and student movement. Thus, the pro-China student activists put “evil”

⁵²³ See *Pan Ku*, Issue 79, March 1st, 1975, pp. 14-16. This special anti-Trotskyist report was also reproduced in Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Xianggang xuesheng yundong huigu* (A Review of Student Movement in Hong Kong), pp. 89-93.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ *Pan Ku*, Issue 77, Jan 1st, 1975, pp. 24-25.

labels on the Trotskyist youth group and other student campaign groups in order to contain their political development in student circles.

In this section, we can clearly understand that the leftist stigmatisation of Trotskyism was not only for anti-Trotskyist propaganda use, but also implied that the pro-China leftists raised a political concern about the rise of Trotskyism in Hong Kong. This concern indirectly acknowledged that Hong Kong Trotskyists put great efforts into intervening in and engaging in various social movements, particularly the workers' movement and student movement.

Trotskyist responses to the first wave of the anti-Trotskyism campaign

As the *October Review* was a key ideological base and propaganda platform for old and new generations of Trotskyists in Hong Kong, it became an obvious target of suppression from the pro-China forces. Consequently, by using pro-China propaganda instruments, such as *Hong Kong Workers* and *Pan Ku*, etc., the pro-PRC leftists continuously stigmatised *October Review* and other general or specific forms of Trotskyist engagements in local labour and youth movements so as to set up a political-ideological barrier against the Trotskyist development. For the purpose of reacting against the wave of the leftist campaigns against Trotskyism in 1974, by employing the press of *October Review* as a propaganda tool as well as by making use of other propaganda means, the Trotskyists responded to the leftist stigmatisation of Trotskyism and elaborated what was Trotskyism. Meanwhile, a propaganda counterattack launched by the Trotskyists against the stigmatisation of

Trotskyism was also a chance for them to present their political views to the public, wanting to clarify that all the “crimes of Trotskyism” were imposed by a “Communist production of history”.

In August 1974, one month after pro-PRC trade unionists from the FTU took the lead in launching the anti-Trotskyist attack in *Hong Kong Workers*, the Trotskyist editorial board of *October Review* brought out a special issue titled *Our Statement: A Response to the Attacks against October Review* to explicitly define their political positions:

- (1) “To oppose capitalism and imperialism; to overthrow capitalist regimes and establish proletarian dictatorship with socialist democracy by means of world revolution.
- (2) “To oppose new and old forms of colonialism and advocate an integration between national liberation and proletarian revolution.
- (3) “To endorse the positive role of the Chinese Revolution led by the CCP; however, because Communist China is a deformed workers’ state under the Party’s bureaucracy, [the Trotskyists] oppose its bureaucratic dictatorship and call on workers and peasants to struggle for socialist democracy.
- (4) “To oppose Soviet chauvinism and stand for a political revolution in the Soviet Union and other workers’ states aiming at establishing socialist democracy.

(5) “To call for the masses to put pressures on Soviet and China’s Communist leadership in order to reach a reconciliation between these two countries on behalf of the world proletarian revolution.

(6) “In all revolutionary struggles, all political factions on behalf of the proletariat should be united in action against class enemies, and should seek a solution to their divergences only in the ideological struggle; particularly, [every faction] should not calumniate the others.”⁵²⁶

After claiming their political stances and ambitions, the Trotskyists continued to defend their positions against the leftist stigmatisation of Trotskyism in following articles in subsequent issues of *October Review*.

The *October Review* contributors, on the historical level, contradicted the anti-Trotskyist discourse adopted from the *Short Course*. By presenting a large range of evidence from the testimonies of the witnesses of the Russian Revolution, such as an American left-wing journalist John Reed’s *Ten Days That Shook the World*,⁵²⁷ and even Stalin’s own words, the Trotskyists believed that Trotsky was not a “defector” of the Russian Revolution, but a leading figure of the October uprising. For example, they quoted a passage by Stalin in which he praised Trotsky’s role as organiser in the work of the October Revolution so as to refute the charges that Trotsky had tried to sabotage the revolution:

“All practical work in connection with the organization of the uprising was done under the immediate direction of Comrade Trotsky, the president

⁵²⁶ *Shiyue pinglun* (October Review), Aug 1974, p. 2.

⁵²⁷ See John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (London: Penguin, 2007), Chapter 4, pp. 45-62.

of the Petrograd Soviet. It can be stated with certainty that the Party is indebted primarily and principally to Comrade Trotsky for the rapid going over of the garrison to the side of the Soviet and the efficient manner in which the work of the Military-Revolutionary Committee was organised...”⁵²⁸

On a theoretical level, the Trotskyist writers constantly introduced Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution in *October Review*, while they denied the leftist charges that Trotsky despised the peasantry class in the revolution.⁵²⁹ They considered that Trotsky's thinking on the peasantry rather stressed from the unique leading character of the “proletariat” and the “dualism” of the peasantry. That is to say, for Trotsky, the peasant movement was inconsistent: it could become either pro-“proletarian revolution” or anti-“proletarian revolution”. Furthermore, they continued to demonstrate that Lenin was at one with Trotsky on the “dualism” of the peasantry, as Lenin also emphasised that the interest of the “proletariat” was different from the peasantry's.⁵³⁰ Following this clue, they were able to conclude that Trotsky did not oppose Lenin, but stood with Lenin on theoretical issues. Additionally, in the *October Review*, while defending the Trotskyist positions by disproving the leftist anti-Trotskyist articles, the Trotskyists, from their radical anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist stances, continually attacked the “non-confrontation” policy that the pro-China leftists carried out in trade union and student

⁵²⁸ See original passage in Joseph Stalin, *The October Revolution*, 1918, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1918/11/06.htm> [cited in *October Review*, August 1974, p. 4]

⁵²⁹ See the pro-PRC leftist charges that Trotsky despised the peasantry in the revolution in *Pan Ku*, Issue 73, pp. 3-9.

⁵³⁰ *October Review*, Aug 1974, p. 5; Nov 1974, p. 11.

activities.⁵³¹ They also vehemently condemned the “class compromise” between the “Maoists” and the Chinese “bourgeoisie” in Hong Kong under the flag of “patriotism”, which, from a Trotskyist view, created a “detrimental impact” on the workers’ struggle.⁵³²

Apart from the Trotskyist responses to the high wave of anti-Trotskyism in the *October Review*, in the second half of 1974, young Trotskyist leaders also sought to find other mass media platforms, including more liberal and pro-colonial publications, such as *Undergrad*, *SCMP*, *HKS*, *Ming Pao Monthly*,⁵³³ to reiterate their political views of Communist China and refute accusations against them. During the “anti-four” campaign in September, they accepted several press interviews. In the interviews with *HKS*, they explicitly claimed that they were “Revolutionary Marxists” whose “ultimate goal is an equal distribution of wealth among the [Hong Kong] community”, while in response to the leftist charge of being the “running dogs of Soviet revisionism”, they firmly denied that they were backed by the Soviet regime.⁵³⁴

More importantly, by fully using the pro-colonial press, the Trotskyists pointed out to the public that the reason “[w]e have been savagely attacked by them [i.e. the pro-China leftists]” was because “we do not think on the same lines ideologically”.⁵³⁵ Subsequently, they took the opportunity to make a counterattack against pro-PRC leftists.⁵³⁶ Firstly, they restated their critical attitude towards Communist China, criticising the absence of basic freedoms

⁵³¹ *October Review*, Aug 1974, p. 7; Jan 1975, p. 9.

⁵³² *October Review*, Jan 1975, p. 9.

⁵³³ Wu Zhongxian, “Shehuizhuyi de pantu—Sidalin” (The Traitor of Socialism--Stalin), *Ming Pao Monthly*, Dec 1974, pp. 59-64.

⁵³⁴ *HKS*, Sep 15th, 1974, p. 1.

⁵³⁵ *HKS*, Sep 22nd, 1974, p. 17.

⁵³⁶ See: *HKS*, Sep 15th, 1974, p. 16; Sep 22nd, 1974, p. 17.

and “socialist democracy” under the CCP’s “bureaucratic dictatorship”. Secondly, they sharply blamed local “Maoists” who followed the line of “non-confrontation” for avoiding clashes with the colonial government, which meant, from a Trotskyist point of view, that the leftists were only anti-colonial in word, but did not take any actions against British colonialism in practice. Thirdly, they also imposed “evil” labels on pro-PRC leftists. For example, pro-PRC labour union leaders were accused of “being a bunch of nationalist capitalists who are ‘exploiting workers daily’.”⁵³⁷

Though the young Trotskyists “hope[s] to influence the hawkers, industrial workers and students”,⁵³⁸ their voices remained weak during the “propaganda war” with the leftists, because compared to the pro-PRC groups in Hong Kong with their considerable socio-political resources among trade unions, educational institutions, media platforms, etc., enabling them to exert their influence on a part of the local population, the newly established Trotskyist youth groups in the mid-1970s, along with a small faction of the old Chinese Trotskyists, lacked such socio-political resources. Another factor that made them weak in their propaganda counterattack against anti-Trotskyism was that, as the Trotskyists themselves admitted, they were “young, inexperienced [in the political struggle], lacking in any deep ideological training...”⁵³⁹

Furthermore, as we pointed out earlier, the news reports with regard to the young Trotskyist perspectives towards China, Hong Kong current situation and the local labour movement from *SCMP* and *HKS* gave the pro-PRC

⁵³⁷ *HKS*, Sep 15th, 1974, p. 16.

⁵³⁸ *Sunday Post-Herald* (*SCMP*), Sep 22nd, 1974, p. 1.

⁵³⁹ Raymond Yao, “Hongkong’s Coffee-Shop Radicals,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hong Kong, October 1976, p. 39. And in the same article, the author worried that “the situation [of the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement] is full of rich potential for the Soviet propagandists”.

leftists a good “excuse” to attack the Trotskyists and accuse them of being a “bourgeois tool” of the colonial government.

The Trotskyists’ pro-Chinese Democracy campaign and the second-high wave of anti-Trotskyism in 1976

After the “anti-four” campaign ended, the young action-oriented Trotskyists continued to be passionately involved in local socio-political issues. Moreover, as we mentioned in earlier chapters, Chinese Trotskyists were desperate to pursue “socialist democracy” in China. Also, as Pik Wan Wong discovered, the young Trotskyists “believed that a democratic China could provide a solid foundation for a democratic Hong Kong”.⁵⁴⁰ On April 5th, 1976, a massive pro-democracy protest against the *Gang of Four* and the CCP’s bureaucracy took place at Tian’anmen Square in Beijing, which was immediately cracked down by the repressive apparatus of the Communist state.⁵⁴¹ When the news of the Tian’anmen protest reached Hong Kong, in opposition to the pro-PRC stronghold in Hong Kong that immediately claimed its support for the Communist suppression of the protest, the Trotskyist youth groups along with other New Left factions, student groups, and human rights organisations subsequently announced their solidarity with the pro-democracy protest on

⁵⁴⁰ Pik Wan Wong, “The Pro-Chinese Democracy Movement in Hong Kong,” in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, ed. Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), p. 60.

⁵⁴¹ See the details about the rise and process of the April 5th protest in Frederick Teiwes and Warren Sun, “The First Tian’anmen Incident Revisited: Elite Politics and Crisis Management at the End of the Maoist Era,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol 77 Issue 2, 2004, pp. 211–235; Sebastian Heilmann, “The Social Context of Mobilization in China, Factions, Work Units, and Activists during the 1976 April Fifth Movement”, *China Information*, Vol 8, Issue 3, 1993, pp. 1-19.

the mainland,⁵⁴² and began to prepare solidarity campaigns with the Tian'anmen protest. On May 2nd, five small radical New Left groups, the RML, the *Young Socialist Group* (YSG, an affiliated youth group of the RCP at that time), the *Young Militants*, the *Seventies Front* (the former "Seventies" group), and the *Re-awaken* (a pro-Trotskyist Chinese youth group based in London), brought out a joint statement, "Let People Stand and Speak", on the April 5th pro-democracy protest. In this statement, these five youth groups together denounced Beijing's suppression of the protest, and jointly demanded that the Communist government should unconditionally release all the arrested, while they firmly supported the Chinese people's right to enjoy freedom of expression and other democratic rights including the rights of assembly, to strike, of publishing.⁵⁴³

Shortly after this statement was announced, the Trotskyist group as a whole swiftly took protest actions for presenting their pro-democracy attitude in front of the Hong Kong people and showing their solidarity with the Chinese democracy activities that took place in Beijing and other cities under Communist rule. According to a report from a Trotskyist youth magazine,⁵⁴⁴ on May 12th, the YSG, the RML, the Young Militants and the Seventies Front staged a small demonstration outside the headquarters of the Hong Kong branch of the *Xinhua News Agency*, which was a political symbol of the local pro-PRC establishment. The Trotskyist and anarchist activists wanted to submit a joint statement as a pro-democracy petition to the Agency with

⁵⁴² See different solidarity statements on the April 5th Movement issued by various social movement groups, including 5 small radical New Left groups in *Women yao minzhu ziyou* (We Demand Democracy and Freedom) (Hong Kong: Lianhe Press, 1976).

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*, pp. 7–9.

⁵⁴⁴ *Xinsichao* (Rive Gauche), June 1976, p. 2.

regard to the Tian'anmen protest. But because this petition might embarrass the pro-PRC groups, the Agency refused to accept the statement.

Nevertheless, the morale of local Trotskyist youth groups remained high.

From their political point of view, they thought the pro-democracy activities in Communist China was a way for establishing the Trotskyist form of “political revolution”, i.e. struggling for “socialist democracy” in the “workers’ state” of China. In order to explicitly express their political support for the April 5th pro-democracy protest while denouncing the oppressive Communist “bureaucracy”, they attempted to organise a larger pro-Chinese democracy demonstration in Hong Kong. Consequently, the Trotskyists’ pro-democracy push in local political practice put them into a position of direct confrontation with the leftist establishment. On May 16th, when local leftists were celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Chinese Cultural Revolution,⁵⁴⁵ after obtaining permission to demonstrate from the Hong Kong Police,⁵⁴⁶ three Trotskyist and pro-Trotskyist groups, the Young Socialist Group, the Combat Bulletin, and the Young Militants, in co-operation with the “Seventies Front”, staged a pro-Chinese democracy rally at Victoria Park. The Trotskyist organisers of the rally hoped that this “free speech forum” would attract a considerable number of local people who were concerned with Chinese issues which would initiate a discussion on the significance of the April 5th protest and to exchange different opinions on democratisation in China. Thus,

⁵⁴⁵ See: *Ta Kung Pao*, May 17th, 1976, p. 4; *Wen Wei Po*, May 17th, 1976, p. 4; *Xinwanbao* (New Evening Post), May 16th, 1976, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁶ According to a rally organiser, Li Huaiming, he thought because the rally aimed at criticising the Communist regime in China, the colonial authorities tolerated such a Trotskyist protest action and issued a permission of demonstration to the Trotskyists, see *Li Huaiming Interview*, June 14th, 2014. Also, such a permission of demonstration granted by the Hong Kong police made a few press reporters surprised, see *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (STJP), May 17th, 1976, p. 27.

before the rally started, they invited the pro-China students from local universities and colleges, the left-wing trade unionists and other pro-Beijing supporters to attend this event.⁵⁴⁷

The rally, indeed, gathered a crowd of people: approximately 1,000 participants and onlookers attended this public meeting.⁵⁴⁸ During the event, a dozen public speeches on the Tian'anmen incident were given by different people including the Trotskyist organisers and guest speakers, most of which both fiercely condemned the Communist suppression of the pro-democracy protest; and highly endorsed the Tian'anmen movement, firmly supporting pro-democracy activities in mainland China. For example, a Trotskyist representative of *October Review* said that the Tian'anmen protest was a "righteous revolutionary act", while "the one-party dictatorship of the CCP must be ended and the goal of socialist democracy must be achieved", and as a result, from a Trotskyist position, "we solemnly claim that we, on behalf of the masses, will fight against the bureaucracy to the end".⁵⁴⁹ In the meantime, in order to deliver the Trotskyist "anti-party bureaucracy" and "pro-mass democracy" messages to the public, as was common practice, the organisers distributed a bunch of ideological leaflets amongst the attendees, such as the *Daily Combat Bulletin*.

Though none of the pro-China organisations sent their representatives to attend the rally, a small group of pro-Beijing supporters attempted to disrupt the forum. Some of them loudly shouted to the crowd who attended the rally,

⁵⁴⁷ *Xinsichao* (Rive Gauche), Jun 1976, p. 2; *HKS*, May 17th, 1976, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁸ *HKS*, May 17th, 1976, p. 1; *STJP*, May 17th, 1976, p. 27; However, *SCMP* reported only "[m]ore than 600 people, including many Sunday park strollers, attended the rally", see *SCMP*, May 17th, 1976, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁹ *October Review*, Jun 1976, p. 3

“[y]ou are not Chinese. Down with Soviet spies. Long live Chairman Mao”, whilst several of them attacked the press photographers when they took pictures, and a PRC supporter was allowed to make a three-minute speech in the pro-democracy forum to express his support of Beijing’s suppression.⁵⁵⁰

In spite of these disruptions, this pro-democracy forum was well-prepared and peaceful in general. From some Trotskyist perspectives, the May 16th rally became the first sign of the solidarity movement in Hong Kong with the Chinese Democracy Movement prior to 1989.⁵⁵¹ From then on, the Hong Kong Trotskyist radicals engaged in a long-term solidarity campaign with mainland pro-democracy activities. For example, on April 5th, 1977, i.e. one year after the Tian’anmen protest took place, the *October Review* published an article to reiterate the importance of the April 5th movement.⁵⁵²

Furthermore, when the Democracy Wall movement emerged in Beijing in late 1978, with mainland democracy activists beginning to demand people’s democratic rights under the one-party rule in the post-Cultural Revolution period, the RML immediately restated its pro-democracy position, particularly putting a focus on the development of “socialist democracy” on the mainland.⁵⁵³ In April 1979, while publishing a text to commemorate the 3rd anniversary of the Tian’anmen protest and support the ongoing Chinese Democracy Movement (CDM), the RML elaborately planned a pro-democracy

⁵⁵⁰ *October Review*, Jun, 1976, pp. 4-5; *SCMP*, May 17th, 1976, p. 1; *HKS*, May 17th, 1976, p. 1; *STJP*, May 17th, 1976, p. 27; *Ming Pao*, May 17th, 1976, p. 9; *Xinsichao* (Rive Guache), Jun, 1976, p. 2; *Zhongguo zazhi* (China Magazine), Jun 1976, pp. 92-93; *Oulongyu Interview, Hong Kong*, Nov 19th, 2015.

⁵⁵¹ *Li Huaiming Interview*, June 14th, 2014.

⁵⁵² *October Review*, Jun 10th, 1977, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵³ *Zhanxun yuekan* (Combat Bulletin Monthly), Dec 1st, 1978, pp. 2-4.

rally on April 22nd, which was later disrupted by the colonial police.⁵⁵⁴ In addition, from 1979 to 1981, several Trotskyist activists, such as Liu Shanqing⁵⁵⁵ and Wu Zhongxian, travelled to Communist China to take part in the CDM. We will discuss this later in Chapter 7.

After the May 16th rally ended, different political-oriented groups and press in Hong Kong had different reactions towards the pro-Chinese democracy protest action held by the Trotskyists and anarchists. The pro-colonial press like *Ming Pao*⁵⁵⁶ remained highly critical of Trotskyist activities. At the same time, for an anti-Communist ideological purpose, Hong Kong's pro-Taiwan press began to praise the Trotskyist activities. For example, *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (STJP) described the May 16th rally as "an appropriate mean of presenting political opinions".⁵⁵⁷ *China Magazine* expressed its support for the May 16th assembly and reproduced the Trotskyist-anarchist May 2nd joint statement in its June issue.⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, *Hong Kong Times* published two editorial articles after the May 16th rally to back the Trotskyist criticisms of Chinese Communist rule: from an anti-Communist perspective, the editorial board pointed out that the Trotskyists could figure out the "anti-democratic and totalitarian" characters of the Communist regime on the mainland from a Marxist root. The editors also acknowledged that the local Trotskyist groups were putting efforts into organising grass-roots actions aiming at mobilising workers and students. They understood that Trotskyism was indeed an ideological-political threat

⁵⁵⁴ On April 5th, 1979, the RML published a special issue on the April 5th movement to discuss the current development of "socialist democracy" in mainland China. See *Zhanxun yuekan*, Apr 5th, 1979. Also, see the April 22nd pro-democracy rally plan in a 3-page internal RML material: *Changweihui guanyu 422 jihui zhi jihua cao'an* (The Standing Committee's Draft for Preparing the April 22nd Rally).

⁵⁵⁵ Please refer to Liu's biography in the section "Key organisations and figures".

⁵⁵⁶ *Ming Pao*, May 17th, 1976, p. 9.

⁵⁵⁷ *Sing Tao Jih Pao* (STJP), May 17th, 1976, p. 2

⁵⁵⁸ *Zhongguo zazhi* (China Magazine), Jun 1976, pp. 89-94

from the Left to the pro-PRC groups because its criticisms of Chinese Communism were “effective” from a “Marxist-Leninist” theoretical background.⁵⁵⁹

On the other hand, the Trotskyists’ “pro-democracy and anti-bureaucracy” views and actions embarrassed and angered the pro-PRC leftists. During a series of celebratory events for the 10th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, local leftist leaders from the *Xinhua News Agency*, trade unions and other organisations denounced the Trotskyists as “class enemies” and warned left-wing adherents to watch out for the Trotskyist “anti-China, anti-Communist sabotage activities”.⁵⁶⁰ From mid-May 1976, different pro-PRC organisations immediately responded to the Trotskyist pro-democracy assembly at Victoria Park by launching another wave of anti-Trotskyism campaigns. As in 1974, they repeated the “crimes” of Trotsky and Trotskyist movement to stigmatise Trotskyism and to set ideological restrictions on Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong.

The “propaganda warfare” against Trotskyism swiftly began after the Trotskyists’ rally ended. Firstly, the pro-PRC press, such as *New Evening Post* and *Wen Wei Po*, continually labelled Trotskyism and Trotskyists as “evils”. From their anti-Trotskyist perspective, the Trotskyists were not described as “revolutionary Marxists”, but described as a bunch of “anti-China, anti-Communist right-wing extremists”, “hatchet men of Soviet revisionism” and “a special detachment of imperialists, revisionists and

⁵⁵⁹ *Xianggang shibao* (Hong Kong Times), May 20th, 1976, p. 2; May 27th, 1976, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁰ See *Xinwanbao* (New Evening Post), May 16th, 1976, p. 4; *Wen Wei Po*, May 17th, 1976, p. 4; *Ta Kung Pao*, May 17th, 1976, p. 4, May 18th, p. 4.

counterrevolutionaries” who wanted to replace “proletarian dictatorship” by “bourgeois democracy”, etc.⁵⁶¹ Secondly, in June, pro-China labour and professional unions such as the FTU and the *Teaching Staff Association* convened their respective standing committee meetings to discuss the current “class struggle” in Hong Kong. In those official meetings, the union representatives vehemently denounced the fact that the Trotskyists were organising “anti-revolutionary conspiracy activities”. For example, a trade unionist accused Hong Kong Trotskyists of doing “dirty tricks” in local workers’ activities in order to seize the union leadership from the leftist hands, which also indirectly acknowledged that the Trotskyists were *de facto* competing with the leftists in Hong Kong for the support of workers.⁵⁶² At the end of those meetings, the pro-China unions decided to call on leftist unionists to “resolutely smash the evil activities” organised by the “class enemies”, i.e. the Trotskyist groups and the pro-Taiwan forces.⁵⁶³ Thirdly, there remained a hatred of Trotskyism among the pro-China student and youth groups. In July and August, 1976, while publishing editorial articles to condemn the “anti-China” student activities carried out by the *College Student Association* and other student groups which were competing with the pro-China student factions for the support of Hong Kong students, the *Hong Kong Federation of Students* and its affiliated students’ unions in the control of the pro-China faction, such as the *Students’ Union of the Chinese University*, also publicly accused the Trotskyists of organising “anti-China, anti-Communist” events,

⁵⁶¹ See *Xinwanbao*, May 16th, 1976, p. 8; May 23rd, p. 8; Jun 27th, p. 8; *Wen Wei Po*, Jun 8th, p. 7.

⁵⁶² *Hong Kong Workers*, Jul 1st, 1976, p. 2.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 1; *Xianggang jiaoyu* (Hong Kong Education), Jun 30th, 1976, p. 1, 4.

such as the May 16th rally.⁵⁶⁴ Moreover, in the pro-China youth publications, young pro-PRC writers attempted to “expose” the “anti-China, anti-Communist” characters of Trotskyism in the current political practice and to condemn the Trotskyist “splitting” activities in the labour movement.⁵⁶⁵ They kept repeating the “crimes” of Trotskyism learnt from the *Short Course* and other anti-Trotskyist propaganda materials. For example, they said that Trotskyists in the Soviet Union in the 1930s were in collaboration with “German-Japanese fascist” spy organisations in organising “counterrevolutionary rebellions”, while Chinese Trotskyists during the Sino-Japanese War served the Japanese aggressors.⁵⁶⁶

In addition, compliments given to the Trotskyist activities by the local pro-Taiwan press offered the pro-PRC leftists a good pretext to heap more “evils” on the Trotskyists. In Issue 94 and 96 of *Pan Ku*, pro-PRC leftist commentators, by making use of the reports on the May 16th rally from the pro-Taiwan press, fiercely condemned the Hong Kong Trotskyists. They claimed that the Trotskyists were “in collusion with” the pro-Taiwan forces to carry out the “anti-China, anti-Communist sabotage activities”.⁵⁶⁷

Furthermore, *Pan Ku* editors claimed that the “Soviet revisionists”, the “Guomindang gang”, i.e. pro-Taiwan groups in Hong Kong, and the “Trotskyites” were forming a “Triune Sacred Alliance” aiming at “anti-China, anti-Communism” in Hong Kong.⁵⁶⁸ However, from a Trotskyist point of view, it was impossible for the Trotskyists to work with the “Soviet revisionists” and

⁵⁶⁴ See *Zhongda xueshengbao* (Chinese University Student Newspaper), Jul 17th, 1976, p. 1, 6; *Xuelianbao* (The Paper of the Hong Kong Federation of Students), Aug 1976, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁵ *Qingnian zhishi* (Youth Knowledge), Jun 5th, 1976, pp. 28-31.

⁵⁶⁶ *Xinzhishi* (New Learning Monthly), Aug 1976, pp. 4-7; Sep 1976, pp. 42-45.

⁵⁶⁷ *Pan Ku*, Issue 94, Jun 1st, 1976, pp. 25-27; Issue 96, Aug 1st, 1976, pp. 4-6.

⁵⁶⁸ *Pan Ku*, Issue 96, p. 3.

the “Guomintang gang” in Hong Kong because they insisted on vehemently criticising the “bureaucratic dictatorship” in the Soviet Union and on strongly opposing the Guomintang “capitalist” rule in Taiwan.⁵⁶⁹ In a word, the Trotskyists ideologically and politically stood in opposition to the Soviet and Guomintang regimes.

Faced with the second wave of anti-Trotskyism campaigns, Hong Kong Trotskyists immediately responded to the pro-PRC leftist charges against Trotskyism in *October Review*. In their responses, they resolutely defended their ideological and political positions as logically conformed to the “orthodox Marxist” principles, while they firmly insisted that Trotsky and Trotskyism, historically and in the political struggle, were “unsullied”.⁵⁷⁰ For example, the Trotskyist writers responded to the charge that “the Trotskyists attempted to replace proletarian dictatorship by bourgeois democracy” by arguing that “socialist democracy is the most effective means in politics of protecting proletarian dictatorship”.⁵⁷¹ In response to the “Trotskyist crime” of being “hatchet men of Soviet revisionism”, they explicitly clarified that the Trotskyists only endorsed the socialist economic foundations, i.e. state ownership, of the Soviet state (and other Communist states), whereas they firmly opposed the political system of the Soviet (and Chinese) “bureaucracy”.⁵⁷² Nevertheless, as the Trotskyist voice was weak, Trotskyist responses to the anti-Trotskyist campaign did not produce a major impact on

⁵⁶⁹ For example, see the Trotskyist criticisms of the Soviet and Guomintang regimes in *Zhanxun* (Combat Bulletin), July 1975, p. 7; *October Review*, Nov 1975, p. 9.

⁵⁷⁰ See a collection of Trotskyist articles in response to the second wave of anti-Trotskyism campaigns in *October Review*, Jul 1976, pp. 4-9; Aug 1976, pp. 4-8; Sep 1976, pp. 11-18; Oct 1976, pp. 7-13, 15.

⁵⁷¹ *October Review*, Jul 1976, pp. 6-9.

⁵⁷² *October Review*, Sep 1976, pp. 16-18.

the general public. Moreover, both the colonial state and the pro-PRC presence viewed the anti-colonial, “anti-Communist” Trotskyists as a threat and their “target of repression”. Thus, the Trotskyist activities were largely counteracted by both sides. According to Wu Zhongxian, from 1976 onwards, the Trotskyist organisation as a whole became politically isolated in its engagement with the Hong Kong social movement.⁵⁷³

To conclude, the “propaganda war” between Trotskyists and pro-PRC leftists in Hong Kong in the 1970s directly reflects that there was a political competition between both forces for the support of Hong Kong workers and students under colonial rule. With rise of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong in the mid-1970s, the pro-PRC groups, as a dominant force within the local circle of left-wing politics, immediately perceived that the Trotskyists were posing a threat from the Left that was challenging its dominant position within the Left. To keep the “masses” away from Trotskyist influence and to prevent the Trotskyists from challenging its stronghold in Hong Kong, the “old leftists” launched stigmatisation campaigns against Trotskyism. In such a “propaganda war”, the pro-PRC groups, which had been deeply entrenched in the colonial society of Hong Kong for a long period, and possessed a large amount of socio-political resources among trade unions, educational institutions, media platforms, etc., was certainly in a predominant position. Compared to the pro-PRC leftist camp, the inexperienced Trotskyist youth group as a whole, which lacked such resources, was indeed in a disadvantaged position during this “warfare” in the 1970s. Nevertheless, this “propaganda war”, particularly, the stigmatisation of Trotskyism from the pro-

⁵⁷³ Wu Zhongxian, *Dazhi weijing* (Our Work’s Not Finished), p. 478.

PRC camp, indirectly acknowledges the Trotskyists' efforts in engaging the Hong Kong workers' and student movement, and Trotskyists' ambition of taking on a vanguard role in the local social movement.

Along with the colonial government's suppression of Trotskyist activities, the pro-PRC leftists' anti-Trotskyism campaigns also counteracted the Trotskyist movement, and contained its ideological-political influence within the circle of local leftwing politics to some degree. Consequently, the Trotskyist movement that aimed at challenging both the colonial state and the pro-PRC groups in Hong Kong was suppressed in different ways by both sides. In the end, the Trotskyists' radicalism remained at the "margin".

Chapter 6: The Internal Matters of Trotskyism in Hong Kong I: The International Connection and the 1978 Unification

In the previous chapters, we investigated the political dynamics between Trotskyists and other key political forces in Hong Kong in the 1970s. Nevertheless, we have not specifically explored the organisational structure of Trotskyism in Hong Kong, though the emergence of different small local Trotskyist and pro-Trotskyist groups has been briefly mentioned in the early chapters. What were the Trotskyist organisations in Hong Kong at that juncture? In addition, the *Fourth International (FI)*⁵⁷⁴ is an international Trotskyist organisation with a large number of overseas contacts and affiliated national sections. Thus, there must be a certain political connection between its headquarters and its affiliated Chinese section in particular, regarding the political issue of China during the period that this thesis focuses on, i.e. from the early 1970s to the early 1980s. In this way, how did the political network of the FI operate in Hong Kong?

In this chapter, we will discuss the international connection between the FI and Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong. Moreover, concerning the old and new organisational problems of Chinese Trotskyism, Chapters 6 & 7 will explore the internal relations between the small and separate Hong Kong Trotskyist groups for a decade, i.e. from the early 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s. During that period, there were two main small Trotskyist groups existing in Hong Kong, the “old and dogmatic” Chinese section of the FI, i.e.

⁵⁷⁴ In the most cases of this chapter, the FI refers, in particular, to the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International*.

the *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RCP), founded by Peng Shuzhi and his comrades in 1948, and the “young and vigorous” Trotskyist organisation, i.e. the *Revolutionary Marxist League* (RML), established by a small group of young Hong Kong Trotskyist-leaning radicals in 1973.

In order to defend its own “orthodoxy”, the RCP was reluctant to recognise any young Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong, in particular the RML as a newly-established Trotskyist centre. Consequently, between 1973 and 1978, the Chinese Trotskyist group remained organisationally disintegrated. Eventually, in 1978, apart from a small group of RCP members, a large majority of overseas Chinese Trotskyists and young Hong Kong Trotskyists united under the banner of the RML. Despite the fact that most Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong unified in this way, some key internal problems surrounding the organisational structure, tactics, and other issues remained unresolved.

In 1980, after only two years of unification, the unified RML split and divided into two small groups. Similarly to the political struggle within the FI and other forms of the worldwide leftist movement, the internal process of unification and split of the Trotskyist organisation in Hong Kong can tell us that Chinese Trotskyists, either from the older generation or from the younger generation, often fell into “endless” internal disputes. By elucidating this internal process, Chapters 6 & 7 will argue that different local Trotskyist groups or different factions within the RML would fiercely debate with each other and defend themselves as “orthodox Trotskyists” from their own positions and understanding of Trotskyism, which meant one particular group of Trotskyists always identified themselves as more “Trotskyist” or more “revolutionary” than the other groups that also claimed themselves as “Trotskyists”. Each

employed a discourse of “correctness”/“orthodoxy”. This was a discourse that provided different groups of Hong Kong Trotskyists with an ideological tool to justify that, as they believed, they respectively held the “right line” on the Trotskyist political practice, and organisational matters.

As a result, the “endless” disputes regarding “who are more left-wing revolutionary/which group is more orthodox Trotskyist centre” within the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement created a drastic internal conflict between different local Trotskyist factions, which also became a key factor that limited the political growth of Trotskyism in Hong Kong and marginalised the local Trotskyist force. In Chapters 6 & 7, we will explicitly illustrate this internal conflict in Hong Kong Trotskyist activities.

The connection between the Fourth International and Chinese Trotskyists in exile and the situation of the Trotskyist individuals and groups in Hong Kong, 1952-1974

As an integral part of international Trotskyism, there had been a communication network between Chinese Trotskyists and the international movement which had a long history. Prior to the establishment of the *Fourth International (FI)* in 1938, Chinese Trotskyists established direct contact with Leon Trotsky: in 1929, Liu Renjing, an early Chinese Communist who became a Left Oppositionist during his studies in Moscow, visited Trotsky in Turkey, which was the beginning of direct connections between the Chinese

Trotskyists and Trotsky.⁵⁷⁵ Subsequently, the Chinese Left Oppositionist groups and individuals began to exchange letters with Trotsky to discuss the problems of the Chinese Revolution. As mentioned in the Introduction, in 1931, due to Trotsky's personal appeal,⁵⁷⁶ four small Chinese Trotskyist groups finally fused together as a single and unified Trotskyist organisation. Though the unified Chinese Trotskyist group organisationally split in 1942, it did not disrupt direct contact between Chinese Trotskyists and the international Trotskyist movement. In the early 1950s, Peng Shuzhi, one of the key Chinese Trotskyist leaders, who founded a new Trotskyist party in 1948 based on the *Majority* group, named the *Revolutionary Communist Party* (RCP, see the Introduction), fled from mainland China and finally settled in Paris with his family. During Peng's stay in France, he became an important figure in the FI, speaking about the China issue. In 1951, Peng gave a report on the causes of the CCP's victory in China to the 3rd world congress of the FI. In this report, he stressed that the CCP's seizure of national power was the historical result of "a combination of various intricate and exceptional conditions emerging from the Second World War", while he continued to point out the "Stalinist" character of the CCP: "it [i.e. the CCP] was a Stalinist party relying exclusively on the peasant armed forces that destroyed the old regime and seized power".⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ Liu Renjing, *Liu Renjing tan huijian tuoluociji de jingguo* (The Recollection on My Meet with Trotsky), Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/marxist.org-chinese-lau.htm>

⁵⁷⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China* (New York: Monad Press, 1976), p. 498.

⁵⁷⁷ Peng Shuzhi, "The Causes of the Victory of the Chinese Communist Party over Chiang Kai-shek, and the CCP's Perspectives, Report on the Chinese Situation to the Third Congress of the FI", *International Information Bulletin* (IIB), published by the Socialist Workers' Party (US), Feb 1952, pp. 2-44. In this China report, Peng insisted that there were four main "exceptional" factors that caused the CCP's military victory: 1. the complete rottenness of the

Moreover, a major internal dispute between Michel Pablo and other leaders was taking place, concerning the entryist strategy towards the Social Democratic and Communist parties. The Pablo-led FI leadership argued that Trotskyists internationally should undertake long-term infiltration work by joining the mass working-class but “reformist” or “Stalinist” parties, such as the Social Democratic and Communist parties, in order to radicalise the political tendencies within them, “vacillating between reform and revolution”. This could lead to a radicalisation of the working class.⁵⁷⁸ Other important FI figures like James Cannon, the American Trotskyist leader of the *Socialist Workers’ Party* (SWP) strongly opposed Pablo’s suggestion of entryism.⁵⁷⁹ Peng also played an important role in opposing Pablo, and thereafter witnessed the break-up of the international Trotskyist movement.⁵⁸⁰

On the other side, several key members of the *Minority* group, who formed the *Internationalist Workers’ Party* (IWP) in 1949, retreated from the chaos of

Chiang Kai-shek regime, 2. the refusal of aid from “American imperialism” to the Guomindang, 3. the subjective force of the CCP, and 4. the aid to the CCP from the Soviet Union. And about the nature of the CCP, he asserted that the CCP was a “petty-bourgeois party based on peasantry”, while stressing its “Stalinist” character.

⁵⁷⁸ Barry Woolley, *Adherents of Permanent Revolution* (University Press of America, 1999), p. 176. Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (London: Open University Press, 1990), p. 34. Michel Pablo, “The Building of the Revolutionary Party”, in *International Secretariat Documents*, 1974, published by the Socialist Workers’ Party (US), New York, p. 35. See also Pablo’s report on the entryist work “in the direction of the reformist and Stalinist workers and organisations” in *International Information Bulletin* (IIB), published by the Socialist Workers’ Party (US), New York, June 1952, pp. 2-23.

⁵⁷⁹ For example, James Cannon questioned Pablo’s entryist policy, from which Trotskyism was mainly seen as an adjunct of Stalinism by the “anti-Pabloists”. See James Cannon, *Speeches to the Party*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973) [cited in Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism*, p. 35.]

⁵⁸⁰ See Peng’s criticism of Pablo in Peng Shuzhi, “The Chinese Experience with Pabloite Revisionism and Bureaucratism”, in *Struggle in the Fourth International, International Committee Documents 1951-1954*, Vol. 3, from “Toward A History of the Fourth International”, Part 3, Education for Socialists Bulletin, issued by the National Education Department of the Socialist Workers’ Party (US), pp. 165-172; also in Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/peng/1953/dec/30.htm>. See Peng’s life in France as an “anti-Pabloist” in Chen Bilan, *Zaoqi zhonggong yu tuopai: wode geming shengya huiyi* (The Early CCP and Chinese Trotskyists: My Revolutionist Memoirs) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2010), pp. 519-26.

mainland China to Hong Kong to continue their Trotskyist work. Wang Fanxi was one of them. But shortly after he arrived in the “safe house”, i.e. Hong Kong, in 1949, he was captured by the Hong Kong secret police and soon deported by the British colonial authorities. Nevertheless, Wang survived and started his hard life in Macao from late 1949. During his exile in Macao until the year of 1975, he kept in touch with his overseas Trotskyist comrades to discuss the failure of the Trotskyist movement in mainland China, the nature of the CCP’s victory, and the Chinese situation under Communist rule.⁵⁸¹

As we described in Chapter 1, the issue centering around the characters of the newly-established Communist regime on the mainland, i.e. whether or not the CCP’s victory was a “prelude to the proletarian revolution” from a Trotskyist perspective, created a new rift between the Trotskyists who remained in Hong Kong within the RCP in the very early 1950s.⁵⁸² Though the FI finally passed a resolution on the Chinese revolution in May 1952 in which the FI sent its theoretical support to the Chinese Trotskyists who advocated that the victory of Chinese Communism was the “first stage of the proletarian revolution”.⁵⁸³ However, agreement regarding the “progressive” nature of the Communist regime had not been reached between the RCP Trotskyists. After the publication of the FI resolution on the Chinese revolution, a political crisis rose in both the Chinese and International Trotskyist movement: in December

⁵⁸¹ See the correspondence between Wang Fanxi and his foreign comrades and other documents in *Wang Fanxi Archive*, MS 1709, deposited in the Special Collections, University of Leeds.

⁵⁸² See the internal discussions between Chinese Trotskyists on the CCP’s role and the nature of the Communist regime in *IIB*, Mar 1952, pp. 1-20 and Apr 1952, pp. 1-29.

⁵⁸³ It is quoted from a Chinese version of the political resolution on the Third Chinese Revolution by Fourth International. Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/marxist.org-chinese-chinatrots-1951.htm#5>; See the FI’s internal reports and discussions on the Chinese Communist Revolution at the 11th Plenum of the International Executive Committee of the FI, May 1952, in *IIB*, Dec 1952, pp. 1-43.

1952, up to one thousand Trotskyist activists and sympathisers who had remained in mainland China were rounded up by the Communist ruling power, which hurt the morale of the Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong.⁵⁸⁴ Nearly a year later, owing to some key member parties' opposition to Pablo's International leadership and the differences in the FI's entryist policy towards the Communist and Social Democratic parties,⁵⁸⁵ the intact FI organisation itself became shattered and split into two main tendencies, *the International Secretariat of the FI* (ISFI) and *the International Committee of the FI* (ICFI).⁵⁸⁶ It is important to note that after the 1953 FI split, along with his allies from the SWP (U.S), Peng Shuzhi joined the International Committee, but Wang Fanxi seemed to remain affiliated to the International Secretariat.⁵⁸⁷ In the early 1950s, both the round-up of Chinese Trotskyists and the FI organisational separation were political earthquakes hugely demoralising to the small Chinese Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong.

These external "disasters", plus the factional disputes within the RCP mentioned in Chapter 1, fragmented the Trotskyist organisation in Hong

⁵⁸⁴ The figure of 1,000 is given by Zheng Chaolin, a prominent Trotskyist, who had been jailed in the Communist prison for about 27 years, in a letter from Zheng to Wang Fanxi [cited in Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952*, p. 235.]

⁵⁸⁵ However, when Pierre Frank, one of Pablo's colleagues in the FI leadership in the 1950s, re-examined the 1953 FI split, he considered that the decisive factor for this International split was the internal crisis within the SWP of America. Pierre Frank, *The Fourth International, The Long March of the Trotskyists*, 1979, Chapter 7, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/frank/works/march/ch07.htm>

⁵⁸⁶ After the split, the SWP (US), the largest national section of the FI in the early 1950s, joined the ICFI. According to a SWP member's observation, "the IC[FI] thought that the IS[FI] was adapting to Stalinism, toning down criticism and demanding a general tactic of joining the Communist parties...The IS supporters argued that the SWP and the IC were sectarian towards the opportunities they saw in the CPs and the divisions in the Soviet bureaucracy after Stalin's death." Barry Sheppard, *The Party: The Socialist Workers' Party 1960-1988, A Political Memoir, Vol. 1: The Sixties* (London: Resistance Books, 2005), p. 101.

⁵⁸⁷ However, Peng later favoured the re-unification between the IC and the IS. He and his American allies from the SWP witnessed the whole process of the re-unification. Peng Shuzhi, *Peng Shuzhi xuanji* (The Collected Work of Peng Shuzhi) Vol. 4, (Hong Kong: October Bookshop, 2010), pp. 294-304.

Kong. In a letter to the International Secretariat, Wang Fanxi described the Chinese Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong area as having fallen into a “hibernation” period, which lasted about ten years from 1958 to 1968, because there were only a handful of Trotskyists remaining both in his IWP organisation and in the surviving branch of the RCP in that period. They had “no organisation, no activity and no voice” in mainland China as well as in Hong Kong.⁵⁸⁸

During this period of "hibernation", those surviving old Chinese Trotskyists still insisted on their faith in the Trotskyist version of Communism and sought to reason as to why the Trotskyist movement failed in China and the Communists succeeded to seize the national power. Despite the fact that they escaped from Communist China, and politically survived in Hong Kong and Macao, while they could re-examine the gain and loss of the past Chinese Trotskyist movement during their exile, the refuge Trotskyists' lives remained difficult. For some of them, at the very beginning of their exile in Hong Kong, it was very hard to make a living.⁵⁸⁹ According to Xiang Qing's recollections, a few senior Trotskyist cadres who became inactive began to run small businesses to enable their families to survive and to help somewhat in political fundraising, which partly contributed to the party finances.⁵⁹⁰ Meanwhile, some others, who continued underground activities, were pursued by the Hong Kong police. Once these underground activists, like Xiang Qing, were captured, they would immediately be deported by the British

⁵⁸⁸ "A Letter from Wang Fanxi to IS", August 1975, p. 2, *MS 1709 11*. But since 1963, the IS had changed its organisational name to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

⁵⁸⁹ *Zhang Yun Interview*, Jun 15th, Aug 20th, 2014.

⁵⁹⁰ *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014.

colonial authority.⁵⁹¹ In general, the surviving Trotskyists were mostly lonely, depressed, and their exiled lives were at risk at all times. During the Cultural Revolution era, the pro-Beijing leftists began to provoke the Portuguese authorities in Macao. After the December 3rd incident of 1966, which led to the street violence and caused 8 people to be killed, with 212 injured,⁵⁹² the Portuguese colonial government under the Communist pressure was forced by the Chinese authorities in Guangdong to expel the Guomindang forces from Macao, and this city ceased to be “an exit point for dissidents fleeing [mainland] China”.⁵⁹³ Since then, because Macao was completely under the Communists' watch, and was under *de facto* Chinese control, it had become a “half-liberation area”.⁵⁹⁴ As a Portuguese minister later pointed out, the Portuguese's role in Macao after 1967 was only “a caretaker of a condominium under foreign supervision”.⁵⁹⁵ Thus, under such circumstances, the Trotskyists in Macao, who were also regarded as a category of “counterrevolutionaries” by the Communists, considered their personal safety to be at risk. Wang Fanxi once recalled:

⁵⁹¹ According to Xiang Qing himself, he was deported by the British colonial authority in 1955. *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² See more details about the 1966 Macao riots in Cathryn Clayton, “The Hapless Imperialist? Portuguese Rule in 1960s Macau,” in 20th *Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday and the World*, ed. David Goodman and Bryna Goodman (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 216–19. Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), pp. 199–205. Zhidong Hao, *Macao History and Society* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), p. 215.

⁵⁹³ Kenneth Maxwell, *Naked Tropics: Essays on Empire and Other Rogues* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 279.

⁵⁹⁴ Wu Zhiliang, *Aomen zhengzhi zhidu shi* (The History of Macao's Political System), (Guangzhou: Guandong renminchubanshe, 2010) [cited in Jiang Guansheng, *Zhonggong zai Xianggang 1949-2012* (Chinese Communism in Hong Kong, 1949-2012) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2012), p. 203.]

⁵⁹⁵ Franco Nogueira, *Slazar, estudo biografico, 6 vols.* (Coimbra: Atlantida Editora, 1977), III, 393 [cited in Kenneth Maxwell, *Naked Tropics: Essays on Empire and Other Rogues* (London: Routledge, 2003) p. 279.]

“I had been living under the constant danger of being arrested and delivered to the CCP authorities...[t]he CCP agents in the port of M [Macao] had taken an ever increasing hostile attitude to me. In the summer of 1972, they made me dismissed from a middle school, where I had taught for twelve years by exercising their influence on the principal. They cut the sources of my living and thereby they wished to give me a warning...”⁵⁹⁶

In 1963, a large majority of the international Trotskyist organisations affiliated to both the ISFI and the ICFI reunified. They formed a new Trotskyist international body named the *United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (USFI), and this new international organisation intended to re-build the Trotskyist movement in East Asia. In 1972 and 1973, several Trotskyists from the Japanese section of the USFI⁵⁹⁷ visited Hong Kong and Macao, where they interviewed some old Chinese Trotskyists, such as Wang Fanxi,⁵⁹⁸ and obtained an extensive range of first-hand information from them on the early Chinese Trotskyist movement on the mainland. After finishing these trips to Hong Kong and Macao, Sakai Yoshichi, one of the leading figures of the FI organisation in Japan, the *Japanese Revolutionary Communist League* (JRCL), reported to the USFI office in Brussels about the situation of the

⁵⁹⁶ “A letter from Wang Fanxi to IS”, August 1975, p. 3, *MS 1709 11*.

⁵⁹⁷ See the FI document: *The Reunification of the Fourth International*, 1963, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/swp-us/misc-1/reunif.htm>; see also Pierre Frank, *The Fourth International*, Chapter 7 and Appendix I, 1979. In the following part of this chapter, if there is no specific explanation, the FI or the Fourth International refers to the USFI.

⁵⁹⁸ In August 1972, a Japanese Trotskyist, Wataru Yakushiji, from the Japanese section of the FI, i.e. the *Japanese Revolutionary Communist League*, visited Macao and interviewed Wang Fanxi, see more details in “Interview with W.F.H (Wang Fanxi) by Wataru Yakushiji, Aug 30th, 1972”, *MS 1709 10*.

Chinese Trotskyists in exile.⁵⁹⁹ Then, in the next two years (1973 and 1974), the USFI sent liaison people from its various affiliated national sections, such as Tariq Ali of the UK, Gerard Verjat and Pierre Rousset of France, to Hong Kong and Macao to get more details about the precarious presence of Chinese Trotskyist organisation in the colonies. Consequently, the USFI organisationally reached out to the exiled Chinese Trotskyists there, and tried to assist them in rebuilding the Chinese Trotskyist section in Hong Kong. It is important to note that in 1974, Tariq Ali⁶⁰⁰ of the *International Marxist Group* in the Britain visited Wang Fanxi in person in Macao. After knowing the 25 years' miseries of Wang in exile, Ali discussed with Wang if there was a possibility of getting Wang out of Macao which was *de facto* under the Communist supervision.⁶⁰¹ When Ali returned to Europe, he reported Wang's exile to the USFI leadership and relayed this information to Gregor Benton, a China expert at the Chinese Studies department at the University of Leeds.⁶⁰² Subsequently, Benton directly communicated with Wang and immediately organised an international aid operation to bring Wang to the UK. Through Benton's efforts, Edward Boyle, a former Conservative MP and the vice-chancellor of the University of Leeds in the 1970s, Ralph Miliband, a prominent left-wing political theorist and professor at the University of Leeds,

⁵⁹⁹ Sakai Yoshichi, *My FI activities towards Hong Kong and Macao* (Tokyo: Sep 2015), unpublished, one-page document.

⁶⁰⁰ Tariq Ali (1943-): A renowned British Pakistani left-wing writer, political activist. He joined a British Trotskyist organisation, the *International Marxist Group*, in 1968. He remained highly active in the British left-wing politics at present.

⁶⁰¹ *Tariq Ali Interview*, Sep 11th, 2017. And in a letter from Wang to Ali on September 4th, 1974, Wang wrote: "I have to seriously consider the possibility of my leaving this port [Macao] now. Circumstances are becoming more and more difficult for me to live", hence, Wang asked Ali for help to bring him out of Macao to England or other European countries. "A Letter from Wang to Ali", Sep 4th, 1974, *MS 1709 10*.

⁶⁰² *Tariq Ali Interview*, Sep 11th, 2017, and "A Letter from Tariq Ali to Wang", Sep 18th, 1974, "A Letter from Gregor Benton to Wang", no date (probably the first letter to Wang, written in a letterhead paper of the University of Leeds), *MS 1709 10*.

and Graeme Moddie, a politics professor at the University of York were all involved in “rescuing” Wang from Macao.⁶⁰³ Eventually, Wang came to the UK for settlement in the spring of 1975.

In 1972, as discussed in Chapter 3, a small group of Hong Kong New Left-inclined young radicals went to France, where they got in contact with Western Trotskyists and Peng Shuzhi. While “studying” Trotskyism in the West, the young radicals from Hong Kong became involved to some extent in the FI’s internal disputes in the early 1970s, which led to animosity between several of them and some leading Chinese Trotskyists from the older generation.

In the 9th world congress of the FI (i.e. the USFI) in 1969, a majority of the Trotskyist delegates voted in favour of focusing on the guerrilla war in Latin America. The FI leadership of the United Secretariat subsequently adopted this orientation, and began to support its Latin American sections to conduct guerrilla warfare against the “bourgeois” governments in their own countries. Meanwhile, a minority at the congress rejected this guerrilla turn because they thought this orientation did not adequately take different situations in different Latin American countries into account. In late 1972, as the majority leadership did not pull back from the 1969 guerrilla war position, and factionalism was guaranteed within the FI, a minority led by the FI American section, the SWP, which had consistently opposed the FI’s guerrilla war policy since 1969, formed an international faction called the *Leninist-Trotskyist*

⁶⁰³ For example, see their efforts into bringing Wang to Britain in *Tariq Ali Interview*, Sep 11th, 2017; Letters from Gregor Benton to Wang, Sep 16th, 1974, no date (written in a blue paper), A Letter from Wang to Ralph Miliband, Nov 9th, 1974, A Letter from Wang to Graeme Moodie, Nov 24th, 1974, and An Application Letter from Wang to Home Office, Sep 23rd, 1976, *MS 1709 10*.

Faction (LTF). The majority within the FI that advocated the guerrilla turn in Latin America organised an *International Majority Tendency* (IMT). These two main internal factions of the FI were not disbanded until 1978.⁶⁰⁴ In the USFI debates, Peng Shuzhi – because of the unification earlier referred to, he was now a member of the USFI -- sided with the minority group and opposed the IMT's political stance on the problems of Latin America and China. Though Peng did not reject guerrilla war as a temporary tactic in the Latin American Trotskyist movement, what he rejected was that the orientation advocated by the international majority within the FI could be adopted as a revolutionary strategy. From Peng's perspective, there was no certain revolutionary situation existing in Latin America, and if a guerrilla war strategy was implemented under such a situation, it would be "adventurous"--which could lead to "disastrous results" for the international Trotskyist movement.⁶⁰⁵ Later, in 1974, Peng sent a protest letter to the 10th FI world congress in which he expressed his longstanding rejection of the guerrilla war orientation adopted by the majority members of the FI.⁶⁰⁶

But leaving the Latin America issue on one side, the internal discussion of China in the FI was more important to Peng. In 1966, after the Cultural Revolution emerged in Communist China, the FI immediately recognised it as a new phenomenon and kept its eyes on the dynamics of this "revolution". In

⁶⁰⁴ Barry Sheppard, *The Party: The Socialist Workers' Party 1960-1988, A Political Memoir, Vol. 2: Interregnum, Decline and Collapse, 1973-1988* (London: Resistance Books, 2005), pp. 36–42. See also the differences between these two factions from the minutes, voting records and statements of the IMT and LTF in the 10th world congress of the FI, 1974, in *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* (IIDB), published by the Socialist Workers' Party (US), New York, April 1974, pp. 3-28. Further, see the Trotskyist movement in Latin America in Robert Alexander, *Trotskyism in Latin America* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1973).

⁶⁰⁵ Peng Shuzhi, "Return to the Road of Trotskyism", *International Information Bulletin* (IIB), published by the Socialist Workers' Party (US), New York, March 1969, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁰⁶ *IIDB*, April 1974, Vol. 11, No. 5, p. 17.

early 1969, the majority of the USFI proposed a draft resolution on the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In the draft, the international majority thought that the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao and his faction within the CCP was to “eliminate the most irritating and persistent critics of his domestic and foreign policy, to give a free hand to his pare-down faction in the top leadership...”. The FI considered that there was a mass movement from below in the Cultural Revolution in which the young rebels “resented haughty and uncontrolled bureaucratic authority; they wanted greater democracy; they wanted a political revolution to open the road to socialist democracy”. However, the FI majority believed that “when the masses started to intervene autonomously into the struggle and thereby threatened the whole bureaucratic rule”, the revolution had been halted in “an attempt to stop the mass movement and to restore a new form of bureaucratic rule...”⁶⁰⁷

In addition, the international majority clearly stated that they would not politically support either Mao’s faction or its opponents, i.e. Liu Shaoqi’s group within the Communist “bureaucracy” during the Cultural Revolution because neither faction, from the FI majority’s point of view, “can be judged to be more progressive than the other”.⁶⁰⁸ Regarding the Cultural Revolution in China, Peng had been sharply critical of the FI majority’s viewpoint for some years. On one hand, from 1967 onwards, he criticised that the FI majority’s “neutralist” position towards the Chinese Cultural Revolution, i.e. showing no support to either Mao’s faction or its opposition, “that is, standing by and regarding the events as a spectator—can only be described as the most

⁶⁰⁷ “Draft Resolution on the ‘Cultural Revolution’”, *IIB*, March 1969, p. 13,14,16

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14.

irresponsible position for revolutionaries”.⁶⁰⁹ Rather, Peng considered that the anti-Mao faction, i.e. Liu Shaoqi’s group within the Communist leadership, was more progressive than Mao’s faction from a Trotskyist standard. He, therefore, proposed that the international Trotskyists should critically support the anti-Mao group within the CCP in order to defeat Mao’s faction and his “personal dictatorship” in the Cultural Revolution.⁶¹⁰ On the other hand, despite the fact that the FI majority literally condemned the Communist “bureaucracy” in China, which still preserved a “Stalinist heritage”,⁶¹¹ Peng remained dissatisfied with the majority position towards the CCP. From his point of view, the CCP must be characterised as a “Stalinist” party, which should also be clearly stated in the FI resolutions on China. He consistently urged the FI to do so, and he wanted the FI to explicitly define the Communist regime as a “bureaucratic dictatorship”. But the FI majority avoided adding such a political definition in their resolutions.⁶¹² Therefore, between 1969 and 1974, Peng repeated his criticisms of the FI majority position towards the China issues, and condemned the IMT for not specifically defining the “Stalinist” character of Chinese Communism.⁶¹³

Thus, it was not surprising that Peng was also critical of the *Ligue*/LCR, the French section of the FI, which politically and organisationally belonged to the IMT within the FI. He kept distance from it for a while. Compared to Peng’s

⁶⁰⁹ Peng Shuzhi, “What Our Position Should Be on the Factional Struggle inside the CCP”, *International Information Bulletin* (IIB), Vol. 1, 1968, p. 13. See also Peng’s criticisms of the FI majority’s “neutralism” towards China also in “A Letter of Comrade Peng Shuzhi to the International Executive Committee”, *ibid*, pp. 15-18 and Peng Shuzhi: “Minority Report to the [1969] World Congress”, *IIB*, July 1969, pp. 8-11.

⁶¹⁰ *IIB*, Vol. 1, 1968, pp. 1-18.

⁶¹¹ For example, see “Draft Resolution on the ‘Cultural Revolution’”, *IIB*, March 1969, pp. 10-17.

⁶¹² Peng Shuzhi, “Minority Report to the [1969] World Congress”, *IIB*, July 1969, pp. 8-11.

⁶¹³ See, for example, *IIB*, April 1974, p. 17.

minority position, several Hong Kong pro-Trotskyist radicals, such as Wu Zhongxian, were sympathetic to the IMT's political stand, as they were personally and organisationally closer to the *Ligue*/LCR Trotskyists than Peng.⁶¹⁴ During Wu's and the other "Seventies" members' communication with Peng, they could perceive that Peng revealed his discontent with the *Ligue*/LCR and the IMT's political line when Peng was reluctant to arrange meetings between the French Trotskyists and the Hong Kong Trotskyist-leaning youngsters.⁶¹⁵ After Peng realised that Wu Zhongxian did not inform him of his contact with the *Ligue*/LCR, Peng was disappointed with Wu's behaviour.⁶¹⁶ As a result, the personal relationship between the two deteriorated.⁶¹⁷ Indeed, in a personal letter from Peng to Joseph Miller, an American researcher working on the history of Chinese Trotskyism, Peng regarded Wu's pro-IMT position as a "mistaken" viewpoint, while he considered that Wu's political plan was to "destroy the Chinese Trotskyists".⁶¹⁸

What is more, during their political studies on Trotskyism abroad, Wu and his close political associates from Hong Kong gradually revealed a dislike of the

⁶¹⁴ According to Cen Jianxun and Li Huaiming, they confirmed that Wu's political orientation since his stay in France had been inclined to the *Ligue*/LCR and the IMT. See this in *Cen Jianxun Interview*, Jun 16th, 2014. *Li Huaiming Interview*, Jun 14th, 2014. In an interview with Miller, Wu admitted that some of his political views, such as his position towards some China questions was "no different from those of Mandel, Maitan, etc.", who were the leading figures of the IMT within the FI. Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 30.

⁶¹⁵ Cen Jianxun (He Ren): *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan* (The Experience I worked for *October Review*), Sep 12th, 1978, p. 1.

⁶¹⁶ In Joseph Miller's interview with Wu, Wu mentioned that he also kept in touch with Peng's opponent, Wang Fanxi. In a letter to Wu from Wang, Wang was highly critical of Peng. Hence, this was a reason that Wu did not keep Peng informed in order to avoid tensing the personal relationship between him and Peng. Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 27.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.* Peng Shuzhi, *A Letter from Peng Shuzhi to Joseph Miller*, June 29th, 1977, Translated in English by Miller, pp. 2–3.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Also, according to Cen Jianxun, Peng once wrote letters to him to express his personal anger towards Wu's "defection" to the IMT. Cen Jianxun (He Ren): *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan* (The Experience I worked for the *October Review*), Sep 12th, 1978, p. 3.

Chinese section of the FI in Hong Kong, i.e. the RCP. The reasons for a few pro-Trotskyist radicals' dislike of the RCP would be various, but it could be assumed that there were two main factors that might cause such a sentiment. Firstly, a small number of pro-Trotskyist young radicals from the "Seventies", particularly Wu, were critical of the long-term inactivity of the RCP.⁶¹⁹ More importantly, in the recent FI dispute, the RCP Trotskyists usually followed Peng's anti-IMT point of view. The pro-Peng political position that the RCP adopted, therefore, created an obstacle between Peng's followers within the RCP and the young men whose political orientations were inclined to the IMT.⁶²⁰ Thus, when Wu returned to Hong Kong to start his political career of being a Trotskyist, he and his comrades put their political priority on building a new Trotskyist organisation rather than on connecting with the older Trotskyist generation from the RCP. Consequently, the Peng-Wu animosity and the younger generation's dislike of the RCP were two factors that partly led to the disagreements on the organisational unification of the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement in the 1970s between Wu's group and the RCP founded by Peng Shuzhi.

⁶¹⁹ During an interview conducted by Miller, Miller perceived that "the fact of nonactivity on the part of the RCP had created an unfavourable impression upon Wu", while Wu complained to him that the RCP leadership was "fearful of any attempts to intervene in labour struggles in Hong Kong. This fear developed out of the long period of inactivity [of the RCP] between the early 1950s and 1974." In addition, in Miller's interviews with Hong Kong Trotskyists in 1976, a particular old Trotskyist, You Xiangming, also informed Miller that "[t]he RCP, for a very long time, was unwilling to have any connection with this [student] movement", which confirmed the RCP's nonactivity, and its unwillingness of engaging in local social movement to some extent. Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 26, 30, 32; and see also Sakai Yochishi, *My FI Activities towards Hong Kong and Macao*.

⁶²⁰ The political tendencies of the RCP and Peng's followers (i.e. pro-LTF), and of the young Trotskyist-leaning radicals from Hong Kong who later formed the RIL/RML (i.e. pro-IMT) in the FI disputes were demonstrated by Wang Fanxi and Joseph Miller. See: Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, pp. 17-18; A Letter from Wang Fanxi to IS, August 1975, p. 3, *MS 1709 11*.

As shown in Chapter 3, in 1973, Wu and his close associates founded a new independent Trotskyist group in Hong Kong named the *Revolutionary Internationalist League* (RIL, which later changed the name to the the Revolutionary Marxist League [RML]).⁶²¹ Since then, though the RIL was not the official Chinese section of the FI, the younger generation of Chinese Trotskyists had begun to establish a regular organisational connection with the United Secretariat in Brussels, whilst keeping in touch with their East Asian comrades.⁶²² At the same time, the colonial authorities in Hong Kong believed that the RIL had received some form of financial support from the foreign Trotskyist organisations.⁶²³

Meanwhile, the older generation's organisation of Chinese Trotskyists, the RCP, began to be re-organised, and also re-established the connection with

⁶²¹ As mentioned in Chapter 3, around September 1973, another new Trotskyist youth group IYSA was founded. In 1974, the RIL and a few IYSA members built a unified group, the *Socialist League*, which soon changed its organisation's name to the *Revolutionary Marxist League* (RML), publicly known as the *Daily Combat Bulletin* group. According to *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), the *Socialist League* changed its organisation's name to the RML in October 1974, but Joseph Miller and Liu Pingmei investigated that this change was made in March 1975. See SCMP, Oct 2nd, 1974; and Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 29, Liu Pingmei: *Zhongguo toupai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism) Chapter 12: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/liupingmei/2005book/marxist.org-chinese-LauPingMUI-2005book-12.htm#4>. Additionally, a former Trotskyist Cen Jianxun recollected that the ISYA members like Li Huaiming who did not join the *Socialist League* organised another small Trotskyist youth group named the "October Youths", which later became a "mass" youth organisation of the RCP, named the *Young Socialist Group* (YSG), and a same group of young radicals from the "October Youths" also formed a small "youth league" of the RCP, i.e. *Revolutionary Communist Youth* (RCY) in the mid-1970s, which was dissolved into the YSG in early 1978. See Cen Jianxun (He Ren): *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan*, Sep 12th, 1978, p. 6.

⁶²² For example, from 1973 to 1977, Sakai regularly visited the RIL (later the RML) and other small Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong every year. His last political trip to Hong Kong was in April 1977. When he wanted to enter Hong Kong in December 1979, he was refused to enter by the Hong Kong immigration office. What is more, the RIL sent its members, like Anita Chan, who later became an outstanding scholar in the field of Chinese labour studies in Australia, to attend the Trotskyist activities in Japan, such as the 1975 national congress of the JRCL. Sakai Yochishi, *My FI Activities towards Hong Kong and Macao*. Letters from Sakai to Wang Fanxi, Jun 18th, 1976; Apr 2nd, 1977, Nov 23rd, Dec 24th, 1979, MS 1709 11; and Anita Chan, *Canjia riben disiguoji zhibu dahui de bugao* (The Participation in the Congress of the Japanese Section of the FI), 1975, two-page document.

⁶²³ "The New Left in Hong Kong", Jan 10th, 1975, p. 7, HKRS 890-2-36.

the FI. In 1974, as the official Chinese section of the FI, the RCP sent a delegate, Lee See (the party name of this delegate) in company with a young Hong Kong Trotskyist Cen Jianxun as his translator, to attend the 10th world congress of the FI.⁶²⁴ In that year, there was a small “recovery” of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in the region of Hong Kong (approximately no more than a hundred members and sympathisers in Wu’s group and the RCP).⁶²⁵ Hence, the Trotskyists both from the FI and Hong Kong groups suggested that the dispersed overseas Chinese Trotskyists and the new Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong should be unified for strengthening the Trotskyist force at the margins of China and for preparing the “preliminary work of re-building the Chinese Trotskyist movement” in mainland China, just as the first generation of Chinese Trotskyists fused together in 1931. However, the unification of overseas Chinese Trotskyists was not as easy as these Trotskyists expected.

⁶²⁴ *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014; *Cen Jianxun Interview*, Jun 16th, 2014; Cen Jianxun (He Ren): *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan*, Sep 12th, 1978, p. 5.

⁶²⁵ About the memberships of the RCP and of the RIL, it was estimated that there were 65 members in Wu’s group by *Hong Kong Standard*, Oct 1st, 1974, while according to the 1977 RCP party minutes, it “officially” had 33 party members in the RCP. Moreover, according to *Ou Longyu Interview*, Aug 18th, 2014, he figures out that, in total, there were 60-70 members from various Hong Kong Trotskyist groups. What is more, in Miller’s interview notes, he estimated that there were nearly 100 Trotskyist and Trotskyist-leaning members in four local radical left/Trotskyist groups in late 1976: 40 in the RCP, 10 in the *Revolutionary Communist Youth* (RCY), 30 in the RML, and 20 in the *Young Socialist Group* (YSG), but according to the report of the RCP congress 1977, all the members from the RCY joined the YSG, while all the RCY members were also the party members of the RCP. Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, appendix I, and Sakai, *Hong Kong Report on the Congress of the RCP*, Apr 24th, 1977, *MS 1709 27*. Overall, if the information is accurate enough, we can assume that the number of Trotskyists in Hong Kong (including the members from different groups and sympathisers who were even later disengaged from the organisation, disillusioned and inactive) is approximately 100.

The New Unification of Chinese Trotskyism in 1978

1 The controversy between the old Trotskyists in exile

Since the 1942 organisational split of the Chinese Communist League (CCL), the Chinese Trotskyist movement had long been in an unstable split status. Moreover, from the 1952 round-up of Trotskyists in mainland China to the early 1970s, the Chinese Trotskyist movement was *de facto* organisationally disintegrated. As Wang Fanxi pointed out, during that “hibernation” period, “there has been no more Chinese section of the 4th International”.⁶²⁶

Nevertheless, under the circumstance of long-term organisational fragmentation, a controversy between the exiled Trotskyist individuals from the former *Minority* and *Majority* factions of the CCL continued concerning the Chinese revolution and other China issues, and some of them were involved in the FI debates. As mentioned above, Peng Shuzhi from the RCP firmly stood in a minority position in the FI, and he exerted his influence on his followers within the RCP in Hong Kong. On the other side, the surviving IWP members, Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua, who regarded the IWP as one of the member parties of the USFI, submitted a statement to the 10th world congress of the FI in 1974. Though Wang and Lou were not affiliated to any factions within the FI, in this statement, they asserted that, in general, their basic political attitude was closer to the IMT position,⁶²⁷ whereas they also wanted to point out to the IMT that “Maoism” in China was “still a variant of Stalinism”, as it “still firmly adheres to the practice and theory of [C]ommunism in one

⁶²⁶ A Letter from Wang Fanxi to IS, August 1975, p. 2, *MS 1709 11*.

⁶²⁷ Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua, “Our [the IWP] Statement”, submitted to the 10th World Congress of the FI, Dec 28th, 1973, p. 2, *MS 1709 11*.

single country' and other bureaucratic measures a la Stalin".⁶²⁸ Moreover, Wang Fanxi expressed his criticisms of the IMT's guerrilla war orientation in Latin America on some occasions.⁶²⁹

What is more, it seemed to a number of Trotskyists who were not only from the IWP but also from the RCP and the FI that Peng was an authoritarian figure who was not willing to admit his "erroneous" arguments and judgements in the past Chinese Trotskyist movement, and that his authoritarian style also produced a profound impact upon the RCP in Hong Kong, even when he resided in Europe from the very early 1950s.⁶³⁰

Particularly, since the 1942 split, an animosity between Peng and the IWP leaders had existed, and during Wang Fanxi's exile in Macao, he always

⁶²⁸ Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua, "Two Concrete Suggestions for the Amendment of the Part 10 [the China Problems] of the Draft Political Resolution", submitted to the IEC [International Executive Committee] Majority Tendency, Jan 10th, 1974, p. 2, *MS 1709 11*. In this article, Wang and Lou pointed out the dual characters of "Maoism": on the one hand, Maoism was still a variant of Stalinism, which "should be more precisely understood and designated as a bureaucratic centrism"; on the other hand, it "has gone beyond Stalinism", because "it has settled the democratic tasks of Chinese revolution and further developed it into a socialist revolution by establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat (though deformed)".

⁶²⁹ In a personal letter to Frank Glass, a close comrade of Wang who lived in America, Wang Fanxi criticised the FI majority's resolution in support of the Latin American Trotskyists' guerrilla strategy because it failed to "emphasise the importance of the mobilisation of the masses, of the patient work among the masses and of the political educational work among them. It attaches undue importance to the role of guerrilla warfare in the revolution, so that in action it might isolate ourselves from the broad masses and lead to military putchism." See: A Letter from Wang to Frank Glass, Jul 31st, 1969, pp. 1-5, *MS 1709 11*.

⁶³⁰ A number of Trotskyists have indeed considered that Peng had an authoritarian personality. A *Minority* leader Zheng Chaolin once called Peng a "Wang Ming before Wang Ming", and in an email interview with Sakai Yochishi, he recalled that Peng was "a terribly authoritarian and disgusting person", and the RCP was "a kind of Peng's pocket-group". Furthermore, Zhang Yun, a former RCP member, implied that there was a cult of personality towards Peng within the RCP. Xiang Qing also revealed that the Peng's authoritarian style partly triggered an internal conflict in the RCP regarding the discussions on the third Chinese Revolution in the early 1950s. In addition, after examining Peng's early history in the CCP, Benton from an academic perspective presumed that "[i]f anyone became a Trotskyist for lack of an alternative, it was Peng Shuzhi. If he had been allowed to stay on within the leadership of the official party, he might have become an even worse Stalinist than Qu Qiubai, who by comparison was quite liberal-minded". See: Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952*, p. 52, 54. Zhang Yun Interview, Jun 15th, 2014; Xiang Qing Interview, Aug 17th, 2014; Sakai Yochishi Interview, via email, Sep 1st, 2017.

criticised Peng's "false" judgements in the past and in the present, while condemning Peng's "distortion" of the history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. For Wang Fanxi and his comrades who were engaged in the Chinese Trotskyist activities prior to the CCP's victory in 1949, Peng was absolutely an authoritarian figure who had never carefully examined the causes of the triumph of Communism in China, but also exaggerated his own "leading" role in the Chinese Trotskyist movement in order to shape an image of his "forever correctness" in the narratives of Chinese Trotskyism.⁶³¹ For example, in 1969, in a personal letter to Wang's close comrade, Frank Glass,⁶³² living in the United States, Wang expressed his objection to Peng's viewpoint on Latin America that the guerrilla warfare should only be regarded as a short-term tactic, not as a long-term strategy. From Wang's point of view after re-thinking of the causes of the CCP's victory, "the question of armed

⁶³¹ For example, in the early 1950s, from Wang and other Trotskyists' point of view, Peng would not like to carefully examine the reasons why the Chinese Communists succeeded to seize the national power, but he rather constantly emphasised that the "bourgeois" character of the CCP and its regime "would be never changed", while he insisted that his party, i.e. the Majority faction later the RCP, "has maintained and struggled over long years in the past for the traditional line of Trotskyism", more importantly, his party's political line and its position towards the CCP had been always "correct" during the Sino-Japanese War and the civil war between the Guomindang and the CCP. Thus, though he and his party made mistakes during the Chinese revolution, "these are rather mistakes in estimating the events than in principle". Peng Shuzhi, *Dui zhonggong tongzhi Zhongguo de zhengzhi jueyi, Zhongguo geming gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui kuoda huiyi tongguo* (The Political Resolution on China under the CCP's rule, adopted by the RCP Central Committee's enlarged meeting), Jan 17th, 1950, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/pengshuzhi/mia-chinese-peng-19500117.htm>; Peng Shuzhi, "The Causes of the Victory of the Chinese Communist Party over Chiang Kai-shek, and the CCP's Perspectives, Report on the Chinese Situation to the Third Congress of the FI", *International Information Bulletin*, Feb 1952, p. 28. From these passages, it seemed to Wang Fanxi and others that Peng only intended to defend his "correctness", but he did not want to learn lessons from the Trotskyist failure in the past. See Wang Fanxi (1973): *Lun zhongguo disanci geming zhong sidalinpai shengli yu tuopai shibai de yuanyin—jianda Peng Shuzhi fufu* (On the Causes of the Stalinist [CCP's] Victory and the Trotskyist failure in the Third Chinese Revolution and A Reply to Peng Shuzhi and Chen Bilan). See also the English version in Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo*, pp. 1001–24.

⁶³² Frank Glass (Li Furen, 1901-1988): A British-born South African Trotskyist. He arrived in China in 1931 and worked as a journalist in Shanghai. He worked with the Chinese Trotskyist movement from 1933 to 1938. For further information about Glass, see Baruch Hirson, *Frank Glass: The Restless Revolutionary* (London: Porcupine Press, 2003).

struggles (including guerrilla warfare as one of its forms) must be considered and dealt with on the level of strategy.”⁶³³ More importantly, Wang criticised Peng as having learnt “nothing” from the past, someone who “still cannot see the major reason which brought success to the CPC [i.e. the CCP] and failure to us”, because, from Wang’s perspective, Peng only attributed the CCP’s victory to the “exceptional historical circumstances”, not to the Communist long-term preparation of armed struggles.⁶³⁴ In November 1970, a long recollection on Peng Shuzhi’s life as a Chinese revolutionist written by his wife, Chen Bilan, was serialised in a weekly English Trotskyist magazine, *Intercontinental Press*. Wang and other surviving Trotskyists like Frank Glass, who had witnessed the gain and loss of the Chinese Trotskyist movement from the 1930s to 1940s, believed that Chen’s article was designed to depict an image of Peng’s “forever correctness” in the early Communist activities and the Trotskyist movement in China. They largely suspected that Peng and his wife were distorting the history of Chinese Trotskyism and exaggerating Peng’s role in the Trotskyist movement in the 1930s. In a letter to Glass, Wang took two examples from Chen’s article to refute her “distortion” of the Communist and Trotskyist history in China: Firstly, according to Chen, “Peng

⁶³³ A Letter from Wang Fanxi to Frank Glass, Jul 31st, 1969, letter, p. 5, *MS 1709 11*.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4; see also the “exceptional historical circumstances” summarised by Peng in Peng Shuzhi, “The Causes of the Victory of the Chinese Communist Party over Chiang Kai-shek, and the CCP’s Perspectives, Report on the Chinese Situation to the Third Congress of the FI”, *International Information Bulletin*, Feb 1952, pp. 2-45. In addition, in a long article on re-examining the causes of the CCP’s victory written by Wang in 1973, Wang continued sharply criticising Peng’s perspective on the causes of the Communist triumph in China. He did not agree with Peng that the success of Chinese Communism was mainly caused by the “exceptional historical circumstances”, while he stressed Peng’s conclusion on the Communist victory in China largely ignored the “subjective force of the CCP”, that is to say, from Wang’s point of view, Peng undervalued the military development of the CCP prior to 1949, i.e. the peasant armed struggles led by the Communists. Wang Fanxi (1973): *Lun zhongguo disanci geming zhong sidalinpai shengli yu tuopai shibai de yuanyin—jianda Peng Shuzhi fufu* (On the Causes of the Stalinist [CCP’s] Victory and the Trotskyist failure in the Third Chinese Revolution and A Reply to Peng Shuzhi and Chen Bilan), pp. 8-16.

joined the CCP in the autumn of 1920”,⁶³⁵ but Wang believed that there was no Communist party in China until the year of 1921.⁶³⁶ Secondly, in the *Intercontinental Press*, Chen “falsely” told readers that after Peng was released from the Guomindang’s prison in 1937, the central Trotskyist organisation was re-established under his direction.⁶³⁷ However, according to Wang (and later Glass), the re-establishment of the Trotskyists’ provisional central committee was completed between 1935 and 1936 when Peng was still in prison.⁶³⁸

Such a contention between the former *Majority* and *Minority* individuals, i.e. between Peng and Wang, was one of the major themes which characterised the overseas Chinese Trotskyist activities after 1949.⁶³⁹ Essentially speaking, we can see that this controversy contains three key points on Chinese Trotskyism in the past and at present: Firstly, it largely reflects that the factional positions between two wings of Chinese Trotskyists towards their own past and present struggles were not easily reconcilable. Hence, the Chinese Trotskyist organisation in exile remained disintegrated in the post-

⁶³⁵ Chen Bilan, “Looking Back Over My Years with Peng Shu-tse”, *Intercontinental Press*, Nov 2, 1970, p. 937.

⁶³⁶ See: *A Letter from Shuang Shan (Wang Fanxi) to Li Furen (Frank Glass)*, Apr 4th, 1971, translated in Chinese, single-paged.

⁶³⁷ Chen Bilan, “Looking Back Over My Years with Peng Shu-tse”, *Intercontinental Press*, Nov 16, 1970, pp. 987-988.

⁶³⁸ *A Letter from Shuang Shan (Wang Fanxi) to Li Furen (Frank Glass)*, in Chinese, Apr 4th, 1971, and *A Letter from Frank Glass to Joseph Hansen*, Apr 10th, 1971. What is more, some Western scholars in the field of Chinese studies also consider that Peng’s recollection on the history of Chinese Communism and Trotskyism would be dubious. In a review article on Peng’s memoirs (published in French), Gregor Benton bluntly pointed out that Peng’s “obsession with magnifying his own role and belittling that of others stands between him and the truth often enough to make his record of these events worthless in parts and everywhere dubious”. Benton, “Two Purged Leaders of Early Chinese Communism”, *The China Quarterly*, Jun 1985, p. 326.

⁶³⁹ Even in the 1980s, the pro-Peng RCP still blamed that the IWP’s and Wang’s position towards the Chinese resistance war against Japan was “incorrect”. *Chengqing tuopai dui zhongri kangzhan de lichang* (Clarifying the Basic Position of Chinese Trotskyists towards the Sino-Japanese War), written by the RCP central committee, Aug 30th, 1981, one-page document.

war period until the late 1970s. Secondly, this controversy was *de facto* a controversy about Peng Shuzhi's "authoritarianism", which indicates that a group of old Trotskyists, such as Wang Fanxi, held a highly critical attitude towards Peng's "authoritarian" character. They expressed their objections against Peng and his wife's "distortion" of the Trotskyist history in China by involving themselves in this controversy. Thirdly and more importantly, this dispute also reflects a struggle in discourse on shaping a "revolutionary correctness" within the Chinese Trotskyists, i.e. how to construct a more "correct" narrative of Chinese Trotskyism by interpreting the key events of the past Trotskyist movement in China, such as the Trotskyist failure and the Communist triumph, from different Trotskyists' perspective. To some extent, the controversy against Peng's "forever correctness" launched by some surviving Trotskyists was also a process of shaping their own "revolutionary correctness" regarding the rise and fall of Trotskyism in China, which was, from their point of view, closer to the truth of historical events. Subsequently, this controversy became an obstacle for an attempt of re-integration of Chinese Trotskyists in the 1970s, which created a detrimental impact on organisational unification between the older and the younger generation of overseas Chinese Trotskyists.

2 The efforts and obstacles towards the new unification

Despite expressing their criticisms of Peng's "correctness" by entering into the controversy, Wang Fanxi and his close comrade Lou Guohua from Hong Kong were two ardent advocates of the unification of overseas Chinese Trotskyist groups. They did not expect that this controversy would prevent the surviving old Trotskyists and the new generation of Hong Kong Trotskyists

from re-building the Chinese Trotskyist organisation outside mainland China. In June 1973, they tabled a proposal to persuade the exiled Trotskyists both from the pro-Peng RCP and their own IWP, and the young Hong Kong radicals who had recently organisationally accepted Trotskyism abroad and at home, to work together to set up a “preparatory committee” for establishing a new and unified Chinese section of the FI in Hong Kong.⁶⁴⁰ According to Cen Jianxun, before the 10th world congress of the FI convened in 1974, he, two surviving IWP members (Wang and Lou), an old Trotskyist from the RCP (Xiang Qing), and Wu Zhongxian as a “representative” of the younger generation of Chinese Trotskyists, jointly proposed that the FI should send a delegation to Hong Kong to investigate the current split status of the Chinese Trotskyist organisation, and to urge the old and the young Trotskyists to be unified.⁶⁴¹ From a statement from the “Provisional National Committee” (PNC) of the RCP⁶⁴² to the USFI leadership on July 3rd, 1974, we can see that the FI leadership at the March 16th United Secretariat meeting had decided to send Sakai Yoshichi and Barry Sheppard of the American section of the FI, i.e. the SWP, to Hong Kong to “assist in unifying all our (Trotskyist) forces there”, which meant the FI from 1974 had tried to put effort into integrating the old and new Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong.⁶⁴³ Nevertheless, both the young radicals (from the RIL/RML) and the old “ultra-leftists” (from the RCP) claimed that they believed in Trotskyism and each had close ties with the FI. They

⁶⁴⁰ See: Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua, “A Preliminary Proposal for the Formation of A ‘Preparatory Committee’ for the Re-building of the Chinese Section of the 4th International”, Jun 15th, 1973, pp. 1-2, *MS 1709 11*.

⁶⁴¹ Cen Jianxun (He Ren): *Wo zai shiping gongzuo de jingyan*, Sep 12th, 1978, p. 5.

⁶⁴² The “Provisional National Committee” was the *de facto* leadership body of the RCP in Hong Kong from 1954 until the new central committee was elected in the second congress of the RCP in April 1977. In the 1970s, the RCP consisted of 30-40 party members. See a short introduction on the background of the RCP leadership body in Miller: *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 34.

⁶⁴³ *To the United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (from the RCP), July 3rd, 1974, p. 1.

acted, as though there was no particular fundamental disagreement or difference between the young and the old. But the process of the organisational unification of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong demonstrated that the matter of unification was difficult to work out.

In mid-1974, from the RCP leadership's perspective, though it, in principle, supported the unification of all the small Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong, such a unification should be done under the direction of the "only orthodox" Trotskyist centre in Hong Kong recognised by the FI, that is, the RCP. Why did the RCP regard itself as the "only orthodox" Trotskyist centre? Its members claimed that "[a]s the official section of the Fourth International, although the RCP is now weak, it is the only organised Trotskyist force in H [i.e. Hong Kong] which functions under the tradition of Bolshevism", which self-justified the RCP's "unique orthodox" position in the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement.⁶⁴⁴ In a July 3rd statement, concerning the work of unification, the RCP leadership, i.e. the "Provisional National Committee" (PNC) of the RCP, blamed the FI leadership, the surviving old Trotskyists who opposed against Peng and the young Trotskyist radicals, and Sakai Yoshichi who was a member of the International Executive Committee of the FI at that time, for not "seriously" taking the unification of the Hong Kong Trotskyist forces into account.

At the very beginning of the statement, the RCP leadership claimed that the FI leadership did not provide a concrete guideline for the unification, and disrespected the RCP as its "official" Chinese section by intervening in the affair of the unification "merely by authority". Then, the RCP turned to accuse

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2.

Wu Zhongxian, and other old Trotskyists, such as Wang Fanxi, Lou Guohua, and Xiang Qing of setting up obstacles for unification: Firstly, the RCP thought that Wu's RIL was not a political force within the Trotskyist movement, as "most of its members still do not clearly understand the basic principles of Trotskyism". Secondly, from the RCP's point of view, the surviving Trotskyists like Wang, Lou and Xiang were responsible for creating an internal obstacle for the cooperative work between the RCP and other young Trotskyists. Under their influence, Wu withdrew from the RCP and began to "stir up these who affiliate with the Chinese section (i.e. the RCP)". Thirdly, it seemed to the RCP leaders that Wu and his political associates were preparing to form another new Trotskyist centre outside of the RCP rather than to join the RCP, i.e. a move against unification. At last, the RCP also criticised Sakai "at least" for encouraging Wu's divisive activities. In the eyes of the RCP leadership, Sakai's intervention into the affairs of the Chinese organisation might indicate that the international Trotskyist forces would set up a barrier for the unification of overseas Chinese Trotskyists. In short, this statement strongly implied an authoritarian position of the RCP towards Trotskyist unification. That is to say, from the RCP's viewpoint, the unification work of Chinese Trotskyist groups outside mainland China must be carried out by the "unique orthodox" Chinese Trotskyist centre in Hong Kong, i.e. the RCP, whilst it would not be allowed to be "irrationally" interfered with by foreign Trotskyists or that this to be conducted by other Chinese Trotskyist groups.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 1-4.

In January 1975, as reality did not meet the Chinese Trotskyists' expectations of organisational unification, Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua put forward a proposal again to the FI leadership that suggested a "Coordinating Committee" should be formed by the old and young Trotskyists in Hong Kong to "pave the way for unification".⁶⁴⁶ At the same time, the Trotskyists from the FI purported to have another try in unifying the Hong Kong Trotskyist groups. According to Sakai, Wang Fanxi from the IWP, Xiang Qing from the RCP, two members from the FI French section, Gerard Verjat and Pierre Rousset, and himself from the JRCL, all agreed that "a united, autonomous, self-sustaining, pro-FI organisation should be formed, based on newly emerging young militants of Hong Kong, independent from the RCP, which we considered as a deadly ossified group."⁶⁴⁷ Particularly, in a letter from Sakai to Wang in September 1975, based on his observation of the Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong, Sakai wrote that he saw that the young RML was developing its organisation but that he had heard that the RCP was trying to take "disciplinary action" against two old Trotskyists, You Xiangming and Chen Bing, who worked closely with the young "militants" from the RIL/RML.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua, "A Proposal for the Fusion of all Trotskyists in Hong Kong Area", Jan 19th, 1975, one-page document; "A Letter from Wang Fanxi to Pierre Rousset", Jan 18th, 1975, single-paged, *MS 1709 11*.

⁶⁴⁷ Sakai, *My FI Activities towards Hong Kong and Macao*.

⁶⁴⁸ Regarding the "disciplinary sanction" against them launched by some RCP leaders, such as Lee See, Xiang and Chen wrote an open letter to all the RCP members to justify that their activities in the RML had been authorised by the RCP on the one hand, and to vehemently condemn the RCP leadership's "authoritarianism" on the other. In this open letter, they also mentioned and denounced Lee See's "unprincipled" attacks against Cen Jianxun and Xiang Qing. They supposed that the reason Cen was under Lee's attack was Cen had connection with Wang Fanxi and Lou Guohua who politically and organisationally stood in opposition to the RCP within the Trotskyist movement. They revealed that Lee accused Xiang Qing of being a "Communist spy" in private occasions, which from their viewpoint, was absolutely a defamation act of Xiang's character as a revolutionary. See You Xiangming and Chen Bing: "Gei RCP zhu tongzhi de gongkaixin" (An Open Letter to the Comrades of the RCP), Apr 9th, 1977, republished in the RML's *Neibu tongxun* (Internal Communication Bulletin), Sep 9th, 1978, pp. 9-14.

Sakai believed that “it is now too clear that the RML has [the] only possibility, where we can prepare our real T(rotskyist) organisation”, and “...we have the core of the very unification process in the RML, which is trying to show that it is able to unify the old and young who are ready to work as active Trotskyists”.⁶⁴⁹ In the same letter, he also expressed the opinion that the RCP was an ossified group, and its members were “sectarian” towards the RML. Sakai believed that international Trotskyists “cannot be ‘neutral’ between the RML and the PNC/RCP...” and “must give the RML our full support...”⁶⁵⁰

As mentioned above, the RCP regarded itself as the “only orthodox” Trotskyist centre in Hong Kong, and would not accept any new Hong Kong Trotskyist centre leading the unification, whilst some Trotskyists from the FI, such as Sakai, considered the RCP as an “ossified” Trotskyist group, and attempted to urge other old and young Trotskyists to form a new unified Chinese Trotskyist group, independent from the RCP. These two competing positions towards the unification issue had actually created impediments to the unification itself. Besides these two factors, what other problems prevented all the Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong from unifying themselves?

In August 1975, Wang Fanxi wrote to the FI leadership to explain the general differences between the *Combat Bulletin* group, i.e. the RML, and the Trotskyists of *October Review* affiliated to the RCP. From Wang’s own observations: 1. Within the circle of the FI, the young RML Trotskyists took a pro-IMT position, while the latter supported the LTF minority. 2. On the China

⁶⁴⁹ A Letter from Sakai to Wang Fanxi, Sep 4th, 1975, pp. 1-2, *MS 1709 11*.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.* The PNC is the acronym of the “Provisional National Committee” of the RCP, which was the leadership body of the RCP in Hong Kong from 1954 to 1977.

problem, the former's position was "comparatively sympathetic and close to that of the IWP" [in practical work, the surviving IWP members in Hong Kong usually supported the RML and participated in their activities], while the latter who were affiliated to the RCP, of course, supported the RCP's point of view.

3. In political practice, the RML, as a young Trotskyist organisational body, preferred its open "appearance" in the public, while the *October Review* and the RCP rather stuck to a longstanding Trotskyist tradition of keeping an underground working line.⁶⁵¹ However, it seems that supporting different tendencies within the FI (factionalism was promised to be guaranteed in the FI), disagreements on the China questions, and the "old-fashioned" working principle were unlikely to become the fundamental reasons that hindered the unification process.⁶⁵² Thus, what were the concrete obstacles for the Trotskyist unification in Hong Kong?

From the RML, Wang Fanxi and other Trotskyists' perspectives, the biggest hindrance for unification was the RCP. Wu Zhongxian in 1976 from his personal view reckoned that "there seems to be a highly-developed bureaucratic atmosphere" within the leadership body of the RCP. More importantly, he asserted that the RCP "attempts to wield maximum control

⁶⁵¹ See: A Letter from Wang Fanxi to IS, August 1975, p. 3, *MS 1709 11*. In Miller's interviews with Hong Kong leftists and Trotskyists, some of his interviewees from the RCP and other radical groups stressed that the RML had been influenced by Wang Fanxi to some degree. See Miller, *Interview Notes*, 1976, p. 18, 20, 24.

⁶⁵² Concerning the arguments on the China questions, Wu Zhongxian from the RML thought "this is a minor issue that could be resolved through further study and discussion". On the other side, regarding the difference between the RML and RCP on the working principle in practice, i.e. whether or not the Trotskyists in Hong Kong should adopt an "old-fashioned" and strict underground organisational system, a RCP leader Lee See [party name] considered that this difference was only a technical problem, not a difficult problem in the unification process. Miller, *Interview Notes*, 30; Hong Kong Report on the Congress of the RCP, written by Sakai, April 24th, 1977, p. 17, *MS 1709 27*.

over the [Hong Kong Trotskyist] movement as a whole”.⁶⁵³ It seemed that, from Wu’s perspective, the RCP did not have an overall “fraternal” attitude towards unification with the RML, but it intended to compete with the RML and exert its influence as the “only orthodox” Trotskyist centre in the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement. Wu’s “hatred” of the RCP to a larger degree represented a common view towards the RCP within the RML leadership. This “hatred” from the RML was not occasional. A RCP member who worked closely with the RML in 1976, You Xiangming, claimed that he and another Trotskyist, “Old Chen” (i.e. Chen Bing), from the RCP were assigned by the RCP in early 1975 to “infiltrate” the RML, and the RCP expected them to “pull the RML members into the sphere of the RCP”.⁶⁵⁴ This “infiltration” might strengthen the animosity and create the tension between these two Trotskyist groups.

On the other hand, as the ardent advocates of unification, Wang and his close comrade, Lou, strongly sensed that there was too much authoritarianism and non-openness within the RCP by observing the progress of unification and re-examining the organisational principle of the RCP adopted in 1948. It was “clear” to them that the RCP would not accept an unification led by other Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong and would be willing to take “disciplinary actions” against its members who were keen to work together with the RML to achieve the ultimate goal of unification in order to defend its “orthodox” authority as the “unique” Trotskyist centre and the only official Chinese section of the FI in Hong Kong. While criticising the RCP’s factionalism and authoritarianism and implying there was a lack of democracy within the RCP,

⁶⁵³ Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 30.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 31.

Wang brought up the issue of “democratic centralism” as a core organisational principle of “Leninist” parties and stressed that the “democratic” part of “democratic centralism” was more important in the internal life of the “revolutionary party of the proletariat”. In the Communist or Trotskyist context, “democratic centralism” is usually interpreted to mean: “1. that debates over basic issues terminate after a decision is made until the decision process, usually a Congress, is renewed; and 2. that criticism and debate are contained within the organisation and its internal documents”.⁶⁵⁵ Wang tended to lay his stress on the “democratic” part rather than the “centralism” part of “democratic centralism”: 1. dissent within a revolutionary party must be tolerated, and the dissidents have the right to form opposition factions in the internal party life; 2. in party practice, after a decision is made, the minority must be subjected to the majority whereas the majority must respect the minority’s rights, including reserving an appropriate proportion of positions in the party leadership body for the minority.⁶⁵⁶ In Wang and his comrades’ conclusion concerning the internal party life of the RCP, internal democracy within a “revolutionary party of the proletariat” was a tradition of Bolshevism/Trotskyism,⁶⁵⁷ but it was “apparent” to them that the pro-Peng RCP did not preserve this tradition: the RCP neither had a basis founded on internal democracy nor tolerated the opposition factions within its group. Thus, they did not expect that the Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong would be

⁶⁵⁵ Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States*, p. 51.

⁶⁵⁶ Wang Fanxi (Lian Gen): *Luo lun zuzhi yuanze yu fangfa* (A Brief Comment on the Organisational Principle and Method), May 22nd, 1978, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/fourth-international/china/mia-chinese-fi-197911.htm#4>.

⁶⁵⁷ Wang quoted this “tradition” from Trotsky, *The Transitional Programme*, 1938, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/>.

unified under the RCP's direction. Rather, they regarded the RCP to be a hindrance for the unification.

However, the RCP did not see itself as an obstacle for the unification. In its view, the barrier to unification was created by some other elements. As mentioned above, within the circle of a group of young Trotskyists from the RML and several veteran Trotskyists from the *ex-Minority* faction, they frequently revealed their dislike or "hatred" of the RCP, and Wu Zhongxian and Wang Fanxi apparently stood in opposition to Peng Shuzhi. As a Trotskyist party founded by Peng, the RCP members' political views were usually similar to Peng's, and their organisational ties with Peng were exceedingly close. They, of course, realised the mutual animosity against Peng from the RML leaders and the IWP individuals, and some of Peng's followers within the RCP sent out a very clear message that "the public criticism of the 'traditional' Chinese Trotskyist movement in the person of Peng Shuzhi [from the Peng/RCP's opposition factions] was uncalled for [and unacceptable]".⁶⁵⁸ More importantly, as an official Chinese section of the FI recognised by the FI, the RCP, from its "orthodox" position, would be unlikely to accept any newly-established Trotskyist centre in Hong Kong, such as the RML. Compared to the RML and other radical Left groups in Hong Kong, the RCP considered itself to be more "revolutionary" and the "only orthodox" Trotskyist centre. Thus, from what we have seen in the 1974 statement from the RCP to the FI leadership, the RCP members did not recognise the RIL/RML as a Trotskyist organisation; furthermore, they saw those young Trotskyists outside of the RCP "endeavour[ing] not for a unification", but

⁶⁵⁸ Joseph Miller, *Interview Notes*, p. 26.

instead “they attack the Chinese section in order to justify their aim to set up another [Trotskyist] centre”.⁶⁵⁹ This might demonstrate that though the RIL/RML was not recognised by the RCP as a Trotskyist/“revolutionary” group, the RCP members had already perceived that the “Trotskyist elements” in the RIL/RML posed a “threat” to the leading/“orthodox” position of the RCP and attempted to set up another “centre” in the local Trotskyist activities. Therefore, for the purpose of maintaining its “orthodoxy”, both the young Trotskyists’ intention of building a new Trotskyist centre and the unification move under not the “only orthodox” centre’s direction, but the other centre’s direction would not be tolerated by the RCP. From the RCP’s viewpoint, the young Trotskyists, mainly from the RML and the RML advocates, were the “interrupters” who “*de facto*” prevented the local Trotskyist groups from unifying. The RML was not accepted as a Trotskyist/“revolutionary” organisation by the RCP until the 1977 congress of the RCP,⁶⁶⁰ where some party leaders accused the RML of creating the barrier for the unification.⁶⁶¹ In a liaison meeting between foreign representatives⁶⁶² and the RCP leadership during the congress on April 14th 1977, a party leader, Lee See firstly pointed out that the RML had asked to

⁶⁵⁹ *To the United Secretariat of the Fourth International* (from the RCP), July 3rd, 1974, p. 3.

⁶⁶⁰ On April 10th and 11th 1977, the RCP convened its second national congress in Hong Kong since 1948. During this congress, two political resolutions on Communist China and on the current situation of Hong Kong were adopted. See the Chinese versions of the political resolutions in Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/fourth-international/china/mia-chinese-fi-cn-19770410.htm>; <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/fourth-international/china/mia-chinese-fi-cn-19770410-3.htm>

⁶⁶¹ In this congress, some RCP members insisted that the RML was not a “revolutionary” organisation because they thought it neither had certain political programme nor had strict organisational discipline. Nevertheless, a motion of recognising the RML as a Trotskyist organisation was adopted by a majority of the RCP members. Sakai, “Hong Kong Report on the Congress of the RCP”, Apr 24th, 1977, pp. 3-4, 11, *MS 1709 27*.

⁶⁶² The two foreign representatives for this conference were Sakai Yoshichi of the JRCL and Jim Percy, the general secretary of the *Socialist Workers’ Party* (Australia). *Ibid*, and see also this information In *Sakai Interview* via email Aug 28th, 2017.

stop the work of setting up a communication committee between two groups that both sides had agreed on in 1976. Subsequently, he bluntly blamed the RML, “[i]n our opinion, the main problem in the course of the unification is the sectarianism of the RML”.⁶⁶³

From above, we can see that the “RML-IWP alliance” and the RCP regarded each other as a hindering element of the unification between 1974 and 1978. As a result, it was difficult to form a unified Trotskyist group in Hong Kong during that period. In April 1977, both sides, i.e. the RCP and the RML, in principle, agreed to exchange their internal documents with each other and to send their representatives to the other side to join the party discussions at the rank-and-file level.⁶⁶⁴ Later in the same year, negotiation on the integration between two groups started, and a joint internal bulletin as an opinion platform was subsequently published for the discussions on the unification among the Trotskyists from different groups and internal factions.

Nevertheless, at the same time, since both groups preserved factional “prejudices” of their own towards the other, there was no advancement in the progress of unification.

3 The factional struggle within the RCP and the new unification in 1978

In spite of the difficulties in the process of unification, some foreign Trotskyists from the FI like Pierre Rousset and a majority of the old and young Chinese

⁶⁶³ Sakai, “Hong Kong Report on the Congress of the RCP”, Apr 24th, 1977, p. 17. In the same report, Lee See’s view on the RML seems contradictory. On the one hand, he said that the RML’s “sectarianism” impeded the unification, which might indicate that the RCP organisationally knew the RML very well; on the other, he also admitted that “we [the RCP members] cannot know it [the RML] so well”. *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁴ See the minutes of April 12th liaison meeting between the executive committee of the RML and the foreign representatives, and of Apr 14th liaison meeting between the central committee of the RCP and the foreign representatives, in *ibid*, pp. 16-17.

Trotskyists would not abandon their previous efforts in attempting to achieve unification. In a report on the fusion of the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement to the FI written on May 10th 1978, Rousset viewed it as that the disbandment of the IMT and the LTF within the FI and the re-integration of the Trotskyist organisations in many countries in 1978 had created a favourably objective condition for the Trotskyist unification in Hong Kong. In addition, from 1977, the RCP and the RML had recognised each other as legitimate Trotskyist organisations in Hong Kong which both supported the FI. Theoretically speaking, both groups politically and organisationally held a common Trotskyist position. Both politically adopted the “anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic” programme of Trotskyism and organisationally accepted the principle of “democratic centralism”. Thus, there should be no barrier for the unification.⁶⁶⁵ In Rousset’s report, we can see that some international Trotskyists like him keenly urged all the Trotskyist forces in Hong Kong to be unified. Back earlier to February 1978, a factional struggle within the RCP concerning an organisational matter gave Rousset and other unification advocates new hope to unify the Chinese Trotskyists in the region of Hong Kong.

On February 12th and 19th 1978, the *Young Socialist Group* (YSG), a “mass” youth organisation of the RCP consisting of no more than 20 members, convened an organisational general meeting. In this meeting, after an internal discussion and a democratic vote, the YSG decided that owing to no obvious differences in theory and in practice, the *Revolutionary Communist Youth*

⁶⁶⁵ Pierre Rousset, *Zhi tongyi shujiju Xianggang tuopai yundong tongyi wenti de baogao* (To the United Secretariat: A Report on the Fusion of the Hong Kong Trotskyist Movement), May 10th, 1978, translated in Chinese, 3-page document, pp. 1-3.

(RCY),⁶⁶⁶ the youth league body of the RCP, was to be dissolved into the YSG. Because the YSG and its members had adopted a common Trotskyist position, it was considered to have evolved from a “mass” youth group into a full authentic Trotskyist youth organisation. At the same time, a political programme on the basis of Trotskyist principles that explicitly presented an anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-bureaucratic stance was passed by the YSG members.⁶⁶⁷ More importantly, in a draft resolution on the “party-league” relation submitted by the executive committee of the YSG to the February 1978 meeting, the YSG leadership stressed that the “revolutionary” youth organisation should not be an adjunct of the “revolutionary”/Trotskyist party, which meant a majority of the young YSG “militants” demanded organisational independence in practical “revolutionary” work. The YSG would equally recognise both the RCP and the RML as two Trotskyist/“revolutionary” centres in Hong Kong, while it would collaborate with these two parties and assist them in unifying.⁶⁶⁸ What is more, the YSG intended to unify with the *Progressive Students*, the youth group of the RML, even before the two-party unification. This was seen as a positive contributor to the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement from the viewpoint of some “militants” in the YSG.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ The YSG and the RCY were established by the former ISYA members who did not fuse into the RML in mid-1974. According to the 1977 RCP congress report, all the RCY members were the YSG members. Sakai, “Hong Kong Report on the Congress of the RCP”, Apr 24th, 1977, p. 9.

⁶⁶⁷ See: *Shehuizhuyi qingnianshe jiben lichang* (The Basic Line of the YSG), adopted by the YSG general meeting, Feb 1978, an internal pamphlet.

⁶⁶⁸ *Dangtuan guanxi jueyi cao'an* (The Draft Resolution on the Party-League Relation), submitted by the executive committee of the YSG, no date (before February 1978), two-page document, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁶⁹ On January 28th, 1978, the YSG decided to invite all the members of the youth league of the RML to join the YSG to achieve the goal of the two-league unification before that of the two-party unification. An YSG leader Zhang Kui regarded that such a league unification would be beneficial to the development of the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong. See her argument in Zhang Kui: *Qingnian gongzuo luxian de zhenglun yu dangde minzhu jizhongzhi*

However, a majority of the RCP leadership firmly opposed the re-organisation of the YSG. Some leading Trotskyists in the central committee of the RCP⁶⁷⁰ might have worried that the new YSG could be outside the control of the RCP. It seemed to them that the re-organisation of the YSG was splitting the party body of the RCP, and an organisationally independent YSG that was no longer affiliated to the RCP would establish a third Trotskyist centre in Hong Kong competing with the RCP and the RML.⁶⁷¹ In order to defend its “unique orthodoxy” in the local Trotskyist movement, before and after the YSG general meeting convened in February, the RCP central committee, launched disciplinary actions against RCP members in the YSG to prevent the organisational independence of the YSG. On February 2nd, the central committee of the RCP sent a notification to the young RCP members working in the YSG, in which they criticised the RCP members’ engagement in the re-organisation of the YSG on the grounds that it had not been authorised by the party and its youth league (the RCY) leadership. It accused the new YSG of transforming itself into a “potential party” organisation or a “sectarian” group. The party leadership, thus, did not recognise the YSG as a Trotskyist youth

(The Debates regarding the Line of the Youth Work and the Party’s Democratic Centralism), no date, 8-page document, pp. 1-8.

⁶⁷⁰ The previous leadership body of the RCP, i.e. the “Provisional National Committee” (PNC), was replaced by the new central committee elected in the 1977 second congress of the RCP.

⁶⁷¹ This point of view within the RCP leadership can be reflected in *Dui jiantuan gongzuo, dangtuan guanxi wenti de yijian he taidu* (The Suggestions and Attitudes towards the Building of the Youth League and the Party-League Relation), Apr 17th, 1978, a draft proposal of the central committee submitted to the special congress of the RCP, 3-page document, pp. 1-3; *Zhongwei zhi YSG zhong gongzuo zhu dangyuan de tongzhi* (The Central Committee’s Notification to the Party Members Working in the YSG), Feb, 2nd, 1978, two-page document, pp. 1-2; Pierre Rousset, *Zhi tongyi shujiju Xianggang tuopai yundong tongyi wenti de baogao* (To the United Secretariat: A Report on the Fusion of the Hong Kong Trotskyist Movement), May 10th, 1978, 3-page document, pp. 1-3; Xiang Qing and Li Huaiming (Ye Ning), *Dang he qingniantuan guanxi de yuanze: gegongdang tebie dahui jueyi dui’an* (The Principle of the Party-League Relation: A Counter-proposal to the [Draft] Resolution of the RCP’s Special Congress), March 15th, 1978, 3-page internal document, pp. 1-3; Xiang Qing, *Liangzhong luxian de xuanze* (The Choice between Two Lines), no date, four-page document, pp. 1-4.

group. The central committee clearly stated that it would use party discipline to impose its will on RCP members in the YSG: 1. their work in the YSG must be conducted by the party branch and submitted to the party leadership; 2. any RCP members must not engage in the partial unification with the RML or its youth organisation, otherwise, it would be regarded as a violation of the party discipline.⁶⁷² On February 26th, the central committee called a leadership meeting and a majority of its members adopted a resolution on the YSG issue.⁶⁷³ In this resolution, the party leadership continued to stress that party discipline was superior to league discipline and all party members must be subject to the party decisions, while the central committee decided to use party discipline to sanction 8 party members (a “serious warning”) for their involvement in the re-organisation of the YSG on February 12th.⁶⁷⁴ These party “orders” subsequently triggered the YSG’s rebellion against the party leadership. Faced with the young Trotskyists’ rebellion, the majority in the central committee (and Peng Shuzhi) stated that the official Chinese section of the FI, i.e. the RCP, would not accept the RCY’s dissolution into the YSG and would not tolerate the YSG establishing an independent organisation in the name of Trotskyism; and it, furthermore, vehemently blamed the YSG for “*de facto*” forming an “independent kingdom” outside of the party.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷² *Zhongwei zhi YSG zhong gongzuo zhu dangyuan de tongzhi* (The Central Committee’s Notification to the Party Members Working in the YSG), Feb 2nd, 1978, two-page document, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁷³ The central committee of the RCP had 8 members in early 1978. 6 out of 8 adopted this resolution.

⁶⁷⁴ *Guanyu YSG wenti de jueyi* (The Resolution on the YSG Problem), adopted by the Central Committee of the RCP, Feb 26th, 1978, single-paged.

⁶⁷⁵ *Dui jiantuan gongzuo, dangtuan guanxi wenti de yijian he taidu* (The Suggestions and Attitudes towards the Building of the Youth League and the Party-League Relation), Apr 17th, 1978, a draft proposal of the central committee submitted to the special congress of the RCP, 3-page document, pp. 1-3; and Peng Shuzhi (Ou Yun), *Zhi Zhang Kui tongzhi de xin* (A Letter to Comrade Zhang Kui from Peng Shuzhi), March 26th, 1978, single-paged. In the latter, Peng

As we have known, international Trotskyist groups affiliated to the FI consistently recognised “democratic centralism” as their fundamental organisational principle. Indeed, all the Chinese Trotskyist organisations (both “parties” and “youth leagues”) in Hong Kong accepted this principle. As we previously mentioned, concerning the principle of “democratic centralism”, Wang Fanxi tended to advocate the “democratic” part rather than the “centralism” part of “democratic centralism”. Compared to Wang’s “democratic” interpretation of “democratic centralism”, in the eyes of the YSG rebels and a minority within the RCP, the majority of the central committee of the RCP did not advocate the “democratic” part at all, but laid more stress on the “centralism” part of the principle in the party life. For them, the internal party life of the RCP contained some “unacceptable” non-democratic but authoritarian elements, which might detrimentally impact on the development of the Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong; and the factional struggle between the RCP majority and the YSG was a case that could reflect the “unhealthy” organisational life of the RCP.

Faced with the discipline “whip” imposed by the central committee of the RCP, a group of the YSG individuals who were also party members decided to fight back. Among them, Zhang Kui was one of the resolute “oppositionists” in the YSG “fighting” against the RCP’s “authoritarianism”. In one of her articles that intended to defend the YSG’s position towards its re-organisation,

Shuzhi accepted the internal unification between the YSG and the RCP. However, he considered that it must not be allowed to have any “independent kingdom” within the Chinese section of FI, and concerning the key political problems or events, the youth league (i.e. the YSG) must submit to the party (the RCP) and must not self-decide what is going to do next; furthermore, youth league’s contact with other political groups must be authorised by the party first. It seems to readers that from Peng’s point of view, the Trotskyist party should be the “parent” of its youth organisation, and the Trotskyist youth organisation must be politically affiliated to the party, i.e. a political adjunct of the party, which standpoint was firmly opposed by the YSG “militants” and a minority in the RCP leadership.

she condemned the party's imposition of its will on the YSG from above by using disciplinary sanctions as a simplistic "commandist" act against the YSG's re-organisation, and this overreaction from the party towards the inner organisational matter of the YSG reflected that the party leadership "mistakenly" adopted the principle of "democratic centralism" by imposing the party discipline on the young RCP members in the YSG while avoiding serious discussions with the YSG Trotskyists.⁶⁷⁶ Zhang Kui implicitly claimed that the young Trotskyists had no intention to form an anti-party tendency or a "third force" in the local Trotskyist movement, but that it would only create factional prejudice and bring more confusions in the movement to describe the YSG as a "third force".⁶⁷⁷ The majority of young Trotskyists in the YSG stood firmly with Zhang to express their dissent against the party "whip". For example, Ou Longyu⁶⁷⁸ bluntly pointed out that the majority of RCP's attitude towards the YSG was "utterly sectarian" (e.g. the majority condemned the YSG as a "potential party" organisation), and also questioning the RCP majority, "it seems that when the others become the revolutionaries, it is not an achievement, but a disaster in their eyes."⁶⁷⁹ More importantly, the YSG dissidents continued to emphasise that the organisational independence was essential to the building of the Trotskyist youth organisation and its youth work in the "masses". Ou considered that based on a common Trotskyist programme, a Trotskyist youth league (the YSG) must preserve its own

⁶⁷⁶ Zhang Kui, *Qingnian gongzuo luxian de zhenglun yu dangde minzhu jizhongzhi* (The Debates regarding the Line of the Youth Work and the Party's Democratic Centralism), no date, 8-page document, pp. 1-8.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁶⁷⁸ See Ou's brief biography in the section "Key organisations and figures".

⁶⁷⁹ Ou Longyu (Yue Zhi), *Dui gemaming changweihui de "dangtuan guanxi de jiben lichang" de piping yijian* (The Criticisms of the RML Standing Committee's "The Basic Standpoint on the Party-League Relation"), no date, 3-page document, p. 1.

organisational independence and self-determination outside of the Trotskyist party (the RCP), and that if the league was organisationally subordinated to the party, and carried on its youth work on a basis of the party's opinions, the league would eventually become simply a working unit of the party, not an autonomous league any more.⁶⁸⁰

The majority of the YSG's independent position obtained the support both inside and outside of the RCP. In January 1978, in a draft proposal on the "party-league" relation, the RML leadership clearly stated that the league should not be a party adjunct or branch, while it stressed that organisational independence was important to the league.⁶⁸¹ What is more, according to Ou, in a standing committee meeting of the YSG on April 21st, the RML representative accepted that it was not right that "the party should completely lead the league".⁶⁸² Within the RCP circle, a minority of party members were quite sympathetic to the YSG's point of view. They, therefore, wrote a range of internal discussion articles to argue that the majority of the party leadership should change its "authoritarian" stance towards the YSG and allow the YSG to express criticisms of the party "authoritarianism". They did not advocate the party's "manipulation" of the YSG, but commonly advocated organisational independence for the YSG.⁶⁸³ They either moderately suggested that the

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁶⁸¹ Gemameng changwei (The RML Standing Committee), *Dangtuan guanxi de jiben lichang [cao'an]* (The Basic Standpoint on the Party-League Relation [Draft]), Jan 18th, 1978, single-paged.

⁶⁸² Ou Longyu, *Dui gemaming changweihui de "dangtuan guanxi de jiben lichang" de piping yijian* (The Criticisms of the RML Standing Committee's "The Basic Standpoint on the Party-League Relation"), p. 2.

⁶⁸³ See, for example, Xiang Qing (Su Da), *Zhiwen zhongweihui* (Questioning the Central Committee), March 21st, 1978, two-page document, pp. 1-2; Bao Lian and Zhang Wen, *Lijie dangde wenji, jiejuo dangde weiji* (Understand the Party Crisis, Resolve the Party Crisis), no date, two-page article, pp. 1-2; Xiang Qing, *Liangzhong luxian de xuanze* (The Choice between Two Lines), no date, pp. 1-4.

party should not lead the YSG by imposing party discipline,⁶⁸⁴ or radically criticised the party as having violated the “principle of Marxism” because, in the YSG’s case, serious political discussion was replaced with “disciplinary sanction” by the majority of the leadership.⁶⁸⁵ In addition, in a “counter-proposal”, Xiang Qing and Li Huaiming seriously warned the majority of the RCP leadership that if the party did not give up attempting to “manipulate” the YSG by imposing party discipline, “the outsiders would regard that socialist democracy advocated by our party is fundamentally fictitious, and therefore, our party would thoroughly forfeit the morality against Stalinism and Maoism”.⁶⁸⁶

The factional struggle regarding the problem of the YSG divided the RCP into a majority faction that firmly objected to the YSG’s organisational independence and a minority faction that was sympathetic to the YSG’s standpoint. Nevertheless, this divide accelerated the unification progress of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong. According to Liu Pingmei, in order to discuss the majority-minority and the party-league issues, the RCP leadership on May 4th decided to convene a special congress later, and on July 25th, the minority members formally organised a faction within the RCP named the *Unity Faction* consisting of 11 party members.⁶⁸⁷ The Unity Faction soon drafted a proposal for a special congress named “Struggling for an Immediate Unification of Chinese Trotskyists”. In this draft proposal, the Unity Faction

⁶⁸⁴ Bao Lian and Zhang Wen, *Lijie dangde wenji, jiejie dangde weiji*, p. 1.

⁶⁸⁵ Xiang Qing, *Zhiwen zhongweihui*, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁸⁶ Xiang Qing and Li Huaiming (Ye Ning): *Dang he qingniantuan guanxi de yuanze: gegongdang tebie dahui jueyi dui’an* (The Principle of the Party-League Relation: A Counter-proposal to the [Draft] Resolution of the RCP’s Special Congress), March 15th, 1978, p. 1.

⁶⁸⁷ Liu Pingmei: *Zhongguo toupai dangshi* (The Party History of Chinese Trotskyism) Chapter 12, 2005, Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/liupingmei/2005book/marxist.org-chinese-LauPingMui-2005book-12.htm#4>.

members stated that because there was no obvious difference between the RCP and the RML on the basic programme and fundamental principles of Trotskyism,⁶⁸⁸ these two Trotskyist organisations should immediately announce unification.⁶⁸⁹

On September 10th, 1978, the special congress was convened. During this congress, a RCP majority voted down the Unity Faction's proposal, and firmly rejected unification with the RML. Likewise, the majority in the party insisted that the YSG must accept the party leadership while they adopted disciplinary sanctions against 8 party "oppositionists" in the YSG.⁶⁹⁰ The RCP majority's rejection of unification and its advocacy of the party control over the YSG in the special congress might demonstrate once again that the RCP, particularly the majority of its leadership, wanted to maintain its "unique orthodoxy" of Chinese Trotskyism in Hong Kong, and it still regarded the RML and the YSG as two internal "threats" to some degree, which would compete with the RCP in the movement. Meanwhile, the RCP's "authoritarian" decision angered the unity faction members and the young YSG Trotskyists. They condemned the majority in the RCP, the majority of the central committee in particular, for

⁶⁸⁸ We can see from the party constitution of the RML adopted in 1975 that the RML had confirmed that it was a Trotskyist organisation on a basis of the political programme of Trotskyism and of the organisational principle of "democratic centralism", while it recognised itself as a sympathiser and supporting organisation of the FI; moreover, the RML, in principle, was to oppose the Communist "bureaucratic dictatorship" and pursue the "proletarian democracy" in China, and to consistently advocate "proletarian internationalism"; in practice, its local Trotskyist activities in Hong Kong would be conducted by a basic political line of anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist and socialist revolution. In terms of adhering to the Trotskyist political and organisational principles [though they might understand and interpret those principles in different ways], especially from an observer's point of view, indeed, there was no clear difference between the RCP and the RML. See *Meiri zhanxun zuzhi zhangze* (The Organisational Constitution of the *Daily Combat Bulletin* [the RML]), Apr 15th, 1975, 7-page document, no page number.

⁶⁸⁹ *Zhengqu liji shixian Zhongguo tuopai de tongyi* (Struggling for an Immediate Unification of Chinese Trotskyists), a draft proposal submitted by the unity faction to the special congress of the RCP), no date, two-page document, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁰ *Weishenme women yaoyu gemameng tongyi* (Why We Want a Unification with the RML), adopted by the unity faction, Sep 14th, 1978, single-paged, p. 1.

“trampling” upon internal democracy and adopting an “extremely sectarian” attitude towards the unity faction, the YSG and the RML. Thus, they would launch an “irreconcilable” struggle against the RCP’s “sectarianism”.⁶⁹¹ On September 14th, the unity faction decided to dissolve its own faction and immediately integrate with the RML.⁶⁹²

Subsequently, on September 16th and 17th 1978, the scheduled 5th congress of the RML became a unification conference. Eventually, the conference participants consented and announced that an organisational unification of four Chinese Trotskyist groups, the RML, the Unity Faction of the RCP, the remnant of the IWP, and the *Re-awaken* group (i.e. a small Chinese Trotskyist youth organisation established in Britain led by Cen Jianxun),⁶⁹³ was completed, and the name of the new unified organisation was to continue to be called the Revolutionary Marxist League (the YSG, meanwhile, unified with the youth league of the RML, also named the Young Socialist Group), while a new provisional leadership body was elected and the new RML asked for the FI leadership to recognise this unified Trotskyist organisation as the new Chinese section of the FI.⁶⁹⁴ From then on, though a complete fusion between the RCP and the RML failed to take place, a large part of the dispersed overseas Chinese Trotskyist groups had been unified, and a new integrated Trotskyist group in Hong Kong had emerged.

Above all, we have seen that this Trotskyist unification was triggered by and accelerated through factional struggle within the RCP. Nevertheless, factional

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

⁶⁹³ The establishment of the Re-awaken group in *Neibu tongxun* (Internal Communication Bulletin), published by the RML, Sep 9th, pp. 15-17.

⁶⁹⁴ Please refer to the internal minutes of the unification conference, *Neibu ziliao* (Internal Material), published by the RML, Oct 30th, 1978, pp. 1-7.

struggle within the Trotskyist circle for the most part prevented the political development of the Trotskyist activities rather than stimulating it. Moreover, it was also time-consuming for particular political groups or parties to get involved in the factional struggle. Shortly after the unification, another “endless” factional dispute within the RML concerning organisational matters started, which triggered a new split in 1980.

Chapter 7: The Internal Matters of Trotskyism in Hong Kong II: The Organisational Split of the RML

The internal context of the split

In autumn, 1980, an organisational matter triggered another “endless” dispute between the standing committee of the RML and a small group of the YSG activists, which later resulted in an irreversible split in the integrated Hong Kong Trotskyist party. Before and after this split, by adopting a discourse of “correctness”, the RML leadership and the “oppositionists” from the YSG each condemned the other as “non-revolutionists” who either “mistakenly” understood the “fundamental principle of Marxism” or “violated” the Marxist rules, while each regarded themselves as “Trotskyists/revolutionists” with the “correct line”. We need to inquire as to why such a split took place after only two-year’s unification. After all, there must have been some internal causes which led to the occurrence of the split.

After the unification congress convened in September 1978, according to Ou Longyu, there were 60-70 members and activists in the newly-fused RML (including the league members from the YSG), which was equivalent to a small but functional political party in Hong Kong at the present time.⁶⁹⁵ It

⁶⁹⁵ *Ou Longyu Interview*, Aug 18th, 2014. And according to another RML activist Liu Shanqing’s recollection, during a period of time after the unification, there were only over 40 party members in the RML. Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de zhengcheng* (Journey without Regret) (Hong Kong: Mingpao Press, 1992), p. 69. Additionally, in a private letter from Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli to Wang Fanxi, the two former YSG leaders accurately calculated that after the unification congress was ended, the newly-unified RML had 43 party members in total. “A Letter from Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli to Wang Fanxi, Jan 4th, 1981”, in Chinese, p. 2, *Wang Fanxi Archive*, MS 1709, 27.

seems that a well-organised political party/group should make some political progress through its political activities, but since the unification, the RML had never been in a well-organised form for its political struggle. Regarding the differences on the movement strategy, working tactics and organisational issues of the Trotskyist practice, the unified Trotskyist RML immediately fell into various “endless” debates between 1978 and 1980.

Shortly after the organisational merger, Lou Guohua and others proposed that the RML should stage a political rally at the end of 1978 concerning the rehabilitation of the April 5th, 1976 Tian’anmen Incident by the CCP in November and the new rise of the democratic movement in mainland China. They made this proposal in order to continue to claim the Trotskyist pursuit of “socialist democracy”. However, the motion was vetoed (in a party meeting, 12 members vetoed, and 11 members supported this motion), because a tiny majority of the RML members did not consider that this was an appropriate timing to launch a pro-democracy rally in Hong Kong.⁶⁹⁶ Subsequently, Lou and another 17 RML members wrote an open letter to the standing committee, in which they again demanded the RML to hold a rally at Victoria Park concerning the progress of “socialist democracy” on the mainland, while they criticised the standing committee for not paying enough attention to the

⁶⁹⁶ “Dafu Ye Ning tongzhi de di’er feng xin” (The Second Reply [from Lou Guohua] to Li Huaiming [Ye Ning]), Feb 19th, 1979; “Zhi changweihui de fuxin” (A Reply to the Standing Committee [a letter from Lou Guohua and other 17 RML members]), no date, in Luo Guohua (Gu He) (ed.), *Guanyu zuzhi yuanze de yijian he shili* (The Suggestions and Examples Regarding Organisational Principles) (Hong Kong: 1979), a pamphlet, pp. 12-13.

importance of the Tian'anmen rehabilitation and lacking the confidence to call for a pro-democracy solidarity rally.⁶⁹⁷

In the meantime, Lou, in a RML group discussion meeting, asked for the standing committee to allow the 18 members who jointly drafted the open letter to convene a meeting, including him.⁶⁹⁸ The standing committee did not understand what Lou's purpose was for convening such a meeting, and turned down his request (although the standing committee did not state that the "eighteen" had violated any organisational discipline). It thought the disagreement surrounding the rally issue was not a fundamental issue but only a tactical difference.⁶⁹⁹ On the contrary, in a reply to Li Huaiming, a member of the standing committee, Lou condemned the standing committee's prohibition of the meeting as an "abuse" of organisational power, and accused the standing committee of violating internal democracy by adopting a party "whip".⁷⁰⁰ This dispute between Lou and the standing committee had no concrete resolution. Nevertheless, it sowed the seeds of discontent towards the RML leadership among a group of the RML party members.

⁶⁹⁷ "Shibaren zhi changweihui de xin" (A Joint Letter from 18 RML members to the RML Standing Committee), no date, in Luo Guohua (Gu He) (ed.), *Guanyu zuzhi yuanze de yijian he shili*, pp. 9-10; Xiang Qing also suggested that the RML could stage a legal rally regarding the issue of the democratisation in China at Victoria Park in January 1979. Xiang Qing (Su Da), "Yixiang qunzhong gongzuo jianyi" (A Suggestion on Mass Work), in *Neibu taolun* (Internal Discussion Bulletin), Jan 1979, published by the RML, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁸ Li Huaiming, "Zhi Gu He (Lou Guohua) de xin" (A Letter to Comrade Lou Guohua), Jan 10th, 1979. According to Lou, the "eighteen" had no intention of organising an opposition faction within the RML. Lou Guohua, "Dafu changweihui de xin" (A Reply to the Standing Committee), Jan 13th, 1979, both in *Neibu taolun*, Jan 1979, pp. 8-10.

⁶⁹⁹ Li Huaiming, "Zhi Gu He (Lou Guohua) de xin" (A Letter to Comrade Lou Guohua), Jan 10th, 1979 in *ibid*, pp 8-9; and "Zhi changweihui de fuxin" (A Reply to the Standing Committee [a letter from Lou Guohua and other 17 RML members]), no date, in Luo Guohua (Gu He) (ed.), *Guanyu zuzhi yuanze de yijian he shili*, p. 13.

⁷⁰⁰ Lou Guohua, Dafu Ye Ning tongzhi de di'er feng xin (The Second Reply [from Lou Guohua] to Li Huaiming [Ye Ning]), Feb 19th, 1979, in *ibid*, p. 12.

After the late 1978 Trotskyist unification, in 1979, a strengthened RML expected to develop its activities in labour struggle as well as in various social campaigns in order to achieve its goal of undertaking a leading role in various local socio-political movements. However, its attempts at socio-political activities were not successful, which left the Trotskyists' morale quite low. According to a report to the FI on the RML split in 1980 from the former YSG activists who withdrew from the RML, they pointed out that, at that moment, the RML invested a large part of its organisational force in assisting the local residents of the slums in opposing government's forced eviction and in demanding the land resettlement from the colonial authorities, but their involvement "never obtained any effect".⁷⁰¹

For example, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the Yaumatei boat people's protest at the very beginning of 1979 organised by local boat people and a group of social movement activists was one of the influential resettlement campaigns. The RML also partly involved itself in this campaign to support the boat people's demand for resettlement by staging street protests. But as the report submitted by the former YSG Trotskyists noted, "[t]he campaign fruitlessly ended as usual",⁷⁰² and two Trotskyist radicals were taken away by the police during the protest on February 12th, 1979.⁷⁰³ Moreover, on April 22nd, 1979, when the Trotskyists prepared to launch a rally for commemorating the third anniversary of the Tian'anmen Incident and for supporting the mainland pro-democracy activists' demand for democratic reforms under the Communist

⁷⁰¹ "Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG", from the Preparatory Committee for a Trotskyist organisation (Hong Kong) to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, March 15th, 1982, p. 15, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*

⁷⁰³ *SCMP*, Feb 13th, 1979, p. 8.

regime, seven protesters from the RML and the YSG were arrested by the Hong Kong police. Then, on June 5th, four of the seven Trotskyist arrestees were convicted of “unlawful assembly” by the colonial authority and were sentenced to between one and three months’ imprisonment.⁷⁰⁴ This suppression of the Hong Kong Trotskyists by the colonial government consequently brought more discontent from the RML followers towards the current Trotskyist leadership, and to some degree broke local young radicals’ confidence in continuing their activities in Trotskyism.

Some former RML members later recalled that this conviction was the harshest punishment that the Trotskyists had received from the colonial state since the re-emergence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong in the 1970s, and “[i]t was a big blow to the RML members’ mood and a phenomenon of passivity and disorientation appeared”.⁷⁰⁵ Indeed, later, a number of the young disappointed Trotskyists from the RML strongly sensed that the RML lacked any working ability to mobilise local workers or any other groups of the “oppressed” in socio-political practice. They soon withdrew from or disengaged in RML activities. For instance, in 1979, a few key RML members, such as Cen Jianxun and Wang Guhua, became inactive and

⁷⁰⁴ With regard to the convictions of the RML Trotskyists, the RML published an open statement in support of its convicted members as well as in opposition to the British colonial government on July 4th, 1979, “Jiu feifajihui er panjian shijian de shengming” (The Statement on the Imprisonments of Trotskyists Charging with “Unlawful Assembly”), published by the RML, in *Hsin Szu Ch’ao* (Xin Si Chao, i.e. New Current Monthly), Jul 20th, 1979, Appendix.

⁷⁰⁵ “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, from the Preparatory Committee for a Trotskyist organisation (Hong Kong) to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, March 15th, 1982, p. 15, *MS 1709*, 27.

disconnected with the movement, as they perceived the RML as organisationally “abnormal” or politically “impotent”.⁷⁰⁶

Why did this view of “the RML’s impotency” come into their minds? Aside from the external suppression by the colonial government, several major points led to the disorientation of a number of the RML activists. These can be summarised as the following: firstly, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, protest actions or street campaigning was the most important activity of the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement. Various Trotskyist activities organised by the younger generation of the radicals since the new emergence of Trotskyism in Hong Kong had aroused enough attention from their political “enemies” and the public. As a labour/action-oriented group, the RML had put great efforts into intervening in local workers’ struggle and in any other forms of social action. However, due to the limited resources the RML possessed, such as lack of financial support,⁷⁰⁷ the Trotskyist party was unable to enlarge its influence on its target groups of the “oppressed”, especially on local workers.

The slow progress of the Trotskyist intervention in local labour activities gradually led to frustration among a part of the RML activists. What is more, the RML sometimes exaggerated the scale of the activities it organised. For example, in May 1977, more than a year before the organisational fusion, the

⁷⁰⁶ Wang Guhua, “Zhi RML ge tongzhi shu” (An Open Letter to the RML Comrades), Nov 15th, 1979, in *Neibu taolun* (Internal Discussion Bulletin), Feb 1980, p. 1; and *Cen Jianxun Interview*, Jun 16th, 2014.

⁷⁰⁷ In the minutes of the unification congress, the new RML not only demanded the party members to pay membership dues, but also demanded them to claim a “deficit donation” and other sorts of donations to the party, such as financial contribution to the party press, which revealed that there was a financial and deficit problem in the Hong Kong Trotskyist organisation. “Tuopai tongyi dahui huiyi jilu” (The Minute of the Unification Congress), Sep 16th to 17th, 1978, in *Neibu ziliao* (Internal Material), Oct 30th, 1978, p. 4, published by the RML.

RML Trotskyists launched a small May Day protest in Hong Kong. Subsequently, the RML overstated the figure of the demonstrators and published the news in a FI weekly magazine, *Intercontinental Press*. The RML claimed that there were 1,000 participants in the May Day march that it had organised, but according to former YSG members' recollection, there were only a few demonstrators in this protest. These exaggerated claims were soon ridiculed by local pro-China leftists.⁷⁰⁸ Later on, in the report to the FI on the organisational split, the Trotskyist writers formerly from the YSG criticised the RML's exaggeration of the size of the movement, which revealed a long-time dissatisfaction from a small group of the YSG Trotskyists towards its party [i.e. the RML]'s "impractical agitational work".⁷⁰⁹

Secondly, a few Trotskyist activists continued to complain that the RML's propaganda work was not at an efficient level. As we have known, since the Trotskyist movement emerged in China in the late 1920s, propaganda work, the publishing activities in particular, had become a movement tradition and one of the core tasks for Chinese Trotskyists. Nevertheless, it seemed that both the RML and the YSG failed to manage this well, which meant that neither organisation could regularly publish their monthly periodicals.

According to internal documents, only seven issues of the party organ of the RML, *Combat Bulletin Monthly*, were published within 15 months after the unification (from mid-September, 1978 to late December, 1979, averaging one issue every two months), while the YSG produced eight issues of its youth league publication, *New Current Monthly*, from mid-September, 1978 to

⁷⁰⁸ See such an exaggeration of *May Day* demonstration in 1977 in "Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG", p. 14, *MS 1709*, 27. *Rive Gauche* (i.e. *Xin Si Chao Monthly*), Jul 25th, 1977, p. 2; *Intercontinental Press*, May 16th, 1977, p. 532.

⁷⁰⁹ "Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG", p. 15.

mid-November, 1979 (averaging two months per issue).⁷¹⁰ Regarding the irregular propaganda work towards the public, in the summer of 1979, Xiang Qing advised that the RML and the YSG should work on a joint monthly for publicity.⁷¹¹ However, the negotiations between the party (the RML) and the league (the YSG) on the issue of joint publication did not go smoothly. According to recollections from former YSG members, the YSG in general worried that the content of the joint monthly might become “identical” to that of the party organ, i.e. the *Combat Bulletin Monthly*, whereas the RML leadership might recognise that the YSG did not intend to collaborate with the party side to work on it.⁷¹² Consequently, this led to disharmony between the two leadership bodies.

Thirdly, based on the common memory of veteran Trotskyists and internal movement documents, we can also see that the party life of the RML was not in a well-organised form. A small number of Hong Kong Trotskyist veterans or sympathisers recalled that when they were engaged in RML activities, they originally envisaged that the RML should be a cohesive “revolutionary” group with “iron discipline”, but in reality the party was always in a disorganised and

⁷¹⁰ Xiang Qing (Su Da), *Guanyu dang he tuan de qikan hebing de yijian* (A Suggestion on Joint Publication between the Party and the League), Jul 27th, 1979, single-paged; Ou Longyu (Yue Zhi), “Jiantuan gongzuo de jiantao” (A Review on the Youth League Building), Nov 13th, 1979, in *Neibu taolun wenji* (Internal Discussion Document), No. 2, published by the YSG; Xiang Qing, “Cong yifen chuandan tando gongzuo luxian” (On the Problem of Organisational Working Line, from Mentioning a Leaflet), Dec 22nd, 1979, in *Neibu taolun*, Feb 1980, p. 2; Ma Jiakai, “Zai tan dazi gongzuo” (My Second Remark on Typewriting Work), Feb 28th, 1980, in *Neibu taolun*, March 1980, p. 1. These internal documents can all confirm that the RML and its youth league organisation YSG between 1978 and 1979 could not regularly publish their monthlies on time.

⁷¹¹ Xiang Qing (Su Da), *Guanyu dang he tuan de qikan hebing de yijian* (A Suggestion on Joint Publication between the Party and the League), Jul 27th, 1979, single-paged.

⁷¹² “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, p. 16.

disarrayed condition.⁷¹³ As Cen Jianxun recollected, he, as a party member, should have been well-informed by the RML to participate in the organisational life; yet, this did not happen.⁷¹⁴ Additionally, Xiang Qing once pointed out that the party life within the RML was “unhealthy”.⁷¹⁵ A particular young Trotskyist remaining in the RML after the 1980 split re-confirmed the “abnormality” of the party life from an aspect of internal discussion when she re-examined the course of the split: attributing this to lack of “enough discussions” surrounding the working strategy of RML practice in Hong Kong. There was no certain political resolution on this issue adopted by the RML within the two years’ unification period.⁷¹⁶ In other words, from her perspective, the RML had no specific programme for conducting its political activities. For another example, in the 1978 unification congress, a majority of the RML members agreed that a convention for all members (i.e. the first party congress since the unification) would be held within 3 or 4 months after the unification congress ended, in order to specifically discuss the political and organisational issues concerning the working line in Hong Kong, the political changes on the mainland, the youth league building, the party-league relation, and the election for new leadership, as well as to draft detailed new political resolutions on these affairs.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹³ *Ou Longyu Interview*, Aug 18th, 2014, and *Liang Yaozhong Interview*, Jun 13th, 2014.

⁷¹⁴ *Cen Jianxun Interview*, Jun 16th, 2014.

⁷¹⁵ Xiang Qing, “Cong yifen chuandan tandao gongzuo luxian”, Dec 22nd, 1979, in *Neibu taolun*, Feb 1980, p. 2

⁷¹⁶ Mo Qi, “A Personal Record of the 1980 Organisational Split” (in Chinese, the title of Mo Qi’s document is given by Yang), Feb 1982, p. 2, found in *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷¹⁷ “Tuopai tongyi dahui huiyi jilu” (The Minute of the Unification Congress), Sep 16th to 17th, 1978, in *Neibu ziliao* (Internal Material), Oct 30th, 1978, p. 3.

However, this “anticipated” convention concerning the local struggle strategy and the party-building was postponed again and again.⁷¹⁸ Eventually, only a convention surrounding the discussions on the upcoming 11th FI world congress was convened in October.⁷¹⁹ From these two cases above, it can strongly be perceived that the lack of internal discussion and of a specific programme regarding the local working line itself reflected that the organisational structure of the RML was in disarray. This disarrayed condition led to greater discontent from a small group of the “revolutionists” within the RML and made them disillusioned and disoriented to a larger degree. On November 15th, 1979, a party member, Wang Guhua wrote an open letter to the RML to inform the party of his confusion, in which he claimed that he could not tolerate the “impotency” of the RML any longer, and thus had decided to disengage from the party life.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ The first party congress of the RML since the unification did not take place as scheduled within 3 or 4 months after the unification. The standing committee in May 1979 decided to convene the first party congress in September 1979. However, in a standing committee meeting in July, the RML leadership decided to divide this congress into two parts: the earlier one called in September would be to discuss the draft resolutions of the 11th FI world congress, the later one called in October would be to have a detailed discussion regarding the China and Hong Kong problems. Nevertheless, the first part of congress was postponed again to October, and according to the ex-YSG members’ report on the split, the second part of congress was never convened before the split. *Changweihui guanyu zhaokai tongyi hou diyici dahui zhi tonggao* (The Standing Committee’s Announcement Regarding the Opening of First Party Congress since the Unification), Jul 19th, 1979, single-paged; “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, p. 14.

⁷¹⁹ See more detail about the first part of party congress in 1979 in “Gemameng shijiedahui huiqian tebie dahui huiyi jilu” (The Minute of the Special Convention of the RML Concerning the Issues of the Forthcoming 11th World Congress), Oct 14th, 21st, in *Guoji neibu ziliao* (International Internal Material), Dec 1979, pp. 13-15, published by the RML.

⁷²⁰ In the same letter, Wang also claimed that he wanted to retain his RML membership (he did not intend to retain a “unified” RML membership he had obtained after the unification, but wanted to retain the previous RML membership he obtained prior to the unification) and the member rights that were entitled to him. Wang Guhua, “Zhi RML ge tongzhi shu” (An Open Letter to the RML Comrades), Nov 15th, 1979, in *Neibu taolun* (Internal Discussion Bulletin), Feb 1980, p. 1.

From late 1979, the Trotskyists within the RML engaged in another internal dispute regarding whether or not the international resolutions adopted by the FI world congress should be immediately implemented in Hong Kong. This dispute in 1980 divided the RML group into two main “camps”, and also became a major cause that triggered the split.

In November 1979, the 11th world congress of the FI was convened in Belgium. Based on the central focus on industrial working class people from a Marxist tradition, a SWP (US) leader, Jack Barnes, tabled a draft resolution to urge a large majority of international Trotskyists to infiltrate industrial unions by doing factory or union work and to be a “vanguard of the working class”, this in order to evolve “a class-struggle left wing in the labour movement”, i.e. building a strong Trotskyist force in the global workers’ struggle.⁷²¹ This well-known “Turn to Industry” resolution was passed by a majority of the Trotskyist delegates and adopted as a fundamental policy in the 11th congress. Shortly after the congress, how to make a “Turn to Industry” became a focal point of the different national branches of the FI. As a newly-recognised Chinese section of the FI,⁷²² without exception, a majority in the RML, especially in the leadership, had the strong intention of following the FI’s working line on “the turn”, and prepared to discuss how to make an industrial “turn” locally, aiming at absorbing workers into the RML and growing a Trotskyist force in Hong

⁷²¹ Jack Barnes, “The Turn to Industry and the Task of the Fourth International”, in *1979 World Congress of the Fourth International, Major Resolutions and Reports*, Jan 1980, published by *Intercontinental Press* combined with *Inprecor*, pp. 43-50.

⁷²² In a draft party constitution of the RML submitted to the FI, the RML reaffirmed that it had been recognised as a Chinese branch of the FI. “Geming makesi zhuyizhe tongmeng zhangcheng (cao’an)” (The Party Constitution of the RML [A Draft]), in *Neibu taolun*, March 1980, p. 11.

Kong industry.⁷²³ However, there were also some oppositional voices within the party. Before and after the unification, there always existed an over-confident attitude within the RML towards the development of the Trotskyist movement. In a draft resolution submitted by the standing committee (the one prior to the unification) to the 5th party convention (which suddenly became the unification congress) on the current Hong Kong situation in 1978, the leadership over-confidently considered that the old structure of local capitalist mode of production was deeply “in crisis”, that is to say, Hong Kong’s export-oriented light industry tended to be severely in decline. The standing committee over-estimated the strength of local Trotskyists, and thus thought that the Trotskyist force was the only “revolutionary” tendency/group that was politically able to compete with pro-PRC leftists and “reformist” groups, i.e. local reform- and action-oriented social pressure organisations in the “mass movement”.⁷²⁴

The old RML way of over-confidence and over-estimation of changeable political dynamics was brought into the “new phase” of Hong Kong Trotskyist movement after the unification, and this continued into the dispute regarding the execution of the industrial “turn”. For example, in an article that urged the RML members to respond to the FI’s call of making an industrial “turn”, i.e. participating in factory work and being industrial workers, written by a

⁷²³ Some former activists of the RML once pointed out that when the party discussion concerning whether or not making an “industrial turn” in Hong Kong went on within the RML, most of the RML members who claimed themselves as “working class vanguards” were not even industrial workers. For example, see Ma Jiakai, *Renzhen zongjie gemameng de jiaoxun* (Learning a Lesson from the Past of the RML), no date, single-paged.

⁷²⁴ “Muqian de xingshi yu women de renwu” (The Current Situation in Hong Kong and Our Task), Aug 31st, 1978, in *Neibu tongxun* (Internal Communication Bulletin), Sep 1st, 1978, published by the RML, pp. 1-10.

standing committee member, Li Huaiming, it was revealed that some RML leaders such as Li remained overconfident and underestimated the vitality of Hong Kong capitalism. In Li's analysis, he reckoned that the local capitalist economy would soon be in a period of decline. Hence, the capitalists would try to displace the economic crisis to the local "working class". This would mean that the "ruling class" would "systematically" attack the "working class" and lower the living standard of workers. However, from his perspective, the "attacks" from the capitalists would also offer Hong Kong Trotskyists an opportunity to enable the workers to be radicalised.⁷²⁵

On the contrary, a small number of Li's comrades in the party regarded Li and other leaders' over-confidence as an "old error" they took from the RML prior to the unification, that is to say, they perceived that a part of the RML leadership largely underestimated its capitalist "enemies", whilst exaggerating its own political strength in Hong Kong politics. In an article in early 1980 that responded to Li's confident call of turning to industry, Ou Longyu, one of the key leaders of the YSG, doubted that the FI's "Turn to Industry" policy should immediately be adopted in Hong Kong.

Ou highly criticised Li's analysis of the current situation of Hong Kong capitalism as ignoring the local speciality of capitalist development and overstating the "attacks" on local workers from the "ruling class". Conversely, "the incarnation of the capitalist class", i.e. the colonial government, was currently implementing "winning the hearts and minds" policies, i.e. introducing social welfare reforms on the one hand, improving the

⁷²⁵ Li Huaiming, *Dao chanye gongren zhong qu!* (Joining the Rank of Industrial Workers!), no date [quoted from Ou Longyu, *Dui quanmian zhuanxiang chanye de yijian de chubu piping* (The Preliminary Critique of the "Complete Industrial Turn"), manuscript, no date, pp. 1-2].

government's public images on the other, in order to sustain its power in Hong Kong.⁷²⁶ In other words, from Ou's point of view, Li and his allies in the RML underestimated the vitality of local capitalist development and of colonial power while they magnified the rise of Trotskyist movement and of labour struggle; thus, it was not an appropriate time to take the FI's industrial "turn" in Hong Kong, and the execution of the "turn" should be delayed in the RML's Hong Kong practice. Later, in a standing committee meeting called on May 19th, 1980, a majority of the standing committee members demonstrated their individual decisions to "embrace" the "turn", and voluntarily "picked up" industrial occupations in different factories and industrial enterprises from their personal preferences, such as mechanical, metal, electronic industries and other enterprises.⁷²⁷ Nevertheless, there remained oppositional voices from Ou and a few others within the RML. They insisted that the FI's policy of a "turn" did not correspond to the realities of the current situation in Hong Kong.⁷²⁸

Moreover, concerning the FI's draft document on "socialist democracy", there were also two major different arguments in the RML. From a Trotskyist position, a majority of the FI leadership considered that the multi-party system was not only uniquely applicable to Western capitalist countries with "bourgeois democracy", but a version of a multi- "socialist party" system would suit socialist societies, i.e. "workers' states under proletarian dictatorship". In a draft "Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the

⁷²⁶ Ou Longyu, *Dui quanmian zhuanxiang chanye de yijian de chubu piping* (The Preliminary Critique of the "Complete Industrial Turn"), manuscript, no date, pp. 1-12.

⁷²⁷ *A Personal Letter from Ou Longyu to Xiang Qing*, May 22nd, 1980, single-paged, in Chinese.

⁷²⁸ This oppositional view can be reflected in "Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG", p. 17.

Proletariat” submitted to the 11th FI world congress, the FI leadership proposed that international Trotskyists should strongly be in favour of a principle supporting a multi-“proletarian party” system in Communist countries. The draft stressed that “no genuine workers democracy is possible without freedom to form a multiple party system”.⁷²⁹ It seemed that this proposal might indicate that a majority of the FI leadership intended to address the importance of democratic freedoms, and of institution of democracy accordance with the Trotskyist conception. And in the 11th congress 1979, this draft resolution was passed by a majority of FI’s national sections.

However, a relatively small number of the FI’s national branches, such as the *Australian Socialist Workers’ Party*, rejected this resolution, because some of them believed that the FI leadership exaggerated the idea that any restriction of democratic freedoms under the “proletarian dictatorship” would “inevitably” cause the “Stalinisation” of “workers’ states” and of their ruling political parties within. Rather they considered that this draft proposal, in its advocacy of the multi-party system, merely catered to the “petit-bourgeois leftist circle” in the West, which advanced a “liberal” (i.e. bourgeois) concept of “socialist democracy” amongst international Trotskyists.⁷³⁰

Before the 11th world congress was convened, the RML leadership had called a special convention in October 1979 to discuss the draft resolutions of the FI.

⁷²⁹ See “Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, in *1979 World Congress of the Fourth International, Major Resolutions and Reports*, Jan 1980, published by *Intercontinental Press* combined with *Inprecor*, p. 214.

⁷³⁰ Doug L, “Dui tongyi shujichu `shehuizhuyi minzhu he wuchanjieji zhuanzheng’ cao’an de piping” (The Criticism of the United Secretariat’s Draft Resolution -- “Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, Chinese Translation), in *Guoji neibu ziliao* (International Internal Material), Dec 1979, pp. 6-13.

A majority at this Hong Kong convention refused to endorse the particular FI resolution on “socialist democracy”. Only a small minority stood with the FI leadership to support the principle of the multi-party system as a foundation of “socialist democracy”.⁷³¹ Why was a majority within the RML in opposition to the FI’s resolution on “socialist democracy”? For some prominent Chinese Trotskyists such as Wang Fanxi, who were ardent advocates of democratic freedoms, multi-party system, and tolerance of political opposition for the sake of “proletarian dictatorship”,⁷³² the RML’s rejection of the FI’s resolution was not understandable.⁷³³ And according to the collected meeting records, there was no word to explain the reason of the rejection.⁷³⁴ Nevertheless, concerning the issues that would be discussed at the 11th FI world congress, a political report on the criticism of the FI’s draft resolution on “socialist democracy” (see the above criticism) that had been passed by the leadership of the Australian section of the FI, the *Socialist Workers’ Party*, was reproduced in an internal document, which indicated the majority of the RML members agreed with this criticism of the FI’s draft document regarding the

⁷³¹ “Gemameng shijiedahui huiqian tiebie dahui huiyi jilu” (The Minute of the Special Convention of the RML Concerning the Issues of the Forthcoming 11th World Congress), Oct 14th, in *ibid*, p. 14.

⁷³² Wang Fanxi, “Seven Theses on Socialism and Democracy”, in Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter, *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire: China’s Movement for Democracy, Yan’an to Tian’anmen, 1942-1989*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 102.

⁷³³ For example, see: “Lian Gen (Wang Fanxi) zhi Yue Zhi (Ou Longyu), Bu Xue (Yu Chunli) xin” (A Letter from Wang Fanxi to Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli), Jan 26th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷³⁴ Ou Longyu suggested the RML should draft a counter-proposal to explain the rejection, but his motion was vetoed during the special convention in October 1979. “Gemameng shijiedahui huiqian tiebie dahui huiyi jilu” (The Minute of the Special Convention of the RML Concerning the Issues of the Forthcoming 11th World Congress), Oct 14th, in *Guoji neibu ziliao* (International Internal Material), Dec 1979, p. 14.

problem of “socialist democracy” from their Australian comrades to some extent.⁷³⁵

A small minority in the RML thought the majority’s opposition against the FI’s “socialist democracy” resolution was “mistaken”. In their report on the causes of the split drafted by the ex-YSG members, they criticised that the RML majority’s rejection of the “socialist democracy” resolution “corresponded to the RML method of overemphasis on the centralism of leadership and ignoring [internal] democracy”; and they worried that Hong Kong Trotskyists, without a clarifying their support for the multi-party system and democratic freedoms under Communist rule, would be no better than pro-PRC leftists in the eyes of the Hong Kong people.⁷³⁶ Moreover, in a letter to Wang Fanxi from Ou and his comrade, Yu Chunli, in January 1981, the former YSG leaders privately complained that this majority rejection “disarmed our ideological weapon for the struggle against the Maoists”.⁷³⁷ In short, arguments on whether or not adopting the FI’s resolutions in Hong Kong Trotskyist practice concerning “industrial turn”, “socialist democracy”, and other political issues⁷³⁸ continued to politically divide the RML and to demoralise Trotskyist individuals.

What is more, a short period of political liberalisation occurred in mainland China in late 1978 and 1979 in which intellectuals, students and ordinary

⁷³⁵ Please refer to Doug L, “Dui tongyi shujichu ‘shehuizhuyi minzhu he wuchanjieji zhuanzheng’ cao’an de piping” (The Criticism of the United Secretariat’s Draft Resolution -- “Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, Chinese Translation), in *ibid*, pp. 6-13.

⁷³⁶ “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, p. 17.

⁷³⁷ “A Letter from Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli to Wang Fanxi”, Jan 4th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷³⁸ It can be also referred to Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de zhengcheng* (Journey without Regret), pp. 70-71.

citizens were positively encouraged to express their criticisms of the Communist government's previous "errors" after the establishment of the PRC. Thus, by taking this opportunity, thousands of mainland activists engaged in a Chinese Democracy Movement (CDM), and began to discuss the political future of Communist China and to demand democratic reforms for the PRC.⁷³⁹

In the second half of 1979, regarding the rise of CDM in 1978-79, the RML, as a Chinese Trotskyist group that consistently claimed its anti-CCP "bureaucracy" and pro-"socialist democracy" position,⁷⁴⁰ started to put more focus on Chinese democratic change and established a secret "China group" to engage with the CDM and to communicate with CDM activists on the mainland. According to Liu Shanqing, a key liaison man connecting the Hong

⁷³⁹ See a range of original documents, poems, and analyses of the CDM, 1978-1981 in Gregor Benton, *Wily Lily, Prairie Fire, China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942-1989* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 157-263. David S.G. Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices: The Poetry and Politics of China's Democracy Movement* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981).

⁷⁴⁰ As we have seen in Chapter 4, since the April 5th Incident took place in Beijing's Tian'anmen Square in 1976, at the level of practice, the RML, other small Trotskyist groups and New Left groups had staged a series of pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong to voice their solidarity with the mainland protestors who were suppressed during the April 5th demonstration, whilst expressing their pursuit of "socialist democracy". In the very early 1979, shortly after the rehabilitation of the April 5th Incident, the RML drafted a public statement to reiterate its pro-democracy position, in which the RML Trotskyists, on the one hand, called for a struggle for "socialist democracy" and a protection of democratic rights in the Communist regime; on the other hand, they demanded to collaborate with pro-socialist "mass" organisations and individuals in Hong Kong to form an "association for promotion of Chinese socialist democracy". *Zhengqu sigexiandaihua! Zhengqu shehuizhuyi minzhu!* (Struggling for Four Modernisation! Struggling for Socialist Democracy!), by the RML, Jan 11th, 1979, single-paged. Why had Chinese Trotskyists been keen on supporting the Chinese Democracy Movement? Wang Fanxi might have a word: "if the democratic movement successfully defend itself, then we would see a real possibility of a political revolution in China." That is to say, from some particular Chinese Trotskyists' perspective, a political struggle for pursuing "socialist democracy" in mainland China could be a way of fulfilling Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution, which might lead Communist China to a "genuine democratic regime without distortion". Wang Fanxi and Hobo, "Resolution to the USFI on Hong Kong", 1980, p. 3, *MS 1709*, 11.

Kong Trotskyists and the mainland CDM activists and a leading organiser of the RML's engagement in the CDM, the emergence of the CDM and the RML's involvement of the CDM boosted the confidence and vitality of this Trotskyist organisation.⁷⁴¹

After the Cultural Revolution ended, the political climate became relatively liberal on the mainland compared with that in the Mao era, so that Hong Kong Chinese could more easily return to the "motherland" for visits. By taking the advantage of "free travel", the RML could partly involve itself in the CDM as a small supporting force by putting into operation the "China group" activities, i.e. directly sending Trotskyists back to the mainland to contact CDM activists in person. The core work of the RML in this regard was to bridge this connection and establish a pro-"socialist democracy" network between itself and ardent CDM supporters on the mainland. Hence, the RML Trotskyists working in the secret "China group", such as Liu Shanqing, regularly travelled to different cities on the mainland to visit pro-democracy activists and exchange ideas concerning the development of Chinese democracy.⁷⁴² By this liaison, Hong Kong Trotskyists collected a large range of pro-democracy documents and publications initially produced and printed by the mainland pro-democracy grass-roots groups or individuals, and delivered them back to Hong Kong to publish in order to introduce the CDM's progress and a variety of liberal thoughts on Chinese democratic reforms under the Communist

⁷⁴¹ Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de zhengcheng*, p. 72.

⁷⁴² For example, according to Liu Shanqing's autobiography, for the political purpose of connecting the mainland pro-democracy dissidents, Liu had travelled to the mainland 14 times before his arrest between 1979 and 1981 (3 times in 1979, 9 times in 1980, twice in early 1981) under a circumstance of that the Communist government had begun to impose a repression on the CDM. *Ibid*, p. 22.

regime.⁷⁴³ They also brought theoretical publications on Trotskyism to the CDM activists on the mainland. These included Trotsky's writings translated into Chinese (e.g. *Transitional Programme, the History of the Russian Revolution, the Revolution Betrayed*, etc.), Chinese Trotskyist works (such as Wang Fanxi's *On Mao Zedong Thought*) and Hong Kong Trotskyist journals (*October Review* and *Combat Bulletin Monthly*). They aimed to disseminate Trotskyism in the circle of Chinese dissidents.⁷⁴⁴

As Liu recollected, Trotskyism was a "unique" left-wing political tendency that profoundly and systematically criticised the Chinese "bureaucracy" under Communism; therefore, Trotskyism had a good reputation in the circle of the CDM.⁷⁴⁵ Liu's testimony might be more broadly generalizable. A group of Chinese dissidents were indeed attracted by the political thought of Trotskyism, and used Trotsky's arguments as an ideological tool to challenge Communist rule in China and justify their pursuit of "socialist democracy". In 1980, in searching for historical "truths", a Chinese dissident, Chen Fusheng, wrote a long article on the oppositionist struggles within Soviet Russia in the 1920s. In this article, he praised Trotsky's sharp criticisms of the Soviet

⁷⁴³ Since the pro-democracy "unofficial journals" (*minkan*) were "smuggled" into Hong Kong, the Trotskyist press, like *October Review*, had always picked up and reproduced various documents from the smuggled *minkan*. To expand the influence of the CDM, in 1981, the Trotskyists helped to establish a *Chinese Democratic Movement Resource Centre* and assisted this Centre in publishing a monthly journal about the development of the CDM. See it in Joseph Miller, *Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program*, p. 13, a conference paper, presented in University of Melbourne, 1982.

⁷⁴⁴ Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de zhengcheng* pp. 21-22. Further, in an interview with Li Huaiming, Li also recalled that a few RML members who took part in the liaison work with the CDM brought a range of Trotskyist publications and offered a small amount of financial assistance collected in Hong Kong in support of the CDM to the mainland activists. *Li Huaiming Interview*, June 14th, 2014.

⁷⁴⁵ Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de zhengcheng*, p. 30.

bureaucracy which would timely correspond to the ongoing democratic movement in China:

“Trotsky’s criticisms were very acute and sensitive criticisms on the burgeoning, later aggravating, and finally crystallised totalitarian system. The essence of the criticisms is, speaking in our terms today, the demand for collective leadership in the [Communist] party, prevention of one-person dictatorship, and guarantee for democratic life within the party. From the experience of historical developments, those criticisms were very timely and had a deep significance.”⁷⁴⁶

In the meantime, a key figure of the CDM activists, Wang Xizhe, who self-identified as a “democratic Marxist” writer that tended to link socialism with democracy,⁷⁴⁷ showed his personal interest in Trotskyism. After examining Trotsky’s and other Trotskyists’ writings that he received from Liu Shanqing and other Hong Kong Trotskyists when they met up in Guangzhou,⁷⁴⁸ he would not accept Trotsky’s notion of permanent revolution, but he agreed with the theory of socialist revolution by stages.⁷⁴⁹ Moreover, there were several similarities between Trotskyist ideas and Wang’s “democratic Marxist” thoughts. In his argument on the Communist bureaucratisation, he inclined

⁷⁴⁶ Chen Fusheng, “Lun tuoluociji fandui pai – e’gong(bu) sixiang douzheng chutan” (On the Trotskyist Opposition –An Initial Investigation into the Ideological Struggle of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia [Bolsheviks]) *October Review*, March 1981, p. 51. English quotation is extracted from *China, Marxism, and Democracy, Selections from October Review*, ed. by Thomas Barrett (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 219.

⁷⁴⁷ Wang Xizhe, “China’s Democracy Movement”, *New Left Review*, Jan-Feb 1982, pp. 62-70.

⁷⁴⁸ Wang Xizhe, *Zouxiang hei’an* (The Road to the Darkness), (Hong Kong: Minzhu daxue chubanshe [Democracy University Press], 1996), p. 222. During the CDM, Wang was also attracted by Gramsci and Frankfurt School.

⁷⁴⁹ Wang Xizhe, “Guanyu Guangdong `sisi’ zuotanhui de jidian shuoming” (Some Remarks on the April 4th Forum in Guangdong), *The Seventies*, no. 127, 1980, p. 39. See also Li En, “Yu Wang Xizhe tan geming jieduanlun” (A Discussion with Wang Xizhe on the Stage Theory of Revolution), *October Review*, Oct 1980, p. 23.

towards advocating Trotskyist ideas regarding organising democratic life within the Communist parties:

“Trotsky considered that tendencies should exist in the party to reflect different interests of different strata both inside the party and in the class represented by the party. This point deserves our consideration...I personally think that open opposition should be allowed...the party should allow different views and even different tendencies.”⁷⁵⁰

Furthermore, Wang read the writings of Chinese Trotskyists, and he was deeply influenced by some of them. According to Wang’s close friend and later prisonmate, Liu Shanqing, the book that had the greatest impact on Wang was Wang Fanxi’s *On the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*.⁷⁵¹ In addition, Wang Xizhe was not the only key figure of the CDM activists who was personally interested in Trotskyism. There were some other leading CDM activists who wanted to know more about Trotskyism. For example, Fu Shenqi, a prominent dissident from Shanghai, was keen to know the concept of Trotskyism and the grouping of the RML in Hong Kong from Liu Shanqing.⁷⁵²

It seemed to the RML leadership that its liaison work with the CDM was functional, and it was proud of its engagement in the CDM. However, Ou Longyu, Yu Chunli and a few other “oppositionists” from the YSG considered

⁷⁵⁰ Li En, “Yu Wang Xizhe tan geming jieduanlun” (A Discussion with Wang Xizhe on the Stage Theory of Revolution), *October Review*, Oct 1980, p. 23; English quotation is extracted from Thomas Barrett, 1996, p. 215.

⁷⁵¹ “A Personal Letter from Liu Shanqing to Wang Fanxi”, Jan 6th, 1992, in Chinese, single-paged, *MS 1709, 28*; Gregor Benton, *China’s Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 119. and Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de zhengcheng*, p. 20.

⁷⁵² Liu, *ibid*, p. 30.

that the working direction of the RML's involvement with the CDM was not "correct". From their point of view, the RML put more focus and spent more energy on "secondary work", i.e. collecting documents and information from the mainland dissidents, which was easy to do, whereas it ignored "primary work"—the RML's own political tasks in its involvement of the CDM, i.e. offering Trotskyist analyses on the trend of the CDM, making impact on the mainland activists by propagating a concrete Trotskyist programme for the building of socialism, and by expressing specific Trotskyist opinions concerning the development of the CDM.⁷⁵³ Moreover, they were of the opinion that the secret China group's theoretical and political level was so low that it was unable to exert a wider Trotskyist impact on the Chinese dissidents. Thus, the RML "de facto" "practically offered no help to the democratic movement in mainland China".⁷⁵⁴ Their discontent towards the RML leadership regarding the working direction of the Trotskyist's involvement of the Chinese democratic struggles also deepened the organisational crisis of the RML.

Above all, we can see that the "endless" disputes had never been interrupted within the RML since the unification. As a result, the RML was in crisis: the organisation externally could not expand the Trotskyist influence upon local workers and other "oppressed" public, while, internally, the disillusioned members exited from the party and the organisational body of the party was subsequently in disarray. Eventually, in autumn, 1980, an organisational split

⁷⁵³ In November 1979, in a YSG document, Ou had complained that the RML ignored the political work in its CDM engagement and the party did not bring up a systematic Trotskyist position to respond to the theoretical problems of democracy in China. Ou Longyu, "Jiantuan gongzuo de jiantao" (A Review on the Youth League Building), Nov 13th, 1979, in *Neibu taolun wenji* (Internal Discussion Document), No. 2, p. 3.

⁷⁵⁴ "Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG", p. 18.

occurred between an RML majority and a small number of “oppositionists” from the league (YSG) led by Ou Longyu in the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement.

The RML in crisis: The 1980 split

Under the conditions in which the Hong Kong Trotskyist organisation as a whole was in disarray, in 1980, Ou Longyu began to organise a study group in the YSG to improve the young Trotskyists’ understandings of Marxism, with a few “oppositionists” who had similar views with Ou on the disputes regarding the practical working tactics of Hong Kong Trotskyists, the execution of the FI’s world congress resolutions in Hong Kong practice, and other political and organisational issues. In August, Ou “privately” launched another study group targeting the YSG sympathisers and local workers, about which he did not inform the YSG leadership until the preparation work of readying this group was nearly done. Though the YSG executive committee, i.e. its leadership body, approved setting up this study group, disgruntlement towards Ou was growing amongst a number of the Trotskyists.

In the meantime, a YSG member, Xiao Ding (a pseudonym), personally decided to drop out of a workers’ group, which was jointly established in June 1980 by the RML and the YSG aiming at conducting the Trotskyist activities in local working people before the RML worked out a direction on whether or not and how the FI’s policy of industrial “turn” would be implemented in its political struggle in Hong Kong. From her point of view, the Trotskyist organisation she joined had become demoralised and collapsed, offered no help to direct the

activities of this workers' group, which led her to become frustrated.⁷⁵⁵

Concerning Ding's exit from the workers' group, the YSG condemned her behaviour as an act of "(petit-bourgeoisie) individual liberalism", but accepted her withdrawal. However, a few days later, Ding's departure became a trigger that a majority of the RML leadership made use of to denounce the "oppositionist" activities led by Ou Longyu and his allies in the YSG.

On August 26th, 1980, the RML convened a plenary meeting,⁷⁵⁶ where the leadership reckoned that there was a causal link between Ding's resignation from the workers' group and the opening of the study group in the YSG. On behalf of the RML's standing committee, Li Huaiming alleged that the main reason of Ding's exit was because Ou Longyu persuaded Ding to join the study group activity "privately" organised by Ou, which was not authorised by the YSG leadership. Subsequently, he accused Ou of running "clique activities" in the YSG. Though Ou, as a dual member of the party and the league, also attended this party meeting, he denied the standing committee's charges against him, and demanded an investigation into the charges of "Ou's factionalism in the YSG". A majority of the party members who attended the meeting rejected Ou's appeal. At the same time, they decided that the party members must not inform any YSG members who did not join the party about the issue of "factionalism within the YSG", and that there must be no

⁷⁵⁵ Xiao Ding, *Women bixu miandui shishi* (We Must Face Reality), drafted on Sep 10th, 1980, single-paged. In her statement, she sharply criticised that the Trotskyist leadership was "irresponsible" for the activities of the workers' group, and it also ignored other members' inactivity in this group.

⁷⁵⁶ Within the RML, the plenary meeting was usually called "branch meeting" by the party members, because there was only one party branch in the RML. "Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG", p. 1.

discussion regarding the “factional activities in the YSG organised by Ou” until the RML had come to a decision on it.

The accusation of Ou’s “clique activities” from the standing committee and the party decision angered Ou. Shortly after this meeting was ended, he revealed this “secret” to a YSG member and complained about the charges the party “imposed” on him, which revealed his personal discontent towards the party leadership. On September 2nd, the party plenary meeting continued. In this meeting, some member reported that Ou had violated the party decision of secrecy. Ou admitted that he “leaked the secret” to a YSG Trotskyist, but at the same time, he protested that the decision against him adopted in the previous meeting was “unreasonable”.⁷⁵⁷ During this meeting, another party member Yu Chunli, who was also working in the YSG, expressed her support of Ou’s protest. Nevertheless, a RML majority considered that Ou had violated the party discipline by “leaking the party secret” to an “outsider”, and the party could not believe that Ou and Yu would wholeheartedly adopt the party line in the YSG. Thus, they decided to remove Ou and Yu from the YSG. Ou and Yu did not accept such a party decision, but fiercely opposed it and refused to obey the party order for their removal. Subsequently, a dispute regarding Ou’s behaviour took place in both the RML and in the YSG.

Xiang Qing, an old Trotskyist who resigned from the RCP and joined the RML in late 1978, warned that the RML and the YSG should cautiously handle disciplinary issues towards Ou’s behaviour in organising the study group. Speaking in defence of Ou, Xiang wondered whether the RML’s accusation of Ou’s “factionalism” was unfair and argued that the RML should not decide

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2.

that Ou's political behaviour was "inappropriate" without any investigation.⁷⁵⁸ In response to Xiang's defence of Ou, Li Huaiming reiterated the standing committee's viewpoint that Ou's behaviour of "privately" organising the study group had broken the party rule of internal democracy because Ou did not inform the YSG and other comrades who took charge in related work in advance about his study group activity, but he only tell the organisation about his attempt when preparation for the study group had been done. From Li and the standing committee's point of view, this left no space for internal discussion.⁷⁵⁹ Furthermore, Li also held the view that though Ou was a party member, he was not obliged to serve the RML but had a "disregardful" attitude towards its internal issues.⁷⁶⁰

Faced with continuous censure from Li and the standing committee, Ou wrote a reply to the RML leadership, defending himself on the grounds that the opening of the study group had been authorised by the YSG leadership, which was "completely" in compliance with organisational law. From Ou's standpoint, the accusation against him for his "clique activities" indicated that Li, on behalf of the RML leadership, did not tolerate the YSG's decision to set up a study group, but he could not find an appropriate pretext to object to it. As such, Ou was alternatively picked out as a "scapegoat" instead.⁷⁶¹

Nevertheless, in the same reply, Ou stated his belief that the party

⁷⁵⁸ Xiang Qing, *Xuanya lema, lun Yue Zhi shijian* (Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice - On Yue Zhi [Ou Longyu] Incident), pp. 1-2, *MS 1709, 27*.

⁷⁵⁹ See, for example, Li Huaiming (Ye Ning), "Zuzhi fangfa yu jiandang, ping Yue Zhi tongzhi de cuowu zuzhi xingwei" (The Organisational Measures and the Building of the Party – My Criticism of Comrade Yue Zhi [Ou Longyu]'s Wrongful Organisational Behaviour), pp 1-3, *MS 1709, 27*.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ Ou Longyu, "Dafu changhuiwei dui wo de qianze" (A Reply to the Standing Committee's Accusation against Me), p. 2, *MS 1709, 27*.

condemnation of his behaviour reflected the practical contradiction between the YSG's (particularly himself) and the RML's leadership regarding working tactics in Hong Kong Trotskyist movement, and the RML leadership just made use of the study group activity to "persecute" dissidents within the Trotskyist organisation.⁷⁶² At the end of his reply, he suggested that if the standing committee wanted internal democracy to be guaranteed in the RML, it should respect dissidents within while correcting its previous "mistake", i.e. retracting the disciplinary measures against Ou and Yu.⁷⁶³

A deadlock was reached after a few days' controversy between Ou's supporters and the party leadership concerning whether Ou's political behaviour was appropriate. Eventually, in a joint party-league meeting on September 18th, 1980, a vast majority of the RML members decided to take a harsh disciplinary measure against Ou and Yu: if they remained in the YSG by September 25th, they would be expelled from the RML. This decision enraged Ou and Yu. On September 20th, they delivered an "ultimatum" to the majority of the RML members who agreed on the party punishment against them. In this "ultimatum", the two YSG leaders vehemently condemned the party's disciplinary action as an act of "political repression" aimed at "eliminating" dissidents through an administrative means that "undermined" the party democracy. They warned the RML that if it did not recall their dismissal from the RML and their removal from the YSG, the two would immediately resign from the RML.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶² *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid*

⁷⁶⁴ Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli, "Zhi gemameng duoshu tongzhi de zuihou tongdie" (An Ultimatum to the Majority of the RML comrades), Sep 20th, 1980, single-paged, *MS 1709*, 27.

The RML did not change its position towards Ou and Yu and five days later expelled them from the party. Nevertheless, this was not the end of the controversy. The organisational crisis of Hong Kong Trotskyism continued to deepen. Around October, a RML standing committee member discovered that Ou and Yu once passed a range of the RML internal discussion materials on the issue of Ou's "factionalism" to an old Trotskyist, Lou Guohua, who resigned from the RML in August 1979,⁷⁶⁵ which was confirmed by Lou.⁷⁶⁶ The RML leadership was highly sensitive about this delivery of internal documents to the "outsider". It claimed that Ou and Yu's behaviour in giving internal documents to the "outsider" Lou was not permitted by the Trotskyist party-league organisation. Thus, the RML leadership could not tolerate the "leak" of Trotskyist internal information to an organisational "outsider", as delivered by Ou and Yu, which was considered as a violation of the YSG's discipline. The RML demanded the YSG to put disciplinary measures on Ou and Yu.

Ou and Yu admitted that they had brought the party documents to the "outsider" Lou, but they did not think their action contradicted the rule of the YSG because it was only an internal issue of the RML. As party members, they were eligible to obtain internal documents of the RML, and the "leak" took place when they were still members of the RML. But after their resignations from the RML, they were not obliged to submit to party discipline any longer. In addition, they denied this action had brought any damage to

⁷⁶⁵ On August 30th, 1981, Lou wrote an open letter to apply for re-joining the RML. See: Lou Guohua, "Gao tongzhi shu" (An Open Letter to My Comrades), Aug 30th, 1981, pp. 1-2, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁷⁶⁶ See some details in "Baowei lieningzhuyi de zuzhi yuanze he guifan! – gemameng zhi sheqingshe chengyuan shu" (Defending the Organisational Principle and Norm of Leninism! – A Statement from the RML to the YSG Members), Oct 21st, 1980, single-paged, *MS 1709, 27*.

the Trotskyists' "revolutionary cause".⁷⁶⁷ In an all-members' meeting of the YSG on October 18th, a majority of the YSG members did not accept the RML's appeal of taking disciplinary measures against Ou and Yu. Instead, they agreed to establish a commission of inquiry to look into the "leaking" case.⁷⁶⁸ However, this YSG move further sharpened the conflict between the Trotskyist party and its youth league, and resulted in a factional struggle within the YSG at the same time.

In the eyes of the RML, the YSG was in a "wrong" direction regarding Ou and Yu's behaviour. On October 21st, the RML made an official statement to YSG members, in which, from its self-proclaimed "genuine" Marxist-Leninist standpoint, the party accused the "Ou-Yu clique" within the YSG as in great danger of becoming a political tendency of "petit-bourgeois liberalism" which would drive the YSG on the way of "abandoning the Leninist principles", while the party called for the YSG members who were on the party's side to form a "Leninist" faction to struggle against the tendency of "petit-bourgeois liberalism" led by Ou and Yu within its youth league, and to break with them.⁷⁶⁹

In the meantime, following the party's appeal, a "Leninist faction" was formed within the YSG by four league members who stood with the RML. In opposition to Ou and his supporters in the YSG, this minority faction adopted the RML's position towards the "leaking" case and thus regarded any arbitrary

⁷⁶⁷ "Sheqingshe fan guanliao jizhong zhuyi pai de lichang" (A Statement from the Anti-bureaucratic Centralist Group in the YSG), Oct 24th, 1980, single-paged, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid*; and "Baowei lieningzhuyi de zuzhi yuanze he guifan! – gemameng zhi sheqingshe chengyuan shu" (Defending the Organisational Principle and Norm of Leninism! – A Statement from the RML to the YSG Members), Oct 21st, 1980, single-paged, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

action of passing internal documents to the “outsiders” as a violation of organisational discipline and an act of breaching the principle of “democratic centralism”, which should be punished by means of disciplinary sanctions.⁷⁷⁰ In response to the formation of the “Leninist faction” and in order to justify themselves as the “correct revolutionary line holders” in local Trotskyism, on October 24th, Ou, Yu and their allies in the YSG established an eight-member “anti-bureaucratic centralist faction”. By employing a discourse of “correctness”, this small group questioned the understanding of the RML and the “Leninist faction” that Ou and Yu’s “leak” was “fundamentally mistaken”, and this faction in its founding statement strongly condemned that what the RML and its supporters in the YSG tried to “impose” on the YSG was not an act of “democratic centralism”, but a clear signal of “bureaucratic centralism” and of “extreme factionalism”. As such, according to them, the RML adopted such a position which was “impossible to become a genuine revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat”.⁷⁷¹ At the same time, what the “anti-bureaucratic centralist faction” said also implied that Ou’s faction self-identified its own group as having more potential than the RML to become the “revolutionary vanguard”.

Standing with Ou’s faction, on October 31st, in his “warning” article, Xiang Qing continued to assert that the RML’s decision, which forced minority members like Ou and Yu to be “blindly” subjected to the party order, was “wrongful”, and in opposition to the “spirit of democratic centralism”.⁷⁷² By

⁷⁷⁰ “Lieningzhuyi pai lichangshu” (The Leninist Group’s Statement), no date, single-paged, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁷¹ “Sheqingshe fan guanliao jizhong zhuyi pai de lichang” (A Statement from the Anti-bureaucratic Centralist Group in the YSG), Oct 24th, 1980, single-paged, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁷² Xiang Qing, “Zuihou jinggao” (The Last Warning), Oct 31, 1980, pp. 1-3, *MS 1709*, 27.

quoting some passages from Trotsky, he intended to demonstrate that “blind obedience” had no role in the Trotskyist practice. For example, he quoted:

“Blind obedience is a virtue in a soldier of a capitalist army but not in a proletarian fighter. Revolutionary discipline is rooted in collective thought and will. A supporter of the theory of scientific communism does not take anything on word. He judges everything by reason and experience...Bureaucratic and artificial discipline has crumbled to dust at the moment of danger. Revolutionary discipline does not exclude but demands the right of checking and criticism. Only in this way can an indestructible revolutionary army be created...When at every step coercion is substituted for persuasion, the breath of life disappears from the organisation, and with it, the people”.⁷⁷³

In the same article, he also pointed out that the diverse understandings of the Trotskyist individuals within the organisation led to the emergence of differences concerning the making of a working line in Trotskyist politics, particularly between the RML’s standing committee and Ou and Yu. However, as far as he could perceive, the RML leadership did not hold further discussions within the party to work out the differences, but it accused Ou of organising “clique activities” and “imposed” organisational disciplinary sanctions on Ou and his allies from August 26th.⁷⁷⁴ In defence of Ou’s faction, Xiang, also by employing a discourse of “correctness”, sharply censured that the RML was in the “wrong” direction of handling Ou’s case, and that its actions against Ou and Yu did not correspond to the “genuine research and

⁷⁷³ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1932-33* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), p. 199. [quoted in *ibid*, p. 2].

⁷⁷⁴ Xiang Qing, “Zuihou jinggao” (The Last Warning), Oct 31, 1980, p. 2, *MS 1709*, 27.

discussion methods of Marxism”, but rather resembled the “means of Stalinist or Maoist liquidation and denunciation of the dissidents”.⁷⁷⁵ At the end of his “warning”, he demanded the RML to retract any accusations and disciplinary measures against Ou and his supporters in the YSG; otherwise, he would leave the party immediately as he could not see any “hope” in the RML.⁷⁷⁶ Xiang and other two Trotskyists resigned from the RML a day later, after he insisted on maintaining his position towards the Ou’s case.

Between November and mid-December 1980, the factional struggle between the “anti-bureaucratic centralist faction” and the RML and its affiliated faction in the YSG escalated. Both sides justified themselves as aiming in the “correct” direction of Trotskyism while accusing the other of being on the wrong way of “Marxism-Leninism”. For example, the standing committee members of the RML, such as Li Huaiming, kept their focus on the “mistakes” Ou and his comrades “admitted”, and they continued to condemn Ou’s “justification of his mistakes” as a “typical attempt of petit-bourgeois individualism and liberalism”.⁷⁷⁷ On the other side, the “anti-bureaucratic centralists” reappraised the RML as a political organisation that was impossible to develop into a “genuine revolutionary party of the proletariat”, while they firmly believed that the organisational line of the RML had “deviated” from the “Marxist-Leninist” position, and it was forcing the YSG to follow its “anti-Marxist-Leninist” direction by all means. Accordingly, they unilaterally proclaimed that the YSG would not recognise the RML either as a

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁷⁷ Qian Ya and Li Huaiming (Ye Ning), *Zuzhi guannian shang de qitan guailun – fenxi Yue Zhi de xing’ershaxue* (The Fallacy Regarding Our Organisational Principle – A Criticism of Yue Zhi’s Metaphysics), no date, p. 2.

potential “revolutionary centre of the proletarian revolution” or as a fraternal organisation in collaboration with the YSG.⁷⁷⁸ In addition, Lou Guohua, the “outside receiver” of the RML internal documents, drafted a statement to voice his opposition to the RML’s act of “imposing” punishment on Ou and Yu. In his statement, he said that it was a “Stalinist” style to solve internal problem by adopting party discipline, whilst he considered that it was a damage from “bureaucratism” if “democratic centralism” was “simplistically” seen as the rule that “the minority is subordinate to the majority” and “the lower level to the higher level” of the party.⁷⁷⁹

On December 10th, in a YSG executive committee meeting, the “Leninist faction” intensified the factional fight within the YSG. During that YSG meeting, the members of the “Leninist faction” launched an attack aiming at the “anti-bureaucratic centralist faction” in which they pointed out that the “anti-bureaucratic centralist faction” was “secretly” publishing a factional pamphlet called *Study Bulletin*, which was not permitted by the YSG, and thus, it had violated the organisational rule of the YSG. The “anti-bureaucratic centralists” fiercely opposed this charge from the “Leninist faction”. They denied that this publication was brought out by their faction; rather, they stated that *Study Bulletin* was merely “a material for the study group”.⁷⁸⁰

Subsequently, this conflict escalated within the YSG, which eventually led to an organisational split of Hong Kong Trotskyist organisation since the unification. On December 13th, the YSG decided to take a voting procedure to

⁷⁷⁸ “Dui gemameng chongxin pingjia” (A Reappraisal of the RML), drafted by the YSG’s anti-bureaucratic centralist faction, Nov 9th, 1980, single-paged, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁷⁹ Lou Guohua, *Shengming shu* (A Statement), Nov 7th, 1980, single-paged.

⁷⁸⁰ See more details about this dispute on the issue of study group in *Huyu shu* (An Appeal Letter), drafted by the anti-bureaucratic centralist faction, Dec 13th, 1980, pp. 1-2.

solve the dispute regarding the publication of *Study Bulletin*. At the end of this vote, the result was that Ou and six other individuals who joined the “anti-bureaucratic centralist faction” were expelled from the YSG, while one member resigned.⁷⁸¹

After this split took place, those excluded YSG members did not abandon their political-ideological faith in Trotskyism. Instead, between late December 1980 and January 1981, based on the study group which Ou launched, ten more Trotskyists including the “anti-bureaucratic centralists”, the study group participants and the old Trotskyists who had resigned from the RML (like Xiang Qing) began to prepare a new Hong Kong Trotskyist group, named the *Preparatory Committee for a Trotskyist Organisation* (Preparatory Committee), which later founded a small Trotskyist *Pioneer Group* on February 20th, 1982.

In the meantime, they were also seeking political help from outside Trotskyist individuals and international organisations in support of their position towards the Trotskyist split in Hong Kong. For example, on January 4th, 1981, Ou and Yu wrote their first letter to Wang Fanxi, who had settled down in Leeds, England since the spring of 1975 and had maintained a good communication network with international Trotskyists. Ou and Yu explained the course of the split to Wang from their own point of view. In this letter, they insisted on continuing to state that “the RML can be qualified as a revolutionary organisation by no means”, while they asked Wang to help them in rebuilding

⁷⁸¹ At that time, there were 19 league members in the YSG in total. 17 members took part in the voting procedure, 9 of whom agreed to dismiss the “anti-bureaucratic centralists” from the league, whilst the rest 8 members objected to this motion. See: “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, pp. 4-5.

a “potential revolutionary organisation” in Hong Kong, i.e. introducing them to a range of learning materials on Marxism and assisting this new Trotskyist group in bridging political connections with the FI.⁷⁸²

Despite Wang not understanding that the case of “leaking” internal documents to Lou had created an animosity between a majority of the RML and Ou’s supporters in the YSG, in his reply on January 26th, 1981, he regarded that it was “wrong” to say the RML was “no longer qualified as a revolutionary group”, and stated that the organisational problem of the RML was not a “bureaucrat degeneration”, but a characteristic of “impatience” and “infantilism”. Wang also recognised that it was too early for Ou and his allies to take on the organisational building of a new Trotskyist group in Hong Kong, whilst suggesting them not to break up with the RML because from his own experience as a revolutionist, he saw the organisational split as undermining the development of Trotskyist movement in its history in China. Rather Wang advised Ou and others to report their resentments concerning the RML to the FI in order to call for an investigation into it.⁷⁸³

Later on, Ou and his comrades drafted a complaint report (originally in Chinese) on the 1980 split to the FI, which was adopted by his Preparatory Committee in December 1981. In this report, from the perspective of “correct revolutionary/Trotskyist line holders”, the ex-YSG members very negatively characterised the RML as “an organisation infected with the illness of progeria [premature aging]”⁷⁸⁴ and depicted its members as poor self-recognised

⁷⁸² “A Letter from Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli to Wang Fanxi, Jan 4th, 1981”, p. 2, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁸³ “Lian Gen (Wang Fanxi) zhi Yue Zhi (Ou Longyu), Bu Xue (Yu Chunli) xin” (A Letter from Wang Fanxi to Ou Longyu and Yu Chunli), Jan 26th, 1981, p. 2, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁸⁴ “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, p. 21.

“Marxists” who “actually did not understand correctly the fundamental conclusions of Marxism”.⁷⁸⁵ In particular, they concluded that:

“Being such an extremely selfish and narrow-minded sect, [the] RML was essentially impossible to undertake the task of party building. No experienced revolutionists would join such an organisation. If it happens that any individual who is genuinely a revolutionist or those potential revolutionists who join the organisation accidentally, very soon he or she will definitely be excluded, corrupted, or harassed until demoralisation. Such an organisation can only absorb those opportunists and ambitious adventurers who misunderstand [the] revolutionary movement as a shortcut to personal success, those who had not yet free themselves from servility, those who view the organisation they join as an idol to identify with in order to satisfy their vainglory, or to lessen their inferiority complex, etc. Since the RML had fully exposed its real nature, it is natural for us not to be nostalgic.”⁷⁸⁶

In response to the ex-YSG members’ anger as presented in the report, despite the fact that the Usec Bureau (the Bureau of the United Secretariat), i.e. the top leadership of the FI, was reluctant to judge which side should be responsible for the organisational split in Hong Kong, the FI leadership did not accept the condemnation of the RML in such strong language from the Preparatory Committee because it took the view that this accusation “obviously makes any struggle for the reunification of the revolutionary

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 12.

Marxist forces in Hong Kong very problematic”.⁷⁸⁷ It seemed to the FI that the Preparatory Committee “very much underestimate the negative implications of the split[s] which have affected our movement on our capacity to act in Hong Kong and to intervene in relation to the Chinese Democracy movement. Not only do these splits wear out our members, but they also prevent us appearing as a responsible and credible political pole”.⁷⁸⁸ In short, the FI leadership voiced its regret over the Hong Kong split and showed no political support to Ou’s Preparatory Committee on the cause of the split.

Before and after the FI leadership officially had a word on the Trotskyist split in Hong Kong, both the RML and the expelled YSG members firmly believed that they contributed nothing “wrong” to the RML-YSG split, which meant they were both on the “right” side from their respective positions. For example, on May 24th, 1981, the RML standing committee called for negotiations for the reunification of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong under a “revolutionary Marxist” framework between the RML and other small Trotskyist groups, such as the RCP and the newly-founded Preparatory Committee. However, it also claimed that the RML did not change its attitude towards the expelled or resigned RML members, such as Ou and Yu, whose behaviours were “mistaken”.⁷⁸⁹

In regards to the reunification issue, the Preparatory Committee asserted that it supported the unification of Chinese Trotskyists in principle. However, it

⁷⁸⁷ “A Reply from USec Bureau, the FI to Pioneer Group (HK)”, Apr 19th, 1982, p. 2, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁹ *Gemameng tan tongyi de diyi feng xin* (The First Letter from the RML Concerning the Unification Negotiation), drafted by the RML standing committee, May 24th, 1981, single-paged.

doubted that the unification move conducted by the RML was “principled”, because the ex-YSG members considered the RML’s unification appeal to be rather contradictory, that is to say, from their understandings, on the one hand, the RML insisted that it was on the “right” side of the split and characterised Ou’s faction as a “petit-bourgeois tendency of liberalism”; on the other, as a self-claimed “Leninist organisation”, the RML was demanding negotiations for the rebuilding of a “Leninist organisation” with a group which it once denounced as a “petit-bourgeois tendency”.⁷⁹⁰ In addition, the Preparatory Committee alleged that it was not possible to promote reunification unless both sides reached an agreement on the cause of the split.⁷⁹¹ Regarding this reunification issue, we can see that because both sides resolutely defended their “correctness” towards the issue of the Hong Kong split respectively, this created another barrier to the holding of a new negotiation regarding the reunification, which eventually was a failed attempt that was never achieved.⁷⁹²

Since the 1980 split, there had been no organisational recovery for the Trotskyist movement in Hong Kong. Not only did the FI leadership regard that the split “contributes to dividing and dispersing the forces identifying with our

⁷⁹⁰ “Zhi gemameng changweihui de xin” (A Letter to the RML Standing Committee), drafted by the executive committee of the Preparatory Committee, Jun 22nd, 1981, single-paged, *MS 1709, 27*.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹² In May 1983, the *Pioneer Group* also proposed a unification with the RML and the RCP, but it ended up with nothing concrete. See some internal documents in “Wei shixian tuopai tongyi er nuli (cao’an)” (Striving for A Unification of Trotskyists, A Draft), drafted by the Pioneer Group, May 20th, 1983, pp. 1-2, *MS 1709, 27*; and *Zhi xianqushu quanti tongzhi* (A Letter to All the Comrades from the Pioneer Group), written by the Central Committee of the RCP, March 14th, 1984, pp. 1-2.

movement in Hong Kong”,⁷⁹³ but a number of Trotskyist individuals in Hong Kong also admitted that this “produces a negative effect on the (Hong Kong) Trotskyist activities”.⁷⁹⁴ A *Pioneer Group*, a no more than fifteen members’ Trotskyist organisation,⁷⁹⁵ consisting of former YSG members who were expelled or resigned from the YSG or the RML, was founded in February 1982, and since then, there had been three small Trotskyist groups in total (the RML, the RCP and the *Pioneer Group*) which appeared in the Hong Kong socio-political environment after the RML-YSG infighting and split. However, compared to the Trotskyists’ political strength in the late 1970s, these three groups were always of a smaller size and the Trotskyist force as a whole in the 1980s was more dispersed and isolated than ever before.

Moreover, the “capitulation of Wu Zhongxian” to the mainland public security force in Beijing in late March 1981 further demoralised the Hong Kong Trotskyists. Since then, the majority of Trotskyist activists from the RML had become more and more disillusioned and inactive. Gradually, the majority of the disillusioned RML members quit involvement in the local Trotskyist movement, and the RML activities had died down in the 1980s.⁷⁹⁶ Despite the

⁷⁹³ “A Reply from USec Bureau, the FI to Pioneer Group (HK)”, Apr 19th, 1982, p. 1, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁹⁴ For example, see: Mo Qi, “A Personal Record of the 1980 Organisational Split”, Feb 1982, p. 10, *MS 1709*, 27.

⁷⁹⁵ See more details about the number of the memberships of the *Pioneer Group* in *Xianqushu diyici sheyuan dahui huiyi jilu* (The Meeting Minute of the First Convention of the Pioneer Group), Feb 20th to 21st, 1982, p. 1; *Xianqushu di’erci shehui dahui huiyi jilu* (The Meeting Minute of the Second Convention of the Pioneer Group), Aug 3rd to 4th, 1983, p. 1; *Xianqushu disanci huiyuan dahui* (The Meeting Minute of the Third Convention of the Pioneer Group), Oct, 12th to 13th, Nov 26th, Dec 8, 22nd, 1984, Jan 6th, 1985, p. 1.

⁷⁹⁶ After Wu Zhongxian’s “surrender” (see this in the following section), a Hong Kong political observer, Wu Moran, reckoned that the RML would become more scattered and marginalised in Hong Kong politics. Indeed, according to a press interview with Liang Guoxiong, a RML Trotskyist at its late stage, the RML activities had died down in the late 1980s. In 1988, there were only a dozen of activists remaining in the RML, and Liang was one among them. See:

small *Pioneer Group* and the RCP continuing to politically exist in Hong Kong as Trotskyist organisations throughout the 1980s, Trotskyists' practice became dysfunctional, while the Trotskyists' influence became increasingly intermittent and faded away from Hong Kong politics.

After his investigations into Trotskyist movements in France and the United States in the 1970s, A. Belden Fields concludes that "Trotskyists...have thus far not been able to handle their own contradictions well enough to gain a mass following and to prevent very scarce political resources from being dispersed among a number of competing groups ostensibly interested in the same sort of revolutionary transformation..."⁷⁹⁷ Indeed, there were the similarities in the Hong Kong Trotskyist activities: Trotskyists in Hong Kong at the level of socio-political practice neither gained "a mass following", nor prevented their "scarce political resources from being dispersed" in the competition on the Left with local pro-PRC leftist organisations. Moreover, "endless" disputes within the Trotskyist circle and organisational infighting became a self-restraint to the political progress of Trotskyism in Hong Kong, which are not uncommon in the international Trotskyist movement.⁷⁹⁸

Wu Moran, "Xianggang tuopai lingxiu zai dalu beibu shimo" (The whole Story of the Arrest of a Hong Kong Trotskyist on the Mainland), *Seventies*, Feb 1982, p. 27, Newspaper Cuttings, *MS 1709, 28*; Xu Zhiyuan, "Xianggang de fei zhengtong 'zuopai'" (The Unorthodox "Leftists" in Hong Kong), *Financial Times* (Chinese Online Version), Dec 21st, 2012: <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001048111>.

⁷⁹⁷ A. Belden. Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States* (Autonomedia, 1988), p. 253.

⁷⁹⁸ The "endless" disputes surrounding actual movement strategies, and the organisational infightings and splits that were the "right" ways of "defending" diverse faction's "revolutionary correctness" are common issues in the history of international Trotskyism. For example, please refer to Ted Grant, *History of British Trotskyism* (London: Wellred Publications, 2002), pp. 166–73. James Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism, 1928-1938* (London: Pathfinder Press, 2009), pp. 234–63.

Indeed, in the Hong Kong Trotskyist movement, the RML leaders such as Li Huaiming once expected that the RML Trotskyists “need to establish a militant revolutionary organisation, not a discussion club”.⁷⁹⁹ Unfortunately, its political development led to the opposite. That is to say, the RML and other Trotskyist groups were more “discussion clubs” than formal political parties. As Alexander has also demonstrated in his study on international Trotskyism, “[t]he sectarianism of the Trotskyists had undoubtedly been intensified by the smallness of their organisations. With little ability in the foreseeable future of coming to power, or even of gaining an audible voice in national politics or influence in the organised labour movement, they have been forced back upon themselves, with satisfaction coming from the purity and ‘correctness’ of their doctrine rather than from the possibility of more material rewards”.⁸⁰⁰ This scenario of the Trotskyist infightings as such has been repeated in political history, and Hong Kong Trotskyist groups in their “smallness” cannot avoid the charge of “sectarianism”. They easily fell into “endless” disputes, some mainly regarding minor organisational issues, and some merely defending the “correctness” of particular factions during organisational infightings, which largely disconnected Trotskyists from their actual “mass” target, i.e. local working people, and massively demoralised and marginalised their organisation.

⁷⁹⁹ Qian Ya and Li Huaiming (Ye Ning), *Zuzhi guannian shang de qitan guailun – fenxi Yue Zhi de xing’ershaxue* (The Fallacy Regarding Our Organisational Principle – A Criticism of Yue Zhi’s Metaphysics), no date, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁰ Robert Alexander, *International Trotskyism 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 26.

Epilogue: The case of “Wu Zhongxian’s capitulation to the Communists”

As the expelled YSG members mentioned in that complaint report to the FI, the Trotskyist engagement with the Chinese Democracy Movement (CDM) since the 1978 unification was “the sole work which they (the RML Trotskyists) were proud of”.⁸⁰¹ Indeed, particularly when RML activities went downhill after the organisational split, this task would become more urgent and important for the RML to expand its Trotskyist influence among the CDM activists and to boost its remaining members’ morale.

In March 1981, with no political duties assigned by the RML, a leading activist from the RML, Wu Zhongxian, who had the experience of communicating with a well-known Chinese dissident, Wang Xizhe, in Guangzhou in late May and early June 1980,⁸⁰² decided to go to the mainland by himself to bridge political connections with the CDM activists from different cities.⁸⁰³ At first, Wu succeeded to arrive in Beijing on March 11th, 1981, and immediately visited a few number of pro-democracy dissidents in the capital, such as Yang Jing and Xu Wenli, to exchange political opinions on the CDM. Nevertheless, from 1979 on, the Chinese Communist state had planned to smash the pro-democracy activities by stages.

⁸⁰¹ “Report on the 1980 Split in Both the RML and the YSG”, p. 17.

⁸⁰² “Wu Zhongxian, Zuihou de lvcheng – zhonggong tewu daibu he shenwen wo de jingguo” (The Last Journey, An Explanation of My Arrest and the Interrogation against Me taken by Chinese Communist agents), Feb 20th, 1982, p. 14, Newspaper Cuttings, *MS 1709*, 28.

⁸⁰³ Though the RML did not assign Wu any certain political mission, he thought that the RML leadership was expecting him to enlarge a positive political impact of Trotskyism on the CDM in the North. “Wu Zhongxian, Wo weishenme bei zhongguo tewu jubu?” (Why Was I Arrested by Chinese Communist Agents?), Feb 9th, 1982, p. 11, Newspaper Cuttings, *Ibid.*

Consequently, a number of notable CDM activists, such as Wei Jingsheng, Fu Yuehua and Liu Qing, etc. were imprisoned.⁸⁰⁴ By 1981, the CDM was actually on the brink of danger. The national security promptly drew its attention to Wu's communication activities with Chinese dissenters in Beijing. About half a month after Wu's arrival in Beijing, Wu was arrested. On March 28th, when Wu took a train journey from Beijing to Nanjing to continue his visit to the CDM supporters, he was stopped and arrested at Tianjin railway station, and sent to Beijing under police escort for interrogation. According to Wu's report to the RML standing committee on his arrest, under the police's threat, i.e. preparing to convict him for doing *counterrevolutionary* and *anti-Chinese government* activities which might sentence him a ten-year imprisonment at least, or a life imprisonment/death penalty, and in the hope of being released from police custody, he decided to "confess" to the public security officials.⁸⁰⁵

However, from Wu's recollection, he regarded his "confession" to the Chinese officials as a fabricated one: he only revealed public information that the police might already know about regarding the internal situation of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong, whereas he kept secret the "sensitive" part of internal information and misrepresented the supposed secrets of Trotskyist

⁸⁰⁴ See some more about the state repression of the CDM in Gregor Benton, *China Spring: The Interrupted Rise of the Democracy Movement in People's China* (Amsterdam, 1981), a working paper, pp. 10-15. And see Wei Jingsheng, Liu Qing, Wang Xizhe, Xu Wenli, Yang Jing and other dissidents' articles and interviews during 1979-81 in Gregor Benton, *Wily Lily, Prairie Fire, China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942-1989* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 157-263.

⁸⁰⁵ "Hu Congshan (i.e. Wu Zhongxian) zhi gemameng changweihui de baogao" (A Report from Hu Congshan [Wu Zhongxian] to the RML Standing Committee), p. 1, *MS 1709*, 27.

organisation to the police instead.⁸⁰⁶ After he signed a document that he was forced to admit that the Trotskyists were *counterrevolutionary* and to pledge “allegiance” to Chinese Communists, he was released in the evening of April 1st, 1981, but remained under a close watch of the Communist secret police. Under the police’s supervision, he travelled to Nanjing and Shanghai to pay visits to the CDM activists in the Eastern part of China, as he had previously scheduled. For example, according to the recollection of a prominent dissident, Chen Erjin, from Yunan, from the evening of April 3rd to the early morning of April 4th, Wu had a long conversation with him in Shanghai. They discussed the challenges the CDM was confronting in Communist China and the possibility of establishing an overseas solidarity group with the CDM.⁸⁰⁷

On April 8th, Wu was allowed to leave the mainland back to Hong Kong. Since he had been compelled to become a Communist informer, on April 13th, after talking over his “deceitful surrender to the Communists” with Li Huaiming, a leader of the RML, they decided to pick up several “harmless” Trotskyist

⁸⁰⁶ Wu Zhongxian, “Wo weishenme bei zhongguo tewu jubu?” (Why Was I Arrested by Chinese Communist Agents?), Feb 9th, 1982, p. 12, Newspaper Cuttings, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸⁰⁷ During the conversation with Wu, Chen regarded him as a key figure of the International Trotskyist movement from Hong Kong, i.e. the first secretary of the Hong Kong section of the FI. See: Chen Yingchao (i.e. Chen Erjin), “Zhongguo minzhu yundong shouci zudang huodong jiqi xiangguan shiliao cunshi” (The First Party Building Activity in the CDM), written in Nov 28th, 2004, *Bo Xun News*, Jun 17th, 2017:

<https://peacehall.com/news/gb/pubvp/2017/06/201706172300.shtml>. Wu also confirmed that he had a secret meeting with a dissident during his stay in Shanghai on April 3rd and later fabricated a report to the secret policemen who were in company with him, but in Wu’s abridged written report to the RML standing committee, we cannot see the name of the dissident he met in Shanghai. “Hu Congshan (i.e. Wu Zhongxian) zhi gemameng changweihui de baogao” (A Report from Hu Congshan [Wu Zhongxian] to the RML Standing Committee), p. 2, *MS 1709, 27*; and “Wu Zhongxian, Zuihou de lvcheng – zhonggong tewu daibu he shenwen wo de jingguo” (The Last Journey, An Explanation of My Arrest and the Interrogation against Me taken by Chinese Communist agents), Feb 20th, 1982, p. 16, Newspaper Cuttings, *MS 1709, 28*.

internal documents, and Wu brought them to the Communist agents.⁸⁰⁸ According to Wu, the reason that he continued to communicate with the mainland secret police was that it was just a “delaying tactic” that could leave some time to inform the ardent CDM supporters in Hong Kong who were already on the Communists’ “blacklist” that the secret police had shown to Wu, and to reorganise the local network with the CDM.⁸⁰⁹ Meanwhile, Wu immediately informed the RML leadership about his arrest, and suggested that the RML could make a good use of his “capitulation” to play a “double game” in order to maintain a political network between Hong Kong Trotskyist groups and the mainland CDM activists. This was refused by the RML standing committee, since it had judged that the RML had no capacity to confront Chinese agents backed by the Communist state, while the Communist officials could make use of Wu’s act to charge the CDM activists on the mainland of “colluding with overseas *counterrevolutionary* force”.⁸¹⁰

After Wu informed his Trotskyist group about his “confession” to the Communist secret police, this led to a political earthquake amongst the RML, the RCP and the Preparatory Committee. Internal discussions regarding his arrest were immediately launched in the Trotskyist circle locally in Hong Kong and internationally in the FI. In June 1981, a FI liaison officer, Pierre Rousset,

⁸⁰⁸ See more details in “Women dui X tongzhi (i.e. Wu Zhongxian) de yijian” (Our Attitude towards Comrade X), drafted by the RCP, Jun 20th, 1981, p. 1; “Report on the Wu Affair, from the RCP to the United Secretariat, Fourth International”, Sep 20th, 1981, p. 2; and “A Personal Letter from Pierre Rousset to Wang Fanxi”, Oct 13th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709*, 28.

⁸⁰⁹ “Wu Zhongxian, Wo weishenme bei zhongguo tewu jubu?” (Why Was I Arrested by Chinese Communist Agents?), Feb 9th, 1982, p. 13, Newspaper Cuttings; Wu Zhongxian, “Jiu zhongguo zhengfu feifa jubu wo de gongkai shengming” (A Public Statement Concerning My Arrest Illegally Taken by Chinese Government), Aug 17th, 1981, single-paged, newspaper cuttings, *MS 1709*, 28.

⁸¹⁰ “A Letter from Li Huaiming to Wang Fanxi”, Aug 18th, 1981, in Chinese, p. 1; and “A Personal Letter from Pierre Rousset to Wang Fanxi”, Oct 13th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709*, 28.

went to Hong Kong and discussed Wu's "confession" to the Chinese Communists at length with Hong Kong Trotskyist groups and Wu himself. After his investigation, Rousset pondered that despite the matter that Wu' act of "confessing" to the Communists was "grave mistake[s] with possible grave consequences", Wu was not a "traitor" since after his return to Hong Kong, the "first thing he did...was to tell the story to the RML leadership"; further, from his personal account, he suggested that "W. [Wu] should get out of the organisation (and that the organisation should expel him), while continuing to work for us [the Trotskyists], under the control of the RML leadership..."⁸¹¹

For the RML, especially the leadership, from Rousset's observation, it did not want to take disciplinary sanctions against Wu, partially because the leadership worried that the expulsion of Wu from the RML would be a "big loss".⁸¹² According to Li Huaiming, the Wu affair brought the RML into another internal dispute, but the majority of members regarded Wu as having committed a "principled mistake".⁸¹³ Shortly after Wu reported to the party about his "confession" and his plans on maintaining a political network with the CDM by making use of his fabricated "surrender" to the Communists, the standing committee ordered Wu to immediately stop contact with the Communist agents as an informer, and after an about two-month party discussion at length, the RML decided that Wu would be placed on a "suspension of his membership for further observation".⁸¹⁴ In a later public statement of the RML, while continuing to voice Trotskyist support for the CDM, the RML reiterated that the party had decided to put a "suspension"

⁸¹¹ "A Letter from Pierre Rousset to Wang Fanxi", Sep 22nd, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸¹² *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁸¹³ "A Letter from Li Huaiming to Wang Fanxi", Aug 18th, 1981, p. 2.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid*.

sanction on Wu, not only because Wu's "confession" had damaged the CDM, but also because it might lead to a "grave consequence" for the Chinese Trotskyist movement, i.e. stigmatising the Trotskyist activities by making use of Wu's "confession", which was a "grave principled mistake" that could not be tolerated by the "revolutionary" organisation.⁸¹⁵

What was Wu's own reaction towards the internal discussion regarding his arrest and the disciplinary sanctions put on him? According to Rousset, at the very beginning of the internal discussion, Wu was "never eager to pursue such a discussion" with his Trotskyist comrades.⁸¹⁶ And in several published documents, we can explicitly recognise that what he did after reporting his arrest to the RML was to defend himself and justify his personal actions. In spite of his "confession" to the Communist police, Wu claimed that he did not abandon his political position as a Trotskyist and a CDM supporter.⁸¹⁷ On the other hand, he tried to justify his "confession" as not leading to a nationwide round-up of the CDM activists,⁸¹⁸ and claiming that his act would only damage the CDM at a very low level.⁸¹⁹ In addition, he implied in a public statement concerning his "confession" that there was a difference between "public" and

⁸¹⁵ *Jiu Wu Zhongxian beibu shijian de shengming* (A Statement Regarding Wu Zhongxian's Arrest), drafted by the RML, Sep 11th, 1981, single-paged.

⁸¹⁶ "A Letter from Pierre Rousset to Wu Zhongxian", Oct 14th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸¹⁷ Wu Zhongxian, "Jiu zhongguo zhengfu feifa jubu wo de gongkai shengming", Aug 17th, 1981, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸¹⁸ "Wu Zhongxian, Zuihou de lvcheng – zhonggong tewu daibu he shenwen wo de jingguo" (The Last Journey, An Explanation of My Arrest and the Interrogation against Me taken by Chinese Communist agents), Feb 20th, 1982, p. 16, Newspaper Cuttings, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸¹⁹ Wu Zhongxian, "Jiu zhongguo zhengfu feifa jubu wo de gongkai shengming", Aug 17th, 1981, *MS 1709, 28*.

"secret" arrest: if Wu had the opportunity to have a public trial, there would be no "confession" and he would defend himself as a Trotskyist.⁸²⁰

On August 17th, 1981, Wu personally declared his resignation from the RML, in which he also proclaimed he would not give up his anti-bureaucratic position and "the struggle for socialist democracy".⁸²¹ With regard to Wu's resignation, the RML organisationally expressed its regret and expected that Wu could be back to "the ranks of the revolution" soon, "genuinely struggling for the overthrow of the [Chinese] bureaucracy and the building of socialist democracy".⁸²²

Nevertheless, unlike the RML, other Trotskyist individuals and organisations regarded Wu's "confession" as a definite act of "betrayal" or "political capitulation" and damaging to both the Trotskyist movement and the CDM. For example, when Wang Fanxi in Leeds was informed by some Hong Kong Trotskyists about Wu's arrest, in the beginning, he was "rather upset".⁸²³ On August 16th, from his experiences in prison during the Nationalist China and his own observation of the current political suppression in the PRC, he wrote an article "*What should a revolutionary do when he/she is being arrested?*" about, as the name suggested, how "revolutionary Marxists", i.e. Trotskyists, should react after arrests by the repressive state apparatus. Wang pointed out the only way to resolve this problem was to keep faith in "revolutionary

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*

⁸²² *Jiu Wu Zhongxian beibu shijian de shengming* (A Statement Regarding Wu Zhongxian's Arrest), drafted by the RML, Sep 11th, 1981.

⁸²³ "A Letter from Wang Fanxi to Sakai Yoshichi and Pierre Rousset", May 20th, 1981, single-paged, *MS 1709, 28*.

Marxism".⁸²⁴ After receiving more details from a letter from Li Huaiming written in Toronto dated August 18th, he became more indignant at Wu's "confession". In his response to Li's letter on September 9th, he did not define Wu's "confession" as a "mistake", but as "a surrender to the enemy, a withdrawal from his own previous [Trotskyist] position".⁸²⁵

Moreover, regarding Wu's justification of his "surrender", Wang argued that "[t]here has never been anything like 'deceitful surrender' in the whole history of the communist movement. Revolution is a grand struggle of classes and not the conspiracy between a few individuals or groups...If ever a capture[d] revolutionary surrender[s] himself to his enemy in thoughts and in action in exchange for his freedom, then only serious harm (not only a slightest advantage) will be done to the revolutionary organisation and the revolution itself, irrespect[ive] of whether he did it out of real intent or otherwise".⁸²⁶

Additionally, he continued to point out that Wu's "deceitful surrender" was "not merely a question of personal character, but rather is more of the environment of the struggle itself...The situation in HK [i.e. Hong Kong] today is much relaxed (mainly after the '60s), the young people who join the revolution do not face the urgent need for hard spirit of commitment and sacrifice as us [the older generation of Chinese Trotskyists in the period of Nationalist China] in those [previous] years. And so they have not equip[ped] themselves with this spirit."⁸²⁷ In other words, Wang argued that in a more liberal environment, the younger generation of Trotskyists had not learnt to

⁸²⁴ See the English version in Wang Fanxi, "What Should a Revolutionary Do when He/She is Being Arrested?", Aug 16th, 1981, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸²⁵ Wang Fanxi, "Letter from F.H. Wang to Ip Nin (Li Huaiming) on the 9th September 1981 on Wu's Incident", p. 1, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 3.

adopt a commitment to the "revolution" and a spirit of sacrifice that could keep their faith in Trotskyism, as with the older generation, and that this might have led to Wu's "betrayal". It also seemed to other Chinese Trotskyists from the older generation, who might have undergone torture from their "enemies" in their previous years of struggle, that Wu's "deceitful capitulation" was intolerable. Lou Guohua, a close comrade of Wang, bluntly pointed out that a Trotskyist "revolutionary" who committed such a "crime" (i.e. Wu Zhongxian) was a "traitor" and an "opportunist" that must be expelled from the movement.⁸²⁸

Later, even as a political associate and a personal friend of Wu, Pierre Rousset also sharply criticised him: Wu "forgot about the main principle which must be followed by any revolutionary under arrest: to protect the others (especially to protect all those who are faced with reactionary repression) and to protect the movement as a whole (both the CDM itself and our own movement)".⁸²⁹ Instead, Wu only decided to protect himself first, i.e. freeing himself from secret police's custody, which was selfish and unacceptable from Rousset's point of view.⁸³⁰ Furthermore, to Rousset, what Wu had written down for the Communist agents "can be used to (falsely) 'justify' heavy jail sentences against people [the CDM activists] whose only 'fault' was to fight for their constitutional rights", and "can be very easily utilised against the FI and to discredit the ideas we and others are defending on democratic socialism".⁸³¹ In the end, no matter how close the comradeship between

⁸²⁸ See: Lou Guohua, "Gao tongzhi shu" (An Open Letter to My Comrades), Aug 30th, 1981, pp. 1-2, *MS 1709*, 28.

⁸²⁹ "A Letter from Pierre Rousset to Wu Zhongxian", Oct 14th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709*, 28.

⁸³⁰ See *ibid*, pp. 1-4.

⁸³¹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

Rousset and Wu was, Rousset, from a "revolutionary Marxist" point of view, concluded that Wu's "deceitful surrender" was a "political capitulation" "in front of the [Chinese] bureaucracy's police".⁸³²

Apart from the RML, other Hong Kong Trotskyist organisations had strong reactions towards Wu's "confession". In September, both the RCP and the Preparatory Committee expressed a common position on Wu's arrest: they considered Wu Zhongxian to have betrayed what he believed and abandoned the basic positions of Trotskyism, because his "deceitful surrender" created a detrimental effect on the CDM and discredited Trotskyism in the CDM. They also condemned the RML because it had clearly "intended to cover up" the case of Wu's "confession".⁸³³ Therefore, the Preparatory Committee, concluded that Wu "should be disqualified as a revolutionary. Only by expelling him can we [Trotskyists] distinguish his betrayal and reactionary position from our revolutionary position", and it suggested that "the Fourth International would disassociate with Wu openly or to urge the RML to do likewise as soon as possible".⁸³⁴ The RCP further requested the FI to "announce Wu's act of betrayal, to consign the RML to totally demarcate itself from Wu politically and organisationally; and to inform national sections and

⁸³² *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁸³³ According to Yu Chunli, the Preparatory Committee was not informed about Wu's case until August 1981 by Lou Guohua, while according to Lee See, the RCP knew what happened to Wu, but not in detail. The RCP did not receive Wu's report on his arrest on the mainland until early September 1981. See: "A Report to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on Wu's Affair", drafted by Bosch (Yu Chunli) on behalf of the Preparatory Committee, Sep 15th, 1981, p. 4; "Report on the Wu Affair, from the RCP to the United Secretariat, Fourth International", Sep 20th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸³⁴ "A Report to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on Wu's Affair", drafted by Bosch (Yu Chunli) on behalf of the Preparatory Committee, Sep 15th, 1981, p. 5.

sympathising organisations of the International”.⁸³⁵ Furthermore, these two local Trotskyist groups continually condemned Wu’s “shameful” act while urging the RML to expel Wu, in spite of Wu’s earlier resignation. They defined Wu’s behaviour as a “political capitulation to the Communists” in their own publications.⁸³⁶

In September 1981, the FI leadership in Europe, i.e. the Usec Bureau, launched a primary discussion about what Wu had done. According to Rousset, the European Trotskyists were “shocked” by Wu’s “confession”.⁸³⁷ Eventually, on October 19th, the FI leadership sent a statement to the RML regarding this case. In this statement, the FI vehemently stated that “Wu forgot the duty of revolutionaries, of militants who are in solidarity with the members of the [Chinese] Democracy Movement and of members of the Fourth International”, since “[t]he wrong done to the militants of the Democracy Movement is considerable. Certain of the documents written by Wu during his detention can be directly used to fuel ‘staged’ trials against [the] Democracy Movement militants...” and “Wu has given the bureaucracy effective weapons with which it can attack our movement and he has discredited the Fourth International”.⁸³⁸ Thus, the FI saw Wu’s behaviour as

⁸³⁵ “Report on the Wu Affair, from the RCP to the United Secretariat, Fourth International”, Sep 20th, 1981, p. 6.

⁸³⁶ Editorial Board, “yijian sunhai minyun liyi de shi” (A Thing That Has Damaged the CDM), *Xuexi tongxun* (Study Correspondence), Oct 1st, 1981, published by a *Study Youth Group* (i.e. the Preparatory Committee), pp. 2-3 in *MS 1709, 28*; and Editorial Board, “Ping Wu Zhongxian beibu shijian” (On Wu Zhongxian’s Arrest), drafted on Oct 20th, 1981, published on *October Review* on behalf of the RCP, Dec 1981, p. 19. However, after being informed about Wu’s affair, the RCP, at the very beginning, considered his “confession” as a “principled mistake” in late June, “Women dui X tongzhi (i.e. Wu Zhongxian) de yijian” (Our Attitude towards Comrade X), drafted by the RCP, Jun 20th, 1981, p. 2.

⁸³⁷ “A Letter from Rousset to Wang Fanxi”, Sep 23rd, 1981, single-paged, *MS 1709, 28*.

⁸³⁸ “Wu ‘Affair’”, from Usec Bureau of the FI to the RML, Oct 19th, 1981, p. 1, *MS 1709, 28*.

representing “a real political capitulation”, and decided to urge the RML to “officially” expel Wu from the Trotskyist organisation.⁸³⁹ At the end, following the FI’s directive, the RML accepted the criticism from the FI, more importantly, it internally and publicly announced its decision to “officially” expel Wu while reaffirming the Trotskyists’ pro-CDM position on November 30th, 1981.⁸⁴⁰

Above all, despite the “negativeness” which the Wu affair provoked in the CDM and in the Trotskyist movement, this demonstrates to some extent that there was a real connection between Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong and the CDM activists in mainland China under Communist rule. Through Wu’s case, we can clearly see that Hong Kong Trotskyists attempted to play a supportive role in the CDM. It should also be noteworthy that in late December 1981, a courageous RML activist, Liu Shanqing, who had already been to the mainland 14 times to communicate with the CDM activists, decided to take the risk of going to Guangzhou again in order to visit the families of CDM activists who had been arrested earlier in 1981, such as Wang Xizhe and He Qiu. Shortly after his arrival in Guangzhou, Liu was also arrested by the Communist police. In comparison with Wu’s attitude under detention, Liu did not “capitulate” to the Communists. Consequently, in 1983,

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁰ See the internal decision in “Kaichu Wu Zhongxian de jueyi” (A Resolution of Expelling Wu Zhongxian from the Party), *MS 1709, 28*; see also the RML’s public statement on Wu in “Jiu Wuzhongxian beibu shijian de shengming” (A Statement Regarding Wu Zhongxian’s Arrest), Nov 30th, 1981, published on *October Review*, Dec 1981, p. 23.

he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.⁸⁴¹ Liu was not released from prison until the end of 1991.

⁸⁴¹ See more details about Liu's case in Liu Shanqing, *Wuhui de Zhengcheng*, pp. 32-51; and *Liu Shanqing yinxiangji* (The Impression on Liu Shanqing), published by Yingjiu Liu Shanqing weiyuanhui (The Committee for the Rescue of Liu Shanqing), a pamphlet (Hong Kong: 1982).

Epilogue: A Democratic Echo from “Outside-of-the-System”

Dissidents: Rethinking Chinese Trotskyism Today

In the present, despite the fact that the *Pioneer Group* and the RCP as Trotskyist groups continue to nominally exist in Hong Kong,⁸⁴² and *October Review* continues to be published, the Trotskyist organisation is never beyond a level of being a tiny marginal “propaganda group”.⁸⁴³ It can be said that the Trotskyist movement in China and Hong Kong as a whole has been completely defeated, and its influence has been minimal in the contemporary history of China. Nevertheless, after examining the history of Chinese Trotskyism, we should ask: what is the value of such a radical Left group at the “margin” for today’s China?

Unlike the CCP, the “defeated” Trotskyist group in China and Hong Kong was always in a minority in the history of the Chinese radical Left/Communist movement. However, as Joseph Miller points out, we cannot assess Chinese Trotskyism as part of a “winner-loser” dichotomy.⁸⁴⁴ Rather, we should re-think Chinese Trotskyism for today and re-assess its value in the light of its own history and intentions as a genuine movement of the Left.

⁸⁴² Furthermore, in 2010, a new small local Trotskyist group *Socialist Action* was founded in Hong Kong, sponsored by an international Trotskyist organisation, the *Committee for a Workers’ International*. Despite the fact that in 1979, all the imprisoned Chinese Trotskyists who remained alive were released by the Communist state, there is no political existence of Trotskyists in mainland China at present.

⁸⁴³ Gregor Benton and Xiang Qing both historically consider the Chinese Trotskyist group as a “propaganda group”. Gregor Benton, *Prophets Unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in Revolution, War, Jail, and the Return from Limbo* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 33. Xiang Qing, *Zhongguo tuopai de xianzhuang yu qiantu* (The Current Situation and Future of Chinese Trotskyists), 1977, Marxist Internet Archive: <<https://www.marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/marxist.org-chinese-chinatrots-19770318.htm>>.

⁸⁴⁴ Joseph Miller, “The Politics of Chinese Trotskyism: The Role of a Permanent Opposition in Communism” (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1979), p. 3.

“Trotskyism is usually seen by mainstream commentators as a form of political extremism, intolerant, authoritarian, and the absolute opposite of a democracy movement,” however, in the scholarly eyes of Gergor Benton, in China, the Trotskyists’ “association with democracy was always exceptionally strong...It continued to resonate throughout the history of Chinese Trotskyist movement.”⁸⁴⁵ The Trotskyists’ consistent contribution to a Chinese movement of democracy and political freedom was not only discovered and expounded upon by Benton, but also other Western historians have also discerned a strong relation between Chinese Trotskyists and democracy. That is to say, a number of historians have discovered that as a part of the group of democratic dissidents in China, the Trotskyists also joined a long struggle to pursue democratic rights and political freedoms for Chinese people, though their democratic pursuit was always within the parameters of “socialism/Communism”. For example, by examining the early period of Chinese Trotskyist movement in Shanghai, an American scholar, Richard Kagan points out that “Trotsky's ideas harmonised with and nourished Chinese intellectuals' campaigns for iconoclasm and political freedom”.⁸⁴⁶ Moreover, Joseph Miller has also investigated that a democratic pursuit in the Chinese Trotskyist movement is consistent throughout its political history and continued to be preserved in its Hong Kong activities, though this “ideal” was mainly “literary”.⁸⁴⁷ Therefore, the role of Trotskyists in Chinese democracy might be a historical legacy for today’s Chinese politics, as democracy has

⁸⁴⁵ Benton, 2015, p. 16.

⁸⁴⁶ Richard Kagan, “Trotskyism in Shanghai, 1929-1932: The Politics of Iconoclasm”, *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 1&2, 1977, p. 105.

⁸⁴⁷ See: Joseph Miller, “Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program”, in the 4th National Conference, *the Asian Studies Association of Australia* (Melbourne, 1982).

always been in an “empty phase” or run a “poor course” since the Chinese intellectuals acquired this concept from the West in modern China.

Indeed, since the birth of Chinese Trotskyism, the Trotskyists spent much time and energy trying to preserve the “imported” democratic ideals that also “took strong root in Chinese soil and have survived civil war, foreign invasion, and some of the most brutal political repression ever recorded in history”.⁸⁴⁸

From what we have shown in previous chapters of this thesis, we can explicitly see that Chinese Trotskyists in “diaspora” still kept their pursuit of indigenous democracy alive, and “on the whole in China, Trotskyism stood historically for the democratic movement”.⁸⁴⁹

Organisationally, besides various groups of Hong Kong students, the Trotskyists were the main pioneers that actively participated and ardently supported the Chinese Democracy Movement (CDM) since the April 5th 1976 Tian’anmen incident occurred.⁸⁵⁰ As presented in chapters 4 and 7, from 1976 on, the new generation of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong not only frequently voiced their political support and staged solidarity activities with democratic movement in China, but also the young Trotskyists, in the very late 1970s and early 1980s, went to mainland China on their own initiative to keep in touch with the CDM activists and exchange ideas with the mainland dissidents. In spite of the fact that a majority of democratic dissidents in China were not persuaded by the Trotskyist view, a number of the CDM activists

⁸⁴⁸ *China, Marxism, and Democracy, Selections from October Review*, ed. by Thomas Barrett (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 5.

⁸⁴⁹ Gregor Benton, *China’s Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1912-1952* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 72.

⁸⁵⁰ Pik Wan Wong, “The Pro-Chinese Democracy Movement in Hong Kong”, in *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*, ed. Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W. K. Chiu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), pp. 60–61.

such as Wang Xizhe, Chen Fusheng, and others, were attracted by the political thought of Trotskyism to some degree.

Regardless of the “endless” disputes regarding internal matters amongst the Hong Kong Trotskyists, a large number of Chinese Trotskyists from different groups had far more in common in supporting the CDM and demanding political freedoms for Chinese people. In 1981, Wu Zhongxian’s arrest seemed to largely demoralise the Trotskyist movement and discredit Trotskyism in the CDM. But to redeem its reputation and maintain its supportive role in the CDM, the RML took measures to expel Wu from the ranks of Chinese Trotskyists. And since 1977, the RCP in its party programme had stressed that it was “necessary” to implement “socialist democracy” in China.⁸⁵¹ In 1988, at the fifth congress of the RCP, while keeping its hope on the industrial *proletariat* in China in its political programme, the RCP re-stated its democratic principle:

“[P]ractice true and full socialist democracy; working people should enjoy all democratic and liberal rights (including the freedom to form parties and conduct activities fairly and legally), the freedom and good name of dissidents should be restored, and the CCP’s use of any excuse to limit or deprive them of their rights must be opposed;

⁸⁵¹ RCP, *Xin Zhongguo de fazhan yu women de renwu* (The Development of New China and Our Tasks: The RCP Party Programme) (Hong Kong, 1977), p. 44.

[F]orm independent worker unions and student, youth, women's, and other mass organisations to represent and safeguard the masses' rights and oppose the control and manipulation of the CCP..."⁸⁵²

To put the Trotskyist thinking into practice, despite the smallness of the Trotskyist organisation, particularly during the second wave of the Chinese Democracy Movement in 1989, the Pioneer Group and the RCP continued to organise and participate in mass solidarity activities in Hong Kong with the Tian'anmen demonstrations.⁸⁵³

Miller, writing in 1981, assessed the situation in this way: to "examine, criticise, and promote the wide range of ideas found within the ranks of the CDM" and to disseminate the opinions of Chinese democratic dissidents to the Hong Kong audience, "[s]ince the beginning of 1980, both *October Review* and *Combat Bulletin* have averaged four to six articles per issue concerning socialist democracy and the CDM. This has included rather extensive reprinting of pieces from the so-called 'unofficial' magazines (China's equivalent to Soviet *samizdat*); this has become a regular feature of each issue".⁸⁵⁴ But by later in the 1980s, Trotskyist influence in Hong Kong had become intermittent and the *Combat Bulletin* of the RML was rarely published. Nevertheless, in a "battle" of words concerning the democratic movement in China, the *October Review* of the RCP still makes its own impact and continues to be published regularly. Its publications keep the

⁸⁵² "The Current Situation in China and the Tasks of Revolutionaries", adopted by the 5th RCP congress in 1988, in Thomas Barrett, p. 58.

⁸⁵³ Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview*, Aug 17th, 2014. Thomas Barrett, p. 14.

⁸⁵⁴ Joseph Miller, "Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program", p. 12. In addition, the Trotskyists helped to establish a resource centre of the Chinese Democracy Movement in Hong Kong in June 1981. Joseph Miller, "Trotskyism in China: Its Origins and Contemporary Program", p. 13. See a collection of the *October Review* in English in Thomas Barrett, 1996.

pursuit of “socialist democracy” and of political freedoms alive in its criticisms and discussions. It continues to follow up the current development of civil movement in post-socialist China. For example, during the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement, the *October Review* contributed an extensive range of reports and discussions on the CDM to the Hong Kong audience from a radical Left point of view.⁸⁵⁵ Even today, these magazines keep speaking out for dissent regarding human rights, labour activities, civil movement, etc., both taking place in the “capitalist” China and Hong Kong.⁸⁵⁶

Individually, prominent Chinese Trotskyists’ democratic concerns mirrored an intellectual reflection concerning the issue of Chinese democracy. Wang Fanxi was a key figure amongst those eminent Trotskyists who did not abandon their individual pursuits of democracy and political freedom, and were keen on “restoring” a theoretical/practical link between socialism and democracy as Trotskyists. In 1957, when Wang was in exile in Macao, he recalled his and others’ discussions with Chen Duxiu, a democrat, the founder of the CCP, and a Trotskyist, in the late 1930s.⁸⁵⁷ Based on these discussions and his own concept of democracy, he conceived several key points on “socialist democracy”: unlike the Communist “bureaucratic” rule, under the “proletarian dictatorship”, various democratic rights and political freedoms including “habeas corpus; freedom of speech; the press; assembly; and

⁸⁵⁵ During the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement, *October Review* kept reprinting the source documents collected from the mainland on the development of the CDM 1989. After the June 4th repression of the students, it published a collection of the CDM source documents. See: *Zhongguo minyun yuan ziliao jingxuan*, Vol.1, and Vol. 2 (The Collection of the Chinese Democracy Movement Source Documents) (Hong Kong: October Review, 1989).

⁸⁵⁶ Since 2007, *October Review* has published two online issues per year. See its criticisms of “capitalism” in China and Hong Kong in its website: <http://octrev.mysrvnet.com/>.

⁸⁵⁷ See the relationship between Chen Duxiu and Chinese Trotskyism in Gregor Benton, 1996, pp. 41–51.

association; the right to strike, etc.” must be protected. In a socialist system, opposition parties that support socialism should be allowed to exist, and opposition factions within the workers’ parties should also be tolerated. The power of the dictatorship should be supervised by toiling voters, while power “should not be concentrated on in one body but should be spread across several structures so that there is a system of checks and balances to prevent the emergence of an autocracy or monocacy”. Under “the dictatorship of the proletariat”, a multi-party parliament democratically elected by the proletariat should be guaranteed, and the government’s policies must be discussed and approved by this multi-party parliament, and so on.⁸⁵⁸

Furthermore, when Wang heard of the rise of the CDM in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in spite of his retirement as a Trotskyist activist, from a Trotskyist position and as a democrat, he always gave vocal support to the CDM activists on the mainland and participated in solidarity activities with the CDM. In May 1979, a small group of British socialists and overseas Chinese established a *Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in China* in London in opposition to the CCP’s repression of the CDM and in solidarity with the Chinese dissidents. Along with a few renowned English socialist historians and theorists, such as E.P. Thompson, Ralph Miliband, Robin Blackburn, Wang endorsed and sponsored this committee.⁸⁵⁹ In 1989, after hearing the suppression of the student protest at Tian’anmen Square on June 4th, Wang wanted to express his condemnation of the Chinese government’s

⁸⁵⁸ Wang Fanxi, “Seven These on Socialism and Democracy”, in *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire, China’s Road to Democracy, Yan’an to Tian’anmen, 1942-1989*, ed. by Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 101–3. Gregor Benton, 1996, pp. 76–77.

⁸⁵⁹ See: Gregor Benton, “China Radical Review”, (Amsterdam: Jun 30th, 1981), single-paged, *Wang Fanxi Archive, MS 1709, 43*.

repressive action. In support of the students' democratic appeals, he drafted a personal statement on June 9th. In his statement, he vehemently accused the Communist government of committing "the gravest crime". From his anti-"bureaucratic" stance and his anger, Wang ardently argued that:

"We must oppose the [Communist] regime, raise our voice in protest against it, fight against it, and call for its replacement. Such a brutal regime must be replaced!"⁸⁶⁰

While supporting the repressed students in Beijing, he reaffirmed that what he demanded was "socialism with democracy".⁸⁶¹ Later, in an exchange of letters with a notable exiled Chinese dissident, Liu Binyan, Wang reiterated his concept of "socialism with democracy". He disagreed with some CDM activists that socialism and democracy were "completely contradictory".⁸⁶²

Wang's democratic view was typical among Chinese Trotskyists. They wanted to point out the essence of democratic rights and political freedoms as being part of Marxist/socialist practice, which the people had achieved through political struggle in Western capitalist societies. In 1980, in an interview, while condemning the factional struggle and Deng Xiaoping's rise within the "bureaucratic" layer of the CCP, Peng Shuzhi endorsed the dissident movement, i.e. the CDM, and put his hopes on the young dissidents who were regarded by Peng as "the representatives of the new generation in

⁸⁶⁰Wang Fanxi, "Statement", in *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire, China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942-1989*, ed. by Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 285. See also original Wang's statement both in English and Chinese in *MS 1709, 46-47*. According to Benton, due to Wang's illness, his statement was read out by someone else in a Chinese student meeting in Leeds, which was on a television broadcast of Channel 4.

⁸⁶¹ Wang Fanxi, "Statement", p. 285.

⁸⁶² "A Personal Letter from Wang Fanxi to Liu Binyan", Feb 11th, 1990, single-paged, *MS 1709, 48-49*.

China” who demanded democracy for China while criticising the CCP’s “bureaucracy”. As far as Peng was concerned, this was close to the Trotskyist views.⁸⁶³ In 1986, when expressing his views on the Cultural Revolution and China’s opening reforms to a press interview, another outstanding Trotskyist in Hong Kong, Lou Guohua, indicated that during the Cultural Revolution, under the circumstances of strict state control over organisation and ideology, “genuine socialist democracy” became impossible. He believed that only through the mass movement from below could the goal of “socialist democracy” be achieved in China.⁸⁶⁴ Lou’s assumption might be right. In 1989, despite the Communist’s brutal suppression, by organising and participating in the mass movement, a considerable number of students and citizens from the younger generation genuinely pursued democratic rights and political freedoms for the Chinese people, which shook up Communist rule. From both the individual and organisational level of Trotskyist practice above, we can perceive what Benton has pointed out: that the main value of Trotskyism for today’s China is the Trotskyists’ “consistent promotion of the idea of socialist democracy”.⁸⁶⁵ And this “consistent promotion” is unsullied in the history of Chinese Trotskyism.

Furthermore, Chinese Trotskyists not only insisted on the value of democracy in the Trotskyist version of Marxism, but also, after the collapse of the Communist USSR and Eastern Europe in the very early 1990s, they insisted

⁸⁶³ Peng Shuzhi, “The Chinese Dissident Movement Today, An Interview with Peng Shu-tse, August 1980”, *CDM Dossier* (Hong Kong: Chinese Democratic Movement Reprint Service, 1981), p. 8, 13, in *MS 1709*, 43.

⁸⁶⁴ Lou Guohua, “Tuopai Dui Zhongguo Gaige de Kanfa” (A Trotskyist View on the Opening Reform of China), *Kai Fang* (Hong Kong, April 1986).

⁸⁶⁵ Gregor Benton, “Chinese Trotskyism and Democracy”, *Leeds East Asia Papers*, 1992, p. 11.

on the “correctness” of Marxism and began to emphasise the continued “correctness” and “meaningfulness” of Trotskyist perspectives. After the Tian’anmen repression and the downfall of the Soviet system from 1989 to 1991, a large number of socialists and Communists were disappointed with Marxism, and thus abandoned their beliefs in socialism/Communism. In a word, they were saying that Marxism was bankrupt. On the contrary, Chinese Trotskyists did not regard the socio-political transformation of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries to capitalism as a disaster of socialism, but a defeat of “bureaucratic” states because they recognised the USSR, China and other Eastern European Communist regimes historically as “bureaucratic” states rather than “socialist” ones, which, from the Trotskyist perspective, had never been sustainable from the beginning. Thus, in their eyes, the USSR’s collapse did not inevitably lead to the failure of Marxist practice, but disproved “Stalinism” conclusively; and the Trotskyist individuals who witnessed the bankruptcy of the Soviet system were “qualified” to say that the anti-“bureaucratic” Trotskyist version of Marxism was “right”.⁸⁶⁶ Even though there was a socialist downfall in the early 1990s, they still confidently believed that their Marxism, i.e. Trotskyism, was not defeated or out of fashion, but was still applicable in explaining the debacle of the so-called socialist countries. The “meaningfulness” of the Trotskyist existence was to keep propagating their notion of Marxism without the burden of Soviet “bureaucracy”.

⁸⁶⁶ See: Wang Fanxi, *Wang Fanxi wannian zhaji* (Wang Fanxi’s Personal Diaries in His Later Years), unpublished, p. 59. Zheng Chaolin, *Shishi yu huiyi* (The History and Recollection) (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 1998), Vol. 2, pp. 471-472.

Despite the fact that in reality, the towering figures of Chinese Trotskyists have passed away and there are few Trotskyist voices at present, and that in history, the Trotskyist movement at the “margin” only produced an intermittent influence in Chinese and Hong Kong politics, the Trotskyists’ persistence in adhering to the radical concept of “socialism with democracy” and their criticisms of the CCP regime continue to haunt today’s undemocratic China.

As Benton summarises:

“The Trotskyists’ legacy for China is that they upheld the standard of urban revolution and socialist democracy and pointed to a way of releasing Chinese society from the endless chain of repression, risings, and repression. Because of their democratic critique of Chinese society and Stalinist politics, they have become metaphors incarnate for a host of unresolved problems in Chinese Politics.”⁸⁶⁷

But, once again, on a practical and intellectual level, what is the empirical meaning of Trotskyism in China today? Concerning the “unresolved problems in Chinese politics”, since 1989, different groups of Chinese intellectuals have recommended different answers to them. Some intellectuals who are categorised as “liberals” advocate Hayek’s model of liberalism so that a legal framework depending on *free market* provided by the state will guarantee individual freedoms and democratic reforms in China.⁸⁶⁸ Meanwhile, there also arose the “New Left” nationalistic intellectuals who reject Western norms

⁸⁶⁷ Gregor Benton, 1996, p. 118.

⁸⁶⁸ See some “liberal” thoughts and discussions on China’s current reforms in *Zhengzhi Zhongguo: mianxiang xin tizhi xuanze de shidai* (Political China: In an Era of Choices towards a New System), ed. by Dong Yuyu and Shi Binhai (Beijing: Jinri zhongguo chubanshe, 1998). *Sichao: Zhongguo ‘xinzuopai’ jiqi yingxiang* (Trends of Thought: The Chinese ‘New Left’ and Its Influence), ed. by Gong Yang (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003).

and advocate strong national identity, and social equality and justice in China as granted by the regime.⁸⁶⁹ Additionally, some other intellectuals from the ruling elite who are in line with the Western norm of Social Democracy suggest that the CCP should promote political reforms by adopting and establishing a welfare system, the decentralisation of power, and the multi-party system.⁸⁷⁰ However, these three types of Chinese intellectuals and others, as a Chinese scholar, Xu Jilin declares, “never want to grasp government power but rather seek to advise [the CCP] leaders”.⁸⁷¹ Similarly, Timothy Cheek discovers that “many dissidents simply demanded the right to fulfil the kind of mandarin role that Chinese states (imperial, nationalist, and communist alike) have promised the intelligentsia: that of acting as advisers to those who govern.”⁸⁷² In other words, a majority of Chinese “liberal” intellectuals and dissidents are bound to submit themselves to the political power, and thus we can see them as the “within-system dissidents” who will finally make concessions to the Communist state power.

Compared to the “within-system dissidents”, from the point of view of a radical Left more akin to the western Left, Trotskyism might offer another alternative

⁸⁶⁹ See more “Chinese New Left” thoughts, for example, in Gong Yang, 2003. Wang Hui, *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2010).

⁸⁷⁰ See the advocations of Social Democracy amongst the members of “ruling elite” in China in Xie Tao, *Zhiyou minzhu shehuizhuyi caineng jiu Zhongguo* (Only Can Democratic Socialism Save China) (Aisixiang, 2010) <<http://www.aisixiang.com/data/35710.html>>. Feng Chongyi, “The Party-State, Liberalism and Social Democracy: The Debate on China’s Future”, in *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*, ed. Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 250. Some scholars, like Feng Chongyi, believe that “[o]ne key to the future of China lies in the reflection of intellectuals and members of the ruling elite on this transition”. See *ibid*, p. 251.

⁸⁷¹ Timothy Cheek, “Historians as Public Intellectuals in Contemporary China”, in *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*, ed. by Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 213.

⁸⁷² Timothy Cheek, “From Priests to Professionals: Intellectuals and the State under the CCP”, in *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China: Lessons from 1989*, ed. by N.Wasserstrom and E.J.Perry (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 125.

way of thinking about the future China. Even though the Trotskyists have something in common with the Chinese “within-system” liberals to advocate political freedoms, democratic rights, multi-party system, social equality, etc., what makes Chinese Trotskyists different from the liberal circle of Chinese mainstream intellectuals is that after the downfall of “bureaucratic socialism” in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, based upon the orthodox Marxist notion of “class struggle” and the Lenin-Trotsky’s formula of “proletarian dictatorship”, they put a special emphasis on the significance of “socialism with democracy” particularly within the Chinese context of “capitalist transformation”. After the state repression of the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement, Trotskyists see China under the CCP’s rule as no longer a “workers” regime but as having transformed into a “capitalist” state.⁸⁷³ Unlike the “within-system dissidents”, they do not anticipate any democratic reforms from within, but expect that Chinese Communist rule will be replaced through the workers’ movement, while expressing their resolute opposition to the “bureaucratic capitalist” state governed by the CCP.⁸⁷⁴ In this sense, the

⁸⁷³ Regarding the capitalist development in China, in 1988, the RCP had perceived that “the danger and harm of capitalist restoration has increased”. Also, Xiang Qing felt that the year of 1988 was a turning point of the “capitalist restoration” in the CCP regime. See: “The Current Situation in China and the Tasks of Revolutionaries”, adopted by the 5th RCP congress in 1988, in Thomas Barrett, p. 21. Xiang Qing, *Xiang Qing Interview, Aug 17th, 2014*. But in some Trotskyists’ eyes, the 1989 repression of the CDM was a clear sign that the CCP was already on the road to “capitalism”. See: Ou Longyu, *Ou Longyu Interview, Aug 18th, 2014*. Lin Zhiliang, *Lin Zhiliang Interview, Aug 20th, 2014*. After 1989, the Trotskyists in Hong Kong began to vehemently condemn the CCP’s “capitalist restoration”. See their sharp criticisms in Xiang Qing, “You Zhonggong Zhuanzheng Jiu Meiyou Shehuizhuyi” (If the CCP’s Dictatorship Exists, There will be No Socialism), *Xinmiao Bimonthly* (Hong Kong, April 1990), pp. 4–6. Xiang Qing, “Zai Tan Zhonggong Zhengquan de Xingzhi” (My Second Discussion on the Character of the CCP’s Regime), *Xinmiao Bimonthly* (Hong Kong, December 1990), pp. 11–20. Xiang Qing and Liu Yufan, *Cong guanliao shehuizhuyi dao guanliao zibenzhuyi de Zhongguo* (China under A Transformation from Bureaucratic Socialism to Bureaucratic Capitalism) (Hong Kong: Xinmiao Press, 1997).

⁸⁷⁴ The *China Democracy Party* (CDP) is also a small overseas Chinese opposition party, standing outside of the Communist state, but unlike the resolute Chinese Trotskyists, some of the CDP leaders, such as Wang Xizhe, still put their democratic hope on the “reform from within”. See the development of the CDP in Teresa Wright, ‘Intellectuals and the Politics of

Chinese Trotskyists were a “not ‘within-system opposition’ loyal to the regime in some respects and critical of it in others, for they had the ‘will to power’ that distinguishes an opposition from a movement of dissent. They never sought to shelter behind sympathetic forces in the official world or to borrow or adapt official arguments.”⁸⁷⁵ Rather, standing outside of the state system, they vehemently criticise the CCP’s “capitalist” regime that preserves the Communist discourse as an essential means to defend its legitimacy. Therefore, as a group of “outside of the system” dissidents, they have not given up their pursuits of independent thinking, democratic rights, and Trotskyist version of Marxism over the long term. They never succumb to the Communist power, but echo their “democratic socialist” views “at the margin”, which might provide an alternative critical perspective of the current undemocratic Chinese politics from an “anti-bureaucratic and anti-capitalist” radical Left position.

Protest: The Case of the China Democracy Party’, in *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*, ed. by Edward Gu and Merle Goldman (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 158–80. See Wang Xizhe’s hope on “the reform within” in *Wang Xizhe tan Bo Xilai shijian* (Wang Xizhe’s View on Bo Xilai Incident), Apr 12th, 2012:

http://bbs.creaders.net/politics/bbsviewer.php?trd_id=702122

⁸⁷⁵ Benton, 2015, p. 38.

Conclusion

In this thesis, we have explored the new emergence and the political-ideological dynamics of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in Colonial Hong Kong, primarily in the 1970s, by profoundly examining the new formation of the Trotskyist organisation, its role in the local socio-political movement, social responses from the press, the British colonial authorities' hostility against Trotskyism, and the ideological-political confrontation between Trotskyists and local pro-PRC leftist presence through respective propaganda platforms in the Hong Kong context. Furthermore, the internal struggle of Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong and their political connections with the *Fourth International* have also been looked into and investigated in the thesis. In this sense, readers can deepen their understanding of the contemporary Chinese Trotskyism in "diaspora", particularly at the "margin" of China, i.e. Colonial Hong Kong, as an integral and unknown part of international Trotskyism in history.

In the 1970s, under the external stimuli, which is to say, the influence of the New Left imported from the West, a small group of Hong Kong young radicals looked for an ideological source of political identity from Trotskyism to further their radical activities in Hong Kong. They soon recognised themselves as Trotskyists, and by adopting Trotskyist doctrines and making use of Trotskyism as a "weapon" to justify their anti-establishment political positions, a new formation of Chinese Trotskyists emerged in Hong Kong political arena. Unlike the Chinese Trotskyists' role as "bystanders" in the 1930-40s,

the 70s' Trotskyist activity in Hong Kong was to some extent influential in local politics for a certain period of time (but always in a negative way, as presented by the press and the colonial government). Young Trotskyists undertook something of a vanguard role in an indigenous rise of socio-political movements by means of protest.

However, the Trotskyists never achieved their aim of efficiently mobilising the local labour movement, nor were they able directly to challenge and confront their main enemies, the colonial power and the pro-Communist PRC groups. These attempts were unsuccessful or were suppressed, lowering the morale of the Trotskyists and causing them to be disillusioned. Moreover, organisational infighting, resignations and expulsions of party members further isolated and marginalised the Trotskyist movement from Hong Kong politics. Consequently, after the organisational split and the arrest of Wu Zhongxian in the very early 1980s, it seems that Trotskyist activities, the RML activities in particular, faded away from the local political arena. Eventually, at the “margin” of China, Trotskyists' radicalism became further marginal and was ignored in the political domain.

Nevertheless, though in terms of mainstream politics, Chinese Trotskyist groups in Hong Kong may be also viewed as a political “loser” and a small “defeated” left-wing group only composed of less than a hundred radicals, it does not mean that as a political movement, Hong Kong Trotskyist activity is meaningless. In this study, it can be seen that the newer generation of Chinese Trotskyists in Hong Kong did not want to be political “bystanders” in the socio-political change of society. But since a new formation of Trotskyist activities emerged in the early 1970s, along with student groups, reformist

organisations, etc., Trotskyists put a great effort into the “battle” for changing Hong Kong society, and through socio-political movements and propaganda platforms, they tried to exert their own ideological-political impact on a portion of leftist-leaning local young people, workers, and others. In a word, they wanted a Trotskyist voice to be heard in the Hong Kong’s socio-political transformation in the 1970s. As a key component of Hong Kong radical movement, the Trotskyist movement deserves to be given a paragraph in Hong Kong’s contemporary history.

In the late 1970s, through the participation and connection with the early Chinese Democracy Movement, Chinese Trotskyists from the “margin” attempted to re-establish a link with mainland political activities aimed at pursuing “socialist democracy”, and to deliver their “genuine Marxist” views on democracy to Chinese democracy activists. Despite the fact that both the Chinese Democracy Movement and the Trotskyist movement failed or collapsed, the radical thinking of Chinese Trotskyists, particularly their discussion of the relation between socialism and democracy, may provide a group of Chinese intellectuals with an important ideological perspective so that they may re-think change in China today.

Some scholars such as Benton suggest that the “consistent promotion of socialist democracy” is one of the ultimate pursuits of Chinese Trotskyists. But like Trotskyists everywhere, this promotion was also consistently violated by their own history of endless sectarianism, expulsions and condemnations for “breaking organisational rules”. If there was to be a rise of the Trotskyist movement elsewhere, this old unsolved problem would become one of the biggest challenges for the Trotskyists in their political future.

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