

## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FARMERS MOVEMENT IN KWANGTUNG, 1924-1926

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### Introduction

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### INTRODUCTION

The main body of what follows is a chapter I wrote twenty years ago and never published, though I drew upon it briefly in *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-1928* (Cambridge University Press, 1984). To put the chapter into its historical setting, I should preface it with some general statements. I have also provided a sequel.

The subject seems important because it deals with the first efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to mobilize China's farmers, *nung-min*. (This term is usually translated as "peasants" in European Communist parlance.) Mobilizing the farmers of south China was part of a larger effort of the Nationalist and Communist Parties working together to set in motion a revolutionary movement that would unify the country, end militarism and the heavy hand of imperialism in China, and bring about a better society, although the temporary partners had different visions of what that better society should be.

Three concepts inform this essay—the soil, the seeders, and the climate. By this I refer to the revolutionary potential, the revolutionary organizers, and the revolutionary atmosphere in the region where the farmers movement began. All three were essential for such success in the agrarian movement as was achieved in the mid-1920s.

Agriculture is, of course, the basis of the Chinese economy, and the

largest portion of the Chinese population, by far, lives in the countryside. This has been so from the far past until the present. China's huge rural population during the past several hundred years spread to virtually all arable land, bringing it into intensive cultivation, using all the techniques of irrigation, plant varieties, soil enrichment, and multiple cropping systems in the nation's cultural inventory, and especially using human labor intensively. Competition to own or cultivate farmland had become intense by the Twentieth Century almost everywhere. Rural poverty was widespread, periodic famines ravaged parts of the less favored northern province, and floods ravaged the center and the south. History showed repeated millenarian revolts among the rural poor. While Chinese agriculture was productive, its benefits were distributed very unevenly among the population. Any reformist or revolutionary movement would have to deal with this enormously complex and profoundly difficult matter.

Among Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, the issue of the People's Livelihood concerned him greatly. He had two proposals for solving the land problem: equalization of land rights, and land to the tillers. Together these implied a redistribution of farm lands to break up large holdings, and arrangements so that tenants and agricultural laborers would own the land they cultivated. Dr. Sun had not thought through how to achieve these goals, though he proposed that the government purchase the lands of the wealthy at the price they put upon it for tax purposes, and that the government appropriate the incremental value that came about by socio-economic development. He well understood, however, that much constructive work to increase productivity and assure equity would have to be done after he became President of a unified government. He was a reformist, and hoped to carry out all improvements through legislative means. His position is quite clear in his speech to the first graduating class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute on August 21, 1924. Dr. Sun urged the graduates to bring China's farmers into his National Revolution but to avoid class struggle. Rural problems should be solved through peaceful cooperation between the government and farmers and between farmers and landowners, rather than through force, conflict, and destruction.

Lenin saw the problems of the peasantry in revolutionary terms. The proletariat and the peasantry, particularly the poor peasants, should join together in support of revolution. In theorizing about revolution in colonial

countries, he laid great emphasis on the recruitment of the vast peasant masses. His prescription was expropriation of landed estates and distribution of the land among the peasants. The Communist International, particularly at its Fourth Congress in November 1922, elaborated on Lenin's position. The Thesis on the Oriental Question stated, "Only agrarian revolution, which has as its task the expropriation of large land holdings, is capable of arousing huge peasant masses." The revolutionary parties of all Oriental countries were obliged to define clearly their agrarian program, and must force the bourgeois-nationalist parties to the largest degree possible to adopt this revolutionary program. The Comintern's Executive Committee sent detailed instructions to the young Chinese Communist Party, dated May 24, 1923, in which the main thrust was the necessity to broaden the national revolution by aggressively preparing for agrarian revolt, and to reform the Kuomintang and make it the leader of a democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal front. "The Communist Party must continuously influence the Kuomintang in favor of agrarian revolution, insisting on confiscation of land in favor of the poorest peasantry, thus to insure peasant support for Sun's revolutionary army."

However, the interest of the Chinese Communist Party in the peasantry until 1924 seems to have been almost entirely verbal. In action, the Party concentrated on propaganda and organizing the proletariat. The Third Party Congress, held in Canton in June 1923, adopted a political program that contained a purely reformist set of principles to protect the interests of farmers by legislation. The Party's leader, Ch'en Tu-hsiu, warned in July that in a country like China, where (he stated) the majority of the peasants owned their land, it would not be easy to initiate a revolutionary movement in the countryside.

One person, who later stood out among the Chinese Communists as the most effective organizer of poor farmers, began work among them in mid-1922. This was P'eng Pai, a returned student from Japan, who had come under the influence of Japanese socialists, and who had been a member of a reformist student group which helped organize agricultural cooperatives and unions among Japanese farmers. Apparently inspired by this example, he set out in his native region to try to get in touch with farmers, some of whom were his family's tenants. After a painfully slow start he succeeded, with the help of some younger farmers, in organizing a union, mostly made up of

tenants. Gradually he set up similar unions in other parts of Haifeng County, and the movement even spread into neighboring counties. After this, he and his colleagues, mostly other intellectuals, organized a so-called provincial association. But the real strength remained in the Haifeng Farmers Association. After a crop-destroying storm, the Association attempted to mount a rent reduction movement, but the magistrate and a military force closed down its headquarters in August 1923. P'eng's efforts to reestablish the county association failed. By then, however, he was experienced in problems and methods of getting farmers to organize.

Michael Borodin, who came to Canton in October 1923, was commissioned to carry out the rather complex policies that Russian leaders had developed with respect to Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his Nationalist Party. He was to help revitalize the party and make it the "united front" leader of a revolution directed against imperialism and militarism. The goal was to unify the country and ultimately to convert China into a socialist state with allied Soviet Russia. An experienced revolutionary of magnetic personality, Borodin could call upon a great deal of money, for the Russian government had committed two million roubles as an initial investment, and Dr. Sun knew this. Borodin also brought to Canton several young military men who were veterans of the Russian Civil War and graduates of the Red Army Military Academy. The possibility of arms shipments was an important lure. Dr. Sun asked for arms at the two men's first meeting, for, though he had resumed the title of Generalissimo (*Ta Yuan-shuai*), his foothold in Kwangtung was entirely dependent upon militarist allies.

Borodin did help the Nationalist leadership to reshape the Kuomintang, using the pattern of the Russian Communist Party, and he proposed an attractive program of national reforms with a propaganda apparatus to propagate them. Then Borodin and his staff helped Dr. Sun to create a military academy, mostly financed by Russia, as the first step towards building a modern military force. These matters are well known.

Before any of this had been accomplished, Ch'en Chiung-ming's forces nearly succeeded in driving Generalissimo Sun out. In this crisis of November 1923, Borodin tried to persuade Dr. Sun to gather instant support by promising labor legislation (eight-day, minimum wage, etc.) and promising land to the peasants through confiscation and distribution of landlord holdings. The proposal for land distribution was exactly in line with the Comin-

tern's directive of May 1923 to the CCP, particularly in its emphasis on winning poor peasants for Sun's army. However, it was a form of social revolution much too radical for the Kuomintang at this time; nor could Sun Yat-sen have enforced such a measure. After considerable bargaining—according to Borodin's later account—Dr. Sun agreed to a decree reducing land rents by 25 percent, and to another providing for the establishment of peasant unions. Neither Dr. Sun nor Nationalist Party carried out the promised rent reduction (if it was promised), but farmers associations began to be created near Canton under Kuomintang auspices some months later.

The Manifesto of the Kuomintang prepared for the First National Congress that met in January 1924, mentioned the equalization of land and the regulation of capital as the most important provisions of the Principle of People's Livelihood. These were among Dr. Sun's core ideas. A new element, however, was the concept of the function of the masses in the National Revolution. Victory in the national revolutionary movement depended on the participation of the peasantry and labor throughout the country. The Kuomintang should lend its total strength to help develop the peasant and labor movements; and it must demand that peasants and workers join the Kuomintang and struggle ceaselessly to promote the national revolution. This Manifesto borrowed a great deal from the Resolution of the Presidium of the ECCI, "On the National Liberation Movement in China and the Kuomintang Party," dated November 28, 1923, which Borodin brought back to Canton after a brief trip to Shanghai.

Dr. Sun nominated a Central Executive Committee for the Kuomintang, which the Congress duly elected. This committee then set about to create functional bureaus at Party Headquarters in Canton. One was a Bureau for Farmers. The first head of the Bureau was Lin Tsu-han; an early T'ung-meng Hui and KMT member, who had recently joined the Chinese Communist Party.

Before going into more detail, I should mention several scholarly books in English dealing with our subject that were published after this chapter was written. The authors' interpretations differ considerably among themselves and from the view taken here. They are: *Seeds of Peasant Revolution: Report on the Haifeng Peasant Movement by P'eng P'ai*, Translated by Donald Holloch (Ithaca, Cornell University China-Japan Program, 1973); *The Broken*

*Wave: The Chinese Communist Peasant Movement, 1922-1928*, By Roy Hofheinz, Jr. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1977); *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and the Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927*, By Angus W. McDonald, Jr. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978); and *Rural Revolution in South China: Peasants and the Making of History in Haifeng County, 1570-1930*, by Robert B. Marks (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

### I. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN RURAL KWANGTUNG

The "farmers movement" in Kwangtung grew rapidly during 1925 and members of Farmers Associations (*Nung-min Hsieh-hui*) were sometimes in violent conflict with landlords, officials, and local military groups. Two divergent lines of explanation are adduced. One pictures socio-economic conditions as so harsh for a large proportion of the rural population that the situation was ripe for revolt. The other stresses the role of ideologically motivated organizers who mobilized the poorest rural classes and fanned them into revolt. One emphasizes the revolutionary situation; the other the role of revolutionaries. Both factors were at work during 1925. A third was the favorable political climate. Kwangtung came increasingly under the control of a party most of whose leaders favored the organization of farmers in order to bring them into the National Revolution and to ameliorate the economic lot of the poor among them.

Data concerning socio-economic conditions during the mid-1920's is scanty, scattered, and generally unverifiable. Kwangtung is a large province—nearly twice the size of New York state (85,328 sq. mi. against 49,576)—with a varied topography, an uneven distribution of population, several different ethnic groups, and social customs which differ from region to region. To generalize about Kwangtung is nearly as risky as to generalize about China. Empirical studies were restricted to particular localities—often no more than a single village—which may not be characteristic even for the region concerned. Furthermore, the various investigators used no common methodology, each was seeking particular types of data, and a number were careless in their terminology; therefore the results are difficult to compare. Some of the most interesting and valuable studies date from the 1930's. Because of the scarcity of earlier data such post-factum studies cannot be ignored, and they

probably reflect earlier conditions tolerably well, since such matters as systems of landowning, rental, marketing, interest rates and rural taxes probably changed only slowly. It is easy to produce a flood of "statistics" and a variety of percentages to support or confound almost any statement made about rural Kwangtung. Most of them may be reserved for those willing to read the notes. <sup>(1)</sup>

### *Some General Characteristics of Agrarian Life in Kwangtung*

Two facts seem closely related to rural discontent, the "soil" for revolution: the density of population and the high proportion of farm land that was tenant-operated in Kwangtung.

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- (1) I have used the following studies listed in sequence according to date of information. They will be cited by abbreviations given.

Hsiao (18th and 19th Centuries)

Kung-ch'uan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960).

Jamieson (1888)

George Jamieson, "Tenure of Land in China and the Condition of Rural Population." *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 23, 1888, pp. 59-174.

Contains a report, pp. 110-16, by Miss A.M. Fielde based on information obtained from ten owners of land in four districts within fifty miles of Swatow.

Freedman (ca. 1900-37)

Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organizations in Southeastern China* (London: University of London, 1958. Reprint 1965).

Assembles data from a variety of sources and dating mostly from before 1937. Some pertaining to the "New Territory" adjacent to Kowloon is unavailable elsewhere.

Liu (1912-36)

Hui-chen Wang Liu, *The Traditional Chinese Clan Rules* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1959).

Based upon genealogies dating between 1912 and 1936 but including older material. Two Kwangtung genealogies refer to five localities: Canton, Nan-hai, Hsiang-shan, Shun-te and Ho-pu.

Chen, Migrations (1910, 1920)

Ta Chen, *Chinese Migrations with Special Reference to Labor Conditions* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1923).

Population estimates for Kwangtung based on 1910 and 1920 compilations.

Stauffer (1918-19)

Milton T. Stauffer, *The Christian Occupation of China* (Shanghai: The China Continuation Committee, 1922).

Information gathered through questionnaire sent to Protestant Christian missions.

Kulp (1918-23)

Daniel Harrison Kulp, *Country Life in South China: The Sociology of Familism, vol. I, Phoenix Village, Kwangtung, China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925).

- Study of a village on Phoenix River, off the Han River, two hours boat ride northward from Ch'ao-chow, made by Kulp's students in 1918 and 1919, and visited by Kulp in 1923.
- Lamb (1921-26)  
Jefferson D. H. Lamb [Lin Tung-hai], *The Development of the Agrarian Movement and Agrarian Legislation in China* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1934).  
Uses published Chinese reports dating from 1921-26.
- Chang, Farmers (1917-27)  
T. C. Chang [Chang Tzu-ch'iang], *The Farmers Movement in Kwangtung* (Shanghai: National Christian Council of China, 1928).  
Data collected by him in Kwangtung during 1927; some may be cross-checked with Lamb.
- TITNM (1922-27)  
*Ti-i-tz'u Kuo-nei Ko-ming Chan-cheng Shih-ch'i ti Nung-min Yun-tung* [The Farmers Movement During the Period of the First Revolutionary Civil War] (Peking: Jen-min, 1953).  
Part 2, pp. 35-124, concerns Kwangtung and reprints materials written in 1927.
- KTNMPK (1924-26)  
*Kwangtung Nung-min Yun-tung Pao-kao* [Report on the Farmers Movement in Kwangtung] n. p., n. p., October 1926 (Hoover Institute, Microfilm).  
Observational reports on rural conditions and details on the growth of the farmers movement.
- Tawney (ca. 1918-28)  
R. H. Tawney, *Land and Labour in China* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932).  
Cites much data gathered by many investigators.
- Chen, Agrarian (1928, 1933)  
Han-seng Chen, *Agrarian Problems in Southernmost China* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1936).  
Contains data he acquired in 1933 in many villages in scattered localities through personal surveys and correspondence, and materials dated 1928 without identification of source.
- Buck (1929-33)  
J. Lossing Buck, *Land Utilization in China*, 3 vols. (Nanking: University of Nanking, 1937), Vol. I, text; Vol. II, maps; Vol. III, Statistics.  
Data collected 1929-33 through questionnaires administered by trained investigators in the field. About 15 localities were in Kwangtung.
- Chen, Emigrant (1934-35)  
Ta Chen, *Emigrant Communities in South China: A Study of Overseas Migration and Its Influence on Standards of Living and Social Change* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940).  
Data collected in ten hsien of eastern Kwangtung and southern Fukien, of which two in east Kwangtung were studied intensively.
- Lang (1936-37)  
Olga Lang, *Chinese Family and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946).  
Investigation of clans in Whampoa and perhaps elsewhere near Canton.
- Yang (1948-49)  
C. K. Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Technology Press, 1959).  
A detailed study of Nanching, a village on Honam Island, five miles from Canton, investigated during two years, but information reconstructed from memory in 1952.



No one can say confidently what the population of the province numbered in the mid-20's for there was nothing like an accurate census. Probably it was from 30 to 35 million. This population was concentrated in the south-central delta and in the Han River valley in the east. It was also clustered along the three main rivers flowing into the Pearl River. The main delta, an alluvial plain covering most of seven *hsien*, had a population approaching nine million, an amazing concentration of over 3,100 people for every square mile. Kwangtung was one of the most urbanized provinces of China, with approximately 30 per cent of the population living in towns and cities of more than 10,000. Canton was one of the country's largest cities, rivalling Shanghai. The province had eight other cities estimated at over 100,000, eight with more than 50,000, and 19 with over 25,000. The "Double Cropping Rice Area" (of which Kwangtung made up the greater part) had the second highest density of farm population in relation to farm land among the eight major agricultural regions of China according to the "most reliable" study. <sup>(2)</sup>

Kwangtung had a salubrious climate for intensive agriculture with a year-round growing season and plentiful rainfall in most regions. Its delta lands were exceedingly fertile. A dense urban population and a dense farm population near cities and towns went hand-in-hand, given the Chinese practice of exporting night soil from cities to enrich the farms and sending food from the farms to feed the cities. Agriculture was highly commercia-

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(2) In 1910 the Ministry of Interior produced an estimate of 27.7 millions. Chen, *Migrations*, p. 5. A survey made in 1918 in which missionaries were asked to estimate populations of the *hsien* where they resided, produced a total of 35,195,036, about two million less than the Post Office estimates with which two thirds of the *hsien* reports corresponded exactly. Stauffer, p. 159. The Post Office estimate of 1926 was 36,773,502. George B. Cressey, *China's Geographic Foundations* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1934), p. 55. In 1947 the National Government estimated 29,101,941; while the national census of 1953 arrived at a figure of 37,770,059. Ping-ti Ho, *Studies in the Population of China, 1368-1953* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 95. Cressey, cited, p. 362. Stauffer, Appendix G for list of Chinese cities, and p. 12 for comparison of provinces. Only Kiangsu rivalled Kwangtung in number of cities and towns. Buck, I, p. 362, Table 2. T.H. Shen, *Agricultural Resources in China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 97, Figure 12 gives graphic comparison of farm and non-farm households among the provinces of China at an unspecified date, probably in the 1930's. Kwangtung has the smallest proportion of farm households.

lized, as shown by the high proportion of crops sold in market towns and to middlemen. Commercialization is also shown by types of crops grown. In addition to rice, of which not enough was produced to feed Kwangtung's cities and towns, major crops were tobacco, sugar cane, tea, mulberry leaves for silk production, fruits, nuts, and ginger. <sup>(3)</sup>

Kwangtung could not support its large rural population by farming and ancillary local occupations. Hence there was a large migration of adolescents to cities, the boys going mainly into manual labor and many girls into silk filatures or domestic service. Young males entering the working age were a major export of Kwangtung. In about 1930 there were some four million Chinese living in Nan-yang (the countries south of China), and of these probably more than half came from Kwangtung. The main areas exporting males were Ch'ao-chow, Swatow and Mei Hsien in the east, the Pearl River delta, and Hainan Island, but migrants went from nearly all regions. A major purpose of this emigration was to improve the economic situation of the family of the migrant. For example, a study of the sources of income of 100 "Emigrant Families" in a community near Swatow in 1934-35 showed that from 75.5 to 84.1 per cent of the total income of the families was derived from remittances, with 81.4 per cent as the average. A vast amount of money came into Kwangtung annually as remittances from migrant males. Some of this income was customarily invested in farm land for security, prestige and regular income; this contributed to the high incidence of tenancy in the province. <sup>(4)</sup>

Farms in Kwangtung were usually very small, even for China. Private holdings in the 1920's seldom exceeded two and a half acres and were often no more than one. The average size for farms per household in the province

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(3) Buck, I, p. 349, Table I; and III, p. 343. The figures are for 13 localities in the "Double Cropping Rice Area" which embraces all of Kwangtung and of which it is the largest part; seven of the localities were in Kwangtung. The area showed by far the lowest proportion of farm products sold in the same village (4 per cent; national average, 19; Rice Region, 19) and the highest proportion sold in market towns (62 per cent; national, 44; Rice Region, 46). The area also showed the greatest proportion of farm products sold to middlemen (94 per cent; national, 64; Rice Region, 71).

Julean Arnold, *China: A Commercial and Industrial Handbook* (Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1926), pp. 408-9.

(4) Chen, *Emigrant*, p. 83.

in 1946, based upon a wide sample, was 0.79 hectares (1.95 acres), the smallest among China's provinces. Farms in the delta were often minute. Small size of farms was related to the system of cultivation, mostly by hand and with simple tools. Professor C. K. Yang was told by villagers in a farming community five miles from Canton that "a husband and wife in their prime" could cultivate six *mou* (about one acre), in the proportion of five *mou* of rice and one of vegetables. "With the help of two or three older children under fifteen and possibly an old parent, this amount could be increased to eight or nine *mou* by straining every hand that could be pressed into service during busy days." Those who could afford to keep or rent a buffalo could till more land, but there were not enough buffaloes for the critical period of plowing just after the first rice harvest when land must be prepared immediately for the next planting. A farmer cultivating a very small farm faced almost insurmountable obstacles if he lacked capital for fertilizer and the hire of extra labor at crisis time, and especially if he were a tenant.<sup>(5)</sup>

### *Farm Tenancy*

The term "tenant farmer" is ambiguous and the subject of tenancy in China is complex. The crux of the matter as it relates to the farmers movement in Kwangtung is that tenants paid approximately half the main crops in rent. Whether this led to impoverishment of the tenant or not depended upon the fertility of the soil and size of the farm, as well as many other factors. Some tenants were well-to-do. Yet it would probably be correct to generalize that more tenant farmers were poor, and the main reason was the minuteness of the farms they operated.

There were two major types of farm ownership in Kwangtung—private and corporate. Privately owned land might be operated by the owner, with or without hired labor, or be rented to one or more tenants. Corporate lands might be rented to and operated by tenants, or might be operated with

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(5) Freedman, p. 16. Average in hectares from Shen, cited, p. 142, Table 7: data from Statistical Office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and from the Department of Rural Economics of the Ministry.

Yang, pp. 37-38. Miss Fielde made the same point in 1888 with regard to farms near Swatow. A strong young man could till 6 *mou* alone when pumping water was not necessary; three strong men could till 30 *mou* if the fields were contiguous and favorably situated to water. Jamieson, p. 113.

hired labor. This mixture of practices has led to a five-fold scheme of classifying the farm population: 1. landlords who lived upon rents; 2. owner-operators; 3. part-owners/part-tenants; 4. tenants exclusively; and 5. farm labor hired by the year or for shorter periods. It is the category part-owner/part-tenant which has led to great confusion in statistics regarding rural classes; if they be classed with tenants, the figures for tenancy will be swollen. (6) Even if they are held as a separate group, it is still uncertain whether they are a favored or unfavored group, for a part-owner/part-tenant might be on the way up, economically, or on the way down: either renting additional land to increase his product or mortgaging away bits of land through financial necessity. Full tenants might be rich or poor, depending upon the amount and quality of land rented and their labor power. In some regions, particularly in the rich alluvial lands (*sha-t'ien*) of the Pearl River delta, persons rented land in order to rent it to sub-tenants; they were closer to

(6) The following table is constructed from two found in Chen, Agrarian, and shows how proportions between "owner" and "tenant" will shift according to the definition of the crucial group—"part-owner/part-tenant." His Table 3: "Proportion of Landless Peasant Families (Ten Representative Villages in the District of Fan-yü, 1933)" compared with similar information given in Table 2A: "Peasant Families in Sixty-nine Villages in the District of Fan-yü."

Nine Representative Villages in Fan-yü

Table 3	Families	Peasant Families		Owners		Tenants		Agri. Labor	
	Tab 3	Tab 2A	Tab 3	Tab 2A	Tab 3	Tab 2A	Tab 3	Tab 2A	Tab 3
Méi-tien	170	145	148	16	(deduced) 41	121	97	8	10
Nan-pu	150	105	105	8	35	95	70	2	0
Sha-tien-kang	119	114	114	7	48	105	64	2	2
Pei-shan	140	84	73	20	34	58	29	6	10
Kwei-tien	127	120	60	96	32	18	18	6	10
Lung-tien	70	49	95	5	52	44	23	—	20
Kang-sin	70	53	52	—	31	53	14	—	7
Kiu-tseng	137	85	105	25	75	60	26	—	4
Huang-pien	108	94	84	21	60	35	20	20	4
	1,091	849	836	198	408	507	361	44	67

Note that the numbers of peasant families correspond in only two cases. Table 2A maximises the number of tenants as compared to Table 3 because the first puts under "tenants" many who own some land, whereas Table 3 presumably counts only those as tenants who are "absolutely landless."

being landlords than tenant operators. Nevertheless, Kwangtung probably had as high a proportion of farm land under tenancy as any province in China, rivalled only by Hunan and Szechwan, and this meant that a large proportion of the agricultural product was divided between the tenant operators and the landowners.

An important reason for extensive tenancy was the highly developed lineage system ("clans") in Kwangtung. This refers to the custom of adult male descendants of a common set of ancestors formally maintaining close bonds of kinship and usually living in the same or neighboring villages. The subject has excited great interest among anthropologists. Such lineages usually owned some farm land corporately, the rentals being used for group expenses such as upkeep of the ancestral temple, communal feasts and ceremonies, upkeep of graves, lineage schools, subsidies to scholars and widows, etc. Sub-lineages might also possess land for the same purposes. It was not uncommon for a wealthy member to contribute land in order to strengthen the position of his sub-lineage or to establish one which would descend from him. Lands owned by lineages were virtually inalienable, and over the centuries more and more land passed out of private and into lineage ownership. Chen Han-seng, who made a rather extensive investigation in Kwangtung in 1932-33, came to the conclusion that no less than 35 per cent of cultivated land in Kwangtung was owned by clans and other corporate bodies, although the data he cites, and all similar data, range widely from locality to locality. Other corporately owning organizations were temples, schools or educational endowments, charitable institutions, and merchant guilds; but much less land was owned by such institutions than by lineages. A few, however, had very large holdings. Land owned corporately was normally operated by tenants. Some lineages customarily gave first rights to members of the lineage, either in continuing tenure or by rotation, while others preferred to rent to persons unrelated so that contractual relations could be kept on a strictly business basis. (7)

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(7) Freedman and Liu; also Hsien-chin Hu, *The Common Descent Group in China and Its Functions* (New York: Viking Fund, 1948).  
Chen, *Agrarian*, p. 35; Chen's discussion of corporately owned land, pp. 24-41, gives much detail. A survey made in 1925 by the Provincial Farmers Association in 20 *hsien* scattered throughout Kwangtung showed collectively owned land to range  
(cont.)

Tenancy was of various sorts. In some regions tenants owned the surface soil while landlords owned the subsoil; each ownership had legal sanction and either owner could sell or mortgage his possession. This type of dual ownership was well established in the Han River valley of eastern Kwangtung. Landlords might rent their privately owned land for a year at a time, for four or five year periods, or indefinitely so long as the agreed rent was paid. Lineages and other corporate bodies owning rich alluvial lands in the delta might lease large tracts to investment companies which sublet parcels to other tenants, and even these sub-tenants might rent to others. In a few regions a form of serfdom existed in which hereditary tenants (*sai-wu*) worked the fields of other lineages, retaining a portion of the crop but performing additional services as laborers, servants, and watchmen without compensation. <sup>(8)</sup>

The systems by which land was rented also varied greatly from region to region. There might be a written contract covering a specified number of years and detailing the tenants obligations, or there might be a verbal contract with no fixed term of tenure, leaving the owner free to find another tenant if the occupant failed to fulfill the agreements. By another very ancient system the tenant paid a deposit, agreed to pay a regular fixed rent, and the land could not be transferred. Such tenants virtually became smallholders. Rent payments might be fixed in cash, often paid in advance, irrespective of the size of the harvest. Thus the tenant bore the risk of a poor harvest but gained a margin when it was good. Another system required the tenant to turn over a pre-fixed proportion of the crop at harvest time, perhaps the most common proportion being 50 per cent; but the ratio depended upon which of the parties owned the farmstead or provided tools and fertilizer. Another form was cash-crop, by which the tenant paid in cash the value of a set proportion of the crop. All depended upon the harvest. In bad years

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from 5 per cent to 60 per cent, and private to range from 35 up to 90 per cent in the various districts; but most of the reports appear to be estimates. Chang, *Farmers*, p. 40; Lamb, p. 42 for the source. The majority of 24 clans in Kwangtung investigated by Miss Lang claimed that 50-70 per cent of land cultivated by its members belonged to the clan. Lang, p. 174. C. K. Yang found only 6.2 per cent of the land in Nanching collectively owned, but in a village two miles away about 70 per cent of cultivated land was under clan ownership. Yang, p. 42.

(8) Kulp, pp. 91-92; Chen, *Agrarian*, pp. 22, 47-48, 57-59.

poor tenant families might face near starvation if the landlord exacted his full quota. Kwangtung was relatively free from natural calamities, though they did occur. (9) A bad harvest could set in motion a strong demand among tenants for rent reduction.

Agricultural laborers were the poorest group in the farm population, making up something less than 10 per cent. Farm hands hired by the year or for shorter periods of planting and harvesting, had very little hope of improving their economic position.

### *Social Classes in Rural Kwangtung*

The problem of differentiating actual social classes in rural China has baffled sociologists, reformers, and activators of revolution. What can we say about social classes in rural Kwangtung on the basis of empirical evidence? By "rural" is meant settlements of less than 10,000 persons. First let us hazard a few generalizations from a non-Marxist viewpoint.

1. Most rural Kwangtungese lived in villages and small towns, not in scattered farmsteads.
2. The majority had farming as the principal occupation.
3. Many occupations other than farming were carried on in villages and small towns.
4. Many rural adults had more than one occupation, and farming was often combined with other occupations.
5. In most villages and towns there was great economic inequality.
6. Economic inequality was in a graded spectrum from poverty to wealth.
7. The majority in each village and town was poor.
8. Wealth was associated with landowning and commerce.
9. Poverty was associated with landlessness and wage labor.
10. Class distinctions were blurred by several factors: lineage homogeneity and kinship, multiple occupations, and the wide distribution of landowning and tenancy within each community.

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(9) KTNMPK, pp. 23-29, 37-38, 47. Buck, III, p. 61 shows cash and cash-crop systems predominating in a small sample in seven scattered *hsien*. Buck, III, Chapter I, Table 9 lists the number of calamities occurring during the period 1904-29 and the average percentage of damage caused by them. Information from 11 *hsien* in Kwangtung shows flood, drought, wind and insects as the principal calamities, but they were relatively infrequent.

Social class may arise from occupation, wealth, power and prestige, and a combination of these.

Workers in rural Kwangtung were predominantly engaged in agriculture, but the proportions might range from 50 to 90 per cent, depending upon the size of the settlement. The smaller the settlement, the larger the proportion engaged in agriculture. In 152 villages in 36 different *hsien*, Chen Hanseng found that 84.7 per cent of the families were "peasants." In 69 villages in Fan-yü (P'an-yü) *hsien* where Canton is located, 77.2 per cent [were] peasants. In the next *hsien* north, Hua, 74.8 per cent were peasants.<sup>(10)</sup> This means, however, that from 15 to 25 per cent of the village families were primarily engaged in occupations other than farming. More precise information is available for four villages that were studied intensively. Without going into details, we may note the diversity of occupation.

Phoenix Village, two hours boat ride on the Han River north of Ch'ao-chow, had in 1919 a population of 650 persons in 133 "familist groups and sub-groups" when studied by Chinese students of Daniel Kulp. Farming counted as the principal occupation for only about 41 per cent of those employed. A larger number worked as merchants, fruit dealers, clerks and salesmen, but many of these men were considered outsiders. Of the employed "members" of the village, about 28 per cent were engaged in commerce. Transportation, production of goods, and service occupations each accounted for about 7 or 8 per cent, as did miscellaneous. This village had two special characteristics, however: it was an emigrant community with 55 of its "members" abroad; and the village had a certain commercial character due to the 24 shops built to take business away from a neighboring village.<sup>(11)</sup>

Another village in the same vicinity was studied by Chen Ta in 1934-35.

(10) Chen, *Agrarian*, pp. 115-22.

(11) Kulp, p. 90 lists 41 occupations but does not provide a complete occupational census. Excluding 16 merchants and their clerks, who were considered outsiders, the listed occupations among the natives were as follows:

	"Case"	Per cent
Agriculture	57	41.0
Transport (Boatmen)	9	6.4
Production of goods	11	7.8

(minimum)

Includes 4 varnishers, 2 dyers, 2 tailors, and one each for carpenter, silversmith, and painter of pottery; several other occupations mentioned without numbers.

(cont.)



This was a non-emigrant community some 30 miles north of Swatow, with 725 families and an estimated population of 4,309 (his village M). Dr. Chen investigated 572 of these families for the main occupation of the adult members and found 63.9 per cent engaged in agriculture, 16.2 per cent in trade, and 15.9 per cent in handicraft and industry. Dr. Chen gave less precise information for his large emigrant community Z, of some 4,973 families and an estimated 25,203 persons, living in a market town and seven villages 20 miles northeast of Swatow. It appears that less than half the workers were engaged in farming as the main occupation and that commerce was very important. He says that every farm family hoped at least one son would go into trade. His list of other male occupations is interesting: 267 loading coolies, 146 other carrying coolies, 132 barbers, 110 carpenters, 75 school teachers, 68 fishermen, 62 peddlers, 55 builders, 40 masons, 18 government employees, and 10 ship builders. Most of these jobs were supplemental for, he says, even two jobs might not provide a decent living. About 4,000 girls and women were engaged in embroidery, drawn work, making "paper money" and fishnets. We sense a very active rural community, but in its market town verging on city life. <sup>(12)</sup>

Commercial	40	28.7
	(or less)	
Services	12	8.6
Includes 6 cooks, 3 "officials," and one each for doctor, priest, fortune teller and tax collector. Two teachers were outsiders as were 9 amahs, it appears.		
Miscellaneous	10	7.2
	139	97.7
Includes landholders, middlemen, 2 gamblers, parasitic idler, beggar, nibbler.		

The list probably double-counts for a few; some occupations many have been sparetime for farmers.

- (12) Chen, *Emigrant*, pp. 65-66. He was unable to ascertain the main occupation of 3.8 per cent. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70. It is possible to estimate the number of farm families in Z by dividing the stated cultivated area (9,000 *mou*) by the average number of *mou* operated by farm families (3.6) to find 2,078 farm families, or 41.7 per cent. This may be low. Males occupied in other than farming and trade were supposed to number 1,030, but the list comes to 983. Another indication of the diversity of occupations in Z community is shown by Dr. Chen's list of occupations of emigrants before departure and after return. They were mostly males and not heads of families. Of the 1,084 listed occupations before departure, 399 were in some form of commerce (36.8 per cent), 182 were laborers (16.5), 152 were farmers (14), 158 were unemployed (14.5), and 129 were students (11.9). Upon return, the 1,071 occupations in 1933-34 included 517 in commerce (47.3 per cent), 315 laborers (29.3), 111 unemployed (10.3) and only 13 farmers (1.2). Chen, *Emigrant*, p. 70, Table 4.

Nanching on Honam Island was entirely rural though only five miles from Canton. It was studied by Professor C. K. Yang in 1948-49, though he had to reconstruct his data from memory in 1952 after the area had been "liberated." Nanching had approximately 1,100 people but only one shop. Of its some 230 families only about 30 did not have farming as the principal occupation. Beside the store-keeping family there were 7 peddlers working outside the village, two skilled laborers—a mason and a carpenter—and one catcher of frogs and snakes. Nine persons were in services: four domestics, two school teachers, and one each serving the villagers as seeress, story teller, and Taoist priest. There were also four "old maid houses" in which approximately 60 women engaged in embroidery work.<sup>(13)</sup>

Another way to distinguish social classes is according to wealth.<sup>(14)</sup> Kulp distributed the 133 familist groups and sub-groups in Phoenix Village as follows:

	number	per cent
Good (meaning "well-to-do")	24	18
Fair (maintain selves independently but nothing to spare)	41	31
Poor ("live from hand to mouth"; depend on aid)	68	51
	133	100

Chen Ta's assistants made year-long studies in 1934-35 of the budgets of two groups of 100 households in communities near Swatow, one an emigrant and the other a non-emigrant community. Families were ranked, by monthly income, as follows:

- (13) Yang, pp. 41, 63. A market town named Pingan Chen, about half a mile from Nanching, had a population of about 2,500 in 1950. It had about 40 stores, 3 tea houses, 2 rice mills, 3 or 4 handweaving establishments, 3 masonry and carpentry shops, and 2 shops which made baskets and other articles from bamboo. If the proportion of households to total population was similar to that of Nanching (i. e. about 520 households), it appears that 54 commercial and industrial establishments could not have employed half the work force.
- (14) The following statements come from Kulp, p. 104; Chen, *Emigrant*, pp. 83-86; Chen, *Agrarian*, p. 7 and Yang, p. 41.

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	Emigrant		Non-emigrant	
	Families	Monthly Average Income	Families	Monthly Average Income
Upper	13	\$ 228.90	9	\$ 54.68
Middle	21	86.60	16	28.06
Lower	49	31.90	23	18.14
Poor	17	15.10	52	10.90
Totals and Average Income	100	\$ 66.20	100	[\$19.26]

Chen Han-seng classified peasant families in "Ten Representative Villages" in Fan-yü which he studied in 1933, using "middle peasant" as his pivot. This was a family "barely capable of self support from the land, and in agricultural labor not directly exploited by, nor exploiting others." He found the following distribution among the peasant families:

	per cent
Rich	12.7
Middle	23.0
Poor	64.3
	100.0

For the almost purely agricultural village of Nanching in 1948-49, Professor Yang, on the basis of his memory, distributed the families on the following scale:

	Number	Per cent
Landlords and rich peasants	30	13.0
Middle peasants	70	30.5
Poor peasants	100	43.5
Non-agricultural	30	13.0
	120	100.0

To classify farm families according to land-owning, tenancy, and wage labor is a more complicated problem. The main difficulty is in placing the part-owner/part-tenant category because probably most farmers rented some of the land they tilled. Professor Yang states that in Nanching, "Aside from

the few who lived on income from rent, *we did not encounter a single peasant who did not rent some land from others.*" Chen Han-seng, who strongly opposed tenancy, nevertheless produced figures from his "ten representative villages" showing that in 1928 among the "rich peasant class" 50.5 per cent were owners and 49.5 per cent were tenants; among middle peasants 31.1 per cent were owners and 62.9 per cent were tenants. But Chen made no distinction between part-tenants and full tenants. To both investigators, the decisive factor determining relative affluence or poverty was size and quality of land operated, not the fact of renting.<sup>(15)</sup> Here is a summary of the results of four studies which attempted to classify farm families according to ownership or non-ownership of land. Definitions, if any were given, differed among the several investigators. [see next page]

This exercise makes one skeptical of the utility of provincial averages. The larger the sample the more even the distribution among "classes," as we might expect. The range of variation from *hsien* to *hsien*, and even from village to village in the original figures is striking. It was the specific village situation, not provincial averages, which provided the "soil" with which activators of Farmers Associations had to deal.

It is difficult to find verifiable data on the most influential group in rural Kwangtung, "landlords." The term is emotionally loaded. Presumably it refers to those who lived from rents on their privately owned farm land. Probably few lived exclusively from rents because of the tendency of landlords to engage, directly or indirectly, in commerce and for some to be in money-lending and other forms of business. Some "landlords," however, had so little land to rent that they had to engage in other enterprises to sustain themselves. There seems to be very little numerical data on landlords in Kwangtung. That given in *Agrarian China* and relating to 1933 shows landlords in Kwangtung making up 2 per cent of the "families," presumably in their respective villages, and owning 53 per cent of the land. In ten "representative villages" in Fan-yü in 1933, Chen Han-seng found 35 "residential individual landlords" making up 2.9 per cent of the families. In two

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(15) Yang, p. 46. Italics added. In 1888 Miss Fielde reported the belief that three out of four farmers "till more or less land that belongs to others"—i.e. that most farmers rented some land. Jamieson, p. 118. Chen, *Agrarian*, p. 124, Table 5.

ESTIMATES OF OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY AMONG FARMERS IN KWANGTUNG<sup>(16)</sup>

Source	Data of Data	Locality	Size of Sample (farm families or households)	Definitions	Owner	Part-Owner	Tenant
A. Chen, Migrations. (Ministry of Agriculture)	1917	Province-wide	4, 224, 207	None	31.2	34.2	34.6
B. Chang, Farmers. (Kwangtung Farmers' Association)	1926	12 hsien in East Kwangtung	530, 568	"Independent farmers"; "part tenants"; "share farmers."	34.8	29.4	35.8
C. Buck, Land, Statistics. (Farm Survey B)	1930-32	7 scattered hsien	700	Farmers who own farmsteads but rent all cropland are classed as tenants.	19.4	39.1	41.5
D. Chen, Agrarian. (By correspondence. Agricultural laborers omitted from Chen's percentages)	1933	38 scattered hsien	20, 997	"Owners" own most or all of their holdings; "tenants" lease most or all land they cultivate.	32.6	—	57.2
E. Same. (Recalculated for localities that provided exact figures)	1933	21 scattered hsien	12, 867	Same	27.1	—	63.4

villages, probably untypical, they owned 61.3 per cent of the irrigated land and 38.7 per cent of the dry land. In the village which Professor Yang studied in 1948-49 he found five families which owned from 30 up to 120 *mou* of land; among them they owned 25.8 per cent of the cultivated land of the village. They constituted 2.18 per cent of the 230 families.<sup>(17)</sup> From these scattered accounts we may deduce that landlord families constituted a very small fraction of village families, but were relatively affluent.

(16) The following sources were used to construct the table:

A. Chen, Migrations, p. 22, based upon figures of the Ministry of Agriculture for 1917 and presumably based upon magistrates' reports. I have made slight corrections in additions and calculated percentages. No definitions were given.

		Mou of Wet Land	Dry Land	Total
Owners	1,316,500 (31.2%)	5,602,707 (41.5%)	4,112,599 ( 44%)	9,715,306
Part-owners	1,444,842 (34.2 )	7,914,334 (58.5 )	5,275,938 ( 56 )	13,190,272
Tenants	1,463,865 (34.6 )			
Totals	4,224,207(100.0 )	13,517,041(100.0 )	9,388,537(100.0 )	22,905,578

Note: Land in gardens and fruit orchards (3,096,277 *mou*) were excluded from Chen's calculations. Average holdings in all crop lands by owners were 7.38 *mou*. Part-owners and tenants, listed together by Chen, had average holdings in all crop land of 4.53 *mou*. Provincial average holdings were 5.41 *mou*.

B. Chang, Farmers, p. 18; Lamb, p. 40. Chang gives the following table but does not identify his source; Lamb describes his abbreviated table XV, which has the same totals as given by Chang, as "Report of the Kwangtung Provincial Farmers Union in 1926." *The Chinese Economic Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (April 1928), pp. 328-33 in an article on Kwangtung Agricultural Statistics quotes Chang's table and attributes it to the Kwangtung Farmers Association, pointing out that members could have provided the information. The basis of selection of households is not stated. I have corrected errors in addition and calculated percentages, which differ slightly from those in Lamb. I have used his definitions.

Distribution of Farm Families in 12 Northeastern Hsien in Kwangtung, According to Land Ownership and Tenancy, 1926

Hsien	Total Farm Families	Tenant Families (Share Farmers)	Part-owners (Part Tenants)	Owner-Farmers (Independent Farmers)
Feng-shun	40,146	19,533 (48.6%)	12,469 (31.0%)	8,144 (20.2%)
Ch'ao-yang	56,481	20,763 (36.7 )	18,273 (32.3 )	17,445 (30.8 )
Ch'ao-an	37,053	4,419 (11.9 )	7,489 (20.2 )	25,145 (67.8 )
Ch'eng-hai	37,101	11,244 (30.3 )	9,007 (24.2 )	16,850 (54.4 )
Chieh-yang	38,210	33,362 (87.3 )	2,695 ( 7.0 )	2,153 ( 5.6 )
Jao-p'ing	86,735	34,550 (39.8 )	41,300 (47.6 )	10,885 (12.5 )
Ta-pu	16,691	5,462 (32.7 )	5,948 (35.6 )	5,281 (31.6 )
Mei Hsien	21,977	428 ( 1.9 )	1,393 ( 6.3 )	20,156 (91.7 )
Wu-hua	14,913	3,590 (24.0 )	4,083 (27.3 )	7,240 (48.6 )

(cont.)

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Hsing-ning	137,116	37,652 (27.4 )	45,151 (32.9 )	54,313 (39.6 )
P'ing-yuan	20,079	9,045 (45.0 )	6,247 (31.1 )	4,787 (23.8 )
Chiao-ling	24,066	10,968 (45.5 )	1,974 ( 8.2 )	11,124 (46.2 )
Total	530,568	191,016 (35.8%)	156,029 (29.4%)	183,523 (34.8%)

Note the range of variation among *hsien*, owners showing a high of 91.7 and a low of 5.6 per cent and tenants a high of 87.3 and a low of 1.9. These extremes are found in Mei Hsien and Chieh-yang.

- C. Buck, III, p. 59 (these are statistics from farm survey b) and 471 (for names of villages and dates of information). Buck's local investigators studied 100 "typical" households in each of seven *hsien*, in some cases from a single village, in others from many villages. Those farmers who owned their farmsteads but rented all their crop land were classified as tenants. Returns are given in exact numbers rather than obvious estimates.

Percentage of Farmers in Samples Who Were Owners, Part-owners and Tenants in Seven Scattered Hsien in Kwangtung, 1930-32

Locality	Number of Villages in Sample	Per cent: Owners	Part-owners	Tenants
Ch'ao-an	2	39.0	47.0	14.0
Chung-shan	1	0	0	100.0
Chieh-yang	1	48.0	52.0	0
Kao-yao	1	0	16.0	84.0
Ch'ü-chiang	21	13.9	18.8	67.3
Mao-ming	27	12.0	64.0	24.0
Nan-hsiung	8	23.0	76.0	1.0
Number in class		135.9	273.8	290.3
Per cent in class		19.4	39.1	41.5

Note: No explanation is offered for the odd percentages from Ch'ü-chiang. All *hsien* represented by single villages produced situations of either no owners or no tenants. Averaging conceals the large variations between districts in the sample. The discrepancies between percentages by class in this table and the preceding one are remarkable for Ch'ao-an and Chieh-yang.

- D. Chen, *Agrarian*, pp. 115-17, Table 1. Chen secured his information by correspondence with persons in 38 *hsien* in Kwangtung, who reported on 152 villages. I have not reproduced his long table but give his calculated percentages, excluding agricultural laborers. Chen does not have a category of part-owners.
- E. Chen, *Agrarian*, pp. 115-17, Table 1. I took the 21 localities where there are exact numbers in all columns. By this calculation, 129 villages in 21 *hsien* had 15,245 families and 12,867 farm families. I calculated percentages by class, excluding the 1,208 agricultural laborers (who were 9.4 per cent of the farm families). The 21 *hsien* have the following distribution: 3 in the northeast, 6 in the north, 4 in the Canton delta, 6 in the southwest, but only Kwang-ning in the west and Hui-yang on the eastern coast.
- (17) Freedman, citing *Agrarian China* (London: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1938), p. 4; Chen, *Agrarian*, p. 131, Tables 20, 21; Yang, pp. 43-45. About 30 other families in Nanching were landowners who rented out their land but they were near the bottom of the economic scale, renting tiny plots and supplementing their meager rent income by other means. Some were widows without adult sons; others were families whose adult males had migrated to cities for work. Were these families "landlords"?

### *Style of Life Among the Rural Elite*

In many descriptions of villages in Kwangtung one reads of a few substantial and imposing houses belonging to the village elite.<sup>(18)</sup> It was a common practice for wealthy members of rural society to maintain two residences and two households, one in the ancestral village and one in a city in Kwangtung or abroad. Wealthy men frequently had, in addition to the first wife, one or more secondary wives or concubines. These women and their children (or some combination of them) lived in the several residences, that is, in the native village, a city, or overseas. Income from rented farm land helped maintain the city household; income remitted from overseas helped maintain the village household. Residence in the city provided the amenities of urban life and was convenient for the men engaged in business; it also provided security in times of rural upheaval or civil war. The village residence provided a retreat from the city and a base for local prestige and power. The system allowed the wealthy to disperse their assets and to conceal parts from the attention of tax collectors and other extorters.

Not all landlords, of course, had city residences. Those living in large lineages normally could provide their own security by mobilizing lineage males to defend the village from bandits and marauding soldiers. Descriptions of rural settlements sometimes detail impressive fortifications, accumulations of arms, and other defense preparations.<sup>(19)</sup> *Min-t'uan* or local militia are usually described as being under the control of landlords. These gentlemen also tried to develop amiable relations with *hsien* magistrates and local garrison commanders. Both groups were interested in maintaining local peace though they might be competitors for political power and the revenues derivable from lands and commerce.

The rural elite, who were often landlords, enjoyed prestige in their villages arising from their wealth, education, prominence in lineage affairs, and their connections with persons of their social class in other villages, towns, and the office of the magistrate. They dressed distinctively in the

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(18) Kulp, pp. 14, 152-56; Chen, *Emigrant*, pp. 106-17; Yang, pp. 57-58, 78. Chen, *Agrarian*, p. 31, describing a "village" of over 5,000 families who maintained 130 clan temples and whose clan lands produced an income of Mex \$900,000 a year: "The high, massive, and ornate brick mansions... stand in marked contrast with... mud and straw huts of the tenant farmers."

(19) Kulp, pp. 156-62; Chen, *Emigrant*, pp. 83, 118-25; Yang, pp. 17-21.



traditional "long gown," avoided manual labor, and devoted their time to management—looking after their private property, their business interests, the property of the lineage, and the affairs of the village. Lineages tried to control the behavior of their members, to settle disputes, punish infractions of traditional morality within the village, provide education for the promising younger males, and to care for widows and the poor of the lineage. These were the responsibilities of the local elite. They supervised the upkeep of ancestral temples and graves, kept geneologies, managed communal celebrations, and determined who might rent the corporate lands. In these activities they were guided by "clan" rules, and were largely outside the control of local government. Lineage leaders tried to fend off local officials from interfering in "family" affairs. They often took responsibility for collection and payment of the tax due from the privately and communally owned land in the village. Payment of a lump-sum tax, the collection of which was controlled by lineage leaders, provided the opportunity to shift the tax burden from the more powerful landholders to others. There was also the suspicion that some income from corporate lands was regularly diverted to the private use of the leaders. <sup>(20)</sup>

To summarize this discussion of rural classes: Throughout the villages and small market towns of Kwangtung there was a small rural elite whose eminence rested upon a combination of education, landowning, participation in business, and management of community affairs. They stood out because of their relative wealth, style of life, knowledge of the moral code, connections with the lower reaches of the formal political structure, and their command of local mechanisms of social control—lineages with their powerful sanctions, arms, and quasi-militia. Below them but economically interdependent and often intimately related by kinship, were the actual farmers. These might own their own plots, or rent some of their land, or farm only the land of others. Whether farmers in any one community fared well or poorly from their unremitting toil depended upon such factors as the size and quality of the land they tilled, the number of workers in the farming unit, the capital they could invest, and whether or not they shared the product

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(20) This is a major theme in Chen, *Agrarian. Freedman*, pp. 73-76 discusses the evidence, as well as the matter of land tax burdens being shifted to the less powerful private landowners.

with a landlord, either private or corporate. Some farmers had other occupations and most rural communities had persons engaged in commerce, handicrafts, and service occupations. Commerce provided the best avenue for advancement and plain physical labor the least. The population in rural communities was not necessarily divided into occupational groups or classes, though the tendency for specialization and differentiation increased with the size of the community. This is not to deny inter-group and inter-class tensions. These always existed below the surface. Yet the culture encouraged sublimation of tensions and the harmonization of conflict between groups within a common lineage and, so far as possible, within a common community.

### *Sociological Factors Affecting the Farmers Movement*

How might sociological factors in rural Kwangtung have favored and impeded the growth of the farmers movement?

Poverty was the underlying cause of discontent among the farm population, and we have seen that more than half the families in three of the five samples were classed by the investigators as "poor," according to the definitions they used. Whatever the prevailing myths concerning the possibility of escaping from poverty through toil and parsimony, it probably was the fact that the poor who farmed were caught inexorably in a socio-economic system which afforded little hope of improving their economic lot except by trying other occupations. This is clearly the inference from migration overseas. For the poor who were tenant farmers, rent would be the focus of grievance, especially in times of bad harvest. Agricultural laborers had virtually no prospect of improvement unless they took other occupations. (21)

(21) The following table, while it does not contain material from Kwangtung, suggests the odds in 1935 against an agricultural laborer being able to raise his economic status and the length of time it would take the small minority who succeeded.

Province	Per cent Who Rise from Farm Laborer to Tenant	Average Age	Per cent Who Rise from Laborer to Part-owner	Average Age	Per cent Who Rise from Laborer to Full Owner	Average Age
Honan	6.5	32.8	0.2	40.9	0.9	46.7
Hupei	6.1	32.2	1.3	42.4	0.3	42.4
Anhui	9.3	29.8	1.9	40.4	0.8	50.0
Kiangsi	4.7	28.8	1.0	39.5	0.7	46.0
Average	7.0	30.9	1.6	40.9	0.6	48.1

Source: Hsiao Kung-chuan, *Rural China*, p. 689, n. 95, quoting S. C. Lee, "Heart of China's Problem," *Journal of Farm Economics*, XXX (1948), p. 268, based on a survey made in 1935.

The focus of their grievance was low wages.

Another point of grievance was interest rates on borrowing. Rates were too high for the poor to meet, and drove them deeper into poverty. By custom or law sons were responsible for their deceased father's debts. Seizure of crops and draft animals by passing military, and their requisitions of cash and porters, could be disastrous for the village poor. There was also a great proliferation of taxes and forced contributions. Kwangtung had been plagued by militarists from outside the province throughout the Republican period. In the early 1920s the province was a theatre of almost constant civil war between rival militarists. Thus rural life was extremely competitive and insecure, and insecurity bore heavily upon the poor. A leader of the Kwangtung Farmers Association described how the poor tried to solve their problem: they lived very frugally, reduced the quality of their diet, searched for extra occupations, put their women and children to work, mortgaged or sold their lands and houses, moved to the city to become coolies, married late, sold their wives and daughters, practiced infanticide, indentured themselves for work abroad, became refugees, beggars and prostitutes, went into soldiery or banditry, or committed suicide. All of these were historic avenues of escape, but the writer of the account implies that the situation was becoming ever more critical. (22) Discontent might be translated into organized action virtually spontaneously, or by a political party or secret society, or by individual activists, but the ease or difficulty of success would depend also upon many other factors.

Formidable obstacles must have faced activists attempting to organize farmers associations and to benefit the poorer groups. Benefitting the poor could only be done in the short run by altering socio-economic relations. Yet the entire "thrust" of the culture was conservative: towards upholding existing relationships.

Villages were closely knit communities most of whose residents were members of lineages, whether the village was of the single or multi-lineage type. Adult males were linked together by agnatic ties. Inculcation from earliest childhood emphasized kin ties and the duties of the socially inferior to

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(22) On proliferation of taxes see [Ch'en] Han-seng, "Chung-kuo Nung-min Fu-tan ti Fu-shui" [Tax Burdens Borne by Chinese Peasants], *Tung-fang Tsa-chih*, October 10, 1928, pp. 9-28. KTNMPK, pp. 17-18 for efforts of the poor.

their superiors. These were reinforced by the prevalent religion, ancestral worship, by periodic lineage ceremonies, the terminology of address, and the power held by leaders to discipline the members. Agnatic ties cross-cut class differentiations although they did not erase them. Poorer members of a lineage—whether it was strong in members, lands and men of prestige or relatively weak in these—had good reason to uphold the system and enjoy the benefits which filtered down to them. It must have been very difficult to organize certain socio-economic groups within lineages to oppose other sectors, i. e. tenant farmers and agricultural laborers against private landlords and rich peasants of the same lineage, and even more so against those who managed the communal lands. <sup>(23)</sup>

This would be particularly difficult for an organizer who was not a native of the village. Non-natives were permitted virtually no voice in village affairs even though they lived in the village. Resident school teachers might have some “modern education” and therefore be influenced by Kuomintang doctrines, but their ability to spread these ideas among the poor would be hampered by the low educational level of most farmers and by the abstractness of these doctrines. Outsiders who tried to penetrate a village for whatever purpose, and especially those in some governmental capacity, were normally held off by village leaders. The organizers of farmers associations did have quasi-official status. Furthermore, they tried to preach a reform of village relations and to create a form of power based upon the groups which possessed least power in villages.

Power was held by the well-to-do, many of whom were landlords or rich peasants. They would surely oppose efforts to organize the poor against themselves. They probably owned most of the firearms and controlled the village defense force. They also had the strongest connections with the lower reaches of the governmental structure. And they were allied with similar elites in neighboring villages and towns. The resources of money, prestige, communications and violence were largely in their hands; only numbers were against them.

The right of land owning was among the most staunchly upheld of any

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(23) Aside from the major works cited in note 7 above, Hsiao devotes an entire chapter, pp. 323-70 and 661-97 to clans, and treats them extensively elsewhere.

value in rural China. It was supported by virtually everyone. With it went the right to rent out land to derive a customary income. It was not only landlords who rented out land, but many peasants also. Some middle and low-income families depended upon receiving rents; the whole poor could not be united against the rich on the basis of tenancy alone. Though it was difficult for landlords to raise rent rates arbitrarily since custom was a powerfully limiting factor, tenants could only plead for a reduction of rents if the harvests were poor. Those who rented by the year or term of years risked their leases if they made trouble about fulfilling their contracts. The power of the courts and of extra-legal enforcement devices was against them. Tenants who enjoyed the right to operate communal lands of their own lineages were privileged. Also, they might expect more consideration in hard times than those who had no claim of kinship; but the decision lay with the leadership, not with the tenants, and certainly not with outsiders. Tenants who farmed the corporate lands of other lineages might bear especially hostile feelings—subtly mixed with feelings of dependency—toward the renting lineage. Such tenants might be more easy to organize on the basis of their common grievances than most tenants, especially if they were of a different speech group than the landlords. The land-owning lineage could easily organize on the basis of kin solidarity and common economic interest to resist demands for rent reduction by client tenants. <sup>(24)</sup>

### *The Prevalence of Violence in Rural Kwangtung*

Organized violence was another characteristic of life in rural Kwangtung which might hinder or assist the development of farmers associations. Warlike architecture was the external evidence of a deepseated turbulence for which Kwangtung was famous. For example, when the British added the New Territories to their Hong Kong colony in 1899 they found "several walled villages... invariably inhabited by the members of one clan only. They are rectangular or square in shape, and enclosed within brick walls about 16 feet in height, flanked by square towers, and surrounded by a moat some 40 feet in width. They have one entrance protected by iron gates." Chen Ta

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(24) Hsiao, pp. 426-27 for examples of peasants against gentry and tenants against landlords; p. 431 for conflicts in Kwangtung between such groups when one was Hakka and the other *Pen-ti*. Also many other examples of inter-ethnic conflict elsewhere.

described the defense system of Community Z, 20 miles northeast of Swatow, as it was in 1934. A wall, a river and several ponds surrounded the seven villages and town. There were 38 watch towers, each with accommodation for from 50 to 125 men. In winter usually ten men were posted per tower, and from 20 to 30 in summer to guard the rice crop. The community was said to possess 90 rifles. <sup>(25)</sup>

Kwangtung was plagued by inter-ethnic conflict. Banditry and piracy were commonplace. The literature on Kwangtung throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is rich with descriptions of periodic fights between feuding lineages (*hsieh-tou*), <sup>(26)</sup> or bandit-raids against prosperous villages and market towns. There was also an underworld of "gangs" which fought for control of territories in which they carried on smuggling and piracy, and "protected" gambling, opium, and the transport of commercial goods. <sup>(27)</sup> If poorer farmers were to resort to violence to redress their grievances, they would do so in a world where issues of economic advantage were often fought out with arms.

Throughout rural Kwangtung, as in all of China, there was a group of persons known as *t'u-hao*, *kuang-kun*, *lan-tze* or *lan-tsai* and by several other epithets. These were the "local bullies" or "sticks." Perhaps their essential characteristics were their use of force, defiance of law, and parasitic life. They were toughs and enforcers, who "took a cut" on market transactions, "protected" gambling, and engaged in smuggling. Their fighting

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(25) Freedman, p. 8; Chen, Emigrant, p. 200. A Western visitor to Hui-chow in 1855 observed a village inhabited by a *Pen-ti* clan in largely Hakka territory, surrounded by a wall about 20 feet high with 16 parapets and enclosed by a moat from 10 to 20 feet wide. Hsiao, pp. 366-67, quoting *The Chinese and Japanese Repository*, Vol. 3 (1865), pp. 282-84.

(26) Inter-lineage conflicts (*hsieh-tou*) in south China have been much studied. See Hsiao, pp. 419-33; Freedman, pp. 8, 106-13; and Lang Ch'ing-hsiao, "Chin San-pai Nien Chung-Kuo Nan-pu chih Hsieh-tou"[Clan Battles in South China during the Last 300 Years], *Chien-kuo Yueh-k'an* [Reconstruction Monthly], Vol. 4 (1936), No. 3, pp. 1-10; No. 4, pp. 1-14; No. 5, pp. 1-12.

(27) Lai Yi-faai, *The Part Played by Pirates of Kwangtung and Kwangsi Provinces in the Taiping Insurrection* (Ph. D. dissertation in History, University of California, Berkeley, 1950), pp. 29-35, 113-28; Lai Yi-faai, Franz Michael, and John C. Sherman, "The Uses of Maps in Social Research: A Case Study in South China", *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 52, No. 1, (1962), pp. 92-110, especially figure 10, "Important Pirate and Land Bandit Gangs in Kwangtung & Kwangsi, 1849-1851" and figure 11, "Distribution of Secret Societies in Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Adjacent Areas, 1800-1851."

ability was usually for hire. Since this village type became a special object of the hatred of farmers association organizers, we may note what a few writers have said of them in Kwangtung. A gazetteer of Kwangchow-fu, dated 1878, characterized these "sticks" as "roaming, shiftless people who blustered and terrorized their fellow villagers and neighbors." In 1886 the governor-general reported how clansmen of Kwangtung hired outside bad elements for their inter-clan battles; and a local official in southern Kwangtung said such clan leaders were "evil elements to whom low-down blackguards attached themselves" as their "talons and teeth."<sup>(28)</sup> Kulp described the "gamblers" in Phoenix Village as men who kept houses for gambling and opium smoking; they were men of physical strength from strong branches of the lineage, who "always stand ready, with the assistance of men who have specialized in boxing, to quell disorder or prevent outside interference." Kulp also described them as "self-made leaders" who became particularly effective when their followers were trained in the Chinese art of attack and defense. Such leaders "suffer no responsibility to the local officials"; they stirred up trouble for the "old uncles" and "book worms," and took advantage of disputes with members of neighboring villages by creating open quarrels. Chen Han-seng described "ruffians" hired by landlords to extract rent and interest payments. He calls them "tools and claws," known locally as *lan-tze*, "corrupt and unprincipled people."

Professor Yang provides two specific examples which, though dating after our period, show the persistence of such local toughs. The leader of the Crop Protection Association in Nanching, an armed gang which levied a charge on all farmers, was involved in the operation of opium dens in the village and gambling houses in the neighboring market town. He had earlier been a member of a "navigation protection corps" which stood guard on ships traversing the Pearl River through bandit territory; the corps usually paid the bandits to leave the ship alone, but fought any gang that tried to molest it. The second example was the head of a family which, by the 1940's, was the largest land owner in the village. In the 1920's he had been an underling of Li Fu-lin, a bandit leader who dominated Honam Island and who "joined"

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(28) Hsiao, pp. 705-6, citing *Kwang-chow Fu Chih*, 1878 edition; p. 355, quoting *Tung-Kuan Hsien Chih*, 1911 and *Mu-lin Shu Chi Yao*, 1868 edition.

Sun Yat-sen's regime. According to Nanching residents this underling had made money in banditry and opium traffic, and put it into an import and export business in Canton. He then became not only one of the substantial citizens of his village but a local political boss. His rent collectors would, if necessary, use the family's guns and influence to force rent out of recalcitrant tenants. According to Professor Yang, this man fitted the Communist description of local bully. <sup>(29)</sup>

"Evil gentry" (*lieh-shen*) were another group in villages throughout China and well known in Kwangtung. These were men of some traditional education who displayed the externals of the Confucian moral code, but who dominated their villages and involved themselves in various rackets. Organizers of farmers associations almost always linked "evil gentry" with "local bullies." They neither invented the epithet nor manufactured the hatred for this group, though they certainly fanned it. In the Ch'ing period, when the examination system produced large numbers of local scholars who were awarded privileges and prestige even if they never achieved office, there were always some who were unruly, "frequenting the yamen" and "oppressing their fellow villagers and neighbors." In 1730 such men in eastern Kwangtung were reported as extorting money from passing boats and levying illegal tolls on rural markets. In Nan-hai and Fan-yü, "powerful families," who Professor Hsiao Kung-ch'uan equates with *lieh-shen*, regularly sent armed bands to harvest by force the crops planted by villagers on alluvial lands; or they monopolized irrigation water by preventing farmers access unless they purchased "water certificates." These practices led to bitter inter-clan feuds. In the present century powerful clans in the Canton delta hired mercenary fighters outside their own membership to harvest crops on disputed alluvial lands (*sha-t'ien*) and to enforce their irrigation claims. <sup>(30)</sup>

There were close connections between "local bullies and evil gentry" and the underworld of bandits, pirates, gambling protectors and smugglers as some of these examples show. A few lineages were "bandit clans," at least during the nineteenth century. Bandits and river pirates in Kwangtung in the 1840's and 50's had connections with "rice hosts," who provided them with

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(29) Kulp, pp. 114, 209; Chen, *Agrarian*, p. 61; Yang, pp. 109-10, 113-15, 138.

(30) Hsiao, pp. 246, 247, 318-19; Chen, *Agrarian*, pp. 29, 49.



information, food and supplies, and who helped them dispose of their loot. Such "hosts" sometimes formed stock companies (*tang*). One had 25 branches in a single *hsien*. Some gentry participated in the profit-sharing collaboration between the underworld and the world of respectability. While such lawlessness was prevalent all over the province, apparently piracy and banditry were particularly difficult to control in the main delta, partly because of the complex waterways on which valuable cargoes were shipped. For example, raw silk was shipped to Canton from Shun-te and other main silk producing regions in the delta on special boats guarded against bandits, since a single load might be worth half a million dollars. On the return trip these boats carried the money with which to pay for the silk. Another difficulty was the easy access that bandits had for procuring arms in Macao and possibly also in Hong Kong; they were often better armed than the troops who were supposed to suppress them.<sup>(31)</sup>

Another object of hatred by association organizers were *min-t'uan* or local defense corps. During the first half of the nineteenth century as opium and salt smuggling, piracy and banditry, became widespread in Kwangtung, rival gangs controlled broad reaches of territory. Secret societies such as the Triad enlarged their powers. By mid-century, coincident with the Taiping Rebellion, Kwangtung experienced a devastating revolt of the Red Turbans who dominated the delta and nearly captured Canton. To suppress this revolt Peking authorized its officials in Kwangtung to organize militia corps. These were recruited and largely controlled by local gentry and manned by local braves.<sup>(32)</sup> After suppression of the revolt, these local corps probably were not effectively terminated. Certainly the tradition survived. In the Republican period local defense forces, by then called "people's corps" (*min-t'uan*), still tended to be dominated by leaders of powerful lineages and were often manned by mercenaries. Expenses for maintaining *min-t'uan* were derived

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(31) Laai, *The Part Played by Pirates*, pp. 118-20; C. W. Howard and K. P. Buswell, *A Survey of the Silk Industry in South China* (Canton: Ling Nan Agricultural College, 1925), p. 146. KTNMPK, pp. 11-12. The writer describes Hong Kong and Macao as "rearing places of bandits and where they receive their arms." He implies that "imperialism" deliberately created banditry to disturb the peace in Kwangtung.

(32) Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966), especially chapters 13-15, pp. 132-56.

by a head tax on villagers, collected and administered by an office often located in a market town. Thus *min-t'uan* were the lowest level of permanently constituted and officially recognized military forces. But they were local corps, operating at the *hsiang* level, and closely linked to rural society and its power structure. Landlords used *min-t'uan* to suppress tenant movements for rent reduction. After farmers associations began to build their own armed forces, they frequently came into conflict with *min-t'uan*, and there were hired mercenaries on both sides.

This rural violence was an element of the "soil" in which farmers associations were planted. Powerful lineages tried to preserve their own property or expand it by resort to small scale military forces. Professional toughs, many of whom were part of the underworld, were available for hire. It was the wealthy and powerful who hired them to enforce their will upon the less powerful. Such deeply entrenched power would not be easy to overturn. It persisted through the last days of the National regime on the mainland.

There were various other types of rural organizations which were potential rivals or supporters of farmers associations. Kwangtung had several major secret societies, such as the Triads (*San Ho Hui* and *San Tien Hui*), which were strong in the center of the province, particularly in the delta. The Big Sword Society (*Ta Tao Hui*) was strong in the more mountainous counties of the West and North River regions. It was traditionalistic in its use of such "feudalistic" ideas to bind its members together as "honoring heaven and earth," "filiality towards parents," and "respect for the sovereign and reverence for those above." A local branch of this society known as *Shen Ta* in Kuang-ning and Kao-yao counties came into conflict with farmers associations, but in another county the Big Swords were friendly. In a chain of counties—Ch'ing-yuan, Hua, Fan-yü, Tung-kuan, and Pao-an—there was the Small Sword Society (also called *Ta Chiao Hui*) which was strong in sand-field villages. In a fight this society could muster hundreds of villages. Branches of the society united persons of the same surname. Another society, though less secret, was the P'ao T'ou Hui—the name literally means "Roast Head Society"—which had utopian slogans such as "common enjoyment of prosperity" and "equal treatment in good fortune." Each year in August, this society "lit fires to worship the gods and canvassed for members." There were also alliances among groups of surnames, such as a well-known alliance among

those with the surnames Liu, Kwan, and Chang. There were also associations uniting various *hsiang*, the smallest territorial units, and so-called self-government societies, local merchants associations, agricultural associations organized by reformers to improve farm practices or by gentry to uphold their interests, village crop-watching societies and credit societies organized by farmers themselves. <sup>(33)</sup> Farmers Associations were likely to be in competition with various pre-existing organizations.

Farmers Associations were organized in particular villages; they were only gradually amalgamated into county-wide associations. Socio-economic conditions, no matter how much they may be generalized, differed from one *hsien* to the next. The countryside was a "vast mosaic" in which each village and small town was different from, as well as like, its neighbors. The village was the unit which organizers had to penetrate. And it may have been in periodic markets that they most easily met their clients.

This background discussion should not obscure some important facts: Kwangtung had large numbers of rural poor, and the farming population had many grievances against the powerful and well-to-do among them. What the farmers movement provided the poor was a system for uniting and organizing to overcome their grievances. There was a revolutionary potential - the soil - in the 1920s.

## II. THE ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE KWANGTUNG FARMERS MOVEMENT

After the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee had set up a Farmers Bureau at Party Headquarters, work began slowly. On February 20, 1924, the CEC decided that the Bureau should do research on farmers' conditions, consider methods for mounting a movement among them, and publish a journal for farmers in cooperation with the Propaganda Bureau. The Kuomintang also began to recruit farmers as party members. On March 19, after Borodin had left for Peking, the CEC approved plans for separate associations for self-cultivators, tenants, and hired laborers, to help members of these groups against mistreatment by officials, landlords, and employers,

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(33) This paragraph based on KTNMPK, pp. 19-23.

respectively. There also should be farmers' guards and a variety of educational programs. Kuomintang offices at the county, district and subdistrict levels were to be responsible for such work. The planners clearly expected the farmers movement to be reformist and under direction of the Kuomintang. After Borodin's return to Canton in mid-June, the plan for farmers' organization changed. Instead of three separate associations there should be only one: *Nung-min Hsieh-hui* (Farmers' Association), starting at the most local level, but then combining into district, county, and provincial level associations, and finally into a national organization, completely autonomous.

After several changes in leadership of the Farmers Bureau, Dr. Sun, shortly before he was to leave for Peking on his final journey, appointed Liao Chung-k'ai as head of the Bureau on November 11, 1924 and Mr. Liao retained this position until his assassination on August 20, 1925. During his term the farmers movement took on substance in Kwangtung. The principal officers under Liao were three Communists, Lo Ch'i-yuan as Secretary of the Bureau, and P'eng Pai and Juan Hsiao-hsien as Organization Officers. These three were, in the words of an impartial observer, T. C. Chang, "the soul and spirit of the movement." They held their positions into 1926. The Farmers Bureau operated under Regulations provided by the KMT Central Executive Committee dated September 5, 1924. These defined the duties of the Bureau Chief, who had general responsibility and signed all documents, and the Secretary, who was deputy chief and evidently ran the Bureau. The Secretary directed the work of the staff, made plans and preparations for establishing county farmers associations, managed correspondence and the preparation of literature, and was in charge of special funds, budgets and accounts. The two Organization Officers were responsible for the outside work of the Bureau, organizing farmers associations, training and supervising the work of Special Deputies, training association officers, and executing the Bureau's plans. The principal staff of the Bureau held weekly meetings, and might meet in emergency session, for reports, discussion, and passing of resolutions which would then be forwarded to the KMT Central Executive Committee for approval. The Bureau, however, was poorly financed and had a

staff of only 11, including clerks and copyists, as late as January, 1926. <sup>(34)</sup>

At the next subordinate level of organization were the Special Deputies. In planning for the development of a farmers movement the Central Executive Committee on June 30, 1924, authorized the appointment of twenty such persons; in September it approved a brief set of Regulations. Special Deputies, under the direction of the Farmers Bureau, were to go into the field to investigate conditions, propagandize, and organize farmers associations. They were to report on their work once a week, could not leave their posts without authorization, and must receive permission in advance for any unusual expenditures. On returning from the field they must report to, and attend regular office hours at, the Special Deputies Management Office. Most of the Special Deputies, except for a few experienced organizers, were selected from among graduates of the Farmers Movement Training Institute. Twenty-four were selected from among the 33 graduates of the First Class and sent out on August 20, 1924. Ten of them were still listed as among 65 in service at the beginning of 1926. Fourteen who graduated from the Second Class on October 30 and fifteen from the Third Class, which graduated on April 1, 1925, were serving as Special Deputies in early 1926. They were young men, mostly in their early twenties, middle school students, or farmers who had made a mark in the farmers movement, and most of them came from counties near Canton. They were paid small salaries, ranging from \$15 to \$50 a month, but often in arrears according to a complaint they registered in October, 1925. Practically all of them were members of the Communist Party, though doubtless on the Kuomintang register also. <sup>(35)</sup>

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(34) Appointments in KFNP, 1086 (Nov. 11) and 1083-84 (Nov. 6) sourced to minutes of the CEC, Nov. 6 and 27, 1924. Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Pen Pu I Nien Lai Kung-tso Pao-kao Kai-yao" [Short Report of the Work of This Bureau (i. e., Farmers Bureau) During the Past Year], CKNM, No. 2, (Feb. 1, 1926), pp. 147-207. Regulations given, pp. 162-66. Most of them are concerned with bureaucratic details. (Hereafter Lo, Pen Pu). T. C. Chang, *The Farmers Movement in Kwangtung*, cited, p. 23.

(35) Lo, Pen Pu, p. 166 for Regulations; pp. 160-62 for the list of 65 Special Deputies in service about January, 1926. By comparing this list with his list of graduates of the first three classes of the Farmers Movement Training Institute, pp. 175-76, 182-86, 190-93, it is possible to identify 39 of them. The ages of 27 who became Special Deputies from the second and third classes, ranged from 18 to 28 *sui* when they graduated, but 22 of them ranged between 21 and 25 *sui*. The Special Deputies of the second and third classes came from the following coun-  
(cont.)

Lo Ch'i-yuan provides much interesting information about the first four classes of the Farmers Movement Training Institute. Only the graduates of the first three classes could have affected the farmers movement during the period here under consideration, from October 1924 to May 1925, and we will generalize his information about them. P'eng Pai, Lo Ch'i-yuan and Juan Hsiao-hsien directed the successive classes. Students underwent training for periods which ranged from one and a half to three months. While the class work was largely ideological training, there was an increasing emphasis upon military training and upon field work—going out to nearby villages to observe rural conditions. Students were given military training “to develop disciplined, organized combatants for the farmers movement,” and so they could lead the self-defense groups organized by farmers as “a genuine military power to protect the revolution or defend it against invasion by the enemy class,” in Lo Ch'i-yuan's words. Members of the Second Class were formed up into a “Farmers Corps” and went to Shao-kuan as guards for Sun Yat-sen during his last Northern Expedition.

There was a high attrition rate among the students in the three classes: of 391 students admitted only 289 graduated with their classes. Most of the entrants to the first class were persons influenced by the May Fourth Movement ideal “of going among the people,” that is, they were students, but some were farmers who had worked in the farmers movement and some were workers who had served in the unionization movement. Thereafter the proportion from farm backgrounds was purposely increased. In the second class, students and farmers were each 30 per cent, with another 10 per cent drawn from persons who had worked in the farmers movement. Out of 128 who

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ties near Canton: Hua Hsien 7, Shan-te 6, Tung-kuan 3, Hsiang-shan 2, Ch'ing-yuan 2, and one each from Nan-hai, Kao-yao and Hao-shan. Only four came from distant counties. There is information on previous occupations of Deputies from the third class: out of fifteen, thirteen were farmers and two of them tenants, one was a small merchant and one a student. Protest against salary arrears from “Pen Pu T'e P'ai-yuan Ta-hui chüeh-i An” [Resolutions of a Conference of Special Deputies of This Bureau], CKNM, No. 1 (Jan. 1926), pp. 71-74, p. 74. The Conference was held October 27-28, 1925. KTNMPK, p. 53 states that 99 per cent of the Special Deputies sent out by the KMT Farmers Bureau were Communists. Two Kuomintang writers, Chou Fu-hai and Tsou Lu assert that only Communist applicants were permitted to pass the entrance examinations for the First Class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute. See “Forging the Weapons,” p. 126, note 26.

entered the third class, 29 were village students, 20 were independent farmers, and 72 were tenant farmers. A few women were admitted to the first two classes but not to the third. Most of the students were in their early twenties, though seven were in their early thirties. All but three of the students, so far as we know, came from Kwangtung. Nearly half of them came from counties close to Canton, but Kuang-ning produced 26 (it was the center of one of the most active farmers movements) and the Island of Hainan, surprisingly, produced 28. The rest were from some twenty counties, in numbers too small to have much effect upon their regions when they returned. And it was the purpose of the program to train young men who would return to organize farmers in their native districts. <sup>(36)</sup>

Organizers operated under a simple charter for farmers associations issued in June 1924, but the charter clearly reveals a notable concept. In the first place, farmers associations (*nung-min hsieh-hui*) were to be completely independent bodies so as not to be under any outside restraint. They were permitted to organize farmers guards for the coming period of struggle and to protect themselves against bandits and the outrages of soldiers. The method is precisely outlined: guards would be organized with military discipline according to the system of volunteer armies. Only members of farmers associations could be members of the guards. They were permitted to disarm those in a village who were not members of the farmers associations. Farmers guards were to be supervised by the government, yet it could not use them for activities not directly connected with the defense of their own villages.

Farmers associations were given specific rights, the right to warn, to accuse judicially, to serve in the collection of land taxes, and to "solve land-tax questions," but they did not have executive authority. In making judicial accusations the farmers association of a particular level, from the *hsiang* up to the national level, was to make its complaint to the governmental office of the corresponding level. Problems which could not be solved between a farmers association and the corresponding governmental office would be passed up to the next higher level of the association to work out with its corresponding governmental office. Each association was to have a flag, the

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(36) Lo, Pen Pu, pp. 167-193, quotation, p. 168.

Nationalist flag upon which would be superimposed the picture of a plow and a yellow strip of cloth with an inscription identifying the association by its locality.

The basic level of organization was to be the *hsiang* farmers association. These might be established with 25 or more members aged 16 *sui* and above. Excluded from membership were persons owning 100 or more *mou* of land (16 acres or more), those who practiced usury, teachers of religion such as spiritualists, pastors, Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian priests, mediums, etc., those who were manipulated by imperialism, and opium smokers and gamblers. Members of farmers associations at all levels—these were to be the *hsiang*, *ch'ü*, county, province, and the national level—were to enjoy legal protection in matters of contracts, inheritance and property. Associations had the special right to petition for the dismissal of harsh officials, whether executive, judicial or military, provided three-fourths of the membership voted for such a petition and it passed through the local or central supervisory committee. These committees were to be made up of two delegates from the farmers association and one each from the labor union, the educational association, the merchants association, and the Kuomintang. The decision of the supervisory committee was to be executed by the government organ concerned. Farmers associations might send delegates to conferences convened by organs of the local and the central government to discuss matters concerning agriculture, such as irrigation, relief from natural disasters, the borrowing of funds, and farmer education. Dr. Sun's government promised to assist and earnestly guide the farmers movement so that China's farmers would reach a position of self-governing independence. "In order to complete the work of the Three Principles of the People," the government declared, "we especially issue this proclamation."<sup>(37)</sup>

One other organizational matter deserves attention. Communist leaders in Kwangtung attempted to direct and dominate the farmers movement. In a

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(37) "Keming Cheng-fu Tui-yu Nung-min Yun-tung Ti-i-tz'u Hsuan-yen" [First Proclamation of the Revolutionary Government on the Farmers Movement], *Chung-kuo Kuomintang Chung-yao Hsuan-Yen Hui-pien* (n. p., Tang I Yen-chiu Hui, May 1929), pp. 347-51. The contents dates this proclamation as June 19, 1924. Lo, Pen Pu, p. 159 says the Kuomintang Farmers Bureau proclaimed a constitution for farmers associations in July, 1924, but I have not found it. The constitution adopted by the Kwangtung Provincial Farmers Association in May 1925 is discussed below.



frank bit of history, fortunately published, an unnamed Communist author, probably Lo Ch'i-yuan, relates how the Party organized itself to direct the farmers movement under the Kuomintang. At the Third CCP Congress held in Canton in June 1923, policy for the farmers movement was taken from the Youth Corps and placed under the Communist Party. But the Party did not try to direct the movement openly, and after the Kuomintang's reorganization in January 1924, when that Party had recognized the farmers movement as a form of revolutionary work, "we used the name of the Kuomintang Central Farmers Bureau" for work, and opened the Farmers Movement Training Institute. At this time, the account continues (referring to the summer of 1924), a Farmers Committee (*Nung Hui*) was organized in the Party—that is, the CCP—"to direct the work of the Kuomintang Central Farmers Bureau." The account then states that the Communist Farmers Committee directed not only that Bureau but the Provincial Farmers Bureau, the Provincial Farmers Association, various *hsien* or branch Farmers Committees, and the Special Deputy comrades of the farmers movement. The account then details how this direction by the Farmers Committee was done. <sup>(38)</sup>

The most notable point deduced from the above account is that farmers associations, or rather the entire system of associations, were to be completely autonomous. The leaders of the movement repeatedly and vehemently insisted upon this. Yet the Communist Party intended to control the system itself.

### III. PRACTICAL WORK IN ORGANIZING FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS, OCTOBER 1924—MAY 1925

Let us now examine how farmers associations were organized in Kwangtung during the months preceding the establishment of a Provincial Association

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(38) KTNMPK, p. 124. Within the Report, pp. 152-160, there is embedded a report by Lo Ch'i-yuan to the Regional Committee—that is, the CCP Regional Committee for Kwangtung and Kwangsi—dated 22 July [1926]. In the above cited passages the Communist codeword *min* is used to stand for the Kuomintang. I have not given details of the work of the Farmers Committee because the examples were later than the period here under consideration. The Committee will be discussed again in the period after May, 1925. Using a source which I have not seen, Dr. Hofheinz identifies members of the Farmers Committee as P'eng Pai, Juan Hsiao-hsien, Lo Ch'i-yuan and Chou Ch'i-chien. Roy Mark Hofheinz, Jr., *The Peasant Movement and Rural Revolution: Chinese Communists in the Countryside (1923-7)* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, 1966); *The Broken Wave*, p. 321, note 10.

in May 1925. We focus attention upon methods, when information is available. Some 200,000 farmers had allegedly been organized by May 1925, and the growth of the movement may be gauged thereafter by the following table, though the figures given may only approximate the actual situation.

**GROWTH OF FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS IN KWANGTUNG**

Source	Date	Members	Associations		In Hsien	Formally Organized Hsien Ass.
			Village or Hsiang	Ch'ü		
1	April, 1925	160,000			20	4
2	Ca. April, 1925	172,182	557	83	22	9?
3	May, 1925	210,000			22	
4	Oct., 1925	400,000			33	
5	Dec., 1925	620,000			37	
6	Jan., 1926	720,000			37	16
7	May, 1926	626,457	4,216	177	66	
8	June, 1926	647,766	4,527	177		23
9	Aug., 1926	648,000	4,517			
10	Late 1926	823,338	6,442	252	71	

1. Ts'ai Ho-shen, "Chin Nien Wu I chih Kwangtung Nung-min Yun-tung," [The Kwangtung Farmers Movement on May First This Year], *Hsiang-tao Chou-pao*, No. 112, Special Issue for May First, 1925, pp. 1030-36, p. 1030.
2. From a map found in the Russian Consulate in Canton, Dec. 14, 1927. No date given, but I deduce it from locations where memberships are reported.
3. *Chung-kuo Kuomintang Ti-erh-tz'u Ch'uan-kuo Tai-piao Ta-hui Hui-i Chi-lu* [Records of the Second National Congress of the Kuomintang], Kuomintang Central Executive Committee, April, 1926. Resolutions on the Farmers Movement, p. 148. Hin Wong, "Farmers and Workers in Canton," CWR, May 16, 1925, dated Canton, May 1, states the Farmers League claims 200,000 members in 22 out of 96 Kwangtung districts.
4. "Pen Pu T'e-p'ai Yuan Ta-hui chih Ch'ueh-i-an" [Resolutions of the Conference of Special Deputies of This (i.e. the KMT Central Farmers) Bureau], CKNM, No. 1 (Jan., 1926), pp. 71-74, p. 72. The Conference was held Oct. 27-28, 1925.
5. "Pen Tang Ti-erh-tz'u Ch'uan-kuo Tai-piao Ta-hui Nung-min Yun-tung Ch'ueh-i-an" [Resolutions on the Farmers Movement at the Second National Congress of the Kuomintang], CKNM, No. 1 (Jan., 1926), pp. 111-20. On p. 118 it says there are over 700,000 members in 44 *hsien*.
6. Same as 3, p. 149. This lists the 16 *hsien* with formally organized county associations and 21 in the process of being organized. The total figure is suspect.
7. Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao" [General Report of the Association's Work], CKNM, No. 6-7, [June-July], 1926, pp. 639-87, p. 654. Pages 649-54 give complete details.
8. TITNM, p. 17, figures for June 3. Similar figures are given by Jefferson D.H. Lamb (Lin Tung-hai), *The Development of the Agrarian Movement and Agrarian Legislation in China* (Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1934), p. 77. As a note, Lamb states that according to a later report in 1926 there were only 626,458 organized farmers in Kwangtung.

Thus his figure is virtually identical with the preceding one.

9. Seng Sin Fu, *China: A Survey of the Historical & Economic Forces Behind the National Revolution* (London, Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927), p.63. Sourced to KMT Publicity Department, Information Service, Canton, No. 2 (Sept. 17, 1926).
10. T. C. Chang, *The Farmers' Movement in Kwangtung*, cited, pp. 15-16, with details. *Kwangtung Nung-min Yun-tung Pao-kao*, cited, p. 188, in a resolution prepared for a meeting of Special Deputies to be held August 15, says there are at least 800,000 members in 66 *hsien*.

### *Forming Farmers Associations Near Canton*

There is surprisingly little information about work done to organize farmers in the suburban areas around Canton and in the neighboring counties, though these were the areas of great effort in 1924. Most of what is reported for Canton suburbs concerns conflicts with local authorities and the rural elite. In November 1924, three members of an association were arrested by soldiers of the Third Army under the command of General Wang Tien-jen. Liao Chung-k'ai protested by letter twice, demanding their release, which was effected. On December 13, Lin Pao-chen, the head of the Committee of the Farmers Association of the First *Ch'ü*, was killed by *min-t'uan* under the leadership of one P'eng Chu. Members of the association, which had been formed in July, were resisting levies for crop protection. Liao immediately wrote to Governor Hu Han-min, demanding the punishment of P'eng, who was a relative of Liao's, and justice for the deceased. P'eng was taken into custody. Thereafter this *ch'ü* association became very resistant, its membership grew, and it became the core of the suburban association. Lin Pao-chen is frequently mentioned as one of the first martyrs to the farmers movement. Aside from these incidents, we hear of farmers associations in the fall of 1924 protesting the plan for election of Canton's mayor by various organizations without their participation. In this they were guided by members of the Communist Party. They also remonstrated against the appointment by the magistrate of Fan-yü of one P'eng Chu-shih as chief of the local gendarmes. A formal county association had not yet been set up in April 1925. From these scattered references we deduce a weak movement, in conflict with the established power structure, and assisted by Liao Chung-k'ai in his position as head of the Kuomintang Farmers Bureau. The earliest available numeration of membership in farmers associations, probably dating April 1925, credits Canton with 1,500 members in 11 associations in 3

*ch'ü.* <sup>(39)</sup>

Shun-te, the county directly south of Canton, was a great silk producing district; in fact, the production of mulberry leaves and the raising of silk worms was the principal occupation of the rural population in a county which numbered well over a million people. The raw silk produced by Shun-te was estimated in 1924 to be worth more than 72 million dollars in Hong Kong currency per year. Shun-te was unusual in the fact that most farmers lived, not in villages, but in separate households amidst their fields—a non-nucleated residence pattern, not easy to organize. Probably not over 15 per cent of the land was owned by the farmers themselves. Most of the land had long since come into the hands of wealthy landlords, lineages, and other corporate groups. This tended “to produce a large lower class, a smaller middle class mostly merchants, and a still smaller upper class with considerable wealth,” according to C. W. Howard, an American expert who made an extensive study of the silk growing regions of Kwangtung in 1924. The system of agriculture was a marvelous symbiosis. Much of the alluvial land was farmed by the “six-four system” in which ponds were dug out of about forty per cent of an area to raise the level of the remainder. Fish were grown in the ponds and mulberries on the land. Mulberry leaves fed the silkworms; but it was a unique species of mulberry which produced six or seven crops of leaves a year, allowing an almost continuous rearing of worms and cocoons. Diseased worms and droppings were fed to fish, and the enriched bottom mud of the ponds was used to fertilize the mulberries. The fish crop brought extra income. This system allowed industrious tenants to make a comfortable living from lands they customarily held on long leases. They paid their rents in cash and marketed their leaves or cocoons. Furthermore, Shun-te was one of the delta counties in which land rents were relatively light and thus, in the words of the best source on the Kwangtung farmers movement, “rent-reduction movements don’t go, no matter what.” The county

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(39) Chang, *Famers*, pp. 6, 24, 31; TITNM, 186, 195; CKNM, pp. 73, 616. Issue number 2 of *Chung-kuo Nung-min* for February, 1926, has a picture of the slain Lin Pao-chen and a eulogy to him. He was 43 years old when killed. Apparently he was not a member of the Communist Party, for I do not find him referred to in Communist sources as a “Comrade.” In a table listing martyrs of the “farmers world” in CKNM, pp. 627-28, only two are listed from Canton suburbs. The number of members and associations comes from the map discovered in the Russian Consulate in Canton on December 14, 1927.

was infested with bandits, pirates, and "protection corps"; and the wealthy were well organized to uphold their privileges. (40)

Juan Hsiao-hsien was sent to Shun-te to try his hand at organizing farmers associations, probably in the fall of 1924. He seems to have accomplished little. Already in 1923 some farmers of Yün-lu *hsiang* had organized a farmers corps to resist exactions to pay the local *min-t'uan*, but their organization had been refused recognition by the county magistrate, Chou Chih-chen. They carried on in secret and this was the beginning of the farmers movement in the delta area. In October 1924, probably after Juan's arrival, members of farmers associations are said to have assisted the government side in the conflict with the Canton Merchants Corps. There was a serious conflict in about February 1925 when "evil gentry in league with bandits and the local garrison," destroyed the farmers association in Li-hsiao *hsiang*, killed the entire three-man executive committee, burned several hundred homes, and butchered more than 20 farmers. Struggles between farmers and *min-t'uan* were frequent, and bandits sometimes infiltrated, or were brought into farmers associations in the county. By April 1925, there were only some 1,300 members in the 16 associations which had been created, though a county association was about to be established. This was a minute membership for so populous a county where tenancy was the rule. Nor was it much of a record for the 17 graduates of the second class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute who came from Shun-te, and presumably returned there in November 1924, after their brief military experience. (41)

Hsiang-shan county, directly south of Shun-te, was renamed Chung-shan in 1925 after its most illustrious son, Sun Yat-sen. Macao was on its southern

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(40) Extremely interesting accounts of sericulture in the delta, and particularly in Shun-te, are: C. W. Howard and K. P. Buswell, *A Survey of the Silk Industry of South China* (Canton, Ling Nan Agricultural College, Canton Christian College, January, 1925); Glenn T. Trewartha, "Field Observations on the Canton Delta of South China", *Economic Geography*, vol. 15 (January, 1929), pp. 1-10; and "Mulberry Growing in Kwangtung", *The Chinese Economic Monthly*, vol. 3, No. 5 (May, 1926), pp. 211-15. Quotations from Howard, p. 12, and KTNMPK, p. 2. The population of Shun-te is given by Howard as 1,800,000, "as estimated by the last government census," and he believed that at least 1,440,000 were engaged in some form of sericulture.

(41) Chang, *Farmers*, pp. 1, 6; Report by Juan Hsiao-hsien in CKNM, 613, 617, 623; KTNMPK, pp. 56, 62; TITNM, pp. 35, 36, 186. Numbers from Russian map, cited. CKNM, pp. 182-87. The origins of the first class are not given.

tip and the county faced Hong Kong across the wide Pearl River estuary. It had a long tradition of exporting males overseas. Its agriculture was intensely commercialized. Only the northern districts specialized in sericulture but it was the second most important county in silk production, with the estimated value of its raw silk nearly HK \$33 million per annum. Tenancy was also widely prevalent, and Ch'en Han-seng estimated that half of the farm land was owned by lineages. Bidding for the use of lineage lands was done in the ancestral temples, but actually the rates for rental were "very low." The "so-called unequal treaties between farmers were mostly between tenants and individual landlords, but their lands were mostly not very large so they never wanted the farmers to demand rent-reductions from them." The prescription for this situation, as recommended by leaders of the farmers movement, was for a well-organized farmers association to teach tenants to enter a common, low bid. But they added that rental contracts were quite favorable for good relations with farmers associations.

Extensive areas of reclaimed land were operated under a system of contractual farming (*pao nung chih*) in which syndicates contracted for large amounts of land, surrounded it with walls and protected it with *min-t'uan*, and sub-let the land to cultivators to whom they also rented draft animals and tools. The largest of these companies in Chung-shan was the "Pure Fragrance Agricultural Company," which had contracted for the lands of many small owners, incorporated them in its walls and obliterated the boundaries so that it was impossible to tell which lands belonged to the original owners. In the words of the same farmers movement leaders, "Not only small tenants and agricultural laborers opposed the *pao nung* system but small owners did also, yet in the end there is nothing you can do about it." This source also speaks of vast sums owned by the Ch'ung-i Temple in the 8th *ch'ü* of Chung-shan, which were controlled by the gentry although its lands were originally owned by the public. "Almost all public organizations in Chung-shan," the writer avers, "are the base of power of the gentry, who leave no evil undone." Ch'en Han-seng estimated that about 250,000 acres of land in Chung-shan were under sub-lease, half of it in the hands of "rich merchants and powerful gentry," who often leased blocks of land for 20 or 30 years, and sub-let it for periods of from one to five. They used force and intimidation to win the long leases from lineages, hiring mercenaries to

plunder crops of those who did not grant such leases. Lo Ch'i-yuan, writing in November 1925, described the tax situation in the county and listed 19 kinds of contributions which farmers had to pay in addition to land taxes, as well as the system by which bandits issued "black tickets" for a fee to exempt farmers from having their crops plundered. <sup>(42)</sup>

In August 1924, Governor Liao Chung-k'ai journeyed to the 9th *ch'ü* of Hsiang-shan, a silk growing region, where he lectured to a conference of farmers' representatives, urging them to form farmers associations. After listening to reports of farmers' grievances, Governor Liao observed that most of the farmers in the particular region were tenants, oppressed by gentry from Shun-te who opposed any self-governing by the local people. Although the government supported the farmers, it was up to them to liberate themselves. The farmers association was the "life-preserver" which he threw them, but it was up to them to catch it and save themselves from drowning. They should unite their strength like a bundle of bamboos which cannot be chopped through. Only the farmers were still unorganized. Merchants and laborers used their associations and unions to improve their conditions. With such an instrument, farmers could go directly to the magistrate, to the governor, or to the Generalissimo himself, to negotiate over their sufferings and to solve them. <sup>(43)</sup>

With this strong endorsement by the Governor, it seems likely the county magistrate took a benevolent attitude, at least nominally, toward the organizing of farmers associations. Eleven graduates of the second class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute came from Hsiang-shan as did some,

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(42) Howard, cited, pp. 20-21 and table at end. Quotations from KTNMPK, pp. 4, 6-7, 50; and Chen, Agrarian, p. 49; estimate of lineage lands, p. 34. Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Chung-shan Hsien Shih-pien chih Ching-kuo chi Hsien-tsai," [The Incident in Chung-shan County and the Present] CKNM, No. 1 (January, 1926), pp. 39-58, pp. 50-55. The report is dated, November 20.

(43) Liao's speech in CKNM, No. 3 (March, 1926), pp. 217-21, as taken down by Comrade Hsiao I-p'ing. Hsiao was a member of the First Class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute, which graduated August 21, 1924. This helps to date the speech as late August. The speech is reprinted in *Liao Chung-k'ai Chi* [Collected Works of Liao Chung-k'ai] (Peking, Hsin-hua Book Store, 1963), pp. 175-78. Ta Huang-pu, where the speech was delivered, was an important center of the silk industry. The magistrate must have been present, according to Chinese custom, when the Governor visited his county; hence, Liao was telling him to lend his support.

presumably, from the first. Members of the second class started work early in November. A picture dated 11 December 1924, shows the inaugural ceremony of farmers associations and guards from five *hsiang* of this same 9th *ch'ü*, with something like 400 persons lined up with their several unit flags. Actually, November was a rough month for the organizers in Hsiang-shan. There were five reported incidents, in three of which farmers associations were attacked and destroyed by gentry-led ruffians or troops of the Fu Army of Li Fu-lin. In one place six members were arrested and released only after telegraphic orders from Canton. In another, three farmers were killed. Members of the second class of the Institute were ambushed and fired upon when returning to the *hsien* city after a propaganda tour. In another place organizers were given a terrible beating by landlords. Yet in spite of these obstacles, there were said to be 58 associations in 8 *ch'ü* of Hsiang-shan, with a reported 8,000 members in April 1925, and a county association was about to be organized. (44)

Nan-hai *hsien* lay directly west of Canton and was an extremely populous county with many towns and one large commercial and industrial city, Fo-shan. Nan-hai was the third most important silk growing region, producing an estimated HK \$29 million in raw silk annually. The northern half of the county was mountainous, but those parts near the West River were delta country and had to be diked against floods. Nan-hai was intimately connected with Canton. Political issues in the one place immediately affected the other. When the Merchants Corps Incident broke out in Canton, the Fo-shan merchants immediately responded. When Canton merchants struck, they did also. In Nan-pu *hsiang* a farmers corps—probably not a formally organized farmers association—came into conflict with the *hsiang* merchants corps and was broken up. In August the Fo-shan merchants corps invaded Nan-pu and wrecked it. After the defeat of the Canton Merchants Corps in mid-October

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(44) CKNM, No. 1 (January, 1925), frontis, for picture; pp. 182-87 for identified graduates. Ts'ai Ho-shen, "Chin Nien Wu I chih Kwangtung Nung-min Yun-tung" [The Kwangtung Farmers Movement on May First This Year] *Hsiang-tao Chou-pao*, No. 112, Special Issue for May First, 1925, pp. 1030-36, p. 1033 for the five incidents in November as reported to *Hsiang-tao Chou-pao*, presumably by Communist workers in Kwangtung and probably by the Farmers Committee (*Nung Hui*). Numbers from the Russian map. The figure 8,000 can only be considered an estimate.



1924, some 19 members of the Farmers Army created from the second class of the Training Institute who came from Nan-hai, formed the nucleus of farmers guards in three *ch'ü*. In mid-November units of the Third Yunnanese Army under Hu Ssu-shun, overpowered them: "they were destroyed by an army of the government, a very strange matter." By April 1925 there were reported to be only two farmers associations with 2,120 members in a single *ch'ü*, probably in Fo-shan. <sup>(45)</sup>

The record in Hua *hsien*, a hilly county just north of Canton, is similarly sparse. Farmers had revolted against extra taxation, apparently in the spring of 1924, and came into conflict with *min-t'uan* who were well equipped because the county was plagued by bandits. Organizers from the Farmers Bureau came to shape them into a formal farmers association in three *hsiang* of the First *ch'ü*. Landlords organized a Protection Society which "hated and slandered" the farmers association and its managers. A new magistrate, T'an Sheng-yung, was appointed to the county but was unable to take office because the incumbent refused to turn over the office. While waiting to get into the *hsien* city, T'an lived in the office of the landlords' Protection Society. On November 14 he was able to get the help of *min-t'uan*, converted from bandits, and to force his way into the city. In this he had been aided by "an evil gentry," Chiang Yao-chung. Apparently in return for the favor, Magistrate T'an, "with the help of landlords and the evil gentry, Chiang Yao-chung and others," held a big conference of the Protection Society and proposed to arrest those who were managing the farmers association. In December, as a result of a rent reduction movement, landlords "in league with local officials," mobilized *min-t'uan*, a merchants corps, and bandits to attack the farmers army. In Yuan-t'ien *hsiang* they burned down the office of the farmers association and tortured to death the deputy head of the committee, Wang Fu-san. The movement continued secretly, but it never grew large. Only seven natives of the county had graduated from the second class of the Institute. By April 1925, the movement was said to have had 1,900 members in 17 associations, and Hua *hsien* was one of four with formally

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(45) Howard, cited, pp. 21-23 and chart. Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, p. 1034 describes the conflicts; mentioned also in TITNM, p. 195. Numbers from Russian map. There is very little information on the farmers movement in Nan-hai in sources available to me.

established county associations. <sup>(46)</sup>

Tung-wan, the county southeast of Canton and across the Pearl River from Shun-te, was very populous. Several branches of the East River passed through it while the Canton-Kowloon Railway ran through its main city, Shih-lung. Tung-wan was renowned for having a large educational estate, the famous Ming-lun T'ang, which owned extensive lands that it rented out by the contractual system (*pao nung chih*). The managers of the estate were members of the gentry, and a prime contractor was one Chou Tien-pang, who had many business interests. Chou rented the land, which he contracted out to a third level of entrepreneurs, who either employed hired labor or rented their tracts to tenant farmers who, as the ultimate renters, paid high rates. The annual income of the Ming-lun T'ang was said to be \$200,000 a year. <sup>(47)</sup>

Tung-wan was a battleground between the forces of Ch'en Chiung-ming and the revolutionary government in Canton. This may account, in part, for the slow start of the farmers movement there. Only 3 graduates of the second class of the Institute came from Tung-wan. In October 1924, farmers in two *hsiang* resisted the payment of some thirty kinds of contributions and overcame a combined force of *min-t'uan* under the Commander of the Humen forts, Liao Hsiang-yün. They then established a farmers association in the First *ch'ü*, but hired assassins killed the deputy head of the association, Li Hai-tung. In November, the farmers association of the Third *ch'ü* had its offices wrecked and some members arrested by *min-t'uan*. This may have been another case in which Liao Chung-k'ai intervened to effect their release. Three other incidents are reported for November; in two of them association members were arrested and beaten up in conflicts with local military powers who were assessing funds or demanding porters. When the First Eastern

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(46) This account is pieced together from Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, p. 1033; TITNM, pp. 35, 36, 186, 195; Chang, *Farmers*, pp. 2, 29 (he misdates this as 1927); CKNM, pp. 83, 613, 616 (Juan Hsiao-hsien's report). CKNM, No. 3 (March, 1926) has two photographs of farmers in Hua Hsien holding a memorial service for Wang Fusan, which must have been long after the event. Numbers from Russian map.

(47) D. K. Liu, "Land Tenure Systems in China," *Chinese Economic Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (June, 1928), pp. 457-74, p. 463. This speaks of land being rented either through middlemen or a stock company, and gives an example of one such company which had a capital of \$160,000 but might guarantee rent on any one estate of over a million dollars a year. KTNMPK, pp. 4, 6.

Expedition began its campaign in February 1925, farmers of Tung-wan are said to have assisted. A farmers association was then set up in one *hsiang*, but the next day its office was attacked and burned by forces of "the evil gentry, T'an Ch'i-hsiu," with three or four persons killed. T'an was a military officer who had served under Sun Yat-sen, and is one of the few "evil gentry" about whom some information is available. After Tung-wan had been brought under Canton's control, it was reported there were 4,000 members in 53 farmers associations in 8 *ch'ü*.<sup>(48)</sup>

Two counties northeast of Canton, Tseng-ch'eng and Tsung-hua, left very little record of a farmers movement. Tseng-ch'eng is said to have had three associations with 1,570 members in about April 1925. But the movement scarcely grew at all: in late 1926 it counted only 1,640 members. Tsung-hua apparently had no associations.<sup>(49)</sup>

To generalize these scattered accounts of an eight month effort to organize the farmers in Fan-yü (Canton) and its surrounding counties, we can only conclude that the results were meagre. The Kuomintang, the revolutionary government, and Liao Chung-k'ai personally lent their authority to the movement and a small number of Communists in the Kuomintang worked energetically to forward it. Only 1,500 members were reported from Canton suburbs. In five adjacent counties from which there were 47 graduates of the second class of the Institute, 91 associations had been formed with a total

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(48) Incidents mentioned in TITNM, pp. 186, 195; Chang, *Farmers*, p. 28; CKNM, pp. 614, 617; Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, p. 1033. Tsou Lu in CKKMTSK, p. 356, says bandits in the farmers association were arrested by the forces of Lin Shu-wei in Tung-wan and Liao Chung-k'ai wrote him a letter saying, "No matter whether they are bandits or not, they should be freed." Tsou does not date this incident. According to *Who's Who in China, 1936*, T'an Ch'i-hsiu was a native of Lo-t'ing in Kwangtung. Born in 1892, he received training in the Kwangtung Military Training School and the Army Officers Corps. He served Sun Yat-sen as an officer, rising from battalion to divisional commander, and participated in campaigns against Lu Yung-t'ing and Ch'en Chiung-ming "and other reactionary generals in Kwangtung." We know from another source, however, that T'an was himself considered a reactionary and his force was disarmed after the assassination of Liao Chung-k'ai. Numbers from Russian map. According to Ts'ai Ho-sheng, cited, p. 1030, Tung-wan was ready to have its county association formed before May, 1925.

(49) Tseng-ch'eng membership figures from Russian map and Chang, *Farmers*, p. 15. Lo Ch'i-yuan reported in July 1926 that the people of Tseng-ch'eng were sending delegates to Canton to request help in setting up farmers associations. KTNMPK, p. 158.

membership reported as 10,890. These memberships are all given in round numbers; in one case, 4,000. In Hsiang-shan, the 19 graduates helped in the founding of 58 associations, with a reported total of 8,000, which can be no more than someone's estimate. In several places, farmers associations came into violent conflict with the local power structure and had their headquarters destroyed and some of their leaders killed. November 1924 seems to have been a particularly bad month, probably because the Canton Government was trying to suppress merchants corps not under its own control, and because in November organizers started out from Canton to mobilize the farmers. Attempts to enforce rent-reduction or to escape paying "contributions" for already existing local corps were the main points of conflict, and *min-t'uan* controlled by the local elite were the prime foe. The ideals of the promoters had begun to collide with the reality of rural society.

#### *A Partial Victory—the Kuang-ning Farmers Association Established*

During the winter of 1924-25 young Communist natives of a backwoods county several days travel time from Canton organized tenant farmers in a rent-reduction movement and steered them to partial victory with military help from the Canton government. This movement has been so well reported that it is possible to say with some certainty how it was organized and wherein it succeeded. The flavor of these Chinese Communist accounts may be sensed in what follows.

Kuang-ning is a mountainous county northwest of Canton on the border of Kwangsi. Its main river, the Sui, arises in Kwangsi and flows southeastward across the county, then on to join the North and West Rivers at San-shui, an important communications center west of Canton. Kuang-ning had a population of about 400,000 but only eight per cent of its land could be cultivated. It had a lumber industry of pine and bamboo, and also produced tea, sweet potatoes and rice. There were too many people for the cultivable land. An estimate in 1933 stated that 80 per cent of the farmers cultivated farms of less than 10 *mou*, about 1½ acres. Workers regularly migrated to Canton or cities on the West River to find employment. The poverty and cultural backwardness of the county may be deduced from the statement that in 1919 there were only 167 students in lower and higher primary schools of the government, a mere 4.5 per 10,000 of population. This was the second lowest proportion for all counties in the province. There was no

government middle school. Ambitious young men seeking a modern education had to go to Canton or cities on the West River for middle school or college. A branch of the Big Sword Society, *Shen-ta*, was strongly entrenched in the county. Kuang-ning was on one of the routes through which armies from Kwangsi invaded Canton, and General Shen Hung-ying had retreated through the county in 1923. Kuang-ning had been relatively little effected by modernizing influences, either commercial or cultural, and it had scarcely been touched by "Imperialism."<sup>(50)</sup>

According to a nearly contemporary Communist source—not necessarily accurate—about 60 per cent of farm households were tenants, 30 per cent were part-tenants and only 10 per cent were independent farmers. There were many large landlords, and the life of tenants was bitter. Tenancy was by contract, either written or verbal, rather than hereditary; this left landlords in a position to raise rents or take back their land, and since "land is scarce and people abundant, farmers competed with each other and landlords could manipulate them." Landlords required guarantees paid in advance, various customary dues at rent collection time, and if tenants defaulted, the landlords informed the office of the *Pao-wei t'uan* or the police to send soldiers to arrest them. "If tenants went to plead a bad harvest, the landlords put on an iron face and showed no sympathy; they would not reduce the rent by so much as a peck." This source alleges that rents ran as high as 75 per cent of the crop. According to another Communist source, landlords in Kuang-ning exacted 60 per cent of the crop from their tenants, would permit no rent-reduction in bad years, and might seize a defaulting tenant's animals and even abduct his daughters. This was said to be very common in T'an-yü and She-kang, two villages near Chiang-tun, which is northeast of the county seat, the first being inhabited by landlords and the second entirely by their tenants.<sup>(51)</sup> It was in Chiang-tun that a rent-reduction movement broke out in the fall of 1924.

The Kuang-ning farmers movement got its start early in 1924 when unionized oil workers from Canton returned to their native districts and

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(50) Buck, *Land*, III, p. 27; Stauffer, *The Christian Occupation of China*, cited, pp. xxiv, 169, 170, 172; Chen, *Agrarian*, pp. 17, 34, 55, 92; KTNMPK, pp. 15, 21, 38-40.

(51) Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, p. 1034, section 5, entitled: "A Reminiscence of the Kuang-ning Farmers' Tide," and KTNMPK, p. 38.

propagandized the farmers. In May a farmers association was set up and "nearly 10,000 persons joined." Landlords and evil gentry, using the power of the *Pao-wei t'uan* attacked and wrecked the association and beat up its officers. The movement continued in secret. The Magistrate, Li Chi-yüan, had sided with the landlords but Governor Liao Chung-k'ai ordered his removal and appointed Ts'ai Huo-p'eng in his place. The realities were that Li still had much local support and Magistrate Ts'ai was unable even to enter the *hsien* city without Li's help. Ts'ai went to Chiang-tun, which apparently was the base of Li's power, to negotiate with him. Li introduced Ts'ai to a bandit chief who might help him to enter the city. The bandits, we are told, blackened the reputation of the farmers association by using its name in a marauding expedition. Most farmers not knowing the true facts, hated those managing the farmer association. <sup>(52)</sup>

A group of young Communists led by Chou Ch'i-chien returned to Kuang-ning in August 1924, to reactivate the farmers movement. <sup>(53)</sup> They raised three slogans: "Restore the Association!", "Organize According to Regulations!", and "Reduce Rent!" The group propagandized rent-reduction for three months. Apparently the harvest was poor that year; payments were due in November. Landlords countered by organizing a "Society to Protect Property" and after propagandizing throughout the county, succeeded in uniting owners in three *ch'ü* near Chiang-tun into a "Society to Uphold the Owners." They also began to mobilize *min-t'uan* and purchase arms against an expected conflict. Since the farmers of She-kang were particularly fearless and hostile to the landlords, the organizers decided to concentrate their efforts there. But not all tenants approved of the rent-reduction movement. Older farmers said it was the duty of tenants to pay rent, though P'eng Pai, who was now on the scene, tried to overcome their scruples. Young farmers and hired hands were not difficult to persuade. Independent farmers wanted nothing to do with the movement. On the basis of two months effort the organizers were able to set up a formal county association

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(52) Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, pp. 1033, 1034; KTNMPK, pp. 52, 64; Chang, *Farmers*, pp. 7, 24.

(53) The following account, except as noted, is based upon KTNMPK, pp. 64-83 and 98-100. Only the first part of this report is reprinted in TITNM, pp. 139-47. I have not adhered strictly to the sequence as given in the narrative.

in October and a farmers guard. They set the standard for rent payments as 6 parts for the landlord, 3 parts for the tenant, and 1 part for the farmers association. <sup>(54)</sup> Probably early in November the twenty Kuan-ning graduates of the second class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute, all of whom had received military training, came back to their county to help.

The men of property continued to make their preparations and decided upon a general attack on the various farmers associations. They counted on a force of some 340 men from various local *t'uan* near Chiang-tun and some 400 bandits under Li Chi-yüan. They also decided to reward tenants who would join the attack on those in the farmers association by reducing their rent 50 per cent, paying \$600 to the family of anyone killed, and paying all medical expenses of those wounded. To frighten the farmers they put up a great number of red streamers inscribed, "Don't recognize the rent-reduction. Those who obey the farmers association are harming themselves!" In posters they warned farmers not to get mixed up with outsiders but to pay the rents which morality said were due. <sup>(55)</sup>

As evidences of the landlords' preparations increased, farmers asked the organizers about arms. To give them courage, the organizers told them there were over forty rifles, but in fact they only had the six brought by Comrade Ch'en Po-chung, a few others held by individual comrades, and about ten muzzle-loaders produced by somebody from She-kang. To strengthen strike solidarity, the organizers issued seven regulations: (1) Do not resume cultivation without permission, (2) Do not act privately against the interests of the masses and against regulations by making the final rent payment, (3) When payment is made it will be the proper amount without any deductions or loopholes, (4) The entire membership will rise up to resist the landlords' unreasonable oppression, (5) In whatever village there is an incident, the farmers corps of all *ch'ü* will go to their aid, (6) All farmers will obey completely the orders of

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(54) Last two items based on Ts'ai, cited, p. 1034. The 60 per cent of the crop going to the landlord would still be a high rental but less than the 75 per cent which this early source says was customary. A later source, KTNMPK, p. 38, generalizing rents in the West River areas, says formerly the crop was divided 40/60 between tenant and landlord but now—i. e. after rent-reduction had been enforced—the crop is divided 60/40. But of the tenants share, three parts go to him and one part to the association.

(55) Ts'ai, cited, pp. 1034-35.

the county, *ch'ü* and *hsiang* executive committees, and (7) If anyone breaks the regulations they may be severely punished by the judicial and discipline committee. <sup>(56)</sup>

Thus both sides had organized and were mobilizing their respective strength: on the one side, wealth, prestige, the appeal of customary morality, and control of local militia units strengthened by mercenaries; on the other side, determined leadership, tight organization, large numbers with accumulated grievances, and in the background the latent power of the government at Canton. Late in November mercenaries hired by landlords burned down a couple of villages as a lesson. Magistrate Ts'ai tried to calm things by calling a conference for December 1. The landlords declined to send representatives; instead they sent mercenaries to attack She-kang, but three of them were killed by the farmers' sentries. They attacked again on December 6 and were again repulsed. They were too powerful, however, for the farmers to counterattack.

The organizers had sent someone to Canton to ask for military help from the government, stressing the dangers in order to spur the government to action. In the meantime they put up as strong a front as possible, propagandized in the villages about the rent-reduction movement, and drilled the farmer troops. The organizers had an important advantage in their communications system. They sent daily reports to the Central Farmers Bureau and received word regularly of actions planned by the government. Thus they learned that Canton was about to send troops to their aid. Two strong friends of the farmers movement had arranged this, Liao Chung-k'ai and Borodin. (In fact, Borodin was not in Canton in December 1924.) Later the organizers were criticized for having underestimated the difficulty and having asked for only 30 soldiers. Even the force of 100 that was sent proved insufficient. <sup>(57)</sup> The organizers withheld this news from the farmers. Instead, on December 10 they sent a deputation of old farmers, wives and children to

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(56) Regulations from Ts'ai, p. 1035.

(57) Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao" [General Report on Work of the Association], CKNM, No. 6-7, [June-July], 1926, pp. 639-87, pp. 671-72. Lo uses the incident to illustrate the need for accurate knowledge of the enemy situation. He casts the blame on a farmer—who in fact was only a messenger sent to Canton—and then upon the Kuang-ning Farmers Association, but we may infer he is actually blaming P'eng Pai.



petition Magistrate Ts'ai to carry out the peaceful settlement he had agreed upon and to call for help from Canton. The purpose of this maneuver, as stated by our Communist source, was to make the farmers believe it was their petition which brought military aid from the government. At this meeting, P'eng Pai stood by taking notes, which made Magistrate Ts'ai nervous, for he had been instructed by Governor Liao to protect the farmers. The Magistrate was caught between the local power structure and the more distant danger from Canton.

On December 12 the Armored Car unit arrived from Canton and this encouraged the farmers to attack their enemy. The organizers agreed to the attack, since if the farmers were victorious they would gain courage, while if they were being defeated the Armored Car Corps would have to come to their aid. As it turned out, the farmers were helped in their attack on T'an-yü, and then went on a looting spree. This was only stopped by the threat of martial law against them. The combined assault of the farmers army and the Armored Car Corps failed to take the fortresses into which the landlords had retreated.

The hold-out Property Protection Society had sent emissaries to the Kwangtung Third Division, commanded by Cheng Jun-ch'i, to try to persuade it to stamp out the farmers associations. When two companies of the division arrived, the landlords welcomed them with a big feast in the office of the *Pao-wei t'uan*, and also allegedly bribed the officer in charge, Chen Shih-ch'i. The landlords put out propaganda that the Third Division would destroy the farmers association and confiscate their arms. Then they went into the countryside collecting their rents, demanding every bit due.<sup>(58)</sup> From the viewpoint of the organizers of the farmers movement, the behavior of the Third Division officers was unsatisfactory: they said they would protect the farmers and the farmers army, but displayed a very bad attitude towards the farmers association. They said their aim was to maintain law and order. Toward the landlords and evil gentry, they showed good relations and said they would help the *min-t'uan*. To counteract the officers' partiality, the

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(58) Ts'ai Ho-shen's account has these units of the 3rd D arriving before the Armored Car Corps. It does not mention the bribe nor the name of the officer, which come from KTNMPK, pp. 72, 78. The latter source probably errs in calling this the Third Army.

organizers sent delegations of farm wives and children, carrying banners "welcoming the revolutionary army," and held a farmers and soldiers unity meeting. Thus the troops began to sympathize with the farmers and the attitude of the officers became a little better. At a peace conference held in the county capital the officers took a neutral position, the Magistrate sided with the landlords, and P'eng Pai and Liao Ch'ien-wu (Liao was a Communist officer in the Armored Car Corps) argued for the farmers. It was a standoff.

The organizers then petitioned Canton to send the Generalissimo's Guards. Knowing early in January 1925, that it was on the way but uncertain that the Guards would fight, and also fearing that if a certain landlord fort was not captured the farmers would suffer in the future, the organizers decided on a double strategy: To organize a welcome for the Guards and to attack the fort before they arrived in order to force them to join the battle. Arriving January 10, the Guards were drawn into the attack on the fort, but it still could not be taken. The Captain of the Guards, Lu Chen-liu, then proposed a peace conference. The organizers countered this by spreading propaganda among the Guards that Captain Lu was a member of the counter-revolutionary Right Wing of the Kuomintang but that the troops were revolutionaries. On February 1, probably after getting Lu recalled to Canton, the organizers mounted another attack upon the fort. They tried unsuccessfully to blow it up by tunneling and P'eng Pai nearly lost his life in this effort. News came on the 10th that Hu Han-min had ordered the Guards recalled because they were needed for the Eastern Expedition, but the organizers withheld this information from the farmers for fear of its adverse effect on their morale. Finally the fort was overcome on February 14, partly through the bravery of farm women who rushed it with bundles of firewood and set it ablaze—or so we are informed. About a dozen farmers, one officer and two soldiers were killed during the course of the rent-reduction struggles.<sup>(59)</sup>

After this victory, comrades were sent all over the county to propagandize and farmers associations were established in many *hsiang* and *ch'ü*. Past mistakes were corrected. Landlords were no longer called capitalists, independ-

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(59) TITNM, p. 176, lists Ch'en Kuei-sang and twelve others, as does Lo Ch'i-yuan, Pen Pu, cited, p. 73. Juan Shao-hsien, CKNM, p. 615, says 11 farmers were martyred plus one officer and two soldiers in the revolutionary army.

ent farmers were not treated as landlords, negotiations were conducted with petty landlords who began to hand over their arms, and both the latter groups wanted to join the farmers associations and could no longer be stirred up by the gentry. Kuang-ning farmers associations achieved a certain status in society and most farmers "could eat rice for half of each month." About a hundred farmers' wives joined associations and spread favorable propaganda which helped in the establishment of others. Several associations set up farmers schools, and a few cooperatives were founded. The business of petty merchants improved and the reactionary attitude of students was reversed. The secret society, *Shen-ta*, grew sympathetic. It is possible that by April 1925 the Kuang-ning County Farmers Association numbered nearly 55,000 members in 294 local associations, in 12 *ch'ü*.<sup>(60)</sup>

In scoring up the balance sheet of this rent-reduction movement the authors of this colorful account admit that it was not a great success.<sup>(61)</sup> Among the local elements, the farmers showed great courage, but relied too much on help from the government and on their leaders, that is, the organizers from Canton. The landlords were adamantly opposed, raising the slogan "If there is a farmers association there will be no landlords; if there are landlords there can be no farmers association." Merchants stood on the side of the landlords as did all the local students because they were sons of landlords, and those who had gone to Canton to study were the most hateful. Independent farmers favored the landlords; this was explained by the inefficiency of "our" propaganda and the effectiveness of that of the landlords. The garrison army, although appealed to in the name of the Farmers Bureau, asserted that the farmers association was oppressing the landlords, that tenants should

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(60) From Russian map. The precise figure given is 54,992. The numeration speaks of "N. River—*Kwangtung*." I believe it refers to Kuang-ning for the following reasons: Canton has already been numerated, and could not be listed under North River. Kuang-ning could be so listed since the Sui River flows into North River above San-shui. Kuang-ning is not otherwise numerated but was one of the most successful counties. The number is reasonable since the numeration about a year later was larger: 66,122 in 239 associations in 25 *ch'ü*, CKNM, p. 653.

(61) KTNMPK, p. 73. This may be confirmed by a report from Hin Wong on February 10, 1925, CWR, February 21, 1925; Chang, *Farmers*, p. 29 implies failure of the rent reduction movement. The Political Report and Resolutions presented to the First Congress of Representatives of the Kwangtung Farmers Association, published in July, 1925 (see below) mentions the rent-reduction movement in Kuang-ning but makes no claim of victory.

pay their rents, and that it could help neither side. Magistrate Ts'ai took the side of the landlords.

The organizers have left an analysis of their work which gives a more precise picture of why they were as successful as they were.<sup>(62)</sup> The first point concerns organization. When they first raised the rent-reduction slogan they had no idea of the resistance it would engender, so their organization was slack. The Communist Party gave orders to the comrades in Kuang-ning to mobilize all members, and sent P'eng Pai to be in charge. A special communication service was established with men going between Canton and Kuang-ning every day. Responsible members in Canton—one may deduce this means Lo Ch'i-yüan—had the duty of working closely with the Kuomintang Left Wing, i. e. with Liao Chung-k'ai. The Farmers Committee (of the CCP) sent a circular telegram to all county branches and activists in those places to come to the relief. News arriving in Canton was quickly published with analysis of how to manage the problem—i. e. editorial opinion. In Kuang-ning they set up a special military committee under the *hsien* farmers association with sections in charge of arms, spying, aid for the wounded, provisions, transport, finance, and control of enemy property. (A note here states that the farmers loved to loot but paid no attention to gathering up enemy rifles so our comrades directed them to gather up rifles, and set up this bureau especially to protect enemy property.) Because the branch-office in Kuang-ning—that is, the Communist Party county branch—was extremely well organized, it met every other day. In addition there was the activity of the Special Deputies. Thus it was possible to have a tight organization among the farmers.

On the tactical level, the organizers attributed their success to the following measures. When the farmers asked them whether the government would send a military force, they told the farmers not to count on it but to rely on their own strength; but they sent urgent reports to the government demanding it send troops. When they learned a force was coming, the organizers urged the farmers to petition the local government to send troops so they would believe it was the result of their own plea. Only a few days later

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(62) I have combined the accounts in KTNMPK, pp. 73-74, 77-81, and 99-100 (which contrasts the success in Kuang-ning with the failure in Kao-yao).

the troops did arrive! The organizers made concessions to petty landlords and thus got them not to oppose the movement. Before matters had become critical the organizers paid no attention to the *Shen-ta*, but later they negotiated with the secret society and thus "avoided their standing with the landlords to attack us." They cultivated the Armored Car Corps and the Kwangtung Army unit. The leaders of the first were comrades but the organizers, fearing they might not understand the nature of the movement, assembled some farmers to hold a welcoming party; as a result the Armored Car Corps showed sympathy for the farmers. The commander of the unit from the Kwangtung Third Division, Cheng Shih-ch'i, had been influenced by the landlords and so opposed the farmers association. The organizers countered with a movement among his subordinate officers, held a farmers and soldiers unity party, and got the Armored Car Corps to propagandize in the Kwangtung Army so that it changed a little for the better. The organizers tried unsuccessfully to win over the Magistrate by organizing a pacification committee. They also cultivated the Generalissimo's Guards. When these first arrived, their commander, Lu Chen-liu, tried to settle the conflict by compromise. The organizers then mounted propaganda against him, got his recall, and succeeded in converting the Guards into a very leftist, revolutionary force. When the Guards wanted porters to tote their cannon, the farmers association supplied more than a hundred porters, and won the Guards' sympathy. Another tactic—in fact an act of insubordination—was when the telegram came from Hu Han-min ordering the Guards back to Canton. The organizers simply withheld this telegram until the forts had been overcome, and then organized a triumphant send-off for the Guards. In capturing the enemy forts they used a trick. Emissaries came from two enemy forts of the Fang clan offering to surrender. They were treated leniently, with no killing, and only some thirty rifles were confiscated. The enemy then returned and propagandized in the main fortress of the Chiang clan. When the drinking water in this fortress ran out, its garrison also came to surrender. Now the organizers were very tough: they thoroughly searched the Chiang fort and confiscated four or five hundred rifles and also sent masons to make a thorough inspection of the Fang fortress where they got more than five hundred other rifles and a lot of bullets.

This Communist account is quite frank in several matters. It admits the

assistance of the Kuomintang and attributes this to the fact that the KMT also was suffering oppression and the Left Wing realized it must carry out a mass movement; at the same time their relations with Soviet Russia were very close and so, when Comrade Borodin proposed the sending of troops, his motion was passed immediately. A footnote asserts that Hu Han-min admitted being fooled by the protestations of Lu Chen-liu, Commander of the Guards, that he was a revolutionary leftist. Later when the Eastern Expedition was being mounted, Liao Chung-k'ai, seeing that the matter took so long to settle, grumbled that, "In the Kuang-ning Incident the people of the Farmers Association are under the influence of Old Borodin and the C. P." From this one can see that the Kuomintang Left Wing recognized its importance to them, the writer avers. <sup>(63)</sup> A second point was that the Communist Party won the recognition of the farmers, who knew P'eng Pai was a Communist, and was able to recruit many comrades among them. In its conclusion the account makes the following critique: The rent-reduction movement in Kuang-ning was purely an economic struggle because there was very little political oppression from above. Furthermore it was brought off prematurely and, though a victory was won after four months, "this was the result of a little luck; we did it too hastily, we were not properly prepared, we did not observe our enemy clearly enough, so that even now [about July 1926] it is not entirely finished." <sup>(64)</sup>

The organizers' efforts in Kuang-ning resulted in the first important success for the farmers movement after the founding of the Farmers Bureau. The scene was a culturally backward county where traditional ways had scarcely been effected by modern tendencies and where hostility was strong towards the modernizers from Canton. "Imperialism" was scarcely a factor. Strong lineages protected their position by fortifications and *min-t'uan*, but in one district, Chiang-tun, landlord lineages lived in one village and their tenants in

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(63) KTNMPK, pp. 81, 83. Tsou Lu bitterly relates that Borodin organized a special regiment made up of troops from various units and the Generalissimo's armored car and sent it to destroy the *min-t'uan* which had defeated the farmers association. He mentions Kuang-ning but gives no date. "Later when *min-t'uan* and farmers associations came into conflict, even the most trifling affair, Borodin had to use this heavy method to show the majesty of the Communist Party." CKKMTSK, p. 357.

(64) KTNMPK, p. 83.

another. It was in this particular circumstance where inter-lineage rivalry combined with interclass conflict that organizers found the most fruitful conditions for their rent-reduction movement. The Communist Party made a great effort here. P'eng Pai, a leader with rich experience in organizing tenants farmers in his native district, directed affairs and was aided by Communists who were native to Kuang-ning, particularly by Chou Ch'i-chien and Ch'en Po-chung, as well as the twenty graduates of the Institute. They had a tight organization and a system of communications with Canton. The movement did not succeed on the basis of local resources, however. It was dependent upon help from Canton, both for political pressure on the magistrate and for military force. Reflecting the real political situation at the time, the military forces sent were politically mixed. There were Communists among the leaders of the Armored Car Corps, one being Liao Ch'ien-wu; but the leaders of the movement in Kuang-ning were not even sure of the sympathy of this group. The officers of the Third Division unit played it neutral. The Generalissimo's Guards were under the command of a "Rightist," who had to be removed.

In sum, the victory came through effective mobilization of tenant farmers with both social and economic grievances, appeals to public opinion both locally and in Canton, and political manipulation of military power. Military power was the decisive factor in tipping the scales.

#### *Revival of the Farmers Movement in Eastern Kwangtung*

The First Eastern Expedition permitted a revival of farmers associations in Hai-feng, Lu-feng and other *hsien* where they had been started by P'eng Pai and his associates but crushed by Ch'en Chiung-ming's subordinates. The revival began in March 1925 when P'eng Pai returned to his old region in the wake of the First Eastern Expedition, and gathered together the comrades and farmer leaders who had been in hiding. The movement revived rapidly but then was driven underground again in July, 1925 when Ch'en's forces returned.

Hai-feng county lies on the southeastern coast of Kwangtung about half way between Hong Kong and Swatow. It is hot, lowland country. About 22 per cent of the land was cultivated and the principal crops were rice, sugar cane, and peanuts. P'eng Pai estimated Hai-feng's population at something over 400,000 in about 70,000 households, of which he thought 80

per cent were farming households. Hai-feng was on the southwestward edge of Hakka migration from the main center around Mei Hsien. There was strong antagonism between older inhabitants and the immigrant "guest people," Hakka. Another ethnic division was between established Hakka, and intruding Teochiu people from the east. Hakka were in a strong political position since Ch'en Chiung-ming, a native of Hai-feng, was a Hakka. Members of his lineage were powerful landlords and holders of local offices. Another cleavage was between lineages belonging to the Red Flag and those belonging to the Black Flag organizations, apparently based upon ethnic cleavages. The two confederations carried on intermittant but sometimes bloody feuds. The Triad Society was strong in the county. Lying on the seacoast not far from Hong Kong, and being a county from which emigrants went abroad, Hai-feng was less parochial than Kwang-ning. In 1919 it had 68 governmental lower primary schools with 2,510 students, and 9 higher primary schools with 448 students. Not all of these could have been in the county capital. In addition there were 215 students in missionary primary schools. Protestant missionary work had begun in 1896, and by 1919 there were 17 Christian congregations with 442 communicants. The county capital had a normal school, a middle school, a sericulture school and engineering school, but they were attended mainly by children of landlords and merchants. At Shan-wei (Swabue), Ch'en Chiung-ming had established a small arsenal. By 1921, when P'eng Pai returned from his studies in Japan and was appointed Chief of the county Bureau of Education in October, he found many educated youths already influenced by the May Fourth movement. He began in May 1922 to start a farmers movement in the county. <sup>(65)</sup>

P'eng discovered that not over twenty per cent of farmers could write even their own names. Their entire education depended upon what was

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(65) P'eng Pai, "Hai-feng Nung-min Yun-tung Pao-kao" [A Report on the Hai-feng Farmers Movement] CKNM, Nos. 1-5 (January-May, 1926), pp. 59-69, 251-69, 351-81 and 498-524, pp. 63-69. The Report has been reprinted in TITNM, pp. 40-138 with some differences. (Since this chapter was finished, Donald Holoch's translation of P'eng's "Report" was published.) Stauffer, cited, Appendix, p. xxv, gives an estimate of 450,000 for Hai-feng's population as of about 1919, and other statistics.

An important source of information on Hai-feng and on P'eng Pai is Eto Shinkichi, "Hai-lu-feng: The First Chinese Soviet Government" Part 1, *China Quarterly*, October-December, 1961, pp. 161-183.



handed down from father to son or what they picked up from travelling theatricals and story tellers. Hence they were drenched in the traditional morality and submissive to landlords and the educated elite. P'eng, himself, came from a landlord family, and colorfully described the servility and timidity of the farmers he encountered when he first sallied out to meet them. P'eng left a classification of farm households and his impressions of their respective economic conditions. Of the estimated 56,000 farm households, he classified 20 per cent as independent farmers, 25 per cent as semi-independent (i. e. part-tenants) and 55 per cent as tenant households. He believed there were not even 500 persons in the entire county in two other groups, independent farmers who were also petty landlords, and hired farm hands. These estimates are useful because membership figures claimed for the Hai-feng farmers association became so huge that it seems evident virtually everyone in a farm household was counted as a member. P'eng pictured independent farmers as able to sustain themselves economically, but their position was slipping under the invasion of imperialism and capitalism. The position of part-tenants and full-tenants was becoming impossible. Their rents claimed from 50 to 75 per cent of the harvests. They tried to make up their deficits by supplemental occupations, by selling bits of land, or by pawning their possessions. When all else failed, they migrated to Hong Kong, Canton and other cities as rickshaw pullers or manual laborers, fled into banditry or soldiery, or went abroad as contract laborers. <sup>(66)</sup>

An oft-quoted Communist source<sup>(67)</sup> gives a systematized picture of rental arrangements in the East River Counties, and states that rent in Hai-feng was usually paid in kind rather than in cash. If rent was figured at half the crop, the tenant made two piles of threshed grain, the landlord took his choice, and the tenant delivered it. However, the contract might call for a specified amount of grain. If it were "iron rent," the tenant was forced to pay this amount whether the harvest was good or bad. If it were not iron rent, the tenant might plead with his landlord for a reduction of from ten to twenty per cent in a bad year, or beg him to come and divide the crop. Written contracts usually specified the number of years of the lease—four was

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(66) P'eng, cited, pp. 63-68, 362.

(67) KTNMPK, pp. 23-29.

common—and the amount and quality of grain due as rent. If the tenant defaulted the owner could repossess his land. Verbal contracts were more precarious because there was no fixed term and the lease would be cancelled immediately if the tenant failed to pay his rent. This system discouraged tenants from improving the land. None of this seems to distinguish Hai-feng as unusual in its landowner-tenant relations.

Landlords had all the power on their side, either through toughs hired by them as rent collectors, or by help from the police. Police might seal up the house of a defaulting tenant, which meant the house was to be sold, or might take off his pigs, oxen and farm tools to cover the rent. According to this account, landlords in Hai-feng were not so likely to be in league with *min-t'uan* as with the *pao-wei t'uan* which, it says, "was simply the headquarters of evil gentry and landlords for oppressing the farmers." In case of real necessity the county government could call upon a garrison force of about 400 men stationed at Shan-wei, some 18 miles south of Hai-feng city. Landlords, too, could get help from this garrison since they contributed and collected funds to support the force.<sup>(68)</sup> A combination of various local military units routed farmers demanding rent-reduction following the crop-damaging typhoon of August 1923, and arrested twenty-five of their leaders. Finally the association was dispersed with Ch'en Chiung-ming's permission on March 17, 1924. Some of the leaders stayed in Hai-feng to work secretly.

The Hai-feng Farmers Association had grown from only 10 members in June 1922, to some 40,000 by September 1923, then fallen back to a mere 300 at the end of the year when its leaders were in prison. A critic of the system of organization—perhaps P'eng Pai himself—attributed the collapse to the fact that the association had been organized *hsiang* by *hsiang* but not built upwards on a solid foundation. Thus when "Ch'en Chiung-ming's dogs" had arrested a few top-level organizers "it dissolved like melting ice." Thereafter operating secretly, its membership was about 1,000 until shortly before the Eastern Expedition began in February 1925, when, according to P'eng Pai, it may have reached about 5,000. In its prime, the membership included all categories of farmers in roughly the same proportions as existed in the general population: 20 per cent were independent farmers, 30 per cent semi-

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(68) KTNMPK, pp. 32-36.

independent farmers (part-tenants), 40 per cent tenants, and 10 per cent hired farm laborers. There were in addition about 1,350 non-farmers, including 500 workmen, 300 unemployed, 400 boatmen, and a scattering of teachers, students, petty merchants, and Christians. Thus it was not particularly a tenant farmers' movement, though tenants and part-tenants were in the majority just as they were in the total farm population.

The Hai-feng association also had become the nucleus of a six-county association organized in May, 1923, and calling itself the Provincial Farmers Association. The other counties were Lu-feng, Hui-lai and P'u-ning to the east, Tz'u-chin to the north, and Hui-yang to the west. The combined membership was said to be about 26,800 households.<sup>(69)</sup> All such figures are suspect, but there is no doubt there had been a vigorous farmers movement under dedicated leadership for a brief period in Hai-feng and adjacent *hsien*.

According to his own nearly contemporary account,<sup>(70)</sup> P'eng Pai arrived back in Hai-feng on February 28, 1925, the day after the city was taken by the revolutionary army. Only two weeks before he had been in Kuang-ning directing the tenants struggle there. He recorded an extraordinary welcome from the farmers, both for the army and for himself. Thousands came from various *hsiang* to query him and discuss how to revive the farmers movement. A myriad of farmers came to see him when he made an inspection trip through neighboring *hsien* on March 1st, while on the 3rd over 30,000 turned out for a county-wide meeting of farmers held in Hai-feng city to welcome the Party Army. At this meeting T'an P'ing-shan, General Galin, and Commander-in-Chief Hsü Ch'ung-chih made speeches to thunderous applause, especially when General Hsü said that half the plunder from Hai-feng would go to the farmers association, 30 per cent to the labor union, and 20 per cent to the students association. P'eng and his colleagues sent out letters and telegrams

(69) P'eng, cited, p. 366 chart of growth; pp. 359-62 for provincial association. Membership figures are sometimes given as households, sometimes as totals of individuals, and sometimes in estimates where households are multiplied by five. In the table of membership by *hsien*, presumably in May, 1923, Hai-feng was said to have 12,000 households, Lu-feng 7,000, Hui-yang 4,000, Tzu-chin 3,000, Hui-lai 300 and P'u-ning 500. The criticism of organization is found in Ts'ai Ho-shen, "Chin Nien Wu I chih Kwangtung Nung-min Yun-tung," cited, p. 1030.

(70) Ts'ai, cited, pp. 1031-32 contains a letter from P'eng Pai received by *Hsiang-tao Chou-pao* probably in March or April, 1925. An earlier letter from P'eng, dated 11 May[1924] describing difficulties and the dissolution of the movement is in *Hsiang-tao Chou-pao*, No. 70, pp. 560-63, no date.

announcing that the farmers association had been revived as of that date. Until the calling of the *hsien* congress, they organized a temporary executive committee made up of former officer to manage association affairs. When touring the countryside, P'eng met insistent demands from farmers for rent reduction, elimination of miscellaneous contributions, and the issuance of arms. He and his colleagues therefore immediately organized a farmers guard with forty rifles contributed by General Hsü, and others they retrieved from the battlefields. They also organized a local Farmers Movement Training Institute for 40 or 50 students.

Another source, non-contemporary, tells that P'eng and his colleagues called a congress of representatives of farmers of the county, sometime after March 9. The main resolutions were: (1) to restore the farmers associations at various levels within ten days and strengthen their organization, (2) to enforce a "25" rent-reduction, (3) to set up a general headquarters for the farmers army in the Lin clan temple in Ch'iao-tung *She* under command of Li Lao-kung and Wu Chen-min, and to organize and train a 400-man farmers guard with arms and munitions as a real military force, (4) to appoint six named persons—some were old students of P'eng—as Special Deputies to visit various *ch'ü* to direct the revival and strengthening of local associations and to train Red Guards, and (5) to clear accounts with the reactionaries. The latter was done by arresting landlords, local bullies, evil gentry, and local villains, taking them to farmers associations for punishment, and then dragging them through the streets before the multitude, "which toppled and dissolved the thousand-year feudalistic power of this class."<sup>(71)</sup>

Generalizing about the Hai-feng case, it seems clear there had been a latent situation in which a farmers movement could sprout: a large amount of tenancy, fairly heavy rent rates, and a good deal of inter-lineage and

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(71) Chung I-mou, "Hai Lu-feng Nung-min ti Pa-nien Chan-tou" [The Eight Year Struggle of the Farmers of Hai-feng and Lu-feng], *Chin-tai Shih Tzu-liao* [Modern Historical Materials], (Peking, 1955, No. 1), pp. 170-224, preceded by 5 pages of pictures. The author was a member of the Hai-feng farmers association and the article is introduced as a reminiscence; but clearly it is based upon research also. It is particularly valuable for giving names of participants other than P'eng Pai. Passage abstracted is pp. 191-92. The six named Special Deputies are Lin Tao-wen, Yang Wang and P'eng Yuan-chang (former students who worked with P'eng), and Ch'en Yün-ts'ai, Chou Ta-lin, and Wu T'ao. The "25" rent-reduction meant 25 per cent of the expected rent.

inter-ethnic strife. But in these respects there seems to be little to distinguish Hai-feng from its neighboring counties east and west. For the potential to be realized, farmers had to be "awakened." This was the role of a well-educated and uniquely effective organizer, aided by other educated youths fired with the ideal of "going among the people." The importance of P'eng Pai as energizer, and his influence on young intellectuals in his native town, cannot be minimized. But even with a potentially favorable situation and skilled leadership—the "soil" and the "seeders"—the third factor of "climate" was equally important to the success of the movement in Hai-feng. This is shown by the instability in the association's membership. The initial benevolence of Ch'en Chiung-ming permitted the start of the movement. The membership grew in seven months from the initial ten to about 5,000; then it doubled after a display of power in April 1923 forced the court to release a few tenants arrested for resisting a rent increase. It climbed rapidly with a rent-reduction movement in the fall. Yet the membership collapsed when 25 leaders were arrested and this time imprisoned. When Ch'en Chiung-ming gave permission to disperse the associations, the movement could only carry on in secret with a thousand or so members. The movement revived when the Revolutionary Army destroyed the local military structure and put the power of the local elite in question. Membership grew rapidly to a claimed 70,000. Then after a few months the movement collapsed again with the return of Ch'en Chiung-ming. <sup>(72)</sup>

In the wake of the First Eastern Expedition the following counties in eastern Kwangtung had some farmers associations to report at the time of the First Congress of Representatives of Kwangtung Farmers Associations: Pao-an, Hui-yang, Hai-feng, Lu-feng, Hui-lai, P'u-ning and Ch'ao-an. Probably there were starts in a few other *hsien* in the path of the Revolutionary Army. Because of the large numbers attributed to Hai-feng and Lu-feng (70,000 and 12,000), the revived or recently formed associations must have provided about half the claimed membership before the Congress began. <sup>(73)</sup>

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(72) addendum: Professor Robert Marks would disagree entirely with this analysis.

(73) List of counties from Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, p. 1030. Information probably that available to the CCP in Shanghai in late April, 1925. Numbers from Russian map. Also: Pao-an, 2,200; Hui-chow (Hui-yang), 2,000; P'u-ning, 2,400; Ch'ao-chow, 232; Ting-hai, 370; Hsing-ning, 2,000. Practically all must have been estimates. The total from the map was 172,182.

#### IV. THE FIRST CONGRESS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF KWANGTUNG FARMERS, MAY 1925

The time had come for the organizers to bring more unity among the local farmers associations scattered among some twenty counties in Kwangtung and to infuse them with a common political orientation. The concept of a provincial level association was embedded in the original charter, and September, 1924 had first been selected as the month in which the Provincial Association should be established. For many reasons this had been unfeasible. It is unclear when the planning for the Congress that was held in May 1925, began. Important matters probably had been settled by mid-April—agenda, principal resolutions that would be passed, and selection of important speakers. The Congress would meet in Canton concurrently with the Second All-China Labor Congress and a meeting of the League of Military Youth. "We have heard," said Ts'ai Ho-shen writing in April, "that the three will hold a parade and a Soldiers-Workers-Farmers Unity Meeting, on the one hand to show class solidarity and on the other to present their joint political demands. So May First will be a great day for the Chinese National Revolution!"<sup>(74)</sup>

On May Day, 95 official delegates had arrived from 16 of the 22 *hsien* having farmers associations, and before the Congress was over 117 had come. Figures as to how many farmers they "represented" range from 160,000 to 210,000. The Kwangtung Educational Association and Kwangtung University provided meeting space, and agricultural colleges, schools and trade institutes put on scientific displays for the farmers and workers. There was a giant May Day parade in which farmers brought in from the suburbs joined labor unions and members of the League of Military Youth. The multitude heard an address by a representative of the Red International of Trade Unions amid a sea of red banners and the heaven-shaking roar, "Proletarians of the world unite and arise!" That evening a joint opening ceremony was held in the great

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(74) Lo Ch'i-yuan, Pen Pu, cited, p. 159 quotes a decision of the KMT CEC on June 30, 1924 to set up the provincial farmers association in September. Quotation from Ts'ai Ho-shen's article in the May Day issue of *Hsiang-tao Chou-pao*, cited, p. 1030. He lists resolutions to be offered, and describes procedures for electing delegates, of which he had heard there would be 120 or more. However, he states that the KMT Farmers Bureau had not yet given authorization for a Provincial Association, and gives reasons why that should not be delayed.

hall of Kwangtung University. Teng Chung-hsia provides an interesting account. In addition to the delegates of the two congresses, there were representatives from the League of Military Youth and revolutionary students. After listening to speeches, the thousand or more persons in the audience unanimously passed a "Resolution on the Union of Workers, Farmers and Soldiers," which proclaimed that "the revolution to overthrow the warlords and international imperialism, the revolution to liberate the toiling masses, can only succeed when workers, farmers and soldiers are united in one body." There were cheers: "Long live the great alliance of workers, farmers and soldiers!" "Long live the world revolution!" So much for stage management. (75)

The public business of the Congress, which lasted for about a week, was to hear speeches, pass resolutions, and amend the constitution. The political tone was militantly anti-imperialist, anti-warlord, anti-capitalist, anti-landlord and anti-gentry. These enemies were linked in a chain of responsibility for ills of China and the economic grievances of most of her farm population. The Political Report and Decisions—usually the most important document in such a Congress—reveals the main line of argument. Laborers and farmers in all countries except Russia, it says, are repressed by capitalists. China is crushed by the imperialism of Japan, England, America and France in league with the warlords. Russia has organized a Red International of Workers with 18 million members and a Red International of Farmers with 8 million; they will help us against imperialism and the warlords so we should not fear to arise and join the revolutionary front. The revolution in China cannot be led by capitalists and landlords for they are counterrevolutionary. Labor must lead because it suffers most and because labor is concentrated while farmers

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(75) Hin Wong, "Farmers and Workers in Canton," CWR, May 16, 1925, p. 301 (written May 1); and Teng Chung-hsia, *Chung-kuo Chih-kung Yun-tung Chien Shih*, [A Brief History of the Chinese Labor Movement] (I have used a 1949 edition, *Hua-chung Hsin Hua Shu-tien*), p. 118. The figure 160,000 was used before the Congress by Ts'ai Ho-shen, cited, p. 1030 and by Teng Chung-hsia in a report he made to the Second All-China Labor Congress (reprinted in TITKJ, p. 45); since both were trying to show how large the organized farmers movement was, they would probably use maximum figures. Yet no one really knew. The Russian map prepared, presumably at about this time, and frequently referred to, gives a total of 172,182 members. Hin Wong, cited, says the league claimed 200,000 members in 22 counties. The official figure became 210,000.

are scattered. But since labor's numbers are few they must join with 80 per cent of the farmers against the enemy. The most revolutionary farmers are the tenants and part-tenants; hence responsibility for leading the revolution lies with the workers and poor farmers. But China cannot put the revolution into effect now, for the enemy controls all organs of power. Workers must join unions and farmers join associations, and they must get the soldiers to join the movement. "Then we can make a revolution and overthrow our enemies." In Kwangtung under the Kuomintang Government farmers are relatively free to organize. So we should join the Kuomintang, but join for our own benefit. Its membership includes militarists, bureaucrats, capitalists and big landlords. Some Central Executive Committee Members struggle for us so we should cooperate with them, strengthen the revolutionary government, and not permit the counterrevolutionary clique to stay within the Kuomintang. <sup>(76)</sup>

The Resolution on Economic Questions repeats the anti-imperialist and anti-warlord theme in earthy, abusive language—"the foreign devils; the red-haired, blue-eyed devils." It accuses Imperialism of seizing the Maritime Customs, grabbing China's railways, importing goods and depressing the price of farm products, importing opium and teaching militarists to force poppy planting, circulating foreign banknotes, and thus causing all of China's economic ills. It then focuses upon issues closer to the farmers' experience: The bitterest suffering of farmers is due to high rents, high interest rates, pawnshop charges, the unfair prices paid by compradores, forced contributions, taxes and extra taxes. All these bitter hardships can be overcome only by leading the entire farmer class in economic struggle to achieve true liberation. But true liberation comes after the revolution. The present economic objectives are: to oppose the high cost of borrowing (and the requirement that a son pay his father's debts) and high profit mortgages, and to create farmers banks or credit cooperatives; to oppose traitorous merchants (the compradore class), and create buying and selling cooperatives; to oppose all harsh,

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(76) *Kwangtung Sheng Nung-min Hsieh-hui Ti-i-tz'u Tai-piao Ta-hui I-chueh-an chi Hsuan-yen* [Resolutions and Proclamation of the First Congress of Representatives of the Kwangtung Province Farmers Association] (Canton, Executive Committee of the Provincial Farmers Association, July, 1925), pp. 1-15. (Hereafter KTSNM). The Proclamation and three resolutions are reprinted in TITNM, pp. 171-197, but not this Report and the Decisions which follow.



miscellaneous taxes and extra exactions, especially guarantee deposits for renting land. For hired hands, higher wages, shorter hours, better treatment and equal wages for young and female hands as for adult males. For tenants, eliminate the guarantee system, set a top limit for rents, standardize weights and measures, eliminate oppressive rents, pre-season payments and all extra contributions to landlords. In disaster years, rent should be forgone and the tenant's production costs be compensated by the landlord, who would be forbidden to take back their lands without cause. For independent farmers, abolish all taxes other than the land tax, all extra exactions, collection of taxes in advance, and abolish the perpetuation of land taxes against those who no longer own the land. In addition, costs of village *min-t'uan*, *pao-wei t'uan*, *hsiang* offices, silt-protection offices, etc., and all the numberless public funds appropriated by the gentry and landlord class to oppress the farmers should be taken by the farmers associations to manage and control. (77)

These examples suffice to show the political atmosphere the leaders hoped to create in the farmers movement. Verbally, it went far beyond the mildly reformist tone of the agricultural program announced in the Manifesto of the Kuomintang Reorganization Congress sixteen months before. Even the immediate economic program, if pressed, could only result in class warfare in the countryside. Yet the radicals who drafted these documents were not yet calling for class war, nor revolt against local political authorities. Their movement was too weak for that. In addition they were under the restraint of the united front policy. They advocated support of the Canton government, entry into the Kuomintang, and its purification by driving out its "reactionary" elements. Real revolution would come later. The economic program was reformist; and it remained ambiguous by whom and how the reforms would be carried out. The issue of rent-reduction is a good example. The program called for a top limit on rents, but did not specify what this should be nor who would enforce it. It did not call for a 25 per cent reduction in rents, as the Hai-feng farmers conference had done only shortly before. It was more than a year before the leaders of the Provincial Farmers Association

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(77) KTSNM, pp. 1-13 of second paging; TITNM, pp. 178-85. I have greatly compressed these resolutions in attempting to bring out their essence. The Manifesto and other resolutions published in TITNM, pp. 185-97 further illustrate the verbal radicalism.

openly demanded a 25 per cent rent-reduction.

An important purpose of the Congress was to lay the basis for a province-wide organization as the first step toward a National Farmers Association. To this end a national constitution was presented and adopted, an Executive Committee elected, and a provincial association headquarters established.

The Constitution<sup>(78)</sup> in 14 Chapters and 86 articles was patterned on that of the Kuomintang which, in turn, had been patterned on the Constitution of the Russian Communist Party. The preamble declares that The Farmers Association, based on the purport of the Three Principles of the People to liberate the laboring classes, gathers together and organizes the oppressed, poor and suffering farmers of the entire country with the objectives of farmers' self-defense, improvement in village organization, and advancement of the farmers' livelihood.

The first matter clarified was who could be members and who could not. Membership was open to all farmers in China who cultivated their own land, or were part-owners, tenants, hired farm hands, or handicraft workers or manual laborers in villages, aged 16 *sui* or more. The following were excluded: those owning 100 or more *mou* of land; those who skinned farmers with high interest rates; those whose position was in conflict with the interests of the farmers; religious propagandists and teachers such as priests, pastors, Buddhist and Taoist nuns and mediums, etc.; tools of imperialism; and opium smokers and gambling addicts. A farmer seeking to join must be introduced by two members and approved by more than half the members at a meeting of the association in the *hsiang* where he lived; persons other than farmers required approval of three-quarters of the members for admission.

The basic unit was to be the *hsiang* association, but they might be established only with the permission and under the supervision of the Provincial Executive or Central (National) Executive Committee, and by a specified method. Those approved would be chartered. The same was true for the

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(78) "Nung-min Hsieh-hui Chang-cheng" in KTSNM, pp. 39-59 (not reprinted in TITNM). It was a constitution for a national association, not exclusively a provincial one. A competent digest is given in Jefferson D.H. Lamb, *The Development of the Agrarian Movement and Agrarian Legislation in China*, cited, pp. 169-77. On p. 169, Dr. Lin says it was promulgated by the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee in July, 1925. It differs considerably from the 1926 constitution of the Kwangtung Provincial Farmers Association (TITNM, pp. 244-56).

next higher levels, the *ch'ü* and the county. Associations at each of the five levels including provincial and national were to hold periodic congresses of delegates (or meetings-of-the-whole at the *hsiang* level) to elect executive committees. These committees were to control their respective associations and functional bodies. A lower level executive committee was always subordinate to the committee at the next higher level.

Thus the organ of command was the Central Executive Committee—i. e. the national committee when it was formed.

The CEC represents the Association in outside relations, supervises all lower levels, organizes central bureaus and manages association finances. It must meet twice a week but delegates daily affairs to a three-man committee composed of its chosen chairman, vice-chairman and secretary. The CEC also determines the method of organizing the National Congress of Delegates, the method of electing delegates, and the number to be sent from each locality. (Lower executive committees have similar compositions, responsibilities and powers at their respective levels.)

The actual working bodies in direct contact with farmers were the *hsiang* associations. They were to execute decisions, propagandize policies for farmers found in the Three Principles of the People, explain economic relations between agriculture, industry and commerce, carry out cooperative enterprises, and enforce the prohibition of opium and gambling. They might set up bureaus as needed for military affairs, improvement of agriculture, hired laborers, tenants, handicraft industries, women, young farmers, and education.

A special Discipline Committee was to be organized in each *hsiang* association to maintain internal discipline and order, with powers of warning, suspension, or dismissal of members.

A "General Outline for Organizing Farmers' Self-Defense Forces"<sup>(79)</sup> sketched a system of forces ranging from *hsiang* up to county level. These Guards had responsibility to protect their respective associations and the interests of the farmers. Each force was to drill regularly. They were to be under the direction of the local association's executive committee, but county Guards would be directed by a Military Affairs Bureau of the Provincial Association. These self-defense forces would be of two sorts: "Viligent Corps," which

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(79) KTSNM, pp. 59-62, in 14 articles. Not reprinted in TITNM.

stayed in their respective localities; and "Virtuous Braves Corps," which could be sent to assist neighboring *ch'ü* and county associations. Each *hsiang* association was to put at least 15 per cent of its strong young males into the first type and at least 5 per cent into the second.

A series of "Resolutions on the Future Direction in which the Farmers Association Should Advance" spelt out what the organizers would strive to achieve. (80) Stripped of rhetoric, the 15 points called for an independent, broadly based, tightly organized farmers movement united with the workers in a class struggle against imperialism and the oppressing class made up of militarists, bureaucrats, gentry, local bullies, landlords and compradors. The Farmers Association must be completely independent of the Revolutionary Government and the Kuomintang (1). It must embrace all strata of farmers against landlords (4), with no particularistic rivalries permitted between local associations (8). A tight, hierarchical structure of associations, with regular reports upwards and orders downwards, must be put into effect (7), but all members must participate fully in order to prevent manipulation by a few (2). There must be a degree of democracy and self-education (5), monthly dues must be paid (6), and goals of local struggles must be realistic and well prepared (3). Already established farmers organizations (*nung-min hui*) and agricultural organizations (*nung-wu hui*) may be taken over but must be completely reorganized (9), and where there is usurpation of farmers associations by "farmer thieves," this is to be exposed (14). Propaganda must draw farmers into the anti-imperialist and anti-Christian movement (10). It must be pointed against militarists, both outside and within the revolutionary government (11); against evil gentry and local bullies, who must be cleaned out of the local Kuomintang units (12); and against compradores, but not against small merchants (13). Farmers must unite with the workers in a joint class struggle against all enemies in the exploiting class (15).

The argument for an independent Farmers Association rested upon the following points: The farmers must learn to depend entirely upon their own strength for psychological reasons; if they put their trust in the power of Government and Party, and then were not supported in a crisis, they would

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(80) KTSNM, pp. 13-25; TITNM, pp. 185-93. The following digest cannot convey the stridency of the rhetoric, nor does it attempt to present the rationale advanced for each resolution.

lose hope. If they depended upon the Government to protect them, the Association would be manipulated by the Government and become its organ. If the majority believe the Association to be a government organ they will fear to join it and hence the Association will become ineffective. Finally, should there be a shift in political power, the Farmers Association would be destroyed. <sup>(81)</sup>

The inner problem was: who would control the apparatus of the "independent" Farmers Association when it had become regularized? There can be no doubt that the apparatus would be controlled by the Provincial Executive Committee or its Standing Committee. I have been unable to find a list of the Executive Committee elected by the Congress. According to T. C. Chang, "The members of the Executive Committee of the Provincial Union were not farmers themselves and the leading personalities" were Lo Ch'i-yuan, P'eng Pai, and Juan Hsiao-hsien. Apparently the Provincial Executive Committee met once and set up a General Affairs Office but in June, during the conflict between the revolutionary faction and Generals Yang Hsi-min and Liu Chen-huan, the offices of the Provincial Association were occupied and the Committee members dispersed to various regions. <sup>(82)</sup>

The Congress passed many other resolutions and issued various proclamations. One announced its joining the Red International of Peasants (Krestinern); another announced support of the Revolutionary Government in Canton. A letter from the association begged the Kuomintang to purify itself of counter-revolutionary members, without naming them.

A few questions remain unanswered. Who financed this Congress? On this there is no information. Was the Kuomintang prepared to accept as members the hundred thousand or more members of the Farmers Association? Apparently not, because the associations' membership quickly outstripped the Kuomintang's total enrollment. Was the Kuomintang leadership prepared to cleanse the Party as demanded by the leaders of the farmers movement? Not

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(81) TITNM, p. 187. "Party" is not specified as Kuomintang, but nowhere in any of the documents is the Communist Party mentioned while the KMT is frequently named.

(82) Chang, Farmers, p. 23. and Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao," cited, CKNM, p. 642. Lo adds that in December, 1925 the General Affairs Office was converted into a three-man Standing Committee consisting of Lo Ch'i-yuan, Juan Hsiao-hsien and P'eng Pai which, meeting by-weekly, ran the Association's affairs.

immediately, although gradually some right wing leaders were expelled or separated themselves from the Canton Headquarters in a series of political shifts that occurred during the following year. Was the Kuomintang leadership prepared to see the Farmers Association detached from the control of the Central Farmers Bureau? The answer to this is ambiguous. The Kuomintang Central Executive Committee had endorsed the principle of an autonomous Farmers Association in two Proclamations on the Farmers Movement issued in 1924, and it promulgated a Constitution of the Farmers Association in July 1925 that announced the Association's complete independence. Furthermore, a separate office of the Provincial Farmers Association was set up and received a monthly subsidy from the Kuomintang, though a trifling one, during the following eight months.<sup>(83)</sup> But promotion of the farmers movement was still the function of the Kuomintang Central Farmers Bureau, which put much money into the Farmers Movement Training Institute. This remained, at least formally, under its authority, as did the Special Deputies. The actual situation seems to have been that the Provincial Farmers Association, while theoretically independent, was in fact controlled by a few people who held dual positions as members of the Kuomintang Farmers Bureau and as members of the Association's Executive Committee. They were also members of the secret Farmers Committee of the Kwangtung Regional Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

By May 1925, the farmers movement was launched in regions of Kwangtung that were under the direct influence of the Kuomintang and its revolutionary government. Some 170,000 or 210,000 farmers had been brought into 600 or more local associations in 22 counties, but this was only a tiny fraction of the millions of farm families in the province. Local associations were scarcely linked together nor as yet organized into the pyramidal structure envisaged by the organizers. There did exist a center, manned by a small number of enthusiastic and by now experienced organizers, most if not all of whom were intellectuals. The graduates of the first three classes of the

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(83) First and Second Proclamations of the Revolutionary Government on the Farmers Movement in *Chung-kuo Kuomintang Chung-yao Hsuan-yen Hui-pien*, cited, pp. 348, 355; Lamb, cited, p. 169. Lo Ch'i-yuan, "Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao," cited, CKNM, pp. 642-46, describes the shabby office, and a subsidy of \$100-200 a month from the Farmers Bureau from June to October, 1925.

Farmers Movement Training Institute, of whom about half were farmers or rural students, provided the main link between the center and the local associations. But the 289 graduates were a tiny band compared with the vast number of villages in Kwangtung—probably over 20,000—which hopefully would be penetrated, organized, and shaped into a single structure. Furthermore, the central organization seems to have been inadequately financed for the task ahead, at least from Kuomintang or governmental sources, though little is known about Russian assistance.

The leaders of the farmers movement were motivated both by humanitarian ideals and by political aspirations. They wished to assist farmers in their economic plight, and in this they were encouraged by the Principle of the People's Livelihood as well as by the humanitarian elements in "the new thought tide" of the Student Movement. They conceived their task, however, primarily in political terms. The farmers must be organized and brought into the National Revolution which would create a new government and then a more equitable social order. The National Revolution would be directed against foreign exploiters of the country and the main exploiting groups within. The National Revolution needed mass support, and the largest group in the population was the farmer masses. The organizers also saw the farmers movement as an important source of power for the Communist Party, of which nearly all of them were members.

The revolution was to serve the farmers also. The movement's leaders in Canton conceived the means to benefit the farmers mainly as assisting them to resist economic exploitation. That is, they would encourage farmers to struggle in organized fashion against such specific grievances as high rents and excessive taxation. This struggle could only be successful, however, if farmers associations were able to create organs of local military power, farmers guards, that could resist and defeat *min-t'uan* and other militia-type bands controlled by their "class enemies." By May 1925, the organizers could point to only scattered achievements from farmers' struggles: perhaps two successful rent-reduction movements and a few cases of successful resistance to extraordinary tax levies. There was very little to show in the way of improvement of farming practices, farmer education, or rural cooperatives. The rent-reduction movements in two locations had succeeded because of the injection of external military power. Yet, without organization of farmers nothing could have

been accomplished. The struggles which had occurred were beginning to create a tide of opposition that already was showing itself within the Kuomintang and among holders of military power.

Thus we may say that a foundation had been laid for the numerical growth of farmers associations in Kwangtung during the next fifteen months, and there had emerged a model for other parts of the country. The farmers movement was beginning to show a potentiality for support of the National Revolution and the Communist Party, and a means by which the most discontented farmers could ameliorate immediate grievances. Great dangers lay ahead.

### SEQUEL

There is much information available on what happened in the Farmers Movement in Kwangtung during the next year and a half.<sup>(84)</sup> According to official count, membership grew nearly three times between May 1925 and May 1926, to 626,475; local associations grew from 557 to 4,216; and the geographical spread was from 22 counties to 66. Why this impressive accomplishment? Farmers Associations promised to serve the interests and satisfy the hopes of many of the rural poor. This was their basic appeal. There were now many more graduates of the Farmers Movement Training Institute who worked as Special Deputies, that is, as organizers. Organization had been improved on the basis of experience during the first year of work. An important factor was the expansion of territory under control of the Nationalist Government seated in Canton. Another was the increasingly militant revolutionary climate in Kwangtung as a consequence of the Shakee Massacre and the Hong Kong-Canton Strike. A factor not often mentioned was the use of coercion. In 1927, T. C. Chang of Lingnan University made a study of the movement in Kwangtung, based upon written material, of which there was plenty, discussion with the movement's leaders, and his personal inquiries in the province. Among the organizers' working methods, he mentions terrorism:

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(84) *Chung-kuo Nung-min*, January to July 1926, some 822 pages; and *Kwangtung nung-min yun-tung pao-kao* [A Report on the Farmers Movement in Kwangtung], no place, October 1962, 289 pages, probably written by Lo Ch'i-yüan; T. C. Chang, *The Farmers' Movement in Kwangtung*.



Through ruffians and brigands who joined the unions the movement was able to establish a sort of terrorization among the weak and oppressed peasants. Small farmers and laborers were compelled to join; otherwise the unionists would make life unendurable to them. <sup>(85)</sup>

The climate for revolution heated up in the latter half of 1925, fuelled by the anti-imperialist movement subsequent to the May 30th Incident in Shanghai, the Hong Kong-Canton Strike, and most particularly by the tragic event of June 23 in Canton when scores of Chinese parading against imperialism were slaughtered in an exchange of fire between British and French troops on Shameen Island and Chinese troops on the nearby Shakee side. Canton became an extremely militant city, with thousands of strikers organized under Communist direction, and intensified political training in the armies. The Second National Congress of the Kuomintang in January 1926—dominated by Leftists—was more radical than the First Congress, and clearly endorsed the work of the Farmers Movement.

Areas in Kwangtung under the southern government's control grew month by month, with victory over the armies of Yang Hsi-min and Liu Chen-huan in and around Canton in June 1925; then a second defeat of Ch'en Chiung-ming's coalition in October-November; and then the successful southwestern campaign that reached as far as Hainan Island in late December. Farmer organizers sometimes accompanied the armies in these campaigns, which usually disrupted the local power structures. The organizers claimed that farmers assisted by providing spies, message carriers, porters, and harrassment of the enemies' rear. A map showing where new associations were formed or older ones revived during 1926 would display a great development in the Hai-feng Lu-feng area and all adjacent counties where P'eng Pai and his colleagues could work freely after Ch'en Chiung-ming's second defeat; also in Kwangning and some other West River counties; and in nearly all the counties of the Pearl River Delta. Most of the northern and western parts of Kwangtung were still bare. There was a clear correlation between the spread of the government's reach and the spread of Communist-organized Farmers Associations.

On the matter of organization, Lo Ch'i-yüan's detailed report to the

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(85) Chang, *Farmers' Movement*, p. 22.

Second Provincial Farmers Association Congress explained that in December 1925 a three-man committee of himself, Juan Hsiao-hsien, and P'eng Pai, supported by a special grant, took charge of the movement's headquarters and developed a staff of twelve persons. The Farmers Movement was no longer dependent on the Kuomintang Farmers Bureau, which provided only 100 or 200 dollars a month, for now there was a budget of \$1,500 a month. Presumably this was provided by Borodin, who was greatly interested in the agrarian movement. He considered rural uprising essential for success of a northward military campaign, as he told the Bubnov Commission in Peking in February 1926. <sup>(86)</sup> Borodin added three Russian assistants to his staff—O. S. Tarkhanov, M. Volin, and Y. S. Yolk (or Iolk)—to gather information on agrarian conditions and to advise the Chinese leaders of the movement. They instituted a survey, which was carried out in 1926 through farmers associations and resulted in a large lithographed volume in English, entitled *Agrarian Relations in Kwangtung Province*. <sup>(87)</sup> Much of the factual information reported on by Lo Ch'i-yüan probably came from this survey.

Another organizational improvement was creation of six regional offices run by appointed three-man committees responsible for work in clusters of counties, with the seventeen counties near Canton directly managed by the central office. <sup>(88)</sup> The Farmers Movement Training Institute had graduated 545 by December 1925, though not all had gone into organizational work. The 114 graduates of the Fifth Class were divided into two groups: the first, numbering 55, were sent to the East River and Southern Route counties which had recently been conquered by the Nationalist forces; most of the other graduates were sent to Hunan from which province 44 had been recruited into the Fifth Class. Lin Tsu-han reported to the Second Congress of the Provincial Association that a hundred and some tens of Special Deputies had been sent into the field for organizing work. Lo Ch'i-yüan boasted that 99 percent of the Special Deputies were "our comrades, actually doing the farmers movement work and giving the honor to the Kuomintang." Their

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(86) Cherepanov, A. I. *As Military Adviser in China*. Translated from the Russian by Sergei Sasinsky. (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1982), pp. 181-82.

(87) Vishniakova-Akimova, Vera Vladimirovna. *Two Years in Revolutionary China*. Translated by Steven I. Levine. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 222. Borodin gave copies to some of his important visitors.

(88) Lo Ch'i-yüan, "Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao," pp. 642-644.

work was difficult, they were poorly paid, and some had lost their lives in the struggles between farmers and rural Kwangtung power holders, he said.<sup>(89)</sup> Lo's boast is confirmed by one of the Soviet Advisers, who reported in a meeting of the group that "Currently, in setting up a preparatory committee for the National Peasant Conference, the Communists tried to place a few KMT members on the committee for the sake of appearances. They failed, for there are no KMT members working among the peasantry."<sup>(90)</sup> This was April 1926.

Juan Hsiao-hsien gave a twelve-page report on farmer association struggles, which also takes up a section of Lo Ch'i-yüan's broader report. Most of the conflicts concerned the farmers' livelihood, such as rent-reduction struggles, sometimes as interlineage battles, or resistance to paying levies in support of *min-t'uan*, or to paying taxes. Farmers' guards battled landlords and *min-t'uan* in many places, often requiring the government to send troops to quell disorders.<sup>(91)</sup> Such conflicts aroused the hostility and fear among the wealthy and conservative in political circles. They intensified opposition to Communist activities under the banner of the Kuomintang. Chiang Kai-shek's coup of March 20, 1926 encouraged conservatives. Minutes of the Kuomintang Political Council in the spring of 1926 contain many entries on these rural conflicts and the need to quell them.

Juan and Lo frankly criticized the movement in their reports to the Second Kwangtung Farmers Association Congress, charging poor organization, bad local leadership, and faulty behavior. Local associations failed to report to the center and did not obey orders. Most serious, local associations were being infiltrated by class enemies, Juan charged. "The present suspicion of farmers associations arises from this," he explained. There was too much

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(89) Lo, "Pen Pu I Nien Lai Kung-tso Pao-kao Kai-kuang," pp. 174-207 for details on the five classes and Eto, "Hai-lu-feng," I, p. 182. Lin Tsu-han, "Chung-kuo Kuomintang Nung-min Pu Lieang Nien Lai Kung-tso Chuang-k'uang," CKNM, pp. 695-99, p. 699. Lo Ch'i-yüan, *Kwangtung Nung-min Yun-tung Pao-kao*, p. 53 for the quotation.

(90) Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism, and Soviet Advisers in China, 1918-1927* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 258.

(91) Juan Hsiao-hsien, "Kwangtung Sheng Nung-min I Nien Lai chih Fen-tou Pao-kao Ta-kang," CKNM, pp. 611-29, tabulation pp. 627-28; Lo Ch'i-yüan, "Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao," pp. 657-69, for a table of frequency of conflicts and categorizes the causes. See also T. C. Chang, *The Farmers' Movement*, pp. 24-30 for similar analysis of conflicts.

struggle during the past year, excessive demands and reckless action—attributes of “pro-Leftist naivete,” according to Lo. Farmers associations meddled too much in local government, arrested on their own, and conducted “inopportune executions.” Try to convert *min-t’uan* rather than fight them, he urged. Go slow in trying to overthrow landlords and gentry, and get public support first. It was time for interclass cooperation in the interests of the revolution, and for the united front with the Kuomintang. Liberation would come after the revolution. <sup>(92)</sup>

The main thrust in May 1926 clearly was: time to draw back, for the cautious approach and concentration on economic reforms in the countryside. Resolutions attached to Juan Hsiao-hsien’s report emphasized this caution: tighten organization, take the long range view after careful study of the real rural situation, no struggles without permission from the top, interclass cooperation, support for the Kuomintang and the Nationalist Government, and unity among the masses. <sup>(93)</sup> We sense here the dominance of Comintern-directed “united front” policy over the Comintern’s insistence on agrarian revolution. But could such a revolution be cooled? The soil was just the same, and the seeders were on the job. Even the revolutionary climate was still fairly hot.

As is well known, Mao Tse-tung directed the Sixth Class of the Farmers Movement Training Institute, which lasted from May 3 to October 5, 1926. The class enrolled 327 students, of whom 318 graduated. Only two students were from Kwangtung, but there were 40 from Kwangsi, which was now developing a farmers movement, there were 36 from Hunan, 22 from Kiangsi, 27 from Hupei, and numbers from other provinces in the path of the coming Northern Expedition. The students got ten weeks of military training as part of their preparation for revolutionary work. <sup>(94)</sup> The school had a budget of \$64,960, a handsome figure compared with early expenditures. In October 1926 the Kuomintang Farmers Bureau reported having subsidized the Provincial Farmers Association with \$6,026 monthly. “This big increase was said to be

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(92) Juan, “Kwangtung Sheng...,” pp. 626-34; Lo, “Hui Wu Tsung Pao-kao,” pp. 670-87.

(93) Juan, “Kwangtung Sheng...,” pp. 631-38 for seven attached resolutions; and resolutions attached to Lo’s report.

(94) Eto, “Hai-lu-feng,” I, p. 182.

accounted for by help from Russian sources," according to T. C. Chang. <sup>(95)</sup>

The Kwangtung movement grew to over 800,000 members by year's end, though the figure may be inflated by P'eng Pai's practice of counting all adults in a member family as members. There were 6,422 village associations in 71 of Kwangtung's 95 counties. <sup>(96)</sup> But in April and May 1927 the movement was suppressed in many places following Li Chi-shen's drive against Communist-led mass movements in Canton. The aftermath of the Canton Commune spelled more repression. The Hai-feng soviet held out till May 1928, then their armed forces existed only as scattered bands. P'eng Pai, betrayed and captured in Shanghai, was executed on August 30 or 31, 1929.

If one may editorialize: Looking back, it seems sad that the leaders of the Kuomintang permitted this first large-scale effort to overcome rural socio-economic inequities to fall completely into the hands of their junior partners in the National Revolution.

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(95) Chang, *The Farmers' Movement*, pp. 13-14.

(96) *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.



*P'eng Pat.* From Ch'en Hsiao-pai, *Hai Lu-feng Ch'ih Huo Chi* [The Red Disaster in Hai Lu Feng]. Canton, 1932. p. 4