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Between Arrogance and Despondency: The Shanghai Workers, the Communists, and the Strikes at the Japanese Cotton Mills of 1926

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Abstract

In June 1926, Shanghai cotton-mill workers initiated strikes at Japanese-owned factories in Xiaoshadu, protesting the dismissal of workers accused of arson in the workshop. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recognized that Chinese workers' actions should be aligned with their labor movement strategy, and tried to control the scale of the strikes. In August, responding to an incident where Japanese sailors killed a Chinese man, the CCP redirected to launch a large-scale combined strike, catering to Chinese laborers' demands of Japanese employers, but not accounting for practical market conditions. Drawing on a variety of sources, this article reveals that dissidence in leadership, weaknesses in grassroots organizations, and unrealized alliances made it impossible for the Communists, so-called the vanguard of the working class, to lead the summer strike. Contrarily, the cotton workers coerced the Communists and their controlled labor unions to maximize their benefits. By mid-September, it had failed, causing a serious setback for the CCP. Compared to the CCP's improvisation and confusion, the capitalists took wise countermeasures in the favorable economic climate of 1926, ultimately triumphing over the Communists and workers.

Introduction

On September 20, 1926, the Shanghai Regional Committee (SRC), the leading organization of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Shanghai,¹ met to critique and reflect on lessons learned after their failed strike actions (August–September) at the Japanese Naigai Wata Kaisha (NWK) cotton mills, one of the most competitive textile enterprises in Shanghai. The “big three” of the SRC—Luo Yinong, Zhao Shiyun, and Wang Shouhua—summarized their experiences. Zhao remarked that the Communists were “a bit irritable and radical,” and lacked a strategic vision: He regretted accepting the proposal to strike. Wang admitted he had been radical in formulating the strike policy, but had thought that the strike was necessary under the circumstances. Luo calmly accepted the failure and said it was unsurprising, because the workers were “excessively arrogant.” He also underscored that his own emotions

and impulsiveness and those of his fellow Communists had played a major role in their decision-making.² These local Communist leaders had different views of the failure of the recent strike, which Luo saw as betokening “the end of all strike waves in Shanghai.”³

The labor movement in the summer of 1926 is usually overshadowed by the nationwide May Thirtieth movement of 1925, and the CCP’s three armed uprisings for control of Shanghai between late 1926 and early 1927. Yet the 1926 labor movement, during which the Communists were drawn into two remarkable month-long strikes at NWK mills, bridged these two influential CCP-led achievements. The strikes began for different reasons but had the same result. They occurred in June–July and August–September respectively, and involved workers, Communist-led labor unions, foreign owners, and domestic capitalists. The interactions between these groups over three months in the shared space of the NWK mill network in Western Shanghai Xiaoshadu provide us with an invaluable opportunity to thoroughly examine the complexities of the labor movement in which the Communists participated, and the micro-mechanisms in tackling different agents’ reactions in a global city. With a total of thirty-four strikes between 1918 and 1926, NWK experienced the largest number of strikes at any single establishment in China. As Chen Ta notes, it is extremely difficult to substantiate the extent to which Communist instigation may have influenced the strikes.⁴ Contemporaries typically cited workers’ livelihoods, welfare, and management techniques, or economic pressures, alleged employers’ maltreatment, and popular movements as reasons for the strikes.⁵ In the 1960s, Jean Chesneaux, in his seminal work on the Chinese labor movement, indicates that the political situation in Shanghai and the success of the Northern Expedition were the main reasons for the strikes from June to September of 1926.⁶ However, these explanations do not provide a clear historical picture of how the Communists behaved in the NWK strikes.

Conversely, recent works by Chinese scholars mainly ascribe the failure of the NWK strikes to harsh political-economic circumstances, arguing that the CCP had a sound policy which it enacted poorly. As a kind of official narrative, these works elevate the CCP’s actions, presenting the strikes as well-organized and principled, and suggesting the Communists used certain events to link their political struggle to industrial conflict.⁷ Following Chesneaux’s general research into the period between 1919 and 1927, historians such as Lynda Shaffer underline significant “regional variation” in the labor movement. Arif Dirlik also stresses the importance of “regional specificity” due to local variations in different combinations of social and political forces.⁸ Concerning the labor movement in the Hunan region in the early 1920s, Shaffer concludes quite positively that the Communists “demonstrated their ability to deliver what the workers wanted.”⁹ Similarly, Gail Hershatter’s study of Tianjin workers reveals that the Tianjin millhands of the mid-1920s were amenable to CCP-guided organization, and that the Communist organizers’ mobilization of these workers was “particularly successful.”¹⁰

On the other hand, Ming K. Chan finds that in Guangdong labor activism, the Communists committed “great errors in both their organizational efforts and their mobilization efforts.”¹¹ Chan identifies a gap between the objectives of the Communist intellectual labor leaders and the rank-and-file union membership:

The former focused on the grand revolutionary project, while the latter prioritized economic goals.¹² This finding is supported by Daniel Y. K. Kwan's examination of the relationship between Marxist intellectuals and workers in the Shengang (Guangzhou and Hong Kong) General Strike, in which these groups "had different visions of revolution." Moreover, CCP leaders were willing to abandon the interests of the working class when necessary.¹³ In a comparative study of workers in St. Petersburg and Shanghai, S. A. Smith pinpoints how the westernized cultural style of CCP intellectuals intersected with traditional Chinese culture in a way that benefited them in their communication with workers.¹⁴

Cotton-mill workers, as Smith suggests, were "at the heart of the labor movement from 1925 to 1927."¹⁵ These workers made up the majority of the CCP's rank-and-file membership in Shanghai.¹⁶ Emily Honig, in her work on Shanghai female cotton-mill workers, contends that the CCP was "ineffective in its attempts to organize" this type of laborer, mostly due to the Communists' mistaken assumptions about the way female workers' perceived their own interests.¹⁷ Elizabeth J. Perry similarly argues that Shanghai cotton workers "did not always participate with the same mind-set as the Communist instigators."¹⁸ Both Honig and Perry focus on factors that shaped worker mobilization, such as native place, gangs, and kinship, rather than the role Communists played behind the scenes.

In the study of Communism in Shanghai, S. A. Smith scrutinizes important episodes in the 1926 summer strike at NWK, and concludes that the CCP influenced workers' protests to a certain extent, but did not attain complete control. Like Chan, Smith argues that the Communists did not capture the hearts and minds of Shanghai workers. In addition, Smith points out that the CCP's decision to generalize the strike across the entire NWK system was "a serious miscalculation," but does not clarify how or why the CCP made this miscalculation, nor does Smith explain how the independent activity on the workers' side exerted a profound influence on the Communists' policy and measures.¹⁹

Based on internal CCP sources, archival documents, and contemporary news reports, this article examines the role of the Communists in the NWK strike, and showcases the interactions between four invested parties throughout the process.²⁰ Perry suggests that "[the Chinese workers] were not clay in the hands of partisan potters to be fashioned according to their design."²¹ However, it is important to contextualize the potters: to understand what they were trying to make, and how they were influenced by their thoughts and feelings. By focusing on the debates within the SRC, which was trying to lead and direct the workers' mood and activism, this article addresses the lack of an internal perspective on the choices of the Shanghai Communist leaders in previous scholarship. It reveals the divergent views of the labor movement within the local core leadership, and shows how ideology, theory, and even emotions affected leaders' calculations, and responses to worker offensives, such as strikes and stoppages, as well as the responses of those leaders to foreign owners' countermeasures, such as lockouts.

This article first investigates the way the May Thirtieth commemorative campaign was seen as a prelude to further labor mobilization in the CCP's strategic thinking. Secondly, it traces the configuration and status of the Communist organization and the NWK mills in Shanghai Xiaoshadu. The NWK summer strikes from June to

September are then discussed in the following parts. Finally, this article summarizes the respective motives and dynamics of the different actors involved in the NWK strikes, and the historical implications of these events. Overall, the article provides a historical picture of the CCP's early efforts to organize and mobilize Shanghai cotton-mill workers in a complicated, difficult-to-navigate situation, in which imperialism, nationalism, Communist hierarchy, and class conflict were entangled, and in which the Communist organizers and cotton workers influenced each other.

Reviving revolutionary passion: After the May Thirtieth Movement

In early 1926, the May Thirtieth Movement, a high point of the anti-imperialist campaign and a vital period of the CCP's national expansion, subsided. The CCP perceived a dwindling revolutionary passion, particularly compounded by political changes in North China, and had to face the inevitable reactionary high tide.²² By early 1926, Feng Yuxiang's National Army, covertly financed and armed by the Soviet Union, was on the back foot. Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin had forged an alliance between Zhili and Fengtian forces, and the National Army was caught in the crossfire. Under intense pressure, Feng, with his revolutionary leanings, gave up his command. By 15 April 1926, the National Army had to withdraw from Beijing, which they had taken over six months earlier. According to the CCP Central Committee's observation, this meant "the most reactionary situation has come," and the national populace would be oppressed from north to south.²³

At the same time, the SRC recognized a state of depression prevailed among its personnel. The Shanghai Communist Party membership was stagnating and there was instability across its seven departmental committees in different Shanghai districts.²⁴ Comrades holding positions of responsibility in these organizations were growing fatigued. Branches were the fundamental unit of the CCP, but with few attendees in most of them three were no meetings.²⁵ A sense of despondency had also permeated the higher level of the Shanghai Communist Party. Comrades in the CCP Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee (*zhonggong xiaoshadu buwei*) feared arrest and job loss, which made them unwilling to work hard. Instead, they indulged in alcohol and playing cards. Many Shanghai Communist Party members were despondent about the prospects of the revolution.²⁶

As well as the deteriorating mood, the Communists also faced the difficulty of some mill workers in Xiaoshadu becoming increasingly worried about their material situations and therefore passive about the strike action. Concerned about their own economic interests and the increased cost of living, these workers were wary of incidents that might lead to large strikes in their mills. In May, some Xiaoshadu mill workers began to trust their Japanese employers more, as the latter had increased their salaries.²⁷ As reported by the representative of a British firm in Shanghai, the conditions in NWK cotton mills "are probably better than they are in any mills anywhere else."²⁸ Because of their declining revolutionary fervor, these workers were no longer willing to struggle to organize labor unions in the Japanese mills where they worked. Mirroring this development, the Communists observed that Japanese employers' attitudes toward workers became increasingly tough, tending "to be less yielding to demands than during previous months."²⁹

The CCP was unwilling to accept these developments. At the time, the core leadership of the Shanghai Communist Party, the presidium of the SRC, consisted of five members: Luo Yinong, Zhuang Wengong, Yin Kuan, Wang Shouhua, and Zhao Shiyan. Luo was born in Hunan province, and he had received Bolshevik education and training in Moscow between 1921 and 1925. Luo's peers saw him as smart, brave, competent, and inspirational. As a self-identified bolshevized CCP member, Luo was more interested in practical work than in theory.³⁰ He was then the secretary of the SRC, the top leader of the CCP organization in Shanghai. Wang was from Zhejiang, and had his own advantages in this leading circle, because of his labor activism since Vladivostok.³¹ Wang was then the SRC's director of the laborer department and the secretary of the Labour Movement Committee, taking primary charge of the Shanghai labor movement. Wang's insights and analytical capabilities in the fields he managed impressed his colleagues.³² In June 1926, he served as chairman of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai General Labour Union (GLU).³³ As the external organization of the Labour Movement Committee, the GLU was formally established by the CCP on June 1, 1925 during the May Thirtieth Movement.³⁴ On behalf of the CCP, the GLU usually worked on the frontline of the struggle against capitalists, and mobilized laborers to carry out strikes and stoppages.

The Shanghai Communist Party leaders believed that resuscitating the May Thirtieth spirit would enable them to revive the workers' revolutionary consciousness and reorganize the local work. In late March and early April 1926, the SRC placed commemorative activities for May Thirtieth on their schedule.³⁵ On April 13, they formulated an outline of such commemorative activities, including a civil assembly, a ceremony of laying the foundation stone for a cemetery for May Thirtieth victims, a peaceful demonstration, and public speeches in the International Settlement.³⁶

On May 18, the May Thirtieth Campaign Committee was established. A group of Shanghai Communist leaders, including Luo Yinong, Wang Shouhua, and He Chang, were responsible for coordinating the commemorative activities.³⁷ To enlarge the scale of the campaign, and in response to the CCP Central Committee's request on May 12 that local organizations strike for one day and students for three days, the SRC presidium decided to launch a strike in foreign-owned factories, and to plan student strikes. The Shanghai Communist Party wanted two days of further strikes in British and Japanese mills, in addition to the CCP Central Committee's plan, but the GLU ultimately reduced the strike to two days in total.³⁸ Wang, who operated among workers as well as being one of leaders of the Shanghai Communist Party, thought that Xiaoshadu workers, especially workers in the Japanese cotton mills, were one of two main forces for this planned strike, on account of their history of struggle.³⁹

At the SRC meeting on May 27, Wang said there was an "80 per cent certainty" that the workers at Xiaoshadu mills would participate in the strike. Luo also thought that "members in Xiaoshadu were active and capable."⁴⁰ Thus, the SRC regarded the favorable situation in Xiaoshadu as an important part of the commemorative campaign, and decided to concentrate on initial strikes in the NWK cotton mills in that area.⁴¹ It was no small feat for the SRC to proceed with the May Thirtieth commemoration. Frightened by the likelihood of rowdy behavior on May 30, the Shanghai Federation of Local Shopkeepers Association (FSA), a crucial partner of

the CCP, was unwilling to participate in the campaign if it were held on that day, arguing that May 29 was more appropriate.⁴² The SRC had to compromise in order to maintain a united front with the FSA. On May 24, the SRC decided to separate the May Thirtieth commemorative campaign into two days: the foundation stone ceremony on the 29th and a rally on the 30th.⁴³

On May 29, with roughly two thousand attendees, the opening of the new cemetery took place as planned at Zhaibei Fangjia log bridge, in which “the foundation stone for the mausoleum for the victims of last year’s tragedy was laid.”⁴⁴ The speeches on-site were followed by a peaceful parade through the main streets in Zhabei.⁴⁵ The separate rally the following day, which the Communists also valued, was held in the name of “the Union of Societies”: in reality camouflage for the Shanghai Communist Party.⁴⁶ On May 30, around four thousand people attended to hear inflammatory and antforeign speeches delivered on Chinese territory at the West Gate Public Stadium on Chinese territory. Afterward, the parade marched to the International Settlement, with participants yelling slogans and distributing pamphlets. In the early afternoon, at about 1 p.m., a crowd of around five thousand people, including the parade, gathered at the Nanjing road area, which the CCP regarded as “the centre of the imperialists’ influence in China.”⁴⁷ Most of the crowd were laborers and students, and they turned the commemorative march into a riot: throwing stones, damaging trams and buses, and pulling passengers out of public transport vehicles.⁴⁸ By around 4 p.m., police and fire brigade forces had brought the situation under control without bloodshed and the crowd dispersed.⁴⁹ On both days of the campaign, the CCP and the GLU carried out strikes in Xiaoshadu’s factories including NWK, Dong Shing Spinning & Weaving Company, Ltd., and Japan-China Spinning and Weaving Co., Ltd., as an important component of their commemoration project.⁵⁰

Xiaoshadu, the NWK, and the Communist Party

The Shanghai Communist Party viewed the outcomes of the May Thirtieth commemorative campaign as positive, reorienting the local Communist organization in a new and promising direction. According to statistics from several sources, the highest number of strikes that year took place in June, in total between thirty and fifty strikes—nearly double the number of the previous month.⁵¹ The Shanghai Municipal Council calculated that there were forty strikes during June 1926, “the highest number ever recorded in a month in normal times.”⁵² The Shanghai Communist leaders believed that by allowing them to vent their anger against the Westerners in the International Settlement, the anniversary activities had reinvigorated the social identity of some workers. Workers who participated in or were influenced by this campaign, particularly in Xiaoshadu, became more proactive than the Communist leaders when facing repression. From May 30 to 31, all eleven NWK mills in Xiaoshadu were on strike: About half of all mills that had been asked to participate in the May Thirtieth anniversary activities.⁵³

Xiaoshadu had been a stronghold for the Communists ever since they began political activism in Shanghai. Geographically, Xiaoshadu was an important industrial area in western Shanghai: a counterpart to Yangshupu in eastern Shanghai.

Because of its advantageous location, with convenient production logistics and access to Shanghai's waterways, Xiaoshadu housed many cotton mills.⁵⁴ In the summer of 1924, building on existing workers' supplementary schools, Communist labor activists Xiang Ying, Sun Lianghui, and their colleagues in Xiaoshadu, established the West Shanghai Workers' Club.⁵⁵ The club functioned as a labor union attracting cotton-mill workers in the west Shanghai area. Because it was simultaneously the site of the NWK workers' union, the club quickly facilitated broader networks among Xiaoshadu cotton-mill workers, and provided the CCP with a solid foundation of workers for its organization in west Shanghai, the CCP Xiaoshadu group, and later the CCP Huxi branch (*zhonggong huxi zhibu*).⁵⁶

In October 1925, based on the branches, the SRC founded the CCP Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee as one of the most powerful subordinate organizations of the Shanghai Communist Party in order to strengthen the labor movement in Xiaoshadu. In April 1926, the SRC estimated that there were nearly thirty-five thousand cotton-mill laborers working in Xiaoshadu.⁵⁷ At the same time, there were twenty CCP branches operating in Xiaoshadu, with around four hundred active members: more than 20 percent of the CCP membership in Shanghai (1,964 members).⁵⁸ By June 1926, the CCP members of the Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee had increased to 582: nearly 30 percent of the entire membership of the Shanghai Communist Party.⁵⁹

Following the growth of its membership and influence, the Shanghai Communist Party started to carry out more work at NWK, which one contemporary observer recorded as "owning the most up-to-date mills in Shanghai."⁶⁰ NWK was described as the "overlord" of the Japanese cotton mills, which were already the most powerful cotton mills in China, and the most productive among Shanghai spinning establishments.⁶¹ Between 1911 and 1923, NWK founded eleven mills in Xiaoshadu, which by 1926 employed 15,400 laborers. NWK mills had the most up-to-date machinery and equipment.⁶² Relying on "larger capital and higher productive efficiency," Japanese mills in Shanghai had great influence in the cotton industry.⁶³ At the same time, NWK was continuously caught up in strikes and labor riots during the 1920s. As Sherman Cochran records, there were no less than forty-four strikes at NWK mills between February 1925 and November 1927—the largest number of strikes in a three-year period against any business in Chinese history.⁶⁴ In 1926, NWK had "the largest number of strikes in a single company operating several mills," with twenty-nine strikes according to contemporary record. Due in large part to the layout of the mill sites and relationships between workers, a strike which started at one NWK mill would usually spread to others. For instance, from June 4 to 10, 1926, there was a joint strike at NWK mills Nos. 5 (E), 5 (W), 7, 8, and 12 in support of previous strikes sparked by the dismissal of workers at NWK No. 9 and No. 13.⁶⁵

The Shanghai Communist leadership regarded Xiaoshadu workers, with their revolutionary past, as "exceptionally valorous" the current strikes.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee found that there was a lack of unified command and a lack of coordination between the Departmental Committee and the Cotton Mill Union, which was established on August 20, 1925 as an organization affiliated with the GLU.⁶⁷ In the middle of June 1926, to improve the efficiency and leadership of the labor movement in important industrial areas, the GLU replaced the role of

“organizer” (*zuzhiyuan*) with a permanent representative system. The union dispatched its representatives, Li Bozhi, Zhang Zuochen, and Xie Wenjin, to three major industrial areas: Yangshupu/Yinxianggang, Xiaoshadu/Caojiadu, and Nanshi/Pudong respectively. These permanent representatives were all members of the newly established Standing Committee of the GLU.⁶⁸ In addition, aiming to handle “those scabs” (*gongzei*) who were breaking the strikes, Chen Duxiu suggested that the Shanghai Communist Party organize a picket (*jiuchadui*) in each factory, which would actually be managed by the Departmental Committee. Furthermore, in order to create a long-term and stable view of labor struggles among members and improve their political education, at around the same time, in early June, the SRC’S presidium decided to organize a regional party school, and some departmental committees operated training classes. The former was to teach departmental committee members, and the latter was mainly to train the branch secretaries. The curriculum was designed to train cadres in matters such as how to organize, how to be a secretary, how to educate comrades, and how to penetrate the masses.⁶⁹ These trainees would soon have the chance to put their short-term training into practice in the coming strikes.

The strike at NWK: The first round

In the first half of 1926, the price of rice surged due to issues such as war, crop deficiency, the rising population of Shanghai, and speculative hoarding of rice by merchants.⁷⁰ According to official statistics, the retail price of rice rose over 16 yuan per picul (133.3 pounds) in June. Other sources show that the per-picul price ranged from 16 to 18.2 yuan in that month, reaching the unprecedented high of 19.9 yuan in August, compared with 11.6 yuan fifteen months earlier, a price increase of more than 70 percent.⁷¹ This was in fact an enormous burden on laborers. As some observed, “the cost of living in Shanghai is largely determined by the price of rice.”⁷² Surveys of Shanghai laborers from 1925 to 1926 show food expenditure accounting for more than 50 percent of the entire spending of worker families, whether this was a single adult or a family of five.⁷³ Furthermore, as one observer’s account published in June 1926 stated, for a family of five, the cost of purchasing rice could amount to their entire monthly income.⁷⁴ It is thought that the high prices during June “caused considerable hardship, especially among the poorer classes.” Meanwhile, in the eyes of local Communist leaders, including Wang, the rise in rice price was an important factor in the May and June strikes.⁷⁵

The rice price issue was on the meeting agenda of the SRC Presidium. They discussed publicizing a comparison between rice prices and income, and requested that workers complain to rice shops, so as to make it a social problem.⁷⁶ Under these circumstances, Xiaoshadu workers’ aggression was rising, leading them to break free of the CCP and the union. Wang’s June report on the Shanghai labor movement describes the workers’ acts as overly radical, becoming a “strike action pandemic” (*bagongbing*).⁷⁷ Spontaneous and disorganized strikes erupted frequently, causing the Communists to worry about losing control of the workers.

Although the Shanghai Communist Party tried to harness the labor movement and manage workers’ behavior, they were unsuccessful. On June 24, due to a factional

struggle between groups of workers from the Jiangbei and Anhui regions, a strike erupted at NWK No. 4 mill. Jiangbei workers, who were in the majority at the No. 4 mill, were unhappy when an Anhui foreman promoted his sister to the position of assistant foreman in their carding workshop. On the morning of June 24, three days after a failed negotiation, around eight hundred day-shift employees began to strike to express their dissatisfaction.

The strike erupted after a dramatic dispute ended in violence. Some workers broke into the engine room and took tools as weapons, and blocked the workshops. The situation deteriorated further when workers smashed machinery and set fire to the cotton on the machines.⁷⁸ Under the circumstances, the owner had to call the police and the fire brigade. However, the owner's actions further aggravated the situation, and strikers turned firehoses on the police. Police brought the situation under control, arresting fourteen rioters. The fire was extinguished and damage to mill property was estimated at around four thousand yuan. Because of the damage caused and the repairs needed, the No. 4 mill owner announced a lockout, and would not pay workers' salaries for this period.⁷⁹ The incident was subsequently echoed at the neighboring mill, NWK No. 3, where workers asked the No. 3 mill's owner to bail out the arrested No. 4 mill workers. The owner refused, resulting in a several-hour stoppage on in protest June 26.⁸⁰ Two days later, since NWK No. 3 workers could not accept the stoppage allowance offered by the owners, they refused to process the yarn from NWK No. 4 and shut down the machines. As a countermeasure, the owner adopted an equally aggressive position, and commenced a lockout.⁸¹ In this way, workers and owners arrived at a stalemate.

The Shanghai Communist Party was surprised and dissatisfied with what they saw as the workers' excessive militancy in these strikes. The workers' offensives, which Luo Yinong and the Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee called "primitive strikes," were outside of the Communists' plan.⁸² The day after the arson case at NWK No. 4 mill, the presidium met to discuss the issue. They were deeply worried that the Shanghai Communist Party and labor unions could not control the workers, and took the view that workers were behaving willfully and disobeying the Communist Party and labor union's orders. The Shanghai Communist Party believed that the workers' aggression had "already reached its peak."⁸³ The Communists tried to conceal from the public the fact that the arson had been committed by workers, despite knowing the truth. To divert public opinion from the behavior of NWK workers, the presidium decided to draft a submission to *Shenbao*, a famous national newspaper, stating that the fire was caused by leaking electricity instead of workers' arson. The Communists hoped that this measure would "obscure the facts," and even accused NWK owners of libel.⁸⁴

At that time, NWK took a hard line over the workers' conditions for resuming work. It was reported that they "decided to keep Nos. 3 and 4 mills closed until the strikers surrender on the company's terms."⁸⁵ The unfavorable conditions that they issued for reopening the mills included varying degrees of punishment for workers' behavior. The Japanese owner stipulated either expulsion or legal action against troublemakers, including: the mastermind or agitator of the strike and stoppage; those who stole mill property; those who defied their supervisor, or habitual rioters; those who damaged the machines; and those who raised tools as weapons. The NWK

employer insisted that they would not offer any allowance to the dismissed, nor would they pay wages for the time of the strike.⁸⁶ The workers viewed these conditions as akin to “putting workers to death.”⁸⁷ The tit-for-tat demands made by NWK employers and employees meant that direct negotiations could achieve nothing without one side first being willing to compromise.

For their part, in addition to communicating propaganda to the public, the SRC wanted to build a foundation for breaking the ice, and aimed to solve the lockout issues as quickly as possible, and not allow tensions to ferment.⁸⁸ They took a moderate approach. With the mediation of detectives (*baotan*) from NWK Nos. 3 and 4, the Communists dispatched the Cotton Mill Union representatives to negotiate with the owner and to convince the latter to involve the labor union in dealing with the issue. From July 8, detectives Liu Jinrong and Zhu Qizhen, on behalf of NWK Nos. 3 and 4 respectively, commenced talks with the GLU.⁸⁹ In addition, the presidium requested that No. 4 mill workers organize a delegation to go to different societies and newspapers to “tearfully complain about the false accusations against them.”⁹⁰

In early July, there was still no sign of a compromise between the workers and owners. The ongoing lockout meant that the workers were still earning nothing. On July 2, at the plenary session of the SRC, Zhang Zuochen, a member of the standing committee of the GLU and their representative in the Xiaoshadu-Caojiadu industrial area, pointed out that there was poor discipline at NWK mills No. 3 and 4. The workers had asked to resume work, but the owner was insisting the workers concede defeat, and sought to dismiss the workers’ leaders.⁹¹ The workers themselves wanted to carry out a combined strike (*tongmeng bagong*) against the owner, but the Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee refused to allow it.⁹²

Despite the passionate attitude of many workers immediately after the May Thirtieth commemoration, a sense of despondency gradually overtook the NWK mills after the incident at mill No. 4.⁹³ The Shanghai Communist Party leaders viewed the situation at NWK Nos. 3 and 4 as one in which the workers were “facing the consequences of trying to ride a tiger.”⁹⁴ Luo Yinong worried that the situation would have a negative impact on workers’ attitude toward the CCP and the labor union. Previously, Luo had tried to strike a balance, requesting that the Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee “restrain the worker’s arrogance, on the one hand, and on the other hand, not cause them to be too despondent.”⁹⁵ But now, Luo was concerned that this despondency among Xiaoshadu workers, who played a central role among Shanghai workers, was impacting the broader labor movement. He believed that it was necessary to “prepare a counterattack” in Xiaoshadu to restore the workers’ faith in the GLU. Luo thought Caojiadu and Yinxianggang also needed the CCP’s invigoration. Luo hoped that, unlike workers’ spontaneous acts in June, in July the Shanghai Communist Party might engage the labor movement with “preparation, quality, and an appropriate degree [of action].”⁹⁶

At the Xiaoshadu level, the Departmental Committee was to prepare to wage a strike as a way out of their current defensive position. The Committee felt that the Shanghai Communist Party and the labor union were only just keeping their heads above water. The SRC leaders were worried that “from the perspective of their class stake,” the Communists and the labor union would “definitely lose the faith

and following of the workers if they did not carry out a counterattack.”⁹⁷ However, at this stage, any such counterattack was only theoretical. As Wang Shouhua put it at the presidium meeting, the Shanghai Communist Party’s work was still inefficient, and no firm arrangements were made for a counterattack at NWK.⁹⁸ Although the striking workers were experiencing considerable hardship since they were not receiving wages, the Communists and some workers were unwilling to make any concessions to the owners.⁹⁹

During this period, the detective Liu Jinrong delivered the Japanese conditions for reemployment, which listed twenty workers for dismissal, and prohibited workers from making trouble at the mills. The labor union refused these proposals, but felt that the Japanese were now prepared to make a concession. Subsequently, the labor union decided to launch a stoppage on July 17, in support of mills Nos. 3 and 4, which would include NWK Nos. 5 (E), 5 (W), 8, 9, 12, and 15, and to demand the government allow the GLU to resume public work.¹⁰⁰ However, most mills went back to work after only an hour-long stoppage: only at mills Nos. 5 (E) and 5 (W) did the owner fail to respond, and therefore workers continued their strike until July 19.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, mills No. 3 and 4 turned to the GLU for financial assistance, which the latter was unable to provide.¹⁰²

On July 23, the impasse was broken when workers lowered their requirements. In fact, the press had already released information about the workers’ retreat.¹⁰³ Representatives of the Cotton Mill Union, mills Nos. 3 and 4, and detectives working on behalf of the Japanese owners reached a compromise.¹⁰⁴ The workers did not continue to insist that NWK pay their salaries for the period of the strike. Instead, they requested that the management of mills No. 3 and 4 lend the sum of five yuan to every worker within a week after resumption of work, to be deducted from the recipients’ wages in five instalments. The owner agreed to the workers’ conditions that “in the future no workers be dismissed without reasonable cause,” and “that no policeman be allowed to enter the mills, assault the workers, or arrest them without grave reasons.”¹⁰⁵ Seven and eleven workers were dismissed by the owners of NWK Nos. 3 and 4 respectively.¹⁰⁶ One day later, the month-long strikes ended, and most of the workers returned to work.¹⁰⁷

The Communists and the workers did not achieve what they had hoped for from this strike. Instead, the tough stance of the Japanese employers was an effective way of “making the employees succumb.”¹⁰⁸ After this incident, the NWK began to use long-term lockouts as a countermeasure against workers.¹⁰⁹ As the contemporary press observed, “the mills have won a distinct victory over the unruly workers.”¹¹⁰

The strike at the NWK: The second round

The truce was only temporary. During the first round of strikes, in mid-July, the CCP Central Committee held an enlarged executive committee conference to guide current action. The CCP leadership was concerned that the Communist organization and labor union in Shanghai could not lead the workers because of competing factions in the mills, and urged the local Shanghai leaders to prevent “primitive wanton riots.”¹¹¹ Within the Shanghai Communist Party, there were differing views on its strategy regarding the workers. On July 27, right after work resumed at NWK Nos.

3 and 4, Wang proposed discussing whether to wage a general strike against NWK at the presidium meeting. He claimed that NWK owners would not fulfil their agreements and argue for a socially sympathetic strike. Luo suspended Wang's proposal, because he thought that the owners were not being hard on workers and said he would agree to a counterattack if there was sufficient public sympathy.¹¹² However, according to a Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee report, after returning to NWK mills Nos. 3 and 4, the workers were actually more oppressed than before.¹¹³

The GLU leaders did not want workers to continue to "regard the labour union as weaker than the capitalists."¹¹⁴ Xiang Ying and Zhang Zuochen, members of the GLU standing committee, thus summoned the CCP and League departmental committees, and decided to launch a large strike in Xiaoshadu, thereby going against the SRC's ruling and Luo's leadership. The Departmental Committee and Luo objected on the grounds that around 70 percent of workers in that district would be unwilling to strike because of a downturn in the yarn market, and that if the GLU persisted, the strike would last at most three to four days. Moreover, in a slow market, Japanese employers had no need to keep up employee numbers. In fact, it was common for cotton-mill owners to shut down altogether at such time, or at least cease night shifts.¹¹⁵ Based on low yarn price and high rice price, Luo believed it was a bad time for a long-term strike and observed that the Shanghai working class had been gradually alienated from the general public as a result of the intensive strikes.¹¹⁶

Xiang and Zhang did have supporters for the combined strike strategy. At the presidium provisional meeting of 31 July, when discussing how to respond to the dismissal of dozens of workers at NWK mill No. 9, Wang insisted that a general strike was self-defense against the Shanghai Communist Party failing to find its footing in the industrial area.¹¹⁷ Wang built a case for the general strike that Luo had previously vetoed, and suggested it might run for two weeks. Once again, Luo rejected Wang's proposal for several reasons: The government was strengthening its offensive against the Communists; public opinion and progressive press coverage of the recent strike was basically negative¹¹⁸; social support was not easy to obtain; and finally, Luo did not think the district-by-district strikes that Wang envisaged were possible. Conversely, he believed the strike should be limited to the NWK mills. Furthermore, if the strike involved thirty thousand workers in Xiaoshadu, they would need a budget of three thousand yuan at least, and Luo was concerned that the Shanghai Communist Party could not secure funds from the CCP Central Committee, Moscow, or the Guomindang. He believed that it would be better to wait until the yarn price rose in August to act. For Luo, they should first hold steady for at least a week: A general strike should be a last resort.¹¹⁹

Xiang Ying, another leader of the Shanghai labor movement, was on Luo's side. Xiang thought that, rather than real mass support, there were merely Communist representatives and "troublemakers" at the NWK mills. In his view, the labor movement needed to concentrate on NWK mills Nos. 5 (E) and 7 as its primary force.¹²⁰ Wang, on the other hand, believed that Luo and Xiang's measures would only encourage large-scale oppression by the Japanese, and lower the morale of the masses. Wang regarded the general strike as having "a one-in-ten chance of survival," thereby preventing the resistance against the Japanese employers from being seen as a total failure.¹²¹ Rather than call for a general strike at all NWK mills, the leaders agreed

to support an ongoing strike at NWK mill No. 9 in what Zhang Zuochen called an “offensive retreat.”¹²² At end of this meeting, only Wang voted for the NWK general strike; six members voted against it.¹²³

Less than a week after the proposal for a general strike at Xiaoshadu was rebuffed, another incident ignited a large-scale collective labor movement. On August 3, a Chinese man, Chen Atang, was found dead in the hold of a Japanese steamer, the *Manri Maru*, berthed at Pudong. The two sides told contradictory stories: The Japanese crew said that Chen was a thief, whose death resulted from falling into a coal bunker while trying to escape. The Chinese press vehemently rejected this version of events, insisting that Chen was a hawker peddling his wares on board, and that he was beaten and tortured by the crew when he asked for payment.¹²⁴ This incident gave rise to a surge of Chinese nationalism, especially when the Chinese public discovered that the Japanese crew were protected by extraterritorial jurisdiction.¹²⁵

The Shanghai Communist Party decided to link the death of Chen Atang to their resistance to the Japanese, and to make more trouble for the mill No. 9 owner.¹²⁶ On August 13, at around five o'clock in the morning, thousands of mill workers, mostly from NWK, gathered on a vacant lot close to Suzhou River, between Robinson Road and Penang Road, where they demonstrated against Japanese mistreatment and protested NWK's lockout of mill No. 9. The demonstrators' slogans drew connections between the May Thirtieth incident and the Chen Atang case, claiming that the spirit of the former was still alive.¹²⁷ On August 16, the same day that NWK No. 9 formally reopened, six workers of mill No. 5 were arrested for physically preventing mill No. 9 workers from returning to work.¹²⁸

On August 17, the SRC held a critical presidium meeting, discussing strategies for the labor movement at NWK. Luo, who considered a strike dangerous, again proposed to internally regulate the organization. Similarly, Zhao did not want to enlarge the labor campaign at that time, and objected to the idea of convening a civilian assembly for the death of Chen Atang. By contrast, Wang suggested using the Chen Atang case to raise worker morale, and wage a combined strike at mills Nos. 5 (E), 5 (W), 7, 8, and 12. The leaders of the Shanghai Communist Party did not reach a consensus. In the afternoon of the same day, Luo, Xiang, and Wang conducted a spot investigation in Xiaoshadu.¹²⁹

At the same time, the GLU held an emergency meeting to decide the collective action of Chinese workers at Japanese cotton mills. In total, thirty-two representatives of the workers at nineteen mills including NWK Nos. 3, 4, 5 (E), 5 (W), 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, Japan-China Spinning and Weaving Co., Ltd., Dong Shing Spinning & Weaving Company, Ltd., attended the meeting. Attendees suggested that all workers at Japanese-owned mills issue a united declaration that they would boycott Japanese goods, call on Chinese students in Japan to drop out of school and return home, and hold a memorial for Chen Atang.¹³⁰

The decision-making of the Shanghai Communist Party leadership was greatly affected by the workers' request for a strike.¹³¹ In the evening of August 17, the Shanghai Communist Party leaders shared their observations and opinions at a special meeting about the Xiaoshadu labor movement. Most agreed that it was time to harness the Chen Atang incident and commence a general strike in order to regain the trust of the masses and the leadership of the labor movement. They would use

the general strike as a counterattack against the Japanese capitalists who had dismissed worker activists, and they would appeal to public sentiment to gain support. Because the Chen Atang incident and the NWK mill workers' hardship could both be linked to Japanese actions, the Communists supposed the strike would resonate with all levels of Shanghai society. At last, Luo agreed that the Chen Atang tragedy held political significance, and despite his previous rejection of the general strike, agreed with the majority that "the time had come." However, Luo was still careful to note that the primary work of the strike was to strengthen anti-Japanese sentiment.¹³²

A headquarters and subordinate strike committee were organized at this meeting. Xiang Ying was appointed as commander of the headquarters, and Zhang Zuochen as director of the committee.¹³³ NWK Nos. 5 (E) and (W) were chosen as ground zero for the general strike. On August 20, Wang again explained to the SRC that the Communist Party could not contain the workers' anger and prevent them from spontaneously striking. The starting time was set for twelve o'clock, and the Cotton Mill Union issued the first order announcing a combined strike at the NWK cotton mills.

On the morning of August 20, NWK Nos. 5 (E), 8, and 12 started the strike together, joined later by mills Nos. 5 (W) and 7. Then NWK No. 15 joined at noon. In the afternoon, between six thousand and seven thousand NWK mill workers gathered and demonstrated at Tanziwan in a united public gesture.¹³⁴ At Tanziwan, their demands and stipulations chiefly concerned avenging Chen Atang and improving the treatment of workers.¹³⁴ On August 21 and 22, NWK Nos. 3 and 13 joined the strike. By August 22, 15,404 Chinese NWK workers were striking.¹³⁵ At that time,¹³⁶ Luo still believed that it would have been better to wait until August, when the yarn price rose, to wage a general strike.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, from August 21, the Communists placed a picket of about 350 members at various ferries and mills to maintain the strike, resist the "scabs," and prevent workers from resuming work before they could gain the upper hand in the negotiations.¹³⁸

In the name of the Cotton Mill Union, the Communists began to engage and negotiate with the Japanese owners through representatives such as Pan Donglin, who was a member and director of the general affairs of the FSA. On August 23, Pan and his fellow members went to the NWK general office to meet with the NWK owner. There, Pan argued that damage could be avoided on both sides by solving the workers' problems and reopening the mills as soon as possible. The SRC felt positive about Pan's engagement and supposed that the owners were panicking about the stoppage. However, at some mills, the strike encountered resistance, as 80 percent of workers of NWK Nos. 3 and 13 had already resumed work, and there was almost no response to calls for a collective strike from Yangshupu, another important industrial area of Shanghai.¹³⁹ On August 23, the Communist leaders decided to escalate the general strike. Chen Duxiu, the leader of the Central Committee, insisted on it. After visiting Xiaoshadu personally, Luo agreed: He hoped to strike a balance between demonstrating and negotiating, which meant that it was better for all NWK mills to strike from the second day and to mediate through social groups. Xiang and Zhao were on Luo's side, hoping to enlarge the strike, but also to quickly resolve it.¹⁴⁰

On August 25, the SRC decided to expand the strike and increase propaganda about the Chen Atang incident. In order to strike successfully and revive the Shanghai labor movement, they believed it necessary to extend the strike to all

Japanese factories in Shanghai, and to appeal to the wider Shanghai public as a means of creating social pressure. Luo still held a reserved attitude toward this general strike, but thought that this was at the very least a way of avoiding failure. In the face of unfavorable economic circumstances, he had to convince others and himself of the political significance of the strike. One day later, on August 26, the GLU released a letter to all labor unions of Japanese enterprises in Shanghai, ordering them to prepare for a united anti-Japanese strike in three days.¹⁴¹

Mediating the strike: A less successful outcome for the Communists

Negotiations between Chinese representatives and Japanese mill owners were ongoing. On August 25, the Chinese representative, Wu Zhihao, president of the FSA, suggested separating the Chen Atang incident from the general strike and resolving the latter first. One day later, representatives of the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern) gave the same advice and requested not expanding the strike under the current circumstances, and resolving the matter in three days.¹⁴² Wang objected, claiming that this would damage morale, and persuaded the Moscow representatives to offer another two thousand yuan in strike funds.¹⁴³ On August 27, the SRC decided to enlarge the demonstrations, but after a week of the strike, the Communists began to step back from their hardline stance. The leadership determined to leave the Chen Atang incident to commercial and educational circles. They hoped that FSA would complete the negotiations regarding the strike as soon as possible, even at the cost of making conditional concessions.¹⁴⁴

As a tough promoter of the CCP labor movement, even Wang started to worry about the dynamics and prospects of the general strike, expressing for the first time (on August 27, in the presidium) the pessimistic view that the NWK strike could not last long: the masses were scared, the strike committees incapable, and the owners obstinate.¹⁴⁵ Luo and Zhao shared Wang's concerns, especially regarding the CCP's inoperative branches, the deflated members, and the disappointed masses. On September 4, Luo publicly admitted that the strike in Xiaoshadu was doomed to fail.¹⁴⁶ On August 27, T. Funatsu, director-general of the Japanese Cotton Millowners' Association, arrived in Shanghai to complete negotiations. Three days later, on 30 August 30, the GLU dispatched three people as representatives of the Xiaoshadu workers to visit him, and they had a short discussion in which they explained the reason for the strike. In a letter to T. Funatsu, the Cotton Mill Union detailed their version of the whole story leading to the last two months of strikes in Japanese mills. The Chen Atang incident, which the legal system would resolve, was not a critical point. Instead, the representatives presented four minimum conditions in support of workers' interests.¹⁴⁷

In order to continue mediation with the Japanese owners, the worker representatives secured the help of Yu Qiaqing, renowned entrepreneur and president of the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce.¹⁴⁸ On August 31, the FSA also formed a mediation committee to formally settle the confrontation between employers and employees. The worker representatives went to see Pan Donglin, welcomed the committee for the mediation, and emphasized the necessity of the four minimum conditions. The Chen Atang incident was set aside.¹⁴⁹ By September 3, more than twelve

thousand workers had been on strike from NWK Nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, and Dong Shing Spinning & Weaving Company mills.¹⁵⁰ However, the Shanghai Communist Party was dissatisfied by their inability to raise a strike at NWK No. 9, which dismissed more than twenty workers and was “the only Naigai mill which has remained loyal.”¹⁵¹ On September 2, practically all NWK day-shift workers were working again. At the presidium meeting on September 3, the local Communist leaders reached an agreement that there were two ways out of the strike: “either stage a bloody riot to frighten the capitalists, or carry on with mediation by different parties.” Meanwhile, SRC leaders, such as Zhao, observed that the masses were already downhearted and disappointed with the labor union because the latter could do nothing about the relief fund shortage. Thus, the Shanghai Communist leadership understandably had to choose mediation.¹⁵²

The Japanese owners knew that they had the advantage: Yarn prices remained low, and the workers had insufficient resources to continue the strike indefinitely. Compared to employees, who endured significant losses while unemployed, employers were in less of a hurry to reopen mills. Instead, they became more adamant about their terms as a precondition for reopening, which meant harder work for the Chinese mediators. Meanwhile, on September 5, the Northern Expedition Army had started marching toward Jiangxi, and the army directed its forces against Sun Chuanfang’s rule in Shanghai. As a reaction to this latest situation, on September 7, the SRC discussed preparing to greet the Northern Expedition Army. Luo proposed more effort towards strikes among transportation workers, and decided to approach Yu for mediation to bring the NWK strikes to a quick end.¹⁵³

Throughout this time, the Communists were not able to raise enough funds for the unemployed. As reported by the secretary of the Xiaoshadu Departmental Committee, from September 9 and 10, panic and rumors circulated among mill workers in the area. Unemployed workers were in urgent need of financial relief, which the labor union could not supply. In turn, the mill owners strengthened their propaganda about the inadequacies of the labor union.¹⁵⁴ The Communists and the labor union began to retreat: On September 12, they allowed participating Dong Shing Spinning & Weaving Company mills to resume work.¹⁵⁵

Yu did not let the Communists down. Over September 13 and 14, Yu and Pan’s mediation reached its final stage. In this period, Yu engaged with the Japanese consul, and Pan negotiated with the NWK owners. Yu kept Shanghai Communist Party leaders updated, and the Japanese consul also engaged with NWK owners. On September 14, there was a three-party negotiation (Yu Qiaqing, the NWK owner, and the Japanese consul) at the Japanese consulate, which finally reached a compromise to end the strike. The main conditions were: increase the daily rice allowance for each worker by three cents; improve the treatment of workers; three days after work resumed, the employer would lend four yuan to each worker, which workers could repay in one-yuan instalments. Rejected by Wang, Yu, and Pan, the owner’s proposal to dismiss sixty to seventy workers was set aside in the appendices, along with the conditions of wage increases, supposedly to be negotiated further when Funatsu was back.¹⁵⁶ In practice, the workers could wait no longer. On September 14, during negotiations, it was reported that 80 percent of NWK workers returned to work. Ultimately, only the first and third conditions were implemented.¹⁵⁷

On September 15, NWK Nos. 3, 4, 5 (E) (W), 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, and 15 issued notice that they would reopen. One day later, around eleven thousand workers returned to work unconditionally: between 75 and 90 percent of the people employed in the NWK mills in the western district.¹⁵⁸ By September 18, NWK had dismissed more than 240 workers.¹⁵⁹ According to an SRC internal report from October 1926, more than three hundred workers lost their jobs after the strike.¹⁶⁰ In the wake of the failed strike, the Shanghai CCP faced enormous setbacks. Membership fell from 2,223 in August to 1,395 in September.¹⁶¹ CCP organizational statistics from April to December 1926 reveal cotton-mill worker membership decreased from 1,088 to 178, and the number of branches dropped from 44 to 12. The membership of the Cotton Mill Union in the GLU dropped from 30,468 in September 1926 to 25,640 in January 1927.¹⁶² Before long, the CCP started to shift their focus to the armed uprising in Shanghai.

Conclusion

On September 11, days before the SRC plenum of September 17 formally declared the strike a failure, Chen Duxiu criticized the Shanghai Communist Party's work. After hearing reports from Luo Yinong and his fellow local Communist leaders, the Central Committee requested that the Shanghai Communist Party cut members and funds, rectify its branch work, and convene meetings of branch secretaries after the strike.¹⁶³ The Shanghai Communist Party leaders did not contest the Central Committee's decision: they admitted that the strike "was conducted in a very poor manner," and shared the Central Committee's sense of "suffering caused by the destruction of the Shanghai Communist Party."¹⁶⁴

During the strike, the Japanese employers took advantage of favorable market conditions, and generally held firm against the continuous challenges of the Communists and workers.¹⁶⁵ The Japanese employers used a series of measures to deal with the workers, offering day and night shifts and good pay to appeal to the unemployed, and investigating pawnshops to ascertain the economic status of the unemployed.¹⁶⁶ Compared to the workers, for whom the lockout was a matter of life and death, the Japanese owners had the advantage of time and the resources to wait for the workers to capitulate. They gained the upper hand in the mediation and eventually achieved their goals.

There were separate reasons for the Shanghai Communist Party's involvement in these two rounds of general strikes at NWK. However, local Communist leaders had neither a clear picture of their intended policy, nor a deep understanding of the situation. The Communists' reason for intervening in the strike mainly derived from the thought that they must maintain the morale of workers as the CCP's first and foremost class force, as well as revive the labor movement in a crucial industrial area of Shanghai. However, they overestimated the capacity of the May Thirtieth anniversary campaign to raise revolutionary fervor. Rather than representing a considered, long-term project, the CCP's actions were improvised and reactive: They were swayed by workers' demands and sometimes even forced into improper decision-making by their fear of losing the confidence and loyalty of workers.

Instead of following the CCP Central Committee and Moscow representatives, Shanghai Communist leaders, to some extent, behaved autonomously to fulfil their political ambitions, even though these actions led to expression of dissatisfaction from the Far Eastern Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), which operated as a Moscow authority directing different aspects of CCP work.¹⁶⁷ The Shanghai Communists capitalized on the death of Chen Atang to rouse public anger and nationalism in an effort to gain support for the NWK general strike. Unlike Gu Zhengong, an NWK worker who was shot and killed by a Japanese employer, Chen was an obscure figure who died of debatable causes, and so his case did not resonate as powerfully with the public, nor was it connected to the strikes.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, the Shanghai Communist Party exposed the confusion and fatigue at its departmental and branch levels. The departmental committees were unable to fulfil their responsibilities in cooperating with the work of the GLU.

There were contradictory approaches to the strikes within the SRC. Luo and Wang interpreted events differently as they unfolded, in accordance with their individual responsibilities. Luo, as secretary, was focused more on building the CCP's organization and discipline, while Wang, as labor leader, was in frequent and close contact with workers, and hence more sympathetic to their struggles.¹⁶⁹ Compared with Wang's greater radicalism, Luo was more practical, taking economic and social factors into account.¹⁷⁰ And although Luo predicted the end result, he still followed Communist ideology and the majority's opinion on waging a general strike.

As Smith argues, at a deeper level of consciousness, "traditional norms persisted" for a large number of workers.¹⁷¹ In the case of NWK, the workers' factions and native place associations both aided the Shanghai Communist Party's work and hand-capped their leading role in the strike.¹⁷² According to available evidence, workers placed greater trust in their traditional factions or gangs than they did in the CCP-organized labor union. In particular, the Shanghai Communist Party preferred to use gang networks or sworn brotherhoods and sisterhoods to unite workers, even if CCP members were aware of the negative effects of groups based on such traditional bonds and connections.¹⁷³ However, the workers were willing to use the CCP's resources to extend their influence in the mills and to increase their incomes.¹⁷⁴ As Dirlik highlights, interpretations of the relationship between the workers and the Communists are shifting "toward greater stress on divergence and conflict of interest."¹⁷⁵

Instead of stamping a dichotomy between practical and ideological concerns on cotton-mill workers and Communists, this article demonstrates two more complex dimensions of their activism. Firstly, both workers and the Communists employed instrumental rationality: For workers, immediate economic and practical concerns were a common motivation in their strikes; the Communists, for a time, behaved far more practically and rationally, considering the conditions and timing of their actions when responding to the mood of the workers, which alternated between enthusiasm and despondency. Secondly, there was the issue of final ends, which ranged along a spectrum from highly ideological to piecemeal. At the highly ideological end of the spectrum were the Communists' revolutionary goals and an ideological vision of anti-imperialism and the liberation of the people, and the workers' sporadic

enthusiasm about situating themselves in a cross-class anti-imperialist movement.¹⁷⁶ At the piecemeal end of the spectrum, the Communists (as in the case of NWK strikes), used economic strikes as a means of ultimately fighting a political way out.¹⁷⁷ For their part, rather than considering more practical interests, workers often engaged in strikes out of sympathy and support for fellow mill workers, a motivation that introduced intense emotional dynamics and regional connections into the situation. Emotion was also an important influence on the Communists, who were persuaded by the passion of workers, or by their own passions in certain circumstances. In the case of the NWK strikes, workers felt that they were suffering continuously at the hands of foreign owners, whom the CCP presented as evil imperialists.

The Communists and workers shared a common enemy, at least, which enabled them to cooperate. However, while immersed in those strikes, they had different long-term aims and outlooks. The CCP worked toward their revolutionary goal at the cost of workers' interests if necessary, and the latter prioritized their practical needs. As such, the workers could arguably be seen as passengers on the Communist train: getting off at an earlier station once they had achieved their goals, had their demands met, or backed down from their original aims, thus leaving the Communists to deal with the aftermath.

Notes

1. I use "Shanghai Communist Party" to refer to the local CCP in Shanghai in this article.
2. Zhongyang dang'an guan and Shanghai shi dang'anguan, comps., *Shanghai geming lishi wenjian huiji*, pt. 2, vol. 3 (Shanghai, 1989), 456–73 [hereafter SHWJ].
3. SHWJ, pt. 2, vol. 3, 469.
4. Chen Ta, *Analysis of Strikes in China, from 1918 to 1926* (Beijing, 1929), 7, 52.
5. *North China Daily News*, August 16, 1926, 13 [hereafter NCDN]. Chen Ta, *Analysis of Strikes in China, from 1918 to 1926*. 50.
6. Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labor Movement, 1919-1927*. trans. H. M. Wright (Stanford, 1968), 339.
7. Shanghai fangzhi gongren yundongshi bianxiezu, *Shanghai fangzhi gongren yundongshi* (Beijing, 1991), 120–30; Liu Mingkui, Tang Yuliang eds., *Zhongguo jindai gongren jieji he gongren yundong*, vol. 6. (Beijing, 2002), 362–63; Shen Yixing et al., *Shanghai gongren yundongshi*, vol. 1 (Shenyang, 1991), 297.
8. Lynda Shaffer, "Modern Chinese Labor History, 1895-1949," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 20 (Fall 1981): 35; Arif Dirlik, "Beyond Chesnaux: Workers, Class, and the Socialist Revolution in Modern China," *International Review of Social History* 48, 1 (April 2003): 87.
9. Lynda Shaffer, *Mao and the Workers: The Hunan Labor Movement, 1920–1923* (Armonk, NY, 1982), 205.
10. Gail Hershatter, *The Workers of Tianjin, 1900-1949* (Stanford, 1986), 220.
11. Sheldon Garon, Ming Chan, *Labor, Society and State in Twentieth Century China and Japan* (Durham, NC, 1986), 33–34.
12. Chan Ming Kou, "Labor and Empire: The Chinese Labor Movement in the Canton Delta, 1895–1927." PhD Diss., Stanford University, 1975, 362–63.
13. Daniel Y. K. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement: A Study of Deng Zhongxia (1894-1933)* (Seattle, 1997), 265.
14. S. A. Smith, "Workers, the Intelligentsia and Marxist Parties: St Petersburg, 1895-1917 and Shanghai, 1921-1927," *International Review of Social History* 41, 1 (April 1996): 46–48.
15. S. A. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses: Nationalism and Labor in Shanghai, 1895-1927* (Durham, NC, 2002), 266.
16. In July 1926, the membership of the Shanghai Communist Party and the number of branches were 2,163 and 112, respectively. Cotton mill worker memberships and branches accounted for 1,348 and 44, respectively. See SHWJ, pt. 1, vol. 3, 344–46.

17. Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919-1949* (Stanford, 1986), 248–49.
18. Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford, 1993), 83.
19. Mechthild Leutner et al., *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s: Between Triumph and Disaster* (London; New York, 2002), 201; S. A. Smith, *A Road is Made: Communism in Shanghai, 1920-1927* (Honolulu, 2000), 144.
20. The internal party source that I draw on in this article is *Shanghai geming lishi wenjian huiji*. These original documents are held in the CCP Central Archives, and were compiled by the Central Archives and the Shanghai Municipal Archives during the 1980s and 1990s. The collection consists of Part One and Part Two, which contain documents including work reports, plans and policies, and directives, as well as complete minutes of meetings convened by the Shanghai Communist Party. Since this collection was not intended to be accessible to the public, its content frankly records many negative aspects and shortcomings of the Shanghai Communist Party (e.g., incoherent organization, unstable membership, irresolute members), which can be crosschecked against other materials and contemporaries' recollections. Elizabeth Perry, in her *Patrolling the Revolution*, mainly used these documents in relation to a period of the three CCP-led armed uprisings in Shanghai. Elizabeth J. Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State* (Lanham, MD, 2006), chapter 2.
21. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, 253.
22. Zhongyang dang'an guan comp. *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji, vol. 1 (1920-1925)* (Beijing, 1989), 102, 108, 112.
23. *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji, vol. 2 (1926)* (Beijing, 1989), 118.
24. The departmental committees of the Shanghai Communist Party at the time included Yangshupu, Yinxianggang, Xiaoshadu, Caojiadu, Pudong, Zhabei, and Nanshi. In June 1926, the French Concession was established as the eighth departmental committee. See Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei zuzhibu, et al., *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shiwei ziliao (1920.8-1987.10)* (Shanghai, 1991), 3–4, 44–45, 67–68.
25. *SHWJ*, pt. 2 vol. 1. (Shanghai, 1989), 357–58.
26. *SHWJ*, pt. 1 vol. 4. (Shanghai, 1987), 237.
27. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 4, p. 237; pt. 2, vol. 2 (Shanghai, 1989), 65.
28. FO 371/10944, F 3036/194/10, Copy of Letter Addressed by Mr. H. P. King of Shanghai to Lewis Lazarus & Sons (June 15, 1925). The National Archives, Kew.
29. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 65; The Shanghai Labor Situation during March (March 30, 1926), RG 59, 893.5045/331, National Archives, United States.
30. Zheng Chaolin, *Shishi yu huiyi*, vol. 1, (Hong Kong, 1998), 247; vol. 2, 51, 70; Chen Bilan, *My Memoirs, Peng Shu-tse Papers*, Box.2, Folder 17, 88, Hoover Institution Archives.
31. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui and Shanghai shi minzhengju eds., *Shanghai yinglie zhuan*, vol. 2 (Shanghai, 1987), 11; Zhonggong Zhuji shiwei dangshi bangongshi ed., *Wang Shouhua* (Zhuji, 1993), 75, 83, 99; *Transcripts of Interviews*, no. 3, Zhu Yingru (February 22, 1957), 32, Shanghai Academy of Social Science.
32. One of the members of the contemporary CCP Central Committee, Peng Shuzhi, was impressed by Wang's capabilities in the labour movement. See Peng Shuzhi, *Peng Shuzhi huiyilu*, vol. 2 (Hong Kong, 2016), 40–41.
33. Zhonggong yida huizhi ji'nian'guan et al., *Hongqi piaopiao*, vol. 31 (Beijing, 1990), 33–34; Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui and Shanghai shi minzhengju eds., *Shanghai yingliezhuan*, vol. 2 (Shanghai, 1987), 11–12.
34. The GLU was a public organization, undertaking social activities. Technically, the GLU was also a department named the Labour Movement Committee, operating under the leadership of the SRC. See *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 407, 423.
35. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 18.
36. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 232.
37. He Chang was then the secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League in Shanghai and would be assigned to the SRC in June 1926.
38. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 10, 151–52; pt. 2, vol. 2, 125, 149; *Zhonggong Zhongyang wenjian xuanji, vol. 1 (1920-1925)*, 132.
39. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 144–46; pt. 1, vol. 3, 471; pt. 1 vol. 1, 236.
40. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 157–58.

41. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 247–48.
42. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 234; pt. 2, vol. 2, 143.
43. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 147–48.
44. *NCDN*, May 31, 1926, 16. Different sources record different numbers, such as the CCP's internal report (5,000) and the Shanghai Municipal Police daily report (1,500). See *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, p. 239; *Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) Daily Report*, May 30, 1926.
45. *NCDN*, May 31, 1926, 16; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 238–39; pt. 2, vol. 2, 148; *SMP Daily Report*, May 30, 1926.
46. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 148.
47. This number is from contemporary news. According to the CCP's internal summary, they planned to dispatch about 4,000 people to gather in the International Settlement. See *NCDN*, May 31, 1926, 15; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 241, 244.
48. Hilton Johnson to Sir Ronald Macleay, June 7, 1926, FO228/3154; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 245–47.
49. *NCDN*, May 30, 1926, 15–16; May 30, Disturbances, RG 59, 893.5045/359; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 246–47; Shanghai Political Report (June Quarter, 1926), June 30, 1926. FO 228/3291.
50. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 247.
51. *Chinese Economic Journal* 1, 3 (March, 1927): 229; *Strikes and Lockouts in Shanghai, 1918–1932*, 61.
52. *The Municipal Gazette* (July 16, 1926), 228; The Shanghai Labor Situation during July, 1926 (August 9, 1926), RG 59, 893.5045/387.
53. *Shibao*, June 2, 1926, 2; Bureau of Social Affairs, The City Government of Greater Shanghai, *Strikes and Lockouts in Shanghai, 1918–1932*, appendix, 37.
54. Shanghai fangzhi gongren yundongshi bianxiezu, *Shanghai fangzhi gongren yundongshi*, 42.
55. Deng Zhongxia, *Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi* (Shanghai, 1990), 115; Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui quanguo gongren yundongshi yanjiushi ed., *Zhongguo gongyun shiliao*, No. 1–8, pt. 2 (Beijing, 1984), 91–95; Shanghai shekeyuan lishi yanjiushi, ed., *Wusa yundong shiliao*, vol. 1, 276–96. Zhang Quan, Guanyu huxi gongyoyu julebu, *Dangshi ziliao congkan* no. 3 (1980): 116–24.
56. Translation of Chinese Pamphlet, February 14, 1925, *Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) Files*, I. O. 6017. Report on Labour Unrest during the Month of February, 1925 (March 3, 1925), *SMP*, I. O. 6023; Zhonggong shanghaiishi Putuo quwei zuzhibu et. al., *Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghaiishi Putuoqu zuzhishi ziliao* (Shanghai, 1991), 3–4.
57. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 214.
58. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 209–10, 216.
59. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 7. (Shanghai, 1991), 308. The SRC work report of May and June shows that the number of the Shanghai Party members was 2,049.
60. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 1, 247; pt. 2, vol. 2, 170; C. L'Estrange Malone, *New China: report of an investigation, Part. 2., Labour conditions and labour organizations* (London, 1926), 13.
61. *Shibao*, August 30, 1926, 14; Tetsuya Kuwahara, "The Establishment of Oligopoly in the Japanese Cotton-Spinning Industry and the Business Strategies of Latecomers: The Case of Naigaiwata & Co., Ltd." *Japanese Yearbook on Business History* 3 (1987): 124.
62. Tetsuya Kuwahara, *The Local Management of Japanese Cotton Spinners in China during the Inter-War Days: Naigaiwata & Company* (Hyōgo, Japan, 2009), table 3.
63. D. K. Lieu, *The Growth and Industrialization of Shanghai* (Shanghai, 1936), 29.
64. Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880–1937* (Berkeley, CA, 2000), 105.
65. *Shenbao*, June 10–12, 1926, 14.
66. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 7, 257.
67. According to Wang Shouhua's report, due to lack of human resources and to avoid tedious procedures, in June 1926, the Cotton Mill Union was integrated with the GLU. The latter dealt with important issues at the mills, but guiding and calling on cotton mill workers still took place under the name of the Cotton Mill Union. See *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 501.
68. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 246; *Zhongguo gongchandang shanghaiishi zuzhishi ziliao*, 77–78.
69. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 224; *Dang de wenxian* 6 (June 2002): 27.
70. The high price of rice had several causes, including "a bad harvest in 1925, and transport difficulties resulting from the civil war in the Yangtze Valley in 1926 and profiteering resulting from that conflict." See *Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1926*, 51.

71. *The Municipal Gazette* (July 16, 1926), 228; *The Municipal Gazette* (September 17, 1926), 287; FO 228/3291, Shanghai Intelligence Report. April–September 1926 (September 30, 1926); *The Monthly Report on Prices & Prices Indexes in Shanghai* 2, no. 6 (June 1926): 14; *The Bankers Weekly* 10, no. 24 (June 1926): 8; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 10, 327; *The Cost of Living Index Numbers of Laborers: Greater Shanghai* (January 1926–December 1931), 1932, 20.
72. *NCDN*, August 19, 1926, 13.
73. *Zongshanghui yuebao*, vol. 7, no. 5, 15; *The China Year Book, 1928*, 934–35; Beijing shehui diaochabu, ed., *Diyici zhongguo laodong nianjian*, Pt. 1, 1928, 161–62.
74. *The Bankers Weekly*, vol. 10, no. 24, June 1926, 7. A similar report published in August records how the high price of rice consumed nearly the entire income of a worker's family (a family of five people) can also be found in *Shibao*, August 2, 1926, 2. An American journalist, George E. Sokolsky, lists findings on two concrete cases of costs of living in Shanghai. Rice expenses amounted to more than 30 percent of monthly income, regardless of whether it was a family of four persons (\$8/\$21) or two persons (\$5/\$15). See *NCDN*, August 19, 1926, 13. For a Chinese family of four persons, rice purchases accounted for nearly half of the family's income (\$12/\$26). See *Shangbao*, July 23, 1926, 3.
75. *The Municipal Gazette* (July 16, 1926), 228. For Wang's opinion, see *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 262.
76. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 300.
77. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 240.
78. The CCP's internal report also recorded this riot and arson committed by mill No. 4 workers, and remarked that workers' aggression reached its peak at that time. See *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 7, 275.
79. *Shenbao*, June 25, 1926, 13; June 26, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, June 25, 1926, 2; *NCDN*, June 25, 1926, 13; *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 310–11; 471.
80. It was reported that more than three hundred of No. 3 mill's night shift workers started their stoppage at 11:30 p.m., and left the mill after four hours. According to the report, Zhang Zuochen, at around 9 and 10 p.m., probably went to No. 3 mill and gave a speech there. *SMP Daily Report*, June 27, 1926.
81. *Shenbao*, June 29, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, June 29, 1926, 2; the SMP daily report shows that the owner shut the mill at around 9:15 a.m., *SMP Daily Report*, June 29, 1926.
82. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 54.
83. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 310–11; pt. 2, vol. 7, 275.
84. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 311; pt. 1, vol. 3, 531.
85. *Shibao*, July 9, 1926, 2; *NCDN*, 13 July 1926, p. 12.
86. *Shenbao*, July 29, 1926, 15; *Shibao*, July 23, 1926, 2. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 529; Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), B-3-7-2-8_2_002, *Confidential No. 606*, The Japanese General-Consul in Shanghai to the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, July 27, 1926.
87. *Shenbao*, 26 July 26, 1926, 13.
88. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 7, 289.
89. *Shenbao*, July 29, 1926, 15; *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 90; *Confidential No. 606*.
90. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 311–12.
91. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 8.
92. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 12.
93. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 7, 288.
94. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 119.
95. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 38.
96. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 38, 40.
97. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 54–57.
98. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 80.
99. *Shibao*, July 9, 1926, 2.
100. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 90; *Shenbao*, July 18, 1926, 14.
101. *Shenbao*, July 18, 1926, 14; July 20, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, July 20, 1926, 2.
102. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 119; pt. 2, vol. 7, 332.
103. *Shenbao*, July 23, 1926, 13; *Shibao*, July 23, 1926, 2.
104. *Shenbao*, July 23, 1926, 13. It is said that there were eleven rounds of negotiation. See *Shenbao*, July 29, 15; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 531.
105. *Shenbao*, July 23, 1926, 13; *NCDN*, July 26, 1926, 16; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 531.
106. *Shibao*, July 23, 1926, 2; *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 142.

107. For the morning shift on July 24, it is recorded that 528 of 600 workers at the No. 3 mill and 693 of 900 workers at the No. 4 mill returned to work. For the night shift, 353 of 420 at the No. 3 mill and 618 of 750 at the No. 4 mill returned to work. See *Shibao*, July 25, 1926, 2; *NCDN*, July 26, 1926, 16.
108. *Confidential No. 606*.
109. Tokihiko Mori, ed., *Zaikabō to Chūgoku shakai* (Kyōto-shi, 2005), 55.
110. *NCDN*, July 24, 1926, 12.
111. *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji*, vol. 2 (1926), 262.
112. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 173.
113. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 4, 253.
114. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 186.
115. B.Y. Lee, "Japanese Influence in China's Cotton Industry," *China Weekly Review* (January 10, 1925), 159; Kang Chao, *The Development of Cotton Textile Production in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 121.
116. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 187–88.
117. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 186, 193–94.
118. *Shangbao*, July 23, 25, 27, 28, 1926; *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 176, 193–94.
119. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 194–96.
120. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 197.
121. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 197.
122. On July 29, the strike began at mill No. 9 because the owner dismissed twenty-six workers. It involved around twenty-three hundred workers. On August 3, after a total stoppage by workers, the employer commenced a lockout. On August 14, most workers returned to work unconditionally. See *Shenbao*, August 16, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, August 5, 1926, 2; August 15, 1926, 2.
123. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 194–99.
124. *The China Year Book, 1928*, 974; FO 228/3291, Shanghai Intelligence Report. April–September 1926 (October 9, 1926). There are many reports about the Chen incident at that time. See *Shibao*, August 7, 10, 12, 13, 1926, 2; *Shenbao*, August 8, 1926, 13; August 9, 1926, 13; *Shishi xinbao*, August 7, 1926, 3. Two of the accused were trialed in Nagasaki, and sentenced to imprisonment for four and two years respectively. According to the court text, Chen stole a watch from the crew's quarters. He was imprisoned by the crew, and died of suffocation after being bound and gagged. Chen's family received compensation of three thousand yuan. See *Shenbao*, December 26, 1926, 10; December 27, 1926, 10.
125. *Shenbao*, August 9, 1926, 15; August 19, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, August 13, 1926, 2; *NCDN*, 21 August 21, 1926, 11.
126. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 238.
127. *NCDN*, August 14, 1926, 12; *Shenbao*, August 14, 1926, 13; *Shibao*, August 14, 1926, 2; SMP intelligence shows that there were two demonstrations, which occurred at 4:45 and 5:30 a.m. respectively. See *SMP Daily Report*, August 13, 1926.
128. *Shibao*, August 17, 1926, 2, *Shenbao*, August 18, 1926, 13; *NCDN*, August 17, 1926, 12.
129. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 264.
130. *Shenbao*, August 18, 1926, 13.
131. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 470–71.
132. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 275–76.
133. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 280.
134. *NCDN*, August 24, 1926, 12.
135. *Shenbao*, August 21, 22, 23, 1926, 13; *Shibao*, August 21, 22, 1926, 2; *NCDN*, August 23, 1926, 15; August 24, 1926, 12.
136. According to press reports, the attendees numbered 6,500 and 7,000 respectively. In the Shanghai Municipal Police report, the figure was around 3,000 from 12:00 to 14:30; from 14:30 to 16:00, the number dropped to around 350. The report reveals that there was another public speech from 22:00 to 23:30 at Tanziwan, which around 600 cotton mill workers attended. See *Shenbao*, August 21, 1926, 13; *Shibao*, August 21, 1926, 2; *SMP Daily Report*, August 21, 1926.
137. *SHWJ*, pt. 2 vol. 3, 299. Some contemporary press noted that "the strikes are almost entirely an anti-Japanese affairs." See *NCDN*, August 23, 1926, 15.
138. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 278, 290, 316; *NCDN*, August 25, 1926, 12; September 1, 1926, 12; September 2, 1926, 14; September 18, 1926, 12.

139. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 303; *Shibao*, August 23, 1926, 2; *Shenbao*, August 25, 1926, 15; NCDN, August 25, 1926, 15.
140. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 303.
141. *Shenbao*, August 27, 1926, 13.
142. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 320.
143. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 320.
144. The SMP daily report records that at 21:00 on August 28, the FSA held a meeting including six workers, and passed several points, requesting that the NWK solve the Chen Atang incident as soon as possible; improve the treatment of workers, increase workers' salaries, re-hire dismissed workers; and compensate the workers for the income lost during the strike. The FSA also decided to ask if the Japanese employers would like to accept FSA mediation in the matter. See *SMP Daily Report*, August 30, 1926.
145. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 319.
146. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 340–49.
147. The conditions included: a 10 percent wage increase; recognition of labor union representatives; improvement in the treatment of workers, with no police or hooligans beating workers, and no fines or insults; re-employment of some of the dismissed workers, no more willful dismissal of workers, and payment of a fifty yuan allowance to the dismissed and arrested; and payment of 2 yuan to each worker as a wage for the duration of the strike. See *Shenbao*, August 31, 1926, 14.
148. *Shibao*, August 31, 1926, 2.
149. *Shenbao*, September 1, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, September 1, 1926, 2.
150. *Shenbao*, August 23, 27, 1926, 13; August 29, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, September 4, 1926, 2; NCDN, September 1926, 3, 14.
151. NCDN, September 2, 1926, 14.
152. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 344–45.
153. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 360–62, 366, 370.
154. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 396.
155. *Shibao*, September 14, 1926, 2; NCDN, September 15, 1926, 12.
156. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 409; *Shenbao*, September 15, 1926, 13.
157. *Shenbao*, September 15, 1926, 13; *Shishi xinbao*, 15 September 1926, 3.
158. *Shibao*, September 17, 1926, 2; *Shenbao*, September 17, 1926, 10; September 18, 1926, 14; NCDN, September 17, 1926, 14.
159. *Shenbao*, September 18, 1926, 14; *Shibao*, September 18, 1926, 2.
160. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 4, 487; pt. 2, vol. 7, 394.
161. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 562.
162. *Shanghai fangzhi gongren yundongshi*, 474; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 10, 383.
163. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 406.
164. "Revised Statistic of Labour Movements in Shanghai (1 October 1926)," *SMP Files*, I. O. 7317; *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 423.
165. Some sources, such as Japanese consular correspondence, show that a few Japanese employers in July were not unwilling to resume operations; see *Confidential No. 606*. In addition, as some Communist leaders observed, there were different attitudes to the lockout from different levels of NWK, in which the higher levels were more insistent on crushing the strike through protracted countermeasures. See *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 317.
166. *Shibao*, September 11, 2; *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 396.
167. M. L. Titarenko et al., *VKP(B), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitaie, Dokumenty* (RCP[B], the Comintern and the National-Revolutionary Movement in China, Documents), vol. 2: 1926–1927, pt. 1 (Moscow, 1996), 444. (Hereafter *VKP(B), Komintern*).
168. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 7, 326. Voitinsky reported to Moscow that "the political slogans against the killing of the Chinese on the Japanese vessel did not conform to the actual situation." See *VKP(B), Komintern*, 444.
169. Wang was dissatisfied with his colleagues' tough attitude to workers after the latter committed arson at NWK No. 4 mill. Wang requested his colleagues be polite to workers in future matters. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 171.
170. Wang acknowledged that he was "a radical" at the meeting held on September 20, 1926 to conclude and critique the strike at the Japanese mills. See *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 3, 466.
171. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses*, 268.

172. The report by the Comintern mentioned the 1926 summer strike, noting that “hometown association played a noticeable and harmful role in the labour movement.” The Shanghai Communist leaders sensed the difficulty of organizing those workers who were “accustomed to old relations like gangs, brotherhood, and countrymen etc.” See M. L. Titarenko et al., *VKP(B), Komintern i Sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitaie, Dokumenty*, vol. 3: 1927–1931, pt. 1 (Moscow, 1999), 262; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 500.

173. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 4, 30, 32, 40–41, 44, 500. In fact, in July 1926, the CCP Central Committee requested the Shanghai Communist Party dispatch members to gangs to build relations, cementing the Communist organization as well as decreasing the degree of damage to the CCP’s cause. The GLU also entertained detectives and gangs in Xiaoshadu to gain their cooperation and assistance. See *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji*, vol. 2 (1926), 262; *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 3, 472.

174. *SHWJ*, pt. 2, vol. 2, 333.

175. Dirlik, “Beyond Chesnaux,” 79.

176. *Shenbao*, August 18, 1926, 13.

177. *SHWJ*, pt. 1, vol. 10, 184; pt. 2, vol. 3, 299.