

**Love Your Country on Nanjing Road:  
the British and the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai**

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## ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of my research is to analyse the development of British reactions to and perceptions of the May Fourth Movement manifestations, especially in Shanghai during late 1910's and early 1920's. The aim is to study what kind of implications the British attitudes and reactions had on the development of the May Fourth Movement. Or in other words, the purpose is to identify the various forms of May Fourth activities that resulted from the foreigners' operations and so to determine the extent of the British influence on the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai.

By researching the British reactions, the objective is to explore more profoundly their political, economic and cultural hegemony in Shanghai. The three major British groups that are researched here are the governmental and municipal officials, the business community and the missionaries.

While I agree with earlier researchers' emphasis on both the ideological and political causes of the Movement and the need for China's democratic liberation, we also need to take account of power relationships between the foreign and Chinese communities. Hence, another purpose of the study is to assess Chinese May Fourth protagonists' activities in relation to the Shanghai foreign community. Accordingly, the focus is also on the dynamics of interaction between the British and Chinese and its impact on the development of the May Fourth Movement.

The fundamental hypothesis is that the British reactions affected developments of the May Fourth Movement activities in Shanghai. When elaborated further, this assumption proposes that the contemporary British actions had a certain influence on a subsequent new wave of Chinese anti-foreign and anti-Christian movements. This approach supports the hypothesis that the succeeding outbreak of radical Chinese nationalism was partly influenced by the British reactions to the May Fourth Movement.

This research is based on previously closed materials held in the Shanghai Municipal Archives and they are supplemented with sources from British Archives. These include the Jardine, Matheson & Company materials, especially its vast twentieth century correspondence and access to this material was not available until very recently.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AASU	Amalgamated Association of Street Unions
BAT	British American Tobacco Company
BCC	British and Chinese Corporation
BChC	British Chamber of Commerce
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CA	China Association
CIM	China Inland Mission
CMC	Chinese Maritime Customs
CMS	China Missionary Society
HSBC	Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
Jardines	Jardine, Matheson & Co.
LMS	London Missionary Society
<i>NCDN</i>	<i>North China Daily News</i>
<i>NCH</i>	<i>North China Herald</i>
PCE	Presbyterian Church of England
SGCC	Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce
SMC, Council	Shanghai Municipal Council
SMP	Shanghai Municipal Police
SSU	Shanghai Student Union
SVC	Shanghai Volunteer Corps
TACC	Tianjin Anglo-Chinese College
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## MAPS

1. Map of Shanghai in about 1920's.      page 10
2. Map of China in about 1920's.      page 35

## 1. INTRODUCTION

By the evening of June 5, 1919, Shanghai students had succeeded in launching an unprecedented strike which within hours paralysed almost all parts of the city. The protests in Beijing in response to the international policies and domestic misconduct had, a month earlier, opened an avenue for modern Chinese activists to express their nationalist sentiments. In turn, the disappointing failure to influence the central government's policies had marked the initial May Fourth events in Beijing. Therefore, after weeks of demonstrations in response to the denunciation by the fellow students in the north, the Shanghai May Fourth protagonists now attempted to freeze all business transactions. In contrast to May Fourth activities elsewhere, the Shanghai May Fourth demonstrators' radical decision to initiate commercial strike had encouraged merchants and workers to join, which resulted in forcing the humiliated Chinese regime to consent to the protestors' demands.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Shanghai was an industrial and commercial as well as an educational centre and this broad social and economic transformation had influenced the kinds of collective action through which different groups demanded justice. Given its politically changing and progressive atmosphere, Shanghai was unavoidably closely associated with virtually all the upheavals which China had experienced during its modern history. It was not surprising therefore that the May Fourth Movement also flourished in the city. Foreigners were generally reluctant to get involved with politically motivated strikes, boycotts and demonstrations, but this time, 'the Spirit of Shanghai' absorbed all the Shanghai communities in the struggle for the Chinese rights and principles. The three administratively contrasting areas of the International

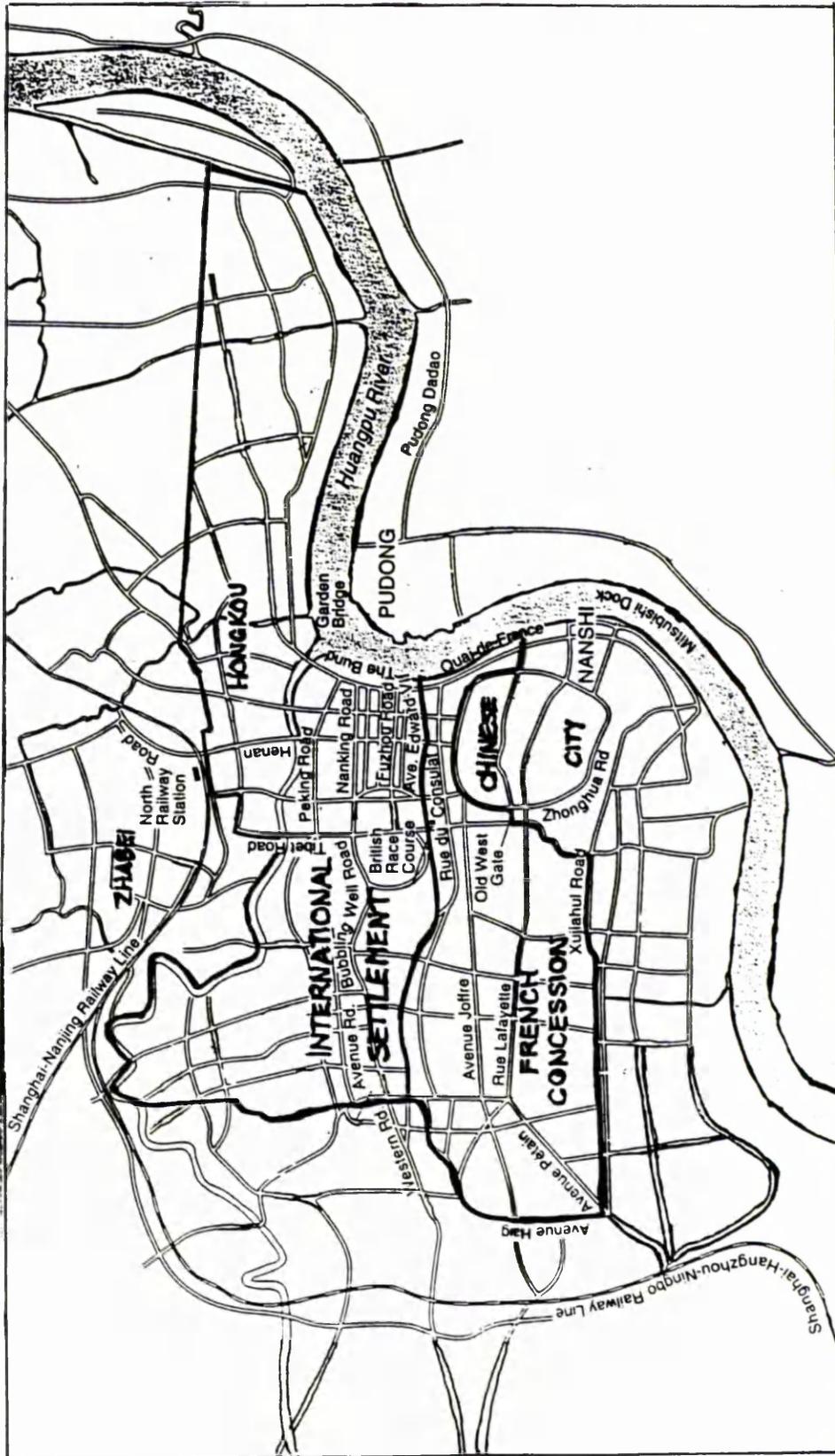
Settlement, French Concession and Chinese city (Map 1, p. 10) were momentarily involved in the May Fourth protestors' patriotic regime. The Chinese and foreigners alike soon acquired their first experience in urban mass mobilisation through the implementation of the May Fourth ideology into activist movement.

### **1.1. Research aims, questions, hypothesis**

The primary purpose of my research is to analyse the development of British reactions to and perceptions of the May Fourth Movement and its manifestations, especially in Shanghai during late 1910's and early 1920's. The aim is to examine the implications British attitudes and reactions had to the subsequent development of the May Fourth Movement. In other words, the research seeks to identify the various forms of May Fourth activities which resulted from the foreigners' operations and to determine the extent of the foreigners' and particularly the British influence on the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai<sup>1</sup>. Another important purpose of the study is to assess Chinese May Fourth protagonists' activities in relation to the Shanghai foreign community particularly in the International Settlement. Accordingly, the work will also address the dynamics of interaction between the British and Chinese and the impact of this interaction on the development of the May Fourth Movement. Furthermore, this thesis is an initial attempt to analyse the experiences of British expatriates in Shanghai during the

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<sup>1</sup> In early 1920's Shanghai was populated by numerous nationalities and although the British residents were politically influential, the Japanese and the Russians formed the largest foreign groups, as will be discussed later in detail. See Albert Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Ann Arbor, 1976), pp. 5-18.



Map of Shanghai in about 1920's.

May Fourth era, and will determine the impact of the May Fourth Movement on the British hegemony and the British relationship with the Chinese residents.

While I agree with earlier researchers' concentration on both the ideological and political aspects which instigated the May Fourth Movement and the emergence of China's democratic liberation<sup>2</sup>, especially in Shanghai, I also need to take account of power relationships between the foreign and Chinese communities. Only by inscribing the analysis of the May Fourth Movement discourse in a structure of power relations in the International Settlement can we understand why the Movement developed considerably different symbolic practices and concrete actions in Shanghai. For this reason, foreigners' May Fourth experience deserves careful scholarly treatment.

The recent tendency to understand the May Fourth Movement conventionally has been to classify it as either "the Enlightened", "the Patriotic and Democratic" or "the Revolutionary May Fourth Movement". Furthermore, it has concentrated on events in Beijing, as Jeffrey Wasserstrom has pointed out. More notably, Wasserstrom has urged scholars to challenge and question this oversimplified picture of the Movement.<sup>3</sup> The problem with other May Fourth analyses lies not in what academics have included, but in what they have left out. Indeed, categorising the Movement in this manner does not explain the activities in other cities or in rural areas nor does it explore the foreigners' profound impact on the events. Important exceptions from the prevailing discourse are

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<sup>2</sup> Tse-tsung Chow, *May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, (Oxford, 1989); Yüsheng Lin, *Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth era*, (Wisconsin, 1979); Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, (Berkeley, 1986); Benjamin I. Schwartz, ed., *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).

<sup>3</sup> I am very grateful to Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom for allowing me to use his paper in this research. Cited with author's permission, Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "The Missing May 4ths", pp. 1-6, unpublished, paper

Joseph Chen's in-depth research of the May Fourth Movement in the Chinese city of Shanghai and Wen-hsin Yeh's concise study on the May Fourth activities in Hangzhou and its surrounding areas in Zhejiang province.<sup>4</sup> Given the remarkably broad participation in the May Fourth boycotts and strikes around the country, wider geographic and demographic research is required in order to understand the multi-faced national movement that swept across China at the end of 1910's and at the beginning of the 1920's. Therefore, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of the May Fourth era and provide new perspectives along with the conventional picture of the Movement, and moreover, to explore some unanswered questions related to the Movement activities.

In order to accomplish this task we may ask the following questions. How did the British react to the May Fourth Movement? What methods were used to interpret the Movement and why? How did the observations reflect or diverge from reality? In what ways did British reactions affect the development of the May Fourth Movement? What implications did the Movement have on British existence in the country? This study will attempt to address these questions by using insights from literary criticism, sociology, social psychology, international politics and history. The methodology employed in the research is critically narrative, but it also examines the May Fourth Movement as the British experienced and interpreted it. Thus, the study will explore the British May Fourth experiences through the British political culture that predominated in Shanghai.

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presented at the May Fourth Movement Conference, Beijing, 1999. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in China: The View from Shanghai*, (Stanford, 1991), pp. 51-71.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, (Leiden, 1971), *passim*; Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space and the Origins of Chinese Communism*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1996), pp. 147-173.

We cannot however understand a nation-wide movement in any given city or town in purely local terms, since 'the Spirit of Shanghai' encouraged and empowered those in rural areas and other cities to join the Movement. In turn the knowledge that thousands of May Fourth protestors were active elsewhere strengthened the protests in the International Settlement. As a result, although Shanghai and its International Settlement are the geographic focus of this study, the British and Chinese interactions outside the area will be also discussed.

The fundamental hypothesis is that British reactions affected developments of the May Fourth Movement activities in Shanghai. When examined further, this assumption proposes that the contemporary British actions had a certain influence on a subsequent new wave of Chinese anti-foreign and anti-Christian movements. This approach supports the hypothesis that the following outbreak of radical Chinese nationalism was partly influenced by the British reactions to the May Fourth Movement.

### **The British as observers**

The British position as observers and commentators of the Chinese national movement included various dimensions of colonial encounters that were interpreted in correspondence, articles and reports. The British expatriates' three-fold identities which consisted of local, British and imperial identity, as aptly described by Robert Bickers, were undoubtedly reflected in propaganda materials and policies directed at the May Fourth demonstrators<sup>5</sup>. It should, however, be pointed out that personal May Fourth

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<sup>5</sup> British local identity was reflected first and foremost in Shanghai politics, whereas 'Britishness' defined people as a part of the nation. Imperial identity dominated the understanding of the Great Britain's position

experiences were to a large extent echoed not only in private correspondence but also in public utterances. A closer look at the British individual May Fourth experiences, as illustrated in the chapters by the few examples of personal profiles, will appropriately demonstrate the variety of expressed interpretations.

The imperialist discourse and Western writers' construction of the non-Western world has attracted a wide interest across academic fields and although it has not been the primary focus of this research, it has been included in the various research approaches operating in the framework of this study.<sup>6</sup> While recognising that British imperial discourse included coloured perceptions, it, simultaneously interpreted an objective reality of those observed, and transmitted a complex transaction between the observer and the observed as historian Nicholas J. Clifford has recently argued.<sup>7</sup> In other words, as Jonathan D. Spence proposes, "the sightings of China" were expressed by the foreigners who not only criticised it, but also regularly contradicted their own judgements, and as a result, often expressed respect and understanding towards the society.<sup>8</sup> Related to the foreigners profound need to "understand the Chinese society", Joshua A. Fogel illustrates

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as the world's greatest colonial power. For more insightful discussion of the evolution of three-fold British identity in China see Robert A. Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism 1900-1949*, (Manchester, 1999), pp. 68-108; Robert A. Bickers, "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937", *Past and Present*, no 159, 1998, pp. 161-211.

<sup>6</sup> Simon Gikandi's work evaluates the colonial texts as tools to impose rule and governance. Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, (New York, 1996), *passim*.; David Spurr establishes extensive list of twelve rhetorical modes of writing about non-Western people. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, (Durham, 1993), pp. 13-201. For in-depth analysis of 'informal empire' or 'semi-colonialism' in China see Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Semi-colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth-Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis', in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, (London, 1986), pp. 290-314; Martyn Atkins, *Informal Empire in Crisis: British Diplomacy and the Chinese Customs Succession 1927-1929*, (New York, 1995), pp. 1-15.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas J. Clifford, *"A Truthful Impression of the Country": British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949*, (Ann Arbor, 2001), pp. 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds*, (New York, 1998), pp. xii-xviii.

that travellers frequently justified the journeys by insisting that their primary agenda was to comprehend the country. Emphasising the foreigners' tendency to 'domesticate the world outside of their own' by classifying it by certain types of generalisations and terminology, Fogel highlights the importance of familiarising the alien society to enable an understanding of it.<sup>9</sup> Although Spence and Fogel refer specifically to travellers, the method to understanding China, as they define it, is applicable to foreigners living in any non-Western country.

According to Urs Bitterli, the encounters between different cultures are defined through phenomenology of the encounter where the personal experience is constructed from contemporary documents which are perceived within the current socio-economic and political context. In addition, the encounter is an intellectual reflection that in written forms interprets the contacts between members of two cultures, and therefore, literature, historiography, articles or travel accounts are relevant examples of this encounter.<sup>10</sup> The encounter is a situation that literature critic Marie Louise Pratt classifies as the 'contact zone' or a space between previously geographically and historically separated people whose life spans now establish ongoing relations and create interaction that remould both sides. Her definition emphasises the interrelated co-presence of people rather than underlining separateness of the different groups of people.<sup>11</sup> The International Settlement was transferred into a unique contact zone where the May Fourth Movement incidents unexpectedly connected Chinese and foreigners, and therefore, it is this particular

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<sup>9</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862-1945*, (Stanford, California, 1996), pp. xiii-xvi, 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Urs Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800*, (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 2,4, 133-153.

<sup>11</sup> Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London, 1992), pp. 6-7.

interaction that profoundly moulded not only the Movement but also the entire society during the 1920's. Even though the British and the Chinese had previously lived in close proximity to each other, their cultural and socio-political encounter had been almost non-existent. Hence, co-operation and communication between Chinese and foreigners was minimal. The May Fourth incidents, however, established shared experiences that affected the whole community in the International Settlement and forced the foreigners to communicate with Chinese protestors.

Hence, a colourful spectre of British observations interpreted imperialist or colonialist expressions of surrounding society that reflected their preconceived moral, theological and cultural principles. According to Quentin Skinner's evaluation, in a broader sense prevailing conditions and ideologies have to be profoundly considered and he concludes that when studying any given text, it is essential to recognise existing general conventions behind an author's intentions in order to be able to interpret the meaning of the text that the person has produced<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, Guanhua Wang contends that the conventional ideologies that are expressed in texts should be understood through an 'interpretative framework' as he calls it. Here he emphasises the importance of recognising contemporary intellectual trends that had an effect on the writings.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the British accounts did not necessarily represent an unmediated reflection of reality. On the other hand, the Chinese accounts evaluated in previous research interpreted one side of the May Fourth reality that included the Chinese

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<sup>12</sup> Quentin Skinner, 'Motives, intentions and the interpretation of texts' in D. Newton de Molina (ed.), *On Literary Intention*, (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 210-221.

<sup>13</sup> Guanhua Wang, *In Search for Justice: The 1905-1906 Chinese Anti-American Boycott*, (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp. 144-145.

version of it<sup>14</sup>. The British people, however, personally experienced the events and derived authority from direct encounters with real incidents. Hence, they produced a vast amount of firsthand information about the unfolding May Fourth incidents, which provides another perspective of the whole Movement.

Although biased and coloured with prejudices, values and ideologies, British experiences interpreted their encounters with current events, and their experiences as such provide valuable information about the May Fourth Movement. Indeed, Paul Cohen argues that in 'lived past', that is, in the pasts of people who have directly participated in the making of it, people have a profound need to understand and define their experiences. This narrative function of the experienced past produced the British version of May Fourth rhetoric that was constantly reconstructed as the Movement proceeded. Cohen further illustrates that when experience is conceived as a "text" and the person living it as a "reader", different readers will construct the text in different ways according to their values, beliefs and myths they bring with them to the reading.<sup>15</sup> The British formed the May Fourth discourse that emerged and expressed their common Christian, British and Western values. Moreover, they revealed and formed shared expectations on how to react towards the Movement. Thus, the May Fourth discussions also created implicit collective rules for the British communal behaviour. This cohesion within the British community included shared attitudes towards politics as an activity, and it also included the constant repetition of key words and principles. However, assuming we can talk of a collective group experience, no two British groups experienced the May Fourth Movement exactly

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<sup>14</sup> Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*; Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*.

<sup>15</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys- the Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth*, (New York, 1997), pp. 5, 61-62, 91.

in the same way.<sup>16</sup> When analysing research materials the focus is on establishing the British experience, with a special aim of evaluating the unity among these experiences. I will highlight also the disparities in these experiences. For their part, the Chinese continued to create *their* May Fourth experience which partly reflected British observations, while simultaneously having a profound effect on the foreigners' existence and thinking.

Theories from international politics provide an appropriate framework to observe the British belief systems and their effect on decision-making behaviour. The belief system reflects various social, class and ethnic oriented presumptions that are introduced in international relations, and therefore, they constantly mould and constrain policy choices. Steve Smith argues that focusing on the belief systems is useful when studying policy decisions, for example, in a non-routine situation or where the organisational constraints were non-existent.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that the May Fourth activities were obscure to the British community and open to various interpretations. Moreover, they were certainly not part of daily operations in the International Settlement. It has to be remembered that in reality the Shanghai Municipal Council's administration, and especially its British members, were free from many governmental or organisational restraints. Thus, in making decisions to deal with the May Fourth Movement, the British evaluated the situation through their many-sided identities, but their policies also reflected the British belief system.

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<sup>16</sup> Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 63; Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, (Berkeley, 1984), pp. 13-14, 63; Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Smith, "Belief Systems and the Study of International Relations", in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds.), *Belief System and International Relations*, (Oxford, 1988), pp. 32-35.

The British identities, the belief system and personal experiences in the Settlement formed a framework in which the May Fourth observations were embedded, but in order to understand British propaganda's influence on the Movement, it is crucial to identify British rhetoric with regard to the May Fourth Movement. It is, however, an oversimplification to suggest that the language used reflected only this framework, as their multiple political, economic and religious interests were also interpreted in the language. Hence, looking at the British manifestos we need to analyse the authorised language that they have created and utilised to communicate their objectives and interests during the May Fourth period. The language was a part of an activity in which the British attempted to define the May Fourth Movement and to control the other community members and their understanding of it. Moreover, the language provided tools to mythologise the May Fourth events and legitimise the British actions. Finally, it also characterised the British expatriate society and ultimately provided an authority to execute its policies in the society.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defines discourse of authority or authorised language as a symbolic power that is exercised in order to acquire more concrete domination. According to Bourdieu's theory, the symbolic power is a linguistically expressed 'invisible' power, which is 'misrecognised' as such, and therefore, it is 'recognised' as legitimate. This, he says, as a condition of its success requires that those subjected to it believe in the legitimacy of power and the legitimacy of those who wield it. Hegemony is in some sense conferred by those who obey it, and authorised language is a relevant example of it. The notion of authorised language includes sets of generally accepted forms that describe, for example, a person's style to perform, his status and mode of

address, and thus, by fulfilling these requirements his utterances are legitimised. Bourdieu argues that "the symbolic power - as a power of constituting is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced".<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu continues the discussion on how to implement the symbolic power in society in order to sustain domination<sup>19</sup> and again his analysis is relevant when observing the British society in the International Settlement, since the British society in Shanghai as a whole created and recreated the May Fourth rhetoric which was established to maintain the existing socio-political order in the International Settlement. Such a textual embodiment of authority served particular group interests, which they tend to present as universal interests and should be shared by the people in the entire International Settlement

Therefore, the governing British expatriates contributed to the fictitious integration of the dominant class of foreigners by providing a worldview that defined their existence and that of the May Fourth Movement. In the hope to receive general support for decisions, this discourse was obviously directed at all Settlement residents. Overall, this rhetoric was designed to answer questions such as, what was the May Fourth Movement. Why was it initiated and what kind of effect would it have on British life in China? The last question in particular, appeared to present the most tangible problem to the foreign society. In addition, different subcultures of missionaries, businessmen and officials within the British community introduced the May Fourth discourse which emphasised their own particular principles and served their interests in the country.

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<sup>18</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 23, 107-116, 163-170; Ivan Snook, 'Language, Truth and Power: Bourdieu's Ministerium', in Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes (eds.), *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*, (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 160-179.

<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, pp. 23-24.

In this context, it is important to briefly examine the audience to whom the British directed their May Fourth rhetoric and to look at the effects they had on the produced materials and the observations interpreted by them. Three major groups to whom the May Fourth rhetoric was primarily communicated were the foreigners in Shanghai, the Chinese in the Settlement, and finally, the British in China or in Britain. The British circle appeared to represent the most important pressure group and was constantly consulted. Many propagandist writings to the foreign society in Shanghai were aimed firstly, to unify the opinions towards the Movement and secondly, to receive a formal acceptance of the policies to constrain the Movement. The British correspondence relating to the May Fourth activities was sometimes ambiguous and therefore, it was difficult to determine whether the text was an expression of an individual writer, the voice of institutional authority or an interpretation of cultural ideology. In many cases the text contained all of these things, often simultaneously.

Obviously official reports to other officials merely reflected British governmental or local policies, but fortunately, some private and personal correspondence elucidates views behind the official narratives. Similarly, the commercial community frequently censored their personal perceptions in the business reports that were distributed to London and around companies' local branches in China, but again available private letters have provided intriguing perceptions that were concealed from the public. It is also evident that the missionaries' published correspondence such as articles, books and travel letters did not necessarily represent their genuine perceptions about Chinese people and society. Authors regularly hide their own views, and moreover, the missionary officials at the headquarters in London carefully censored the most radical opinions before

publication<sup>20</sup>. In all, critical analysis and careful comparison of the materials and cross-checking the given information by using various types of sources has been, in this work, an essential basis for researching the May Fourth fringe areas and the foreigners' involvement in the development of the Movement.

British May Fourth rhetoric was expressed also in divergent policies that were implemented during and after the summer 1919. These manifestos included definite attempts to legitimise the British position in the international community and in the whole of China. In addition, uncontrollable stories, rumours and gossips tended to change and multiply the May Fourth discourse as the communication was never entirely within British control. According to Clay Ramsay, rumours are features of social construction of reality that require the shared mentality of the community in which they are circulated. He adds that rumours regularly act as a 'form of news' which is transmitted, often as a response to immense changes that are threatening the society.<sup>21</sup> Ralph L. Rosnow identifies rumours as an essential part of the social process in an uncertain situation where ordinary channels of communication break down or organisational settings prevent the free circulation of information. Therefore, they reveal much about the culture where they flourish.<sup>22</sup> The fundamental socio-political insecurity of the May Fourth era characterised British and Chinese interaction and produced a vast array of rumours and hearsay in order to explain the situation and also to relieve the racial and political tensions in the community. Undoubtedly the rumours served as a validation for the

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<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Bickers, "To Serve and not to Rule": British Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Nationalism, 1928-1931", in Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds.), *Missionary Encounters, Sources and Issues*, (Richmond, Surrey, 1996), pp. 213-214.

<sup>21</sup> Clay Ramsay, *The Ideology of the Great Fear: The Soissonnais in 1789*, (Baltimore, 1992), pp. xv-xxvii, 137.

<sup>22</sup> Ralph L. Rosnow, *Rumour and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay*, (New York, 1976), pp. 11-12, 30-31.

collective attitude or for the political course of action. In sum, British May Fourth discourse created and responded to a reality that was infinitely adaptable in its functions of preserving the basic structures of power.

### **The Chinese as observers**

To explore the interaction between the British community and the Chinese May Fourth demonstrators, it is also crucial to evaluate concisely the reasoning behind the Chinese propaganda addressed to foreigners and particularly to the British. At best, the communities shared some principle ways of observing and interpreting the situation, since groups respected some common values such as maintenance of peace and control. At the same time, both the Chinese protestors and the British were willing to attain control of May Fourth activities and distribution of propaganda. The Chinese definition of the Movement and its preliminary targets was certainly quite different to the British one. Another significant distinction between Chinese and British observations was that in as much as the foreigners participated in constructing the May Fourth Movement, their involvement did not include the Chinese cause to protest against imperialist threats from abroad and warlord corruption at home. On the contrary, the British attempted, in the first place, to control the Movement, secondly, to constrain it and finally, to suppress it completely. Officially, the British expatriates tried frequently to distance themselves from the Movement by arguing that it was China's internal affair, and thus, had nothing to do with the foreigners<sup>23</sup>. Meanwhile, the Chinese protagonists were participant-observers of

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<sup>23</sup> Public Record Office, London, [hereafter PRO], FO/228/3526/75b Sir Everard Fraser, British Consul-General in Shanghai to Sir John Jordan, British Minister in Beijing, 11 June, 1919.

the Movement. They demonstrated May Fourth principles and accordingly interpreted events differently. Virtually all power in the International Settlement was in British hands and the May Fourth demonstrators perceived it as crucial to communicate their ideals about the Movement to the authorities in order to receive general acceptance for their activities. Finally, fear of clashing with the British authorities and potential suppression of the activities naturally affected the Chinese May Fourth propaganda that was initiated in the Settlement.

On the other hand, it was apparent, from the beginning that the May Fourth activists benefited from operating under the International Settlement's protection since the foreign jurisdiction was outside the Chinese government's oppressive policies and as such was an ideal place to activate their 'progressive' ideas and actions.<sup>24</sup> There is no doubt that it was an ultimate meeting place for educational, social and political societies which had been banned in other parts of the city and in the capital.

Similar to their foreign neighbours, the Chinese demonstrators formed the May Fourth discourse by which they expressed their Movement's values in order to deal with the British particularly, and generally with the entire foreign community in Shanghai. The established rhetoric was carefully constructed from various Chinese and Western elements and it was interpreted through the 'interpretative framework'. Besides the prevalent local and national identities, May Fourth propaganda expressed certain class-related identities. Marie-Claire Bergère has illustrated the emergence of the new urban élite and their attempt to challenge traditional political and social structures in order to modernise China. It was inevitable that the May Fourth ideologies, as they began to

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<sup>24</sup> Nicholas R. Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920's*, (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1991), pp. 17-21.

express their national sentiments, activated the radical section of the bourgeoisie. The May Fourth activities triggered the formation of political consciousness among the new élite who wanted a more powerful position in the International Settlement's administration.<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese May Fourth rhetoric was established firstly, to advocate the Chinese constituency and secondly, to convince the Westerners of their ideological seriousness. Given the remarkably broad participation in the Movement, it is unreasonable to assume that the participants were all inspired by a single ideology. Foreign manifestos and concepts were adopted at least from socialism<sup>26</sup>, anarchism<sup>27</sup>, Darwinism<sup>28</sup>, Marxism<sup>29</sup>, Communism<sup>30</sup>, Bolshevism<sup>31</sup>, liberalism<sup>32</sup>; and these new interpretative schemes were frequently expressed in conjunction with the rejection of traditional Chinese values<sup>33</sup>. It is indisputable that the May Fourth rhetoric always contained contradictory elements. On the one hand it provoked a profound critique of traditional Chinese culture and on the other hand it advocated radical Chinese nationalism. At that time Chinese modernisation was believed to be achievable by adopting particular Western doctrines. Yet, anti-

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<sup>25</sup> Marie-Claire Bergère, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie 1911-1937*, (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 209-217; Wang, *In Search for Justice*, pp. 4-7, 144-145. For more extensive discussion about Chinese Shanghai identities in modern times see Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Michael Y.L. Luk, *The Origins of Chinese Bolshevism: An Ideology in the Making, 1920-1928*, (New York, 1990), pp. 21-22, 33-34.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labour Movement 1919-1927*, (Stanford, 1968), p. 136; Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 148-196.

<sup>28</sup> Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 293-296.

<sup>29</sup> Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949*, (Stanford, 1971), pp. 36, 43-51; Yves Chevrier, "Utopian Marxism: "Populist Strains" and Conceptual Growth Pains in Early Chinese Communism, 1920-1922", in Yu-ming Shaw (ed.), *Reform and Revolution in Twentieth Century China*, (Taipei, 1987), pp. 33-39; Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: The Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937*, (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 20-46.

<sup>30</sup> Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 119.

<sup>32</sup> John Fitzgerald, *Awakening of China: Politics, Culture and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*, (Stanford, 1996), pp. 153-154.

<sup>33</sup> Lin, *The Crises of Chinese Consciousness*, pp. 6-9, 56-57, 63-81.

imperialist feeling was already condemning Japanese politics and the Versailles peace settlement had undoubtedly increased Chinese reservations towards the Westerners' policies in China. However contradictory the objectives were, the radical nationalism urgently demanded change. The strong articulation of these ideals for the foreign audience had a profound impact on the development of May Fourth ideologies. In many cases, the Chinese intellectuals which included both students and teachers, were the major advocates of the May Fourth ideas to the foreigners. This May Fourth discourse dominated intellectual discussions during the Movement.

### **The May Fourth Movement**

Sidney Tarrow appropriately defines the movement in general as a collective challenge by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with the élite, opponents and authorities.<sup>34</sup> In some cases, the relevant experience of united labour strikes had been acquired in Europe when the Chinese workers were sent to work in the factories to replace the fighting labour force during the first World War. Apparently the Chinese workers were actively involved in the strikes.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the May Fourth Movement presented a challenge for Chinese society to recognise their common interests and to translate them into collective action. As it turned out, the magnitude of activities was comparable to no other modern time movement.

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<sup>34</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social movements, collective action and politics*, (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 3-4. For the recent study of the May Fourth activities as a socio-political mass movement see Rudolf G. Wagner, "The Canonisation of May Fourth", in Milena Dolezelová-Velingerová and Oldrich Král (eds.), *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp. 66-120.

<sup>35</sup> Elisabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labour*, (Stanford, California, 1993), pp. 71-72.

Since general May Fourth history has already been thoroughly researched by many accomplished scholars, in this study it is necessary only to summarise the events.<sup>36</sup> The opening of the Versailles Peace Conference in the spring 1919 to end the World War had reactivated the patriotic spirit among the Chinese intelligentsia. As the result of secret treaties that were made during the war between Japan and Western countries, it was decided to cede the former German areas in the Shandong peninsula to China's archenemy Japan.<sup>37</sup> From the Chinese perspective the refusal to respect China's sovereignty was a complete betrayal of 'Wilsonian principles'<sup>38</sup> and it infuriated already disappointed young Chinese intellectuals. Thus, international politics in Europe intensified Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment. Back in China it was disillusionment with the political disintegration of warlord China that reflected weakened state authority. Finally, the pro-Japanese ministers in the Chinese central government and their perceived "betrayal of the country" to the hands of Japanese militarists, activated the students for the May Fourth protests. At this moment, the ingredients for the radical movement were visible and international and domestic politics prompted the May Fourth Incident in Beijing. The students' operations in the capital formed a precedent that was successfully

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<sup>36</sup> For a classic study on the May Fourth Movement see Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*. Schwarcz has illustrated the development of May Fourth ideologies in *The Chinese Enlightenment* and Lin has in his book *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* explored the historical ideological tendencies that defined the Movement. The Shanghai Movement has been carefully constructed by Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*. For a collection of articles discussing on different aspects of the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement see Benjamin I. Schwartz (ed.), *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972). Latest addition to the May Fourth discussion is the collection of essays in Milena Dolezelová-Velingerová and Oldrich Král (eds.), *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, (Cambridge, Mass., 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Chinese and British post-war relations and governmental policies are well assessed in Yungjin Zhang, *China in the International System, 1918-1920: The Middle Kingdom at the Periphery*, (London, 1991). For a survey of the British policies with China during the World War see Philip A. Jones, *Britain's Search for Chinese Cooperation in the First World War*, (London, 1986).

<sup>38</sup> President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points were formed to support post-war sentiments of nationalism and democracy. His programme included policies such as abolition of secret diplomacy, the guaranty of small countries' political independence and national self-determination.

implemented around China. The emerging political and social awareness was mixed with radical nationalism, and as a result, it stimulated expansive protests which changed the political culture and practice of student and established élite groups.

The May Fourth Movement's ideological origins were closely linked with the New Culture Movement<sup>39</sup> which had developed by the mid-1910's among the Chinese intelligentsia. The New Culture Movement extended and popularised a socially critical outlook and added to the urge of intellectuals exploring iconoclastic foreign "isms". The World War and the disillusioning outcome of the peacemaking had stirred people to a consciousness of China's vulnerability and to the urgency of action to bring it out of its backwardness. However, various distinctive features of the movements separated them. The latter was more ideologically cultural, non-political and intellectual, whereas the May Fourth Movement was born to protest against global politics in Versailles. Furthermore, at least in Shanghai, it activated all classes of Chinese society.

Tse-tsung Chow's extensive work on the May Fourth Movement emphasises the importance of foreign influence upon the developments of the Movement. However, his central object is to construct a broad analysis of Chinese social, political and cultural aspects of the incident itself. Furthermore, Chow's concise analysis of the foreigners' effect on the events includes some incorrect information.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to Chow's

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<sup>39</sup> The New Culture Movement was initiated among the Chinese intelligentsia in 1915 to promote literary reform and to stress self-transformation of the nation and its intelligentsia by rejecting the traditional Confucian principles and emphasising the Western ideologies. For more detailed analysis on the New Culture Movement and its relation with the May Fourth Movement see Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 6- 25; Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 41-83. Charlotte Furth has pointed out certain other historical precedents for the May Fourth ideas and activities during the last decade of the Qing dynasty; see Charlotte Furth, "May Fourth in History", in Schwartz (ed.), *Reflections on the May Fourth*, pp. 59- 68.

<sup>40</sup> For Chow's analyses of foreign attitudes see Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 197-214. On page p. 205 Chow argues that "a number of Chinese workers and merchants were killed and wounded by the municipal police in the street fighting". Chow's arguments are based primarily on either American secondary sources or Chinese publications, which particularly interpreted the incidents to support the

approach, Joseph Chen underlines the differences between the Beijing and Shanghai May Fourth Movements. He bases his arguments on dissimilarities in demographic, social and economic structures of Beijing and Shanghai respectively, and thus, the May Fourth Movement developed differently in both cities. Shanghai was a more modern, Western-oriented treaty port with influential international communities, and it had vital elements of commercialism and industrialism.<sup>41</sup> Yet, Chen ignores almost completely the foreigners' influence on the development of the Movement. However, as will be discussed in the following chapters, various May Fourth activities were possible only because of the existence of foreign enclaves and inevitably the foreigners' policies had a profound effect on the Movement.

Indeed, in Shanghai the students were able to escape the Chinese government's suppressive measures by establishing offices and publishing houses inside the foreign-administered areas. Due to poor co-operation between the International Settlement and the French Concession, prohibition in one area would not interrupt the operations in another. The students just simply crossed the border.<sup>42</sup> A particular feature of the Shanghai May Fourth Movement was that it included various sections of Chinese society compared with Beijing's predominately intelligentsia-led movement. In contrast, the students, merchants and workers were able to organise a week's general strike from June 5-12, 1919, which paralysed the whole commercial city of Shanghai, an occurrence that never happened in the capital.

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Chinese nationalist cause. According to the Shanghai Municipal Police records, one Chinese died and nine were wounded. The Shanghai Municipal Archives, Shanghai [hereafter SMA], U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Headquarters, Central Register, Captain Superintendent of Police, K.J. McEuen to Fraser, 14 June, 1919.

<sup>41</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement In Shanghai*, pp. 1-3.

The May Fourth Movement of 1919 has, in retrospect, been perceived as the core of anti-Christian and anti-foreign movements<sup>43</sup>, and as the beginning of women's emancipation<sup>44</sup>, and radical nationalism<sup>45</sup>. It is also said to have provided the ideological basis of the Chinese Communist Party<sup>46</sup>. The Movement is also continuously referred to when explaining the backgrounds of the great Chinese movements during the twentieth century, for example, the Hundred Flowers Campaign<sup>47</sup>, the Cultural Revolution<sup>48</sup> and the Tiananmen Square Democracy Movement<sup>49</sup>.

Each researcher interested in the Chinese revolution has defined the May Fourth Movement and the period covering it, according to the understanding of what the Movement represented for them. As a result, the timing of the Movement varies from 1915-1920<sup>50</sup>, 1915-1922<sup>51</sup>, 1915-1927<sup>52</sup> or 1919-1920<sup>53</sup>, last-mentioned researching only

<sup>42</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/59 Fraser to Jordan, 11 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Headquarters, Central Register, McEuen to Fraser, 10 June, 1919.

<sup>43</sup> Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions - the Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-1928*, (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1988), pp. 5, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Yingchao Deng, "The Spirit of the May Fourth Movement", in Patricia Buckley Ebrey (ed.), *Chinese civilization. A sourcebook*, (New York, 1993, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 363;

<sup>45</sup> Kuang-Sheng Liao, *Antiforeignism and Modernization in China*, (Hong Kong, 1990), pp. 62-79; Evelyn S. Rawski, "The Social Agenda of May Fourth", in Kenneth Liberthal, Joyce Kallgren, Roderick MacFarquhar and Frederick Wakeman, Jr. (eds.), *Perspectives on Modern China, Four Anniversaries*, (New York, 1991), pp. 139-157; Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, pp. 114-116.

<sup>46</sup> Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, pp. 3-15; Sooyoung Kim, "The Comintern and the Far Eastern Communist Movements in Shanghai, 1919-1922: The Meaning of Internationalism", University of Wisconsin-Madison, unpublished PhD thesis, 1996, pp. 102-103; Benjamin Yang, *From Revolution to Politics - Chinese Communists on the Long March*, (Oxford, 1990), p. 253.

<sup>47</sup> Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic*, (New York, 1977), pp. 187, 191, 192.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "The Evolution of the Shanghai Student Protest Repertoire; or, Where Do Correct Tactics Come From?", in Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Sojourners*, (Berkeley, California, 1992), pp. 139-140.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Baum, "The Road to Tiananmen: Chinese politics in the 1980's", in Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Politics of China 1949-1989*, (Cambridge, 1993), p. 435; Joseph Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition*, (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 111-113, 122-125; Vera Schwarcz, "Memory and Commemoration: The Chinese Search for a Livable Past", in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry (eds.), *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, (Boulder, 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 170-183.

<sup>50</sup> Bergère, *The Golden Age*, p. 209.

<sup>51</sup> Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*; Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*.

<sup>52</sup> Lin, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*.

the incidents which occurred immediately after the fourth of May 1919. This research covers roughly the period between 1919-1925, but particular attention is given to the first few years after the May Fourth Incident to which British correspondence constantly refers.

### **Primary sources**

This research is based on previously closed materials held in the Shanghai Municipal Archives including the Shanghai Municipal Police Headquarters Central Archives, and they are supplemented with sources from British archives. Shanghai Municipal Police, 'Special Branch' or as known in 1919 'the Intelligence Office' materials that are available in the West, are only very scattered documents covering the police's activities before 1920's. Therefore, they contain hardly any information relating to the May Fourth Movement. In addition to the Shanghai Municipal Council Secretariat materials in Shanghai, the governmental and municipal officials' correspondence was consulted at the Public Record Office, London.

Especially interesting materials located in Britain include the Jardine, Matheson & Corporation materials, especially its colourful and vast twentieth century correspondence. Access to this material was not available until very recently and has therefore never before been researched. Newly available materials include also the British-Chinese Corporation archives<sup>54</sup> which supply Jardines, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking

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<sup>53</sup> Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*.

<sup>54</sup> In spring 2002, the British-Chinese Corporation [hereafter BCC] materials were to be transferred from the Cambridge University Library into the HSBC archives in London.

Corporation (HSBC) materials. Other business archives researched for this study are the powerful Eastern trading company, the John Swire and Sons Ltd business archives. The John Swire & Sons Ltd archives have been partly destroyed during the World War II, and therefore there is only limited amount of materials available related to their Butterfield & Swire company's (B&S) 1910-1920's activities and none of them discusses of the May Fourth Movement or incidents related to it<sup>55</sup>. However, some other sources indicate that the B&S experienced the Movement equally extensively as Jardines.<sup>56</sup>

Missionary archives that have been relevant for this research are primarily situated in the School of Oriental and African Studies archives, but the Regents Park College in Oxford holds the Baptist Missionary Society sources and the University of Birmingham has the Church Missionary Society materials. Missionary Charles George Sparham's private correspondence was consulted at the Westminster and Cheshunt College in Cambridge.

The Chinese Maritime Customs papers at the Nanjing No. 2 archives are currently under the cataloguing process, and therefore, only the materials available in Britain have been researched. The Shanghai Municipal Council minutes have been published very recently, and thus, have not been used in this research.

The main criterion used to analyse British people and their responses and experiences during the May Fourth Movement has been their presence in China during May-June 1919. There are various in-depth analyses of the Movement, its origins, developments and results from the people who were neither in Shanghai, nor in China at that time. It is

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<sup>55</sup> For the general history of the Butterfield & Swire firm see Charles Drage, *Taikoo*, (London, 1970). The colourful picture of the business community's life in Shanghai and other parts of country has been illustrated by the Butterfield & Swire workers in Christopher Cook's, *The Lion and Dragon: British Voices from the China Coast*, (London, 1985).

not relevant, therefore, to discuss their interpretation in this research. It therefore excludes China 'experts' such as G.E. Morrison, who was the former *Times* correspondent, London, and political adviser to the president of China and O.M. Green, editor of Shanghai's leading British newspaper *The North-China Daily News*, and finally, J.O.P. Bland, a Shanghai-based journalist for the *Times*, London and former director of the BCC and the former secretary of the Council. Attempts to use correspondence from the British travellers or settlers<sup>57</sup> in Shanghai have not provided any significant contribution to this study.

In all, analysed materials therefore include the British consular and legation correspondence, the SMC secretariat and police files, the companies' reports and correspondence, missionary correspondence, private letters and diaries, journals and newspapers. However, it has to be remembered that all the materials were not equally reliable, and as we shall see, intentional misinterpretations and information fabrications were part of the British May Fourth experience. Obviously, the diversity of sources has given the means to critically compare the materials and eventually it has provided a more detailed picture of the British May Fourth experience.

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<sup>56</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/9 Acting Consul, Ningbo to Jordan, 29 May, 1919; SMA, U1-91-18, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 12 June 1919.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Bickers has defined four overlapping categories of the British in China namely: settlers, expatriates, missionaries and officials. Accordingly, the settlers' existence was established on privileges developed in the International Settlement and their livelihood was in principle dependent on the existence of the International Settlement. Bickers, *Britain in China*, pp. 67-73. For an interesting example of the British police's life in 1920's-1930's Shanghai see Settlement police, Maurice Tinkler's papers at the

## 1.2. The British May Fourth Setting in Shanghai

The British-created treaty port system had flourished since the Treaty of Nanjing 1842 and a supplementary agreement was implemented in October 1843 when after the first Opium War, five Chinese ports including Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Xiamen (Amoy) and Guangzhou (Canton) were opened to British trade. The agreement was further extended and reinforced by the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858. Other Western countries were quick to sign similar treaties with China, and therefore, these agreements shaped the political and commercial relations between the Western countries and China for the next century.<sup>58</sup> The treaties allowed foreigners to live and work in these treaty ports and in Shanghai the foreigners were able to rent land within the borders of the International Settlement. The setting was thus established for expatriates to expand into the international market because of Shanghai's existing internal trade in tea, cotton, silk, silver and opium.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the treaties enabled and protected the foreign missionaries and merchants when they travelled along rivers and that also facilitated the consolidation of their position in the countryside. Numerous other cities and towns were opened to foreign political, financial and cultural influence during the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> (Map 2, p. 36)

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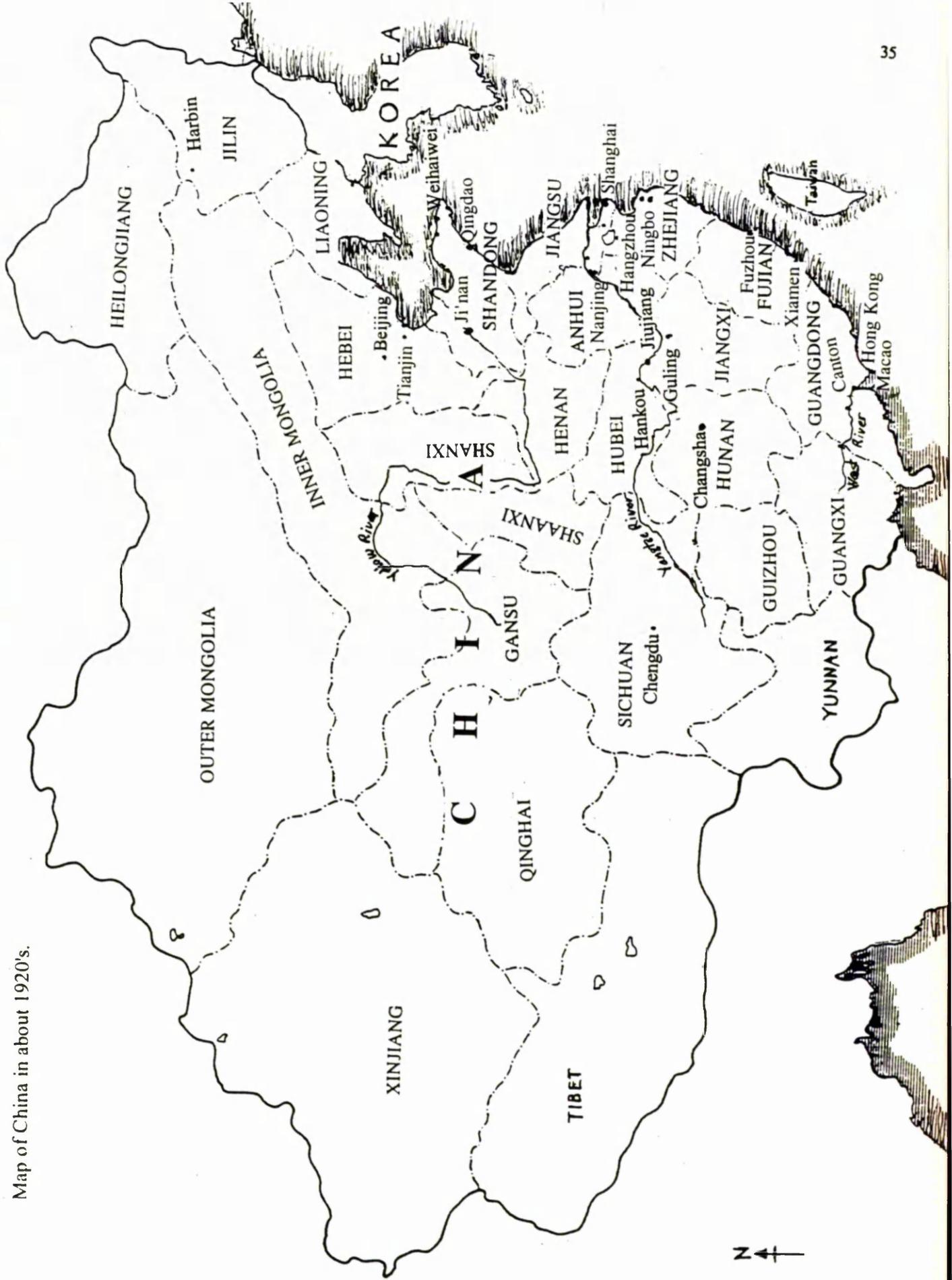
Imperial War Museum and Shanghai Municipal Archives, U1-3-320, file 1385, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, R. M. Tinkler files.

<sup>58</sup> William Frederick Mayers, *Treaties between the Empire of China and Foreign Powers*, (Shanghai, 1906), pp. 1-3, 11-19, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. For British governmental policies in China at the beginning of the twentieth century see P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914-1990*, (London, 1993), pp. 263-296; Wm. Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919-1939*, (Oxford, 1971).

<sup>59</sup> Shanghai's vivid history since early Yuan dynasty to 1850's has been well established in Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858*, (Stanford, California, 1995). Shanghai's modern history is vividly captured by the photographs presented in Lynn Pan, Liyong Xue and Zonghao Qian (eds.), *Shanghai: A Century of Change in Photographs 1843-1949*, (Hong Kong, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Frances Wood, *No Dogs and Not Many Chinese: Treaty Port Life in China 1843-1943*, (London, 1998), pp. 1-6, 18-47.

Map of China in about 1920's.



At the beginning of the twentieth century Shanghai was a centre of trade, industry and banking. Even though Beijing was the capital and the legations were situated there, foreign influence was more dominant and visible in Shanghai<sup>61</sup> and Hong Kong<sup>62</sup>. Shanghai was divided into three different jurisdictions: the French Concession, the International Settlement and the area of the Chinese municipality. The British predominance over the International Settlement was unquestionable, but numerous other foreign groups lived under the British protection. The French Concession<sup>63</sup> was administered by the French consul-general and it offered another refuge for political asylum seekers. The geographically largest and the most populous region was the Chinese administered area. It has to be remembered that the overwhelming majority of all the communities' populations were Chinese. Administratively these municipalities existed side by side each with its own government and laws until 1943. The core of foreign existence was the right of extraterritoriality by which the immigrants remained subjected to the laws of their own country instead of Chinese laws, and hence, were subjects of their own consular jurisdiction. As a result, areas populated by non-indigenous peoples in

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<sup>61</sup> In recent years, history of modern Shanghai has received extensive scholarly attention and here are just few examples of the books published. Stella Dong provides a general overview of city's history in *Shanghai: the Rise and Fall of a Decadent City*, (New York, 2000), whereas Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights* and Brian G. Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organised Crime, 1919-1927*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996) bring new perspectives into the city's life by analysing immigrants and secret societies. Sherman Cochran has edited a selection of articles in which Shanghai's development into modern commercial centre is well analysed in Sherman Cochran (ed.), *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900-1945*, (Ithaca, New York, 1999). Well selected collection of essays on development of Shanghai and its surrounding areas is presented in Brian Hook (ed.), *Shanghai and the Yangtze Delta: A City Reborn*, (Hong Kong, 1998). For another interesting collection of Shanghai essays see Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Sojourners*, (Berkeley, California, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> The British colonial history in Hong Kong has produced numerous volumes of books, but local movements are briefly discussed in Linda Butenhoff, *Social Movements and Political Reform in Hong Kong*, (Westport, Connecticut, 1999).

<sup>63</sup> The French Concession had been established by 1849 and it was a smaller area than the International Settlement. The Concession had a population of around 3 200 foreigners and 162 000 Chinese in 1919, *The North China Herald*, 20 September, 1919, pp. 766-767. The French Concession had a powerful underworld network represented by the Green Gang and one of leaders apparently used his connections to suppress the May Fourth strikes in the Concession; see Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang*, pp. 20, 37-38, 67.

Shanghai were distinguished by almost complete political, social, and cultural isolation from Chinese life: it was like a virtual colonial reality constructed first and foremost by British and other Westerners. There was practically no cultural accommodation between the British and the Chinese.

Of over two million inhabitants in Shanghai around 1920, over 24 000 were foreigners, the largest group within the International Settlement being the Japanese with 15 500 inhabitants<sup>64</sup>. 5300-6300 were British<sup>65</sup>, 1 500 American<sup>66</sup>, 1 400 Portuguese, 1 000 French, and about 1000 were German residents. Other nationalities such as Danish, Dutch, Indian and Russians<sup>67</sup> were also represented in the foreign enclaves. Politically and financially the most influential British group was the businessmen including traders, bankers, manufacturers and the managers of mines, shipping industries and railways. Other major groups included missionaries, as Shanghai was the centre of the Protestant missions in China, and British governmental and municipal officials. Finally, one of the major constituents of Shanghai's British community was the miscellaneous groups providing services at the treaty port settlement including, for example, journalists, lawyers, estate agents, shopkeepers and engineers. Shanghai's reputation as being 'Paris of the East' was supported by lively nightlife, and hence, club owners, prostitutes, musicians and entertainers.

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<sup>64</sup> Christian Henriot, "Little Japan' in Shanghai: and insulated community, 1875-1945", in Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (eds.), *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1953*, (Manchester, 2000), pp. 146- 169.

<sup>65</sup> Estimations vary from 5300 residents, Betty Peh-T'i Wei, *Shanghai: Crucible of Modern China*, (New York, 1987), p. 110; to 6300 British residents, Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 125.

<sup>66</sup> For a more detailed account of the formation of the American community, see James Layton Huskey, "Americans in Shanghai: Community, Formation and response to Revolution, 1919-1928", University of North Carolina, PhD thesis, 1985, pp. 1-72.

<sup>67</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the Russian community, see Marcia R. Ristaino, "The Russian diaspora community in Shanghai", in Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot, *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1953*, (Manchester, 2000), pp. 192-210.

Although the British were outsiders in China they had been able to create their own municipal administration in the International Settlement together with other Western countries and Japan. The British had founded a solid municipal government headed by the Shanghai Municipal Council (the Council) which was responsible for public utilities and security, and in practice controlled the whole foreign community. It was a committee of nine annually elected members (six British, two Americans and one Japanese), and usually chaired by a British member. The members were frequently managers of large companies such as the Jardine, Matheson & Company, Butterfield and Swire or the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and were elected to the Council at the annual Ratepayers General Meeting. Maintenance of this peculiar oligarchy was secured by an electoral system that was based on property franchise, it was limited franchise and only the wealthiest businessmen had the privilege to vote. The Council perceived that administratively it was responsible only to the ratepayers of the Settlement.<sup>68</sup>

Another exceptional feature of the Council was its ability to operate without obtaining its powers from the legislative assembly of any government, as much of legitimacy was established on a code of local laws that had been implemented using the foreign residents' extraterritorial laws. The Council had no internationally recognised judicial power and hence its hegemony was built on incoherent Land Regulations and later added Bylaws.<sup>69</sup> The Council ruled the International Settlement by twelve different departments and employed over 600 people, the great majority being British residents. In addition, the

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<sup>68</sup> A.M. Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council*, (Shanghai, 1925), pp. 561-564; PRO, FO/671/447/507-510 Beilby F. Alston, British Minister in Beijing to Shanghai, 28 January and 6, 15 February, 1921.

<sup>69</sup> *Land Regulations and Bye-Laws*, (Shanghai, 1923), *passim.*; Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court*, pp. 561-562, 566-575.

foreign settlement had its own Mixed Court<sup>70</sup> for Chinese-foreigner disputes; the Shanghai Municipal Police to secure the safety of the area and in a case of emergency the police was assisted by the Shanghai Volunteer Corps which was the case during the May Fourth Movement's activities. With the assistance of its various organisations, the Council's power of policing and taxation asserted sovereignty over the municipality and the population, foreign or Chinese.

British investments helped support her predominant position in Shanghai since almost a third of foreign investment was British. Stocks, land, buildings, and factories often financed by Chinese, British and other foreigners were primary sectors in the contemporary investor's portfolio. Out of all land owned by the Chinese, over 80% of foreign registered land in the International Settlement was held by the British and half of the land value in the French Concession was nominally in their names.<sup>71</sup> Even the Shanghai Municipal Council seized the opportunity to control the municipal investments and established its own Municipal Investment Bank to attract foreign and Chinese investors to avail themselves of the Council's debenture loans.<sup>72</sup> In 1920, Shanghai's share of China's total exports was 35,7 % and almost 48% of the country's foreign imports<sup>73</sup>. The same year foreign trade statistics show that Britain and its crown colony Hong Kong had combined imports to China of 36.4% with exports 33.7%.<sup>74</sup> The British merchants exercised control over this business.

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<sup>70</sup> The Mixed Court's history during the Republican China is well illustrated in Thomas B. Stephens, *Order and Discipline in China: The Shanghai Mixed Court 1911-1927*, (Seattle, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, pp. 41-42, these figures are from years 1926-1927.

<sup>72</sup> SMA, U1-3-4, file 1001, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Council Treasurer to the Secretary, 4 June, 1919.

<sup>73</sup> Liang-lin Hsiao, *China's Foreign Trade Statistics 1846-1949*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1974), pp. 24, 176.

<sup>74</sup> Chinese Maritime Customs, *Foreign Trade of China, 1920*, (Shanghai, 1921), p. 7.

It was true that the British missionaries were not anymore the largest group of missionaries in China in 1919, but they had established an extensive network of missionary stations across the country. Their headquarters were usually situated in Shanghai. Moreover, the missionaries tended to operate in the interior areas of China and were rarely active in British politics in Shanghai. Yet, as we shall see in chapter four, the May Fourth Movement stimulated the missionary community to participate actively in local and national politics. The London Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society and the Religious Tract Society all had headquarters in Shanghai. Therefore, the missionaries were inevitably affected by the May Fourth events.<sup>75</sup>

Obviously, the International Settlement had not escaped the problems of crowds, boycotts and riots, as earlier incidents such as the anti-American boycott of 1905 had demonstrated. The boycott was provoked by recently renewed American exclusion laws which severely restricted Chinese immigration to the country. As a result, the boycott of American products, strikes, petitions and mass rallies were organised and Shanghai was chosen as the centre for anti-exclusion activities. Such operations were a type of 'rehearsal' for the May Fourth boycotts, and indeed, the anti-American boycott has been claimed as representing one of the first manifestations of modern Chinese nationalism.<sup>76</sup> Similar 'operational preparation' which immediately followed this event was the Mixed Court incident of 1905 when the dispute over the court proceedings allowing the court the right to extradite an imprisoned person to the Chinese authorities prompted fierce

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<sup>75</sup> All major British missionary societies and their activities are thoroughly explored in Dan Cui, *The Cultural Contribution of British Protestant Missionaries and British-American Co-operation to China's National Development During the 1920's*, (Lanham, Maryland, 1998).

demonstrations and meetings. Inciting propaganda was strengthened by the wide distribution of pamphlets, and as a result attacks against foreign residents and property took place. All these operations culminated in the burning of the police station.<sup>77</sup> In 1918, scarcely a year before the May Fourth Movement began its activities, a fracas occurred between Chinese and Japanese residents in the northern part of the Settlement. The Council predicted serious consequences and thus put the Shanghai Volunteer Corps on duty for few days. This Hongkou incident evidently exacerbated already strained relations between these groups.<sup>78</sup> In spite of minor episodes during the period of instability in the International Settlement and its surroundings, it was a relatively peaceful decade. Therefore, the scale of the May Fourth Movement's activities was somewhat unexpected and the foreigners in the Settlement found the events extremely disturbing.

The opening chapter of this thesis sets out the British officials' experiences during the May Fourth Movement's activities, and both governmental and municipal officials' views are analysed. The following chapter discusses the ways in which the British commerce and finance community observed and reacted to the Movement. The formation of the British missionaries' May Fourth rhetoric is described in the chapter four. Chapter five shifts to late summer 1919, when the notable aspects of British policies were directed to suppress demonstrators' further activities. Finally in chapter six the Chinese May Fourth demonstrators' reactions to the British May Fourth policies are examined.

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<sup>76</sup> Wang, *In Search for Justice*, pp. 4-5, 81-107. For more extensive discussion about labour strikes and boycotts in Shanghai before 1919 see Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labour Movement*, pp. 125-131.

<sup>77</sup> Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court*, pp. 121-131.

<sup>78</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1918*, pp. 58A-62A, 70A-75A.

## **2. 'A WORLD ALREADY IN PLACE' – BRITISH OFFICIALS' EXPERIENCES**

The primary purpose of this chapter is to analyse participants' immediate experiences and to emphasise the British officials' reactions to and their influence on the May Fourth Movement. It is also important to evaluate whether the conception and practice of British administration affected the Movement. Some of the Chinese protestors' reactions will be discussed here in connection with British actions, while Chapter Six will concentrate on analysing the Chinese response more thoroughly.

The analysis of British officials' experiences, reactions and opinions is, in the following discussion, organised in two parts according to the major developments of the Movement in Shanghai. This partition is created purely to describe the intensification of various British opinions and not to outline the consecutive nature of the Movement. Its events and actions proceeded with their own rhythm, often in response to the foreigners' actions. The first part examines British officials' initial reactions at the beginning of the May Fourth Movement. The stirring moments in the British community will be dealt in the second part which stretches roughly from June to July 1919, covering the general strike and the weeks immediately following it. The May Fourth Movement ideologies and activities changed after the June strikes. Therefore, late summer and autumn events will be discussed in the Chapter Five.

A terminological problem occurred in defining the concept 'a British official' in Shanghai. Consulate workers were clearly British government representatives in Shanghai. But in the case of the Shanghai Municipal Council and its workers, the definition was more complicated. All six British members of the Council were also directors of large enterprises in Shanghai, and they acted in their companies' interests primarily, and therefore, had different agendas to pursue. In principal, they were British

officials protecting foreigners' privileges in the city, but in practice the Council members supported only local British businessmen's interests. These interests occasionally collided with British government policy, but during crises, like that of World War, the home country's international interests were defended, as many Shanghai Britons went back to Europe to fight in the war<sup>1</sup>. In this case British identity was stronger than local 'Shanghaiander' identity<sup>2</sup>. After all, the British Empire provided them with gunboats and rifles, for protection, and offered the governmental, or more 'official' justification for the British presence in Shanghai. Therefore, in this research, the British members of the Council and the British members of different departments are perceived as representing the local British officials in Shanghai. It should be remembered, however, that sometimes they acted as members of the British Empire, and in contrast, in some situations, they supported their own regional interests in the city.

It is evident that after the Movement some of the police reports were compiled from the records written during the incidents, and in general, the official reporting concealed police personal views on the subject. The reports merely explained the concluding and generally accepted views, neglecting personal police experiences, and how these related to the development of the May Fourth Movement, which is one of the main interests of this study. The extracted reports were published in the Shanghai Municipal Council's *Annual Report* of both 1919 and 1920, and similarly, most of the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) Special Branch files which analysed May Fourth Movement were summaries of the files written in the summer of 1919. The SMP Special Branch files alone inadequately describe foreign police views and actions towards the May Fourth

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<sup>1</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, pp. 258-259A.

<sup>2</sup> For analysis of the 'Shanghaiander' identity see Bickers, "Shanghaianders", pp. 170-178; Huskey, "Americans in Shanghai", pp. 36-49.

Movement. This is because only one compiled and embellished report was originally published in July's *Municipal Gazette*<sup>3</sup>, and with three extracts of police evidence added, with memo, to inspectors. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom's excellent work on the student protests in Shanghai and its informative bibliographic essay argues that none of the Shanghai or other Asian archives hold the Shanghai Municipal Police files<sup>4</sup>, and obviously many of the International Settlement materials were closed at the time of his research. However, the Shanghai Municipal Archives possess the bulk of the SMP Headquarters Central Register files. I was allowed access to the files that dealt with May Fourth Movement only. They include, for example: internal police memos and their correspondence with the Council and its various departments; police reports and letters to British and other foreign consulates in Shanghai; copies of May Fourth handbills and posters; extracts of the Council minutes; police's letters to some British, Japanese and Chinese businessmen, and finally, the plans for a new security system in the Settlement. But in all likelihood the archives also hold an extensive collection of police files that will illustrate the whole foreign community's presence in Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century, that is, during the time Special Branch files fail to report. The initial statements found in the SMP Headquarters Central Register files, the Shanghai Municipal Council Secretariat files, and reports to the Shanghai Consul-General in the Foreign Office files have been most relevant in analysing individual views. When comparing these reports they accurately reveal differences between the Council and the police officials' personal reactions.

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<sup>3</sup> *Municipal Gazette* was a supplement paper published by the *NCH* and it was the Shanghai Municipal Council's official paper.

### 2.1. Launching the May Fourth Movement in the International Settlement

The first telegrams of the Beijing May Fourth incidents and students' arrests arrived at Shanghai on May 5, 1919 via Tianjin's British concession. Due to the Chinese government's attempt to restrict escalation of the demonstrations, the Chinese cable connections had been temporarily suspended, and therefore, students had to circumvent the problem by using foreign agencies. Local Chinese newspapers in Shanghai, e.g. *Shen Bao* and *Minguo Ribao*, reported the news in the following day's issue and various educational organisations sent telegrams to the other cities encouraging them also to support the movement.<sup>5</sup>

When the British daily newspaper in Shanghai, *The North-China Daily News (NCDN)*, broke the news on May 6, 1919 of the students' riots in Beijing,<sup>6</sup> British officials' correspondence expressed no immediate reaction. On the following day the Movement was visible also in Shanghai when the Citizens Association<sup>7</sup> held a meeting at the Public Recreation Ground just outside the Chinese City and later had a discussion with the Peace Conference Southern delegates<sup>8</sup> at the old German Club. Estimates of the total attendance varied. The Shanghai Municipal Police reported 7 000 persons, whereas Chinese press reported 10 000 people which included around 3 000 students.<sup>9</sup> *The North-China Herald (NCH)*, in an article dated May 8, 1919 acknowledged the Citizens Association's meeting in Shanghai and complained about the Beijing government's incompetence, which was

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<sup>4</sup> Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 383.

<sup>5</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 75-76; Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> *The North-China Daily News* [hereafter *NCDN*], 6 May, 1919, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> More than 30 business and educational organisations had formed the Citizens Association on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919 to support the capital's movement. Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> The Peace Conference between North and South military leaders had assembled in Shanghai since February 1919.

<sup>9</sup> *NCH* was a weekly version of the *NCDN*, 10 May, 1919, p. 370; School of Oriental and African Studies [hereafter *SOAS*] Shanghai Municipal Police Special Branch Files [hereafter *SMP*], roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

allegedly shown by its release of the students on bail. Furthermore, the *NCH* expressed a long-lasting policy of the Shanghai foreign municipal administration in the statement: "in this Settlement, order will be insisted upon any event".<sup>10</sup> This announcement formed the core of the British officials' May Fourth Movement rhetoric. It appeared repeatedly in government and municipal officials' correspondence for the duration of the May Fourth Movement, sometimes worded differently but constantly maintaining the same message: peace and order of the Settlement must be maintained. The newspaper continued with the warning:

"The students release as a result of the strike of students at Peking University and the higher schools, and also the acceptance of the resignation of president of the University, can not but stimulate these young men to further acts of rowdism if not to violence. Students in other cities are holding demonstrations - there is a large assembly outside the German Club at the moment of writing - and the bad example of the authorities in the capital may lead to excesses in the provinces."<sup>11</sup>

When consulting the records, it is obvious that a SMP member was either present, or a local informant was observing the Citizens Association's gathering. Captain-Superintendent of Police, K.J. McEuen perceived the gathering as an avocation of an anti-Japanese boycott that was convened by various educational, political and commercial institutions, but which revealed no specific political party connections<sup>12</sup>. Throughout the demonstrations McEuen was a rare exception among British officials, as he was consistently reluctant to combine the May Fourth Movement with particular political associations.

By contrast, his colleague Deputy Commissioner of Police, A.H. Hilton-Johnson declared after the general strike that the Citizens Association meeting had been the first endeavour to recruit students to join the Guomindang party in Shanghai. In the same

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<sup>10</sup> *NCH*, 10 May, 1919, p. 343.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise stated all the Shanghai Municipal Archives' police materials are the Headquarters, Central Register files. The Shanghai Municipal Archives, Shanghai [hereafter SMA], U1-91-19, file 19,

report Hilton-Johnson attempted to connect students with Bolshevik activities.<sup>13</sup> Shanghai was an important meeting-place for northern and southern politicians travelling either to Beijing or Guangzhou, and Hilton-Johnson had been investigating political operations in Shanghai for a few years. Apparently he had been alarmed by students' direct confrontation with Chinese officials in Beijing and anticipated that the Bolsheviks would advocate similar 'rebellion' in Shanghai. Once more in July 1919, he perceived the meeting as a landmark of anti-Japanese agitation and was suspicious, but he admitted that although Bolshevik propaganda had been distributed among the students there was nothing definite to connect the unrest with Bolshevism. This was an interesting confession when connecting the statement with the fact that a week after the Citizens Association meeting, police had confiscated books and documents from the Settlement bookshop that reportedly advocated socialism and anarchism.<sup>14</sup> Not only the British police, but also most of the other Westerners confused Bolshevik supporters or socialists with anarchists or liberals despite their ideological differences, and therefore, seizure of any political materials was frequently associated with the Bolshevik propaganda in the region.<sup>15</sup> Many contemporary foreigners indeed deeply feared the spread of Bolshevism. As a result, Shanghai was commonly perceived as a stepping stone for distributing Bolshevism to various parts of China, and furthermore, to the Chinese living in England, France and America.<sup>16</sup> The above examples demonstrate the disparity in the police

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Shanghai Municipal Police, Headquarters, Central Register, Captain-Superintendent of Police K.J.McEuen to Consul-General Sir Everard Fraser, 6 June, 1919.

<sup>13</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Deputy Commissioner of Police, A.H. Hilton-Johnson to Acting Consul-General J.W. Jamieson, 16 July, 1919.

<sup>14</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 26 July, 1919, p.258; A.M. Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Municipality and the Chinese*, (Shanghai, 1927), pp. 5, 83.

<sup>15</sup> Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, p.208.

<sup>16</sup> PRO, FO228/3211, China Command Intelligence Diaries, series of May 31,1919, Headquarters, Singapore, Strait Settlements, p. 23; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson to Acting Consul-General in Shanghai, J.W. Jamieson, 16 July, 1919. A further point to emphasise the SMP's grave situation was that it was seriously understaffed because of the World War, Robert Bickers,

commanders' views. Hereafter, it was obvious that certain police officers looked continuously for signs to connect the Movement with revolutionary political parties or activities. As I will discuss later in detail, the British attached various political ideologies to the Movement when trying to define it and implemented policies in order to control it.

The Shanghai Municipal Police hastily assumed that the Shanghai Student Union (SSU) was inaugurated during the May 8, 1919, gathering at Fudan University and therefore suspected that the Chinese politicians were involved in forming the union immediately after the news of launching the May Fourth Movement had arrived from the north. However, according to the students' own statement the SSU was formally established on May 11, 1919. Its headquarters were situated in the building of the World Association of Chinese Students and this location brought the Movement directly into the core of the International Settlement.<sup>17</sup> The Shanghai Intelligence Bureau was immediately interested in the SSU's activities and collected its anti-Japanese pamphlets named "The Evils of the Sino-Japanese Industrial co-operation" and "An Explanation of the Sino-Japanese conventions". *Save the Nation Daily* was similarly recognised as a students' paper that promoted a Japanese boycott and the use of native goods.<sup>18</sup> From the beginning, foreign officials perceived the SSU's establishment as a serious venture to co-ordinate and maintain local patriotic activities and to spread ideas around the countryside and towns. In this matter, the foreign predictions appeared to be correct: by forming a complex hierarchy of interconnected organisations and establishing the disciplinary corps, the SSU

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"Who Were the Shanghai Municipal Police, and Why Were They There? The British Recruits of 1919", in Bickers and Henriot (eds.), *New Frontiers*, pp. 170-191.

<sup>17</sup> *NCH*, May 17, 1919, p. 441; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 84A.

<sup>18</sup> As elsewhere in the world, the British military establishment maintained a secret service in China. The Shanghai Intelligence Bureau was established during the World War and it consisted of foreign naval and civil members augmented by local British police representatives, the Censor and officers in charge of surveillance of Indian and Japanese affairs. PRO, FO228/3214, Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week ended May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

succeeded in controlling its members and their actions.<sup>19</sup> Before long the student patrol troops were perceived as presenting a tangible threat to the municipal authorities' privileged order in the Settlement.

May 9, 1919 was a Chinese "Day of National Humiliation" and it commemorated the implementation of the Japanese government's Twenty-one Demands to control certain sections of Chinese internal affairs. In principle, the fourth anniversary of this shameful event was organised to remind the nation of the Beijing officials' operations to "betray the country to the Japanese militarism". In practice, the day introduced a new dimension to the Movement when the boycott of Japanese goods and banknotes was officially implemented, and the police were on a high state of alert when the systematic distribution of anti-Japanese handbills and posters began in the Settlement. As a result, three Chinese students were caught with over 600 circulars in their possession at the corner of the Nanjing and Henan Roads. When questioned by the foreign police, the students said they were boarders from the local commercial school. Moreover, they claimed that their school Principal had sent the students all over Shanghai to circulate the handouts.<sup>20</sup> Whether foreigners wanted it or not, the May Fourth Movement had entered the International Settlement, as the incidents of handbill distribution and the establishment of the Shanghai Student Union undeniably demonstrated.

The Shanghai Intelligence Bureau's weekly report expressed fears of serious rioting in the Chinese City, though simultaneously explained that the overall situation was becoming quieter<sup>21</sup>. It has to be remembered that at this stage the May Fourth operations were concentrated in the native city and were gradually growing in other parts of the

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<sup>19</sup> Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Japanese Consul General, 10 May, 1919.



town. In the eyes of the British, the May Fourth activities had not dramatically threatened the foreigners' presence. Apparently, in this situation it was hoped that the crisis would pass without disturbing life in the Settlement and this provided an excuse for the British officials' inaction in the beginning of May, 1919.

The students' operations finally reached the point where the British officials' intervention was perceived crucial. Accordingly, snatching the Japanese straw hats from Chinese people's heads and then publicly destroying them was declared a violent action towards all the Settlement residents.<sup>22</sup> On May 19, 1919, the Council published a notification in the local Chinese and foreign press condemning the intimidation of residents in the Settlement. The statement warned people not to force Chinese merchants and residents to refrain from selling and buying Japanese products, as pressure of this kind was seen to be causing unrest and threatened the peace and good order. Moreover, it stated that attempts to use force or the threat of force was understood to be an unlawful act and persons doing so would be arrested and severely punished. The instructions were directed to gain the attention of the Movement participants and spectators.<sup>23</sup> To emphasise the seriousness of the orders, a few Chinese students and workers were immediately arrested for rowdy behaviour, and some of them were sentenced to prison<sup>24</sup>. Probably a fear of public anger prevented officials from imprisoning more students. The police confirmed that the notification had a calming effect on demonstrators and offences of this kind ceased after ten days. In reality, by the end of the month students were active participants in various other "offensive" operations in spite of the Council's warnings.

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<sup>21</sup> PRO, FO228/3214, Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week ended May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

<sup>22</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 85A.

<sup>23</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 24 May, 1919, p.179.

<sup>24</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 85A; *Municipal Gazette*, 21 June, 1919, p. 202.

The Council's first serious endeavour to constrain the May Fourth Movement had proved to be unsuccessful.

The Council's order described above was in accordance with the treaty port reasoning as it manifested that the Settlement was a specially protected area for its inhabitants governed by the Council with the assistance of the police and the Mixed Court. Another significant point was that the notification failed to indicate or accuse any special group for causing the troubles, although it was commonly known that students were the principal provocateurs and conducted boycotts. In all, the Council appeared to follow the policy of 'deeds not words' as the notification was their only official and public reaction towards the Movement during May.

On May 26, the official student strike was launched in Shanghai and included patriotic speeches and oaths. It ended in a parade inside the native city.<sup>25</sup> For the Settlement officials it meant more disruption by students on the streets, who now encouraged fellow students to form volunteer groups to execute their duties properly.<sup>26</sup> Each school had been organising Publishing, Lecturing, Inspection, Editorial, Disciplinary, and Service Corps since May 13, 1919, and after the initiation of the students' strike, their presence became increasingly visible in the Settlement. In addition, the Liaison Committees, Groups of Ten, Students Volunteer Groups and the Consultative Branch Offices were established to maintain order and control student activities. In particular, the Volunteer Groups and Groups of Ten were patrolling the streets of Shanghai as a peacekeeping

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<sup>25</sup> *NCH*, 31 May, 1919, pp. 578-579.

<sup>26</sup> SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

force to emphasise the importance of avoiding violence and rowdyism.<sup>27</sup> By doing so, they, for the first time, seriously challenged, - and as the British perceived it, threatened - the Settlement's peace and order. For the British officials the legitimate guardians were the police and volunteer corps appointed by the Shanghai Municipal Council and no other Chinese or foreign force was allowed to even enter the International Settlement without special permission. If permission was applied for, it was usually rejected on the grounds of the Settlement's neutrality policy.<sup>28</sup>

The Settlement's municipal schools, both Chinese and foreign, became slowly affected by the strike. Although the *NCH* had reported some problems between students and school authorities from the beginning of the Movement, it was not until the formal commencement of the strike that the school life became entirely confused.<sup>29</sup> By the end of May all schools had been influenced by the May Fourth ideologies and many of them had been shut down. Meanwhile, foreign school authorities tried to prohibit their students from getting involved with 'political activities', as the Movement was described.<sup>30</sup> But their efforts were rendered unsuccessful, as every school reported of unrest, strikes, disturbances, agitation, intimidation, poor attendance and enrolment in late spring and summer 1919.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout May, the British Consul-General in Shanghai, Sir Everard H. Fraser, ignored the Movement in his correspondence with the British Minister, Sir John Jordan in Beijing. Beijing's Acting First Secretary, Miles W. Lampson, had earlier complained

<sup>27</sup> *NCH*, 17 May, 1919, pp. 415-416, and 24 May, 1919, p.490. For insightful discussion of the formation and functioning of the SSU and its organisations see Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 59-63 and Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 57-70. For the 'Groups of Ten' see also chapter six.

<sup>28</sup> Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council*, pp. 24-29.

<sup>29</sup> *NCH*, 10 May, 1919, p. 371.

<sup>30</sup> SMA, U1-3-747, file 1816, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Annual Inspection of Schools by the Permanent Education Committee, December, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, pp. 201-211A.

about Fraser's incoherent reports of the Shanghai Peace Conference and his inefficiency in providing brief summaries even though the meeting was "under his very nose".<sup>32</sup> In June, 1919, Lampson raised a question about the Shanghai Consulate's silence concerning the May Fourth boycotts, and again later in June he complained about Fraser's disjointed reports. Contrary to Fraser's passive attitude, Jordan was concerned about current developments and sent a circular to all British consuls in China asking them to observe the situation carefully, and furthermore, he required them to inform the Legation about potential boycotts across China.<sup>33</sup> It took over one week for Shanghai to send a response to the Minister's enquiry. Another urgent telegram was sent from the capital during which time a full-scale general strike had already begun in Shanghai on June 5, 1919. Fraser stated that it would not have been worthwhile reporting before the beginning of June when the situation had become, in his opinion, more serious.<sup>34</sup> Some understanding of Fraser's reactions to the Movement might be obtained by exploring possible explanations as to why he did not interpret the events as alarming for the Settlement's security.

Having served in China for over three decades, Sir Everard Fraser was one of the foreign 'old hands' in the country. He was in his sixties and had experienced the Boxer rebellion, the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the revolution of 1911 which had established a republican state, and the warlords' intrusion into Chinese politics. Lastly, from February 1919 onwards Fraser had observed the Chinese government's desperate attempt to restore peace at the North-South Peace Conference in Shanghai. Those years in China brought

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<sup>32</sup> PRO, FO228/2986/21, Fraser to Sir John Jordan, 15 May, 1919.

<sup>33</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/5, Jordan's Draft Circular to all Consuls, 30 May, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/87, Fraser to Jordan, 13 June, 1919.

<sup>34</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/22 Fraser to Jordan, 6 June, 1919; SMA, UI-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Fraser to McEuen, 5 June, 1919.

quite turbulent times in internal and external politics, and in this context, he was used to China's unstable affairs of state.

Compared with other foreign officials, Fraser's Chinese language skills were exceptionally good, as he not only produced his own correspondence with local officials, but he also wrote an extensive Chinese language book. Furthermore, he contributed articles on political economy to the Chinese newspaper and to the *North-China Daily News*.<sup>35</sup> For him, it was effortless to read Chinese newspapers and pamphlets and be updated with the development of the Movement. In addition, the Shanghai Intelligence Bureau had received reports for some weeks from around China confirming the Movement as being nation-wide and the Bureau had frequently informed Fraser about the May Fourth incidents<sup>36</sup>.

Fraser was described as a reserved and earnest man with a strong sense of duty, in that "he would never let the Empire down"<sup>37</sup>. Yet even if he was the British Crown Advocate at the port, it took him an exceptionally long time to carry out his duties on reporting the situation in Shanghai. But the years had affected Fraser's health and at his preceding station in Hankou, special arrangements had been made to allow him to administer his works for three months a year from Guling, which was the foreigners' resort area in central China. As early as 1910 he had applied to retire and return home on health grounds, but had finally unwillingly accepted the post in Shanghai, where he remained until his death in 1922.<sup>38</sup> In the spring of 1919 Fraser was old and tired, and had been ill

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<sup>35</sup> P.D. Coates, *The China Consuls, British Consular Officers, 1843-1943*, (Hong Kong, 1988), p. 376; *NCH*, 25 March, 1922, p. 825 and 8 April, 1922, p. 124.

<sup>36</sup> PRO, FO228/3214, Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week ended May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

<sup>37</sup> *NCH*, 8 April, 1922, p.124.

<sup>38</sup> Coates, *The China Consuls*, pp. 376-377, 444.

for some months<sup>39</sup>. Therefore, he undoubtedly eagerly anticipated his long leave home which was due at the end of June. Initially he must have been irritated by the incidents that disturbed his last weeks in office before a well needed half year's vacation, as his correspondence in June revealed<sup>40</sup>. It is possible, however, that because of his life-long career in China he compared the May Fourth Movement with the other twentieth-century violent turbulence in the country, and did not perceive it as a serious threat to the International Settlement as the previous ones had been. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why an official with his experience, interest and expertise in Chinese politics, culture, and life in general, failed to fulfil his duties immediately when the whole country was in the grip of a student protest movement, with all foreign trade being affected by the boycott of Japanese goods.

Apart from general unrest, the first month of the May Fourth Movement brought a new threat to the Council's dominion in the form of student associations, Japanese trade boycott and a students' strike, but as long as the activities continued in a peaceful manner, the British were unwilling to get involved. At this stage prohibiting official look-alike parades and peacekeeping forces might have made the Council appear unjust towards the demonstrators. The unpleasant reality was that the popular support of the Movement was steadily strengthening among the Chinese and foreigners, and the Council was clearly eager to maintain good relations with both groups.

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<sup>39</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 690.

## 2.2. 'Maintenance of Peace and Good Order' - Reactions Towards the General Strike

The following discussion will demonstrate firstly how the Shanghai Municipal Council and its various departments took a stand against the general strike and the May Fourth Movement in order to maintain authority in the Settlement. Secondly, the British Consular, Royal Navy and British controlled Chinese Maritime Customs efforts to constrain the strike will be analysed.

It is true that various incidents in May, for example, the students' strike; anti-Japanese boycott; distribution of handbills; parading and lecturing on the streets, and finally, the formation of the Students' Union had demonstrated the intensification and seriousness of the May Fourth Movement. Indeed, the active centre of a month-long student agitation had gradually shifted from Beijing to the streets of Shanghai, but when the general strike was launched throughout the city, it still took the British by surprise.

If the Council had merely observed developments in May, their opinion, in contrast, was made perfectly clear in June with their four notifications and other actions taken during the general strike. On the morning of June 5<sup>th</sup>, immediately after the shopkeepers had begun to close their premises, the Council's British-run sub-committee, the Watch Committee, held a special meeting. As a result came the prohibition of "inflammatory handbills in connection with the Boycott of Japanese goods". The statement also condemned the flags bearing texts that encouraged people to act in a disorderly manner.<sup>41</sup>

Obviously the Council was irritated by the turn of events and on the same day the whole force of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC) and the Police Specials were mobilised to assist the police in keeping order. Cannons were placed in the centre of the

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<sup>40</sup> PRO, FO228/3526 Fraser to Jordan, 9 June, 1919.

Settlement and squads on patrol, for example mounted men of the Light Horse, were controlling the streets. Before long a number of sailors of the Royal Navy were called out to serve as Special Constables to emphasise the military power in the Settlement.<sup>42</sup> Immediately after mobilisation, one of the SVC members, who was most likely British, expressed his wish not to use force if the maintenance of order could be achieved without it, as the work stoppage was not against the Anglo-Saxons. He revealed his sympathy towards the students' cause by saying, "I have talked with Students and have had a good opportunity to know that they have thought out China's situation with a great deal of intelligence". It was a courageous act to write a letter to the most important British newspaper making his divergent opinion known. Two other correspondents' letters in the same paper blamed the Council's actions as having "the quality of the Hun" which would "strengthen the anti-foreign feeling".<sup>43</sup>

The Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC) consisted of Light Horse, Field Artillery Battery, Engineering Company, Machine Gun Company, Maritime Company, Italian Company, the British Infantry Reserves and various sections of Special Reserves. Mobilisation of this scope was unusual, and could therefore, have been understood as a sign of the Council's obstinate attitude to the ongoing Movement. Anticipating even more severe civil disturbances, the secret SVC Mobilisation Manual was renewed and published to regulate operations while the SVC assisted the police in maintaining order. The special blueprint listed protected services and localities including telephone service, water and gas supply, electric light systems and tramway depots. These were services that had been most severely affected by the general strike and which were the backbones of the

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<sup>41</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 7 June, 1919, p. 191 and 14 June, 1919, p. 196.

<sup>42</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 7A; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 6 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-21, Shanghai Municipal Police, the Council to the Commander of H.M.S. Bee, 20 June, 1919.

foreigners' modern life in the Settlement.<sup>44</sup> These large-scale preparations revealed that thereafter the Council reacted very seriously to the developments of the Movement. Another indication of the Council's strategy to prevent similar incidents in future was to equip the SVC with five armoured cars that were to be used at the first sign of civil disturbance in the Settlement. The Commandant of the SVC stressed it was a matter of imperial security and proposed that the British government should lend the armoured cars for the Shanghai authorities' use. Special attention was given to the continuance of British preponderance in the corps' personnel.<sup>45</sup> One of the most distinguishable long-term consequences of the May Fourth activities was the strengthening of armament, and different plans were made to ensure foreigners' authority over the Settlement. Various other new measures adopted by the foreign community during the civic unrest will be elaborated on throughout this chapter.

The third Municipal notification followed suit on June 6, and this time the Council's objective was complicated. The statement was issued to prevent the spread of rumours, which, it was alleged, caused animosity and fomented trouble. Various rumours flourished among foreigners and Chinese during the May Fourth Movement and this will be illustrated later in this chapter. Yet another almost impossible mission was the Council's attempt to prohibit the assembling of crowds on the streets. Moreover, surprisingly the statement advised shopkeepers and merchants to re-open their businesses and assured a complete protection to all Settlement residents in peaceful pursuit of their work and other duties.<sup>46</sup> Contrary to the Council's expectations, prohibition brought forth

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<sup>43</sup> *NCDN*, 10 June, 1919, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> *Regulations for the Shanghai Volunteer Corps*, (Shanghai, 1914 and 1921); *Shanghai Volunteer Corps Mobilization Manual*, (Shanghai, 1921), pp. 2-5, 10.

<sup>45</sup> SMA, U1-3-157, file 1167, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, the Council minutes, 11 June and 3 December, 1919; Commandant of the SVC to the Council, 27 July, 1920 and 20 May, 1921.

<sup>46</sup> *China Press*, 6 June, 1919, p. 1; *Municipal Gazette*, 14 June, 1919, p. 195.

another rumour, and handbills were distributed widely to spread the story. The story accused the Council of taking a bribe of \$150,000 from the Japanese to publish the notifications against the May Fourth demonstrators, but as in other similar cases, the rumour was proven to be unfounded.<sup>47</sup> On the one hand, the presence of police, volunteer forces and navy had a pacifying effect on Chinese demonstrators, but on the other hand they also served as a provocative and artificial stimulus to excitement. It was the Council's decision, as explained above, to display military force that provoked more local Chinese residents to walk on the streets where they were automatically, but often unintentionally, part of the assembling of the crowds causing the disturbances. Fear of restless crowds accelerated the May Fourth Movement protestors' determination to use their own peacekeeping forces, which in turn once more threatened the foreign society.

The Council's inflexible attitude was about to change within the next 48-hours when two special meetings were held, exceptionally on Sunday, June 8. Here their honour, prestige and authority were on the agenda. For the first time the foreign authorities threatened to "enforce these terms with the utmost rigor" towards those who violated orders or interfered with the police or other authorised officers. Its warnings were severe.

"[.] 1. No person unless a Consular Officer or a member of the naval or military force of any Treaty Power or unless duly authorised by the Council shall, under any pretence whatsoever, appear in the streets or in any public place, in uniform or wearing any distinctive dress or badge or headgear signifying membership of any particular organization, association or body. 2. No person shall, under any pretence whatsoever, carry any flag or banner or wear any sash or other device in the streets or in any public place, bearing any description in Chinese or in any Foreign language.[.]"<sup>48</sup>

The Council perceived the May Fourth student demonstrators' white uniforms and caps<sup>49</sup> as political symbols that expressed the Movement's political position in the society, and they were therefore understood as a potential source of conflict within the

<sup>47</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 26 July, 1919, p. 256.

<sup>48</sup> *China Press*, 10 June, 1919, p. 7; *Municipal Gazette*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 195-196.

<sup>49</sup> See picture of May Fourth students in their uniforms in *The Chinese Recorder*, vol. L, July 1919, p. 432.

Settlement. The Council recognised the power of unified dressing as a threat to the foreign community and prohibited them in the name of peace and order.

The meetings acted as a watershed in outlining the Council's attitude and were followed by other repressive proceedings. Due to discussions between Consul-General Fraser and the Chairman of Municipal Council, E.C. Pearce, the Shanghai Student Union was forced to close its offices in the International Settlement. Fraser's rigid opinion was that "the Council will not allow the Settlement to be used as political centre", and more interestingly, "or to let others usurp its authority". Furthermore, this attitude was strongly expressed in the Council's letter to the SSU, ordering them to end their peace threatening operations.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, the police memo summarised the actions which were to be taken in order to implement the notification. It ordered new police patrols on the streets and instructed the removal of articles from students using non-violent means, but it also authorised the police to arrest students who were distributing handbills. Furthermore, firearms were only to be used in defending life or property and warning shots in the air were prohibited.<sup>51</sup> It was evident that the Council was unwilling to accept the students' new role as a peacekeeping corps, wearing uniforms and badges. The students' corps looked like officially-sanctioned forces that challenged the British duties, and thus, threatened their prestige in the International Settlement.

Fraser had simultaneously sent telegrams to Beijing, hoping to receive an authorisation for the Council's procedures, but the British, American and French Ministers in Beijing feared that the Council's actions could alienate the Chinese from the three powers, and that it might eventually provoke a large-scale anti-foreign movement. The Diplomatic

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<sup>50</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 718; PRO, FO228/3526/20, Fraser to Jordan, 8 June, 1919.

<sup>51</sup> SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Copy of Memo to Inspectors issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Hilton-Johnson, 9 June, 1919.

Body of foreign legation Ministers also claimed that the Movement was a part of Chinese internal politics, which was directed primarily against the Japanese. Hence, when two days later they dispatched guidelines to the Settlement, the Ministers demanded that the foreigners avoid repressive measures towards the May Fourth protagonists in Shanghai.<sup>52</sup> In practice, the Ministers' instructions had no influence on the Council's policy. Evidently the Council and Fraser had had intensive consultations with all the bodies involved in suppressing the Movement, and the British Legations continuously commented and instructed them. It was obvious that the Council's dictatorial commands went far beyond any foreign or Chinese authority in China or abroad. In other words, the Council maintained total mastery over the International Settlement.

The general strike notification that the Council issued in June was similarly related to the containment of protestors' actions. It was aimed to stop vicious rumours concerning the Japanese who allegedly walked around poisoning food markets and water wells. The Council had to act promptly and the notification prohibited similar rumours and attacks on the Settlement residents.<sup>53</sup> Rumours, as Ralph Rosnow illustrates, are a form of public communication that are infused with private hypotheses about how the world operates, and in addition, they contain unverified information and often express the collective concerns of a certain society<sup>54</sup>. The first notices of the poison scare had already been reported in the beginning of June<sup>55</sup>. Rumours that included poisoning foreigners' food and water sources were naturally a matter of deep concern in the Settlement and required immediate counteraction. The Council tackled the problem by appointing police forces and officials from the Health Department to investigate samples of water and food

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<sup>52</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/20-23,36-37, correspondence between Fraser and Jordan, 8 June-10 June, 1919.

<sup>53</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 21 June, 1919, p. 199.

<sup>54</sup> Rosnow, *Rumour and Gossip*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>55</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Police daily report, 6 June, 1919.

supplies in the Municipal laboratory. As a result, the Council sent a letter to the foreign newspaper editors and proclaimed that the accusations of poisonings were absolutely baseless.<sup>56</sup> In spite of widely published assurance, tensions continued to run high and before long a Chinese man was beaten to death when the Chinese crowd mistakenly thought that he was a Japanese man poisoning food and water supplies. Similar attacks on suspected poisoners continued and the atmosphere, as the local press reported, was becoming extremely tense. Fears were inflamed also in the American magazine the *Far Eastern Review* which revealed a number of rumours in which the Council was allegedly about to close down the water supply on the Chinese streets.<sup>57</sup>

Foreigners thought that the May Fourth Movement activities might endanger their society's existence and indeed, the activities disturbed its daily functions such as supplying food and water, maintaining defence systems and trade and traffic service. The fear of Boxers' return initiated rumours and these stories expressed foreigners' collective concerns of a possible anti-foreign outbreak. The Boxer rumours were clearly a threat against foreigners' existence in China and the contemporary anti-Japanese atmosphere was predicted to indicate the arrival of a general anti-foreign movement<sup>58</sup>. These mental images were actively circulated in foreign newspapers and officials' correspondence, creating extra tension among the foreign community. A British newspaper editorial even confessed "how close we have been to a catastrophe compared with which the Boxer trouble of 1900 might have been a child's play [sic]"<sup>59</sup>. The Council, however, did not want to share these collective worries, yet it was eager to quell rumours in order to

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<sup>56</sup> SMA, U1-91-18, Health Officer A. Stanley to the Secretary of the Council, 6 June, 1919; N.O. Liddell, Secretary of the SMC to the Editors of the *NCDN*, *China Press*, *Shanghai Gazette*, *Shanghai Times* and *Shanghai Mercury*, 11 June, 1919.

<sup>57</sup> *China Press*, 11 June, p.1 and 17 June, 1919, p.1; *Far Eastern Review*, vol. XV, no 7, July 1919, p. 504.

<sup>58</sup> *Celestial Empire*, 14 June, 1919, p. 517; *NCH*, 17 May, 1919, p. 420.

<sup>59</sup> *Celestial Empire*, 14 June, 1919, p. 517.

maintain stability. Dealing with organised anti-foreign activities was not taken lightly, since these could become unmanageable and produce dangerous consequences for the foreigner's presence in China. Hence, the May Fourth protagonists' anti-Japanese slogans such as "Yellow Peril", "Huns of the East" or "Hun Oriental Militarism" intensified the strained atmosphere among the foreigners in Shanghai. It was evident that the general disorder created by rumours of any kind was a serious insult which threatened foreigners' protected inviolability within the Settlement boundaries.

In reality, the May Fourth Movement ideologies, operations and collaboration with Westerners deviated quite radically from the Boxers' activities, yet there was fear of a similar outcome. Consequently the contrast between the movements was acknowledged in a British newspaper<sup>60</sup>, but the article had no effect on the circulation of the rumours. Similarly, later research has interpreted these poisoning rumours as representing part of a different tradition of collective action, which diverged from the patriotic and highly organised May Fourth Movement. For example, the mass poisoning rumours during the Boxer uprising seemed to convey symbolic information that was related to the collective worries of societies in crisis where the whole society was potentially at risk, and the lack of verified information created all kinds of stories. In the case of the May Fourth Movement the situation was different, as the students attempted to control the information flow by continually providing updated information and supervised the crowds by their own volunteer corps.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Celestial Empire*, 14 June, 1919, p. 556.

<sup>61</sup> Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, pp. 171-172; Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "Taking it to the streets: Shanghai students and political protest, 1919-1949", University of California, Berkeley, unpublished PhD thesis, 1989, p. 74.

It is true that various rumours relating to the new activities of Guomindang, Bolshevik, or Anfu-club<sup>62</sup> members, or stories about the future ascendancy of the North or South military leaders had been continuously circulating during the spring and summer of 1919. Excitement provoked by the strike strengthened these rumours and created new ones. Inevitably, the foreigners and Chinese officials frequently associated the May Fourth Movement with these political activities.<sup>63</sup> It is also true that the Guomindang members were working in Shanghai, especially in the French Concession where Sun Yatsen lived. Similarly, rumours of Bolshevik agents' activities had been circulating since they captured power in Russia. At the same time, the North and South militarist leaders' peace negotiations in Shanghai had come to a standstill, thus creating endless discussions about its future. In addition, certain inland provinces had reported ongoing conflicts between military cliques, and the Anfu-club members' pro-Japanese policy was the May Fourth demonstrators' common enemy. But according to the students' statements, no political party or faction supported the Movement<sup>64</sup>. It is questionable, though, whether the foreigners ever believed the students' declarations.

In the light of the Council's military performances throughout the strike activities in Shanghai, Joseph Chen's assumption of the Council's "tolerant and positive action" towards the May Fourth Movement appears to be incorrect. His argument that the Council actually promised, in the middle of general work stoppage, to refrain from

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<sup>62</sup> Anfu-club was a political wing of the northern militarist clique that formed three-quarters of the current parliament in Beijing. It was known to be an instrument of Japanese imperialism and was one of the main targets of the May Fourth demonstrations. Andrew J. Nathan, *Peking Politics 1918-1923, Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976), pp.106-107, 160.

<sup>63</sup> *Celestial Empire*, 10 May, 1919, pp. 262, 294, 15 [supplement paper]; *NCH*, 24 May, 1919, pp. 491-492; PRO, FO228/3526/116, Acting Consul-General in Shanghai, H. Phillips to Jordan, 21 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3214 Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

<sup>64</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 696.

further interruption of the general strike is also questionable.<sup>65</sup> There is the possibility, though, that the Council made the students a secret promise in order to achieve wider popular acceptance from the Settlement's Chinese residents. But if the promise was ever made, and there is no evidence of this agreement in the British officials' papers, it did not last longer than a day. Consequently on Sunday, June 8, the Council's ordinances prohibited all the protestors' activities in the Settlement.

The notifications and operations described above indicate that the British Council representatives feared that the May Fourth Movement was a danger to their existence. British opinion was decisive when acknowledging this 'fact' that in the Council's meetings, the majority's opinion, that is the British one, always overruled the opposing views.<sup>66</sup> As a result, the Council's unanimous decisions were published as notification and only on rare occasions were Council members' dissenting opinions made public. The Special Ratepayers' meeting assembly of July 1919 to implement a new Press License bylaw, a question which was prompted by the May Fourth activities, revealed an unusual public dissociation in the Council's rank, and the incident will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. There was, however, no evidence of such disagreement in the Council's policy during the May-June demonstrations. In principle, the Council's command expressed only very few British people's perceptions, but in practice their actions controlled the politics in the Settlement. Their reactions were conveyed both through direct orders to restrain the Movement, and indirectly by the immense prestige they

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<sup>65</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 125, 134, 145.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g. when the American Council representative Mr. Merriman opposed levying the special 1% tax on Chinese residents that was invented to pay salaries for the municipal employees during their service in war. His opposition was overruled and the tax amendment was introduced and accepted in the following Annual Meeting of the Ratepayers in April 1919. SMA, U1-3-1, file 1000, part 1, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, the Shanghai Municipal Council Minutes, 2 April, 1919.

possessed within the British and foreign society in Shanghai. Therefore, the orders acted as authoritative guidelines for foreigners' opinions and actions.

In addition to the written commands, non-written messages that were executed by the Shanghai Municipal Police and Volunteer Forces were clear: the Shanghai Municipal Council worked with councillors taking collective responsibility for decisions in the International Settlement. Moreover, the notifications assured the residents that the Settlement had not been established for Chinese agitators to use it as a testing laboratory to exercise their nationalist politics, or to publish anti-governmental materials. The 'neutral stance' towards Chinese politics was the Settlement's unique characteristic, and foreign military forces were stationed to protect this impartial politics and the area's territorial integrity.<sup>67</sup>

As I have already discussed, the SMP had carefully observed events not only in the Settlement, but also by using the informants around the city. Following the Council's notification of June 5, the police and the SVC had removed prohibited placards, flags, handbills and posters from the streets of the International Settlement<sup>68</sup>. An increase in the police headquarters' translation office's work indicated an intensification of police investigation and 40 Chinese newspapers instead of normally 28 papers were read daily<sup>69</sup>. The Students' Union had reported to the *NCH* and the Chinese newspapers that around 120 students had been taken into custody by the police during the first night of the general strike in the International Settlement and the French Concession. The newspapers assured readers that the students had been subsequently released.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly neither the police, nor the Council nor the Consulate reports revealed any information about such

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<sup>67</sup> Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Municipality*, Special Police Laws for the Preservation of Order, 1914, pp. 448-451; *Municipal Gazette*, 11 July, 1919, p. 242.

<sup>68</sup> See picture of removal of the flags in *Far Eastern Review*, vol XV, no 7, July, 1919, p. 503.

<sup>69</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 26 July, 1919, p. 256.

arrests. The police reported 49 arrests on charges of riotous behaviour and intimidation of the Settlement residents, but half of those initially arrested were later sent to prison, nine were fined and fourteen were released with a caution and two cases were dismissed<sup>71</sup>. Apparently over one hundred student arrests were not included in this report. If the arrests took place, the police must have been extremely alarmed by the students' activities. In this situation it was probable that the fear of public indignation ensured the students' quick release, and afterwards, caused the foreign authorities to conceal the incident.

It is important to remember that even at the very top level, police perceptions about the Movement varied quite dramatically. When analysing a situation where both the chief officials received similar information about the Movement but ended up with diverse conclusions, it appears obvious that their personal experiences, beliefs and backgrounds affected their interpretation. Unfortunately there is little information available about police officials' personal lives and even less direct information of what might have possibly explained their contrasting perceptions. However, some ideas are suggested below in accordance with the limitations of existing materials.

Even at the height of the general strike, the Captain-Superintendent of the Police, McEuen, continued his own neutral stance towards May Fourth demonstrators. Although Guomindang and Bolshevik elements were constantly suspected, and rumours of their actions circulated, McEuen was firm in his opinions and was reluctant to connect the Movement with any political party. He acknowledged the presence of Bolshevik activists and their propaganda work in Shanghai, and finally, at the end of the year he embedded them firmly in the Shanghai's political scene. Nevertheless, he saw that the May Fourth

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<sup>70</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, p. 119, footnote 3; *NCH*, 7 June, 1919, pp. 649-650.

Movement was not connected with Bolsheviks' operations.<sup>72</sup> The second-in command, Hilton-Johnson, held a completely opposing view which was most likely strengthened in the course of incidents in May. He stubbornly perceived "a clever political game" behind the May Fourth demonstrators' behaviour. Bearing in mind that Hilton-Johnson's work in Shanghai included the production of police intelligence reports, the May Fourth Movement's participation in counter-government activities indicated that his suspicions were not entirely unjustified. Leaving no stone unturned he tried to find connections between student associations or universities, and the Guomindang members or Bolsheviks long after the May Fourth general strike and demonstrations were over.<sup>73</sup> In his mind the May Fourth activities continued during the summer and autumn as his in-depth reports about the Movement and local situation revealed.

McEuen had been serving in Shanghai from 1900 and Hilton-Johnson from 1908 but prior to that, at the end of the nineteenth century, he had already worked as a soldier in the Weihaiwei Regiment.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, they were both experienced foreign 'old hands' in China. McEuen was later described to be a person who is "easy going, but otherwise of little use and certainly not worth of the high salary [sic]"<sup>75</sup>, according to one policeman under him. But the materials do not reveal any information about McEuen's own past experiences that may have affected his opinions about the May Fourth

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<sup>71</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 26 July, 1919, p. 257.

<sup>72</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/71 Police reports attached with the letter from Fraser to Jordan, 10 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 7 June -14 June and McEuen to Phillips, 15 June - 10 July, 1919; SMA, U1-91-18, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 24 July - 19 September, 1919.

<sup>73</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 26 July, 1919, p. 258; PRO, FO671/447/557-558,560 Hilton-Johnson to Consul-General, 1-2 and 5 January, 1920; SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson to Jamieson, 10 July - 17 July, 1919; SMA, U1-91-18, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson to Jamieson, 22 September - 25 September, 1919.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Bickers, 'Shanghai Policemen: a guide to a foreign members of the Shanghai Municipal Police 1919-1945, <http://mail.bris.ac.uk/~hirab/smp2.html> ; SMA, U1-3-592, file 1652, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, K.J. McEuen files; SMA, U1-3-602, file 1675, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, A.H. Hilton-Johnson files.

Movement. Furthermore, research materials raised no doubts about his efficiency in police work. His colleague's background details were slightly more informative. Hilton-Johnson had returned shell-shocked from the World War in 1916.<sup>76</sup> Being a man of war, he obviously had a reputation for roughness among the British officials, and to confirm his authority a British official explained that Hilton-Johnson's presence in Shanghai was an indication that the Council had no intention of acting leniently with the demonstrators.<sup>77</sup> This argument is further supported by Hilton-Johnson's own actions as chairman of the United Services Association in Shanghai. In the middle of the general strike, Hilton-Johnson made a suggestion to the Council to form a new Expeditionary Forces Emergency Unit of returned British war officers. Without hesitation, the Council accepted the creation of the force. On the same afternoon they informed Hilton-Johnson that they would "gladly equip a unit of this character" with revolvers to "assist in the protection of foreign interests in Shanghai", as the United Services Association represented by its chief Hilton-Johnson had requested.<sup>78</sup> As an example of Hilton-Johnson's personal authority and his negotiation skills was the meeting with public garage representatives, chauffeurs and private car owners where he persuaded these May Fourth strikers to return to work. By doing so, he prevented a complete cessation of car traffic in the Settlement.<sup>79</sup> His competency in political investigation was recognised after the May 30<sup>th</sup> Incident of 1925, when he became a specialist in dealing with Chinese

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<sup>75</sup> Imperial War Museum, London, R.M.Tinkler papers, letter, 29 December, 1925.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Bickers, 'Shanghai Policemen: a guide to a foreign members of the Shanghai Municipal Police 1919-1945, <http://mail.bris.ac.uk/~hirab/smp2.html> ; SMA, U1-3-592, file 1652, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, K.J. McEuen files; SMA, U1-3-602, file 1675, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat,

A.H. Hilton-Johnson files; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1918*, p. 22A.

<sup>77</sup> M. W. Lampson's hand written comments on the letter. PRO, FO228/3526/26 Fraser to Jordan, 6 June, 1919.

<sup>78</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, pp. 46A, 75A.

<sup>79</sup> *China Press*, 11 June, 1919, p. 4.

political activists<sup>80</sup>. Perhaps it was his war experiences and previous employment as a soldier that made him become 'a bloodhound' in political activities in China. It might also explain his enthusiasm to implement repressive measures to suppress the May Fourth Movement, and also to create, in the autumn, new means and regulations to prevent similar civil disturbances in the Settlement.

The forming of a new unit during a crisis and reinforcing the old forces was not an unusual method for foreign authorities to adopt in order to strengthen hegemony over the municipality. The last time it had occurred was in May 1918, when the volunteer police Special Forces, or the Special Branch as it was also called, was formally established to act as a supervisory organ for the Sikh and Chinese branches, and to work as a preventive unit for armed robberies. Before starting to patrol, the Specials had one month's training behind them, which included lectures, handling weapons and the basics of *jujitsu* and drill. The Specials were initially a voluntary force, although later they were paid a salary for their services.<sup>81</sup> Their work was recognised as being important since they controlled the May Fourth demonstrations and helped the police. Similarly, the Expeditionary Forces were formed from volunteers. The crucial difference, however, between the two groups was the latter's composition. The recruits were professional soldiers armed with revolvers, and therefore authorised by the Council to use the strongest possible measures and even to shoot, in order to protect the Settlement. Furthermore, the Expeditionary Forces recruited only British ex-servicemen men, where as the Specials' ranks were accessible to other foreigners and Chinese men. Bringing the British Expeditionary Forces on to the streets gave the impression that the Settlement needed protection against a war-like enemy and only the British were deemed trustworthy for this assignment.

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<sup>80</sup> SMA, U1-3-602, file 1675, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, A.H. Hilton-Johnson files.

The Settlement police adopted another emergency measure when a complete strike of the telephone companies threatened communication. The police stations prepared themselves to use wireless sets, flags, heliographic signals and lights to transmit messages between the SMP forces around the city.<sup>82</sup> These arrangements demonstrated the police's diverse efforts to prepare themselves for contingencies that might arise. By contrast, the British Municipal police in Tianjin hardly commented on the incidents which occurred during the May Fourth demonstrations and boycotts, and according to police reports the foreign community was able to continue its business as usual<sup>83</sup>.

Back in Shanghai, the police official's monotonous daily reports acquired an excited tone when they described the May Fourth demonstrators. In the official's opinion the protestors had accepted a wide variety of "undesirables" and "hooligans" in their groups, and without a significant police presence, "the processions would have certainly turned to serious ruffianism". Moreover, this rank policeman shared his British officers' perception that the strike leaders were eager to maintain good relations with the foreign authorities and preserve a good order in the Settlement. Yet he accused the May Fourth leaders of losing control of their followers.<sup>84</sup> There was an overwhelming feeling of superiority, which radiated from the police reports that described events during the last night of the general strike. Reportedly, the police had announced commands in English, and Trooper Sergeant Rock tried arrogantly, only six troopers behind him, to control over 300 celebrating Chinese people, and attempted to push them back to the French Concession.

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<sup>81</sup> *NCH*, 11 May, 1918, p. 345; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1918*, p. 42A.

<sup>82</sup> *China Press*, 10 June, 1919, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, Tianjin, 15 July, 1919, pp. 4-5.

<sup>84</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Police daily report, 6 June, 1919; McEuen to Fraser, 13 June, 1919.

In seconds an orderly procession was turned into an affray that ended when police opened fire on the crowd, killing one person and wounding nine.<sup>85</sup>

Not all the Shanghai foreigners perceived these actions necessary for peace keeping. Counter narratives coincided with the Council's justifying articles in the *NCH*, and the newspaper continued its indisputable support of the British authorities' operations throughout May-June 1919. However, a reporter of the American *China Press* newspaper who had personally followed the police's actions inquired, "Who is working for order and who for disorder, when a student distributing leaflets 'Help the Students Movement, Commit no Violence' gets arrested?". The editorial continued with the same opinion and accused the Council of "unqualified, unmitigated and inexcusable" mistreatment of the student demonstrators.<sup>86</sup> The foreign police had embraced opinions and procedures that supported those of the existing British authority in the Settlement, which in contrast were constantly being speculated upon by the foreign officials in Beijing. Contemporary British correspondence includes numerous examples of contradictory arguments between Shanghai and Beijing officials. Here are just a few samples relating to the May Fourth incidents. When the Captain-Superintendent of Police had reported the incidents relating to the Citizens Association meeting of May 7, 1919 he explained that it had ended "in processional order that marched to the Chinese territory". The British Legation official questioned the statement and claimed that "is it not all Chinese territory? This little expression is the key to much at Shanghai". In addition, the same Beijing official blamed the police for a lack of communication between them and protestors. After the shootings on June 12<sup>th</sup> the British Minister at Beijing also complained of the Shanghai Police's

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<sup>85</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Chief Inspector T. Vaughan's report, 13 June, 1919; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, C.I. Vaughan's and Trooper Sergeant E. Rock's reports, 13 June, 1919.

inexperience “at handling the crowds. [And that] their action turned a peaceful procession into a ‘howling mob’.”<sup>87</sup>

Not a single section of the British hierarchical administration system was able to avoid the "May Fourth disturbances", as it was called in common parlance. Core services in the modern Settlement included its water, sewage, light and power systems, all controlled by the Electricity and Public Works Departments. The Council perceived protection of these stations as essential for the foreigners' well being, and positioned the SVC troops with machine guns and extra sentries on guard. Even if some Chinese fitters, blacksmiths and other workers went on strike, the foreign municipal workers were able to provide a constant supply of power and tram services throughout the general strike.<sup>88</sup> The engineers' inability to mobilise with the Shanghai Volunteer Corps created a problem, as the necessity to maintain the running of the water and power stations was prioritised and joining the defence forces was prohibited. This in turn created a lack of men in service and the situation was strongly criticised by the Engineers' Commander.<sup>89</sup> The departments' contribution to the defence system was to provide electric light trucks for the police when they tore down the May Fourth protestors' flags that hung over the streets. Obviously, the threatening incidents in May-June had encouraged the Deputy Commissioner of Public Works to support the suggestion to supply the SVC with trucks and armoured cars to protect vitally important power stations.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *China Press*, 20 June, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Miles W. Lampson's hand written comments on the Captain Superintendent of Police's reports on the files PRO, FO228/3526/61,71 Fraser to Jordan, 8 June and 10 June 1919; Jordan's and Lampson's hand written comments on file PRO, FO228/3526/98 Phillips to Jordan, 15 June, 1919.

<sup>88</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 721; SMA, U1-91-19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 14 June, 1919.

<sup>89</sup> SMA, U1-3-174, file 1268, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Commandant of the SVC Trueman to the Council, 23 June, 1919.

<sup>90</sup> SMA, U1-14 (2)-23, Public Works Department, Memorandum by Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, 1 December, 1919; SMA, U1-91-21, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Engineer-in-chief and Manager of Electricity Department, T.H.U. Aldridge, 23 June, 1919.

The Health Department produced daily summaries about available meat, fish, fowl and vegetable supplies in the Settlement markets which had been immediately affected by the strike. Slaughterhouses' work stoppage created a shortage of meat, which was soon visible in butchers' shops, and even though the health officials tried to convince master butchers to open their doors, their efforts proved fruitless. The Council was not beaten by the Chinese protesting butchers. It hastened actions and secured meat production for foreigners by forcing some butchers to slaughter animals and arranged transportation under police guard. In spite of various measures taken to prevent any problems arising from food shortage and poison rumours, various cases of diarrhoea were reported among the Settlement residents. The British health officer alleged that food supplies being sold off the streets and alleyway corners had caused these. The British Hall & Holtz Bakery issued a notice explaining that it could not deliver bread, but instead a local hotel boldly claimed that its meat "storage is sufficient for 100 strike days". To uplift the British people's spirit, the newspaper wrote an entertaining article on how the absence of servants, due to their strike activities, actually prevented all heavy cooking in the house and exonerated women from charges of being lazy. Consequently, the female society was encouraged to "keep a stiff upper lip".<sup>91</sup> It appeared obvious that the foreigners' anticipated scenarios would not necessarily materialise during the May Fourth Movement. By preparing themselves for the worst, in this case it was the siege that never happened, their activities were related to the outcome-blindness of people who were experiencing a dangerous situation<sup>92</sup>. They had no knowledge that the general work stoppage would be over within a week. Furthermore, many foreigners had either personal

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<sup>91</sup> *China Press*, 7 June, p. 4 and 10 June, 1919, p. 7; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 689-690, 721; SMA, U1-91-18, Shanghai Municipal Police, Health Officer, Arthur Stanley to the SMC Secretary, 5 and 6 June, 1919; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 140A.

<sup>92</sup> Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 61.

memories of the Boxer siege or they had heard horrifying stories of the food deficiency and these vivid images encouraged the people to prepare themselves for the worst possible scenario.

The female workers comprised the majority among the Health Department employees as the five Shanghai Municipal Council hospitals were staffed with foreign and Chinese nurses. Nevertheless, foreign women's opinions about contemporary issues in Chinese politics or life in Shanghai often remained concealed, because at the beginning of the twentieth century it was not thought appropriate for women to discuss these matters<sup>93</sup>. The important individual exceptions were some of the women missionaries. However, the male dominated Council and its departments had to acknowledge women's changing position in the International Settlement by admitting their eligibility for election as members to the Council. A list of over one hundred women paying sufficient taxes to qualify for election was gathered, but much was revealed in the attached comment "the Council has no power to reject the nomination under the Land Regulations even if such a person be, for example, undischarged bankrupt, a Bolshevist agent or a woman"<sup>94</sup>. The British nurse A.A. Thomlinson who worked at the Victoria Nursing Home provides an exceptional woman's perspective on the May Fourth events in Shanghai. She had arrived in Shanghai just before the World War in 1914 and had since been overworking due to a lack of nurses. To a certain extent, she obviously observed political issues in China and abroad, and perhaps received some information from her soldier patients. According to Thomlinson's correspondence the students had initiated the strike because of "some grievances against the Government in Peking". She confirmed that the students' real

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<sup>93</sup> For a colourful study of Western women in China who speak up against the grain, see Susanna Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong: Western Women in the British Colony 1841-1941*, (Hong Kong, 1991), *passim*.

motive was the transfer of Germany's old concession Qingdao, to Japan. The Council had fulfilled all her expectations and prepared the SVC and other forces for the worst, but like many other British people, she was relieved when nothing serious happened. Her interest to analyse current issues continued as she carried on commenting on major political incidents in Shanghai throughout her 15-year assignment in China.<sup>95</sup>

As soon as the May Fourth general strike had closed shops in the International Settlement, Fraser intensified his communication. It seemed that the Consul-General had modified his indifferent attitude to the May Fourth Movement and was prepared to implement powerful measures to suppress it. In keeping with an aggressive approach, he urged the Council to publish a notification, firstly, to guarantee residents' safety, and secondly, to advise people to continue their work<sup>96</sup>. His orders were too late however. By the time his letter was received, the Council had already issued two statements that have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Once again the Council had acted independently before any advice was asked or orders received from the Consulate officials. The Council had indeed adopted a more 'firm' attitude, in accordance with Fraser's request, not necessarily because of his influential position as the head of British Consulate, but more likely to enforce their own inflexible policy toward strikers.

Fraser ordered the closure of the students' union office because he believed that it was the headquarters of activities that could undermine the Settlement's authority. Just a day before, the SSU had approached foreign consuls in a letter stating their motives for

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<sup>94</sup> SMA, U1-3-238, file 1303, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Dr. Margaret Polk to the Council, 3 March, 1923; Legal Adviser Duncan McNeill to the Council, 13 March, 1923.

<sup>95</sup> Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, Papers of the Overseas Nursing Association, MSS Brit. Emp.s. 400, box 140, Letters from nurses overseas 1910-1950, file 3, the Far East, ff 43-119, Nurse A.A. Thomlinson to Miss Middleton, 7 July, 1919; Thomlinson's papers *passim*.

<sup>96</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/16, Fraser to Jordan, 6 June, 1919.

demonstrations, and outlined efforts to maintain the movement as a non-violent one.<sup>97</sup> The Consul-General hesitantly admitted that protestors had extensive support among the Chinese people. Nevertheless, their final mistake had been a “blind folly in interfering with provisioning of the town”. Incidents like the chauffeurs’ strike, shortage of food supplies and workers who abandoned their ships made him blame students for persecuting the foreigners. “The strikers leaders' audacity grows with their impurity”, Fraser argued, and “it is evident that we are to be harassed and 'bullied' into pressing Governments to do what the agitators want”. At this time also, the private letters to Jordan expressed Fraser's harsh attitude, and in addition, he gave the impression that the Bolsheviks were in the background of the strike, but later he alleged that “KuoMinTangHui” i.e. Guomindang with Sun Yatsen as the leader were aiding the Movement. His greatest fear, similar to that of the Council’s, was the students' usurpation of foreign areas.<sup>98</sup> Fraser’s personal fury was apparent and it was targeted directly towards the students as he felt that their propaganda work had questioned the foreign authority that he represented. Instead of addressing ultimatums universally towards agitators and disorderly persons as the Council did, he requested repressive measures to control students.

A contrasting view came from the Consul-General in Ji’nan, as Sir John T. Pratt's views demonstrated that Fraser's opinions and actions in Shanghai were unparalleled among the British officials in China. Pratt was convinced that students’ participation in politics, when combined with organised public opinion and rising national consciousness were exceptionally hopeful signs for China's modernisation. Furthermore, in his private correspondence Pratt urged the British government to clarify its stance on the Shandong

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<sup>97</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 128-129; PRO, FO228/3526/33, Fraser to Jordan,

issue and to support China's endeavour to eliminate Japanese influence from its internal politics.<sup>99</sup> Fraser's views about the May Fourth Movement however, were never so positive or supportive.

The Shanghai Council's principals appeared to follow uncompromising lines, and therefore, Fraser regularly defended their activities. Yet another example of the Council's stubborn stance to surpass all foreign and Chinese authorities in Shanghai was to arrange the British gunboat H.M.S. "Bee" to be placed along the Bund and Customs Jetty, in front of the Nanjing Road. Action was taken without any consular approval and it created an immediate diplomatic quarrel among the foreigner officials. Meanwhile, the American Consul-General insisted on following the proper proceedings, but Fraser supported the Council's self-willed operation by claiming that the maintenance of peace and order was more important than the "possibility of setting up a procedure apparently offensive to national or official amour proper". Quite plainly, the Council was eager to strengthen the naval forces and required the British Admiral and all available ships to arrive in Shanghai. Fraser accepted the suggestion wholeheartedly assuring that it would have a calming effect on furious May Fourth agitators. In fact, two British gunboats prepared themselves to organise a landing party if needed. At this stage the officials' certain fear was the liability of the Movement becoming anti-foreign.<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, the British officials feared the demonstrators' actions a security threat. The decisive moment had come during the protestors' celebrations which had been organised

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7 June, 1919.

<sup>98</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/38, 67b, 68, Fraser to Jordan, 9-10 and 12 June, 1919.

<sup>99</sup> PRO, FO228/3022/6, Sir John T. Pratt to Jordan, 19 January, 1920; SOAS, Sir John Pratt Collection, Box 10, Sir John T. Pratt to Charles Pratt [his brother], 21 August, 1919.

<sup>100</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/20, Fraser to Jordan, 8 June, 1919; PRO, FO371/3694, no 86774, G.S.O. Shanghai to Admiralty, 10 June, 1919; PRO, FO 671/444/501-502, Circular letter of the American Consular General, 11 June, and Fraser to Consul-General for Belgium and Senior Consul, 14 June, 1919. Some American governmental and local officials' perceptions on the May Fourth Movement are briefly discussed in Warren

after the foreign consuls had confirmed the resignations of three hated Beijing officials. Fortified by a third gunboat, the British Navy began to exercise a landing party, which continued into the evening and exactly at the same time the SMP was shooting at the Chinese celebration procession in the Settlement. In addition to the landing party exercises and police fire towards protestors, fear and order were, the following morning, accentuated by the Navy's machine gun drill.<sup>101</sup> 'The Navy card' was a characteristic response from the British officials in a situation where their authority was threatened. To a lesser extent the Americans also appeared to protect their interests by positioning vessels on the rivers to fight against the pirates<sup>102</sup>. Apparently the May Fourth Movement had become too menacing for the Settlement's police and the response was an uncompromising defence policy. This 'gunboat diplomacy' seemed to have a reassuring effect on the British people and it acted as an effective deterrent to the protestors.

Fraser had pushed his personal influence to its limits and was eventually able to convince the Commander-in-Chief of China Station, F.C.T. Tudor, to provide another boat, a cruiser with torpedo armaments, to secure the city's peace. Tudor had doubts about the Settlement's urgent requirements, but finally agreed to keep the fourth boat in Shanghai.<sup>103</sup> During journeys around China, Tudor had had an opportunity to observe the Movement. Contrary to many of his colleague's opinions, the orderly demonstrations and the Chinese universal rejection of the Versailles Peace Treaty had impressed him. Along with his countrymen, Tudor predicted that the Movement would eventually agitate anti-

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I. Cohen, "America and the May Fourth Movement: The Response to Chinese Nationalism, 1917-1921", *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. XXXV, no 1, Feb. 1996, pp. 83-100.

<sup>101</sup> PRO, Admiralty [hereafter Adm], 53/35007, H.M.S. "Bee" Copy of Log for June, 1919; PRO, Adm53/43154, H.M.S. "Gnat" Copy of Log for 1 May-30 June, 1919; PRO, Adm53/43154, H.M.S. "Teal" Copy of Log for June, 1919.

<sup>102</sup> George B. Clark, *Treading Softly: U.S. Marines in China, 1819-1949*, (Westport, Connecticut, 2001), pp. 56-57.

<sup>103</sup> PRO, Adm53/37075, H.M.S. "Carlisle" Copy of Log for 1 January- 20 December, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/97, Commander-in-Chief to Jordan, 16 June, 1919.

foreign feelings, but instead of accepting perceived connections between the Movement and local political parties, the Commander-in-Chief anticipated that the Chinese might turn towards German officers and soldiers to receive moral and material support for their cause.<sup>104</sup> The World War was obviously in British recent memory and the peace talks in Versailles continued to bring war issues under discussion. Questions about the procedures with enemy officials and properties, and the punishment of war criminals were constantly discussed in all foreign newspapers and in the correspondence between allied officials. Given the situation it is not surprising that foreigners were afraid of the students' endeavours to seek outside help to preserve the country's integrity. The Germans were perceived as the most alarming potential foreign supporter together with the Russians. A further interesting point was that the May Fourth Movement was recognised as having the potential power to obtain assistance from abroad. The British officials recognised the fact that the Chinese Western returned students and their active involvement in the Movement probably provided an important connection abroad.

The Statistical Secretary of the Chinese Maritime Customs (CMC) suggested that in Beijing particularly the political parties' conspiracies, and the Beiyang army's<sup>105</sup> internal factions had inflamed student protests which followed in Shanghai. At his hometown in Shanghai, the Secretary blamed student associations for executing the general strike and he repeated the Council's repressive rhetoric towards the May Fourth Movement. In his opinion, the mob had caused the death of a few Chinese people when they collided with the foreign police. Therefore, he accused the crowd and exonerated the SMP from responsibility. His summary of events expressed a strong disapproval of using the boycott

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<sup>104</sup> PRO, Adm125/67, Vice-Admiral Sir Fredrick C.T.Tudor, Commander-in-Chief, general letter, 13 July, 1919.

as a method to attain “the effective recognition and preservation of China’s sovereign rights”.<sup>106</sup> The Commissioner of the CMC in Tianjin, Sir Frederick Maze was concerned about the strike’s influence on government departments’ work and admitted that “students’ agitation” has created a serious situation in the city. Similar to his Shanghai colleague, Maze was disturbed by the use of the strike to boycott Japanese trade, but he proudly informed that the British Concession in Tianjin was prepared for military operations and had made plans to encounter arising situations.<sup>107</sup> Compared with Shanghai’s ‘gunboat diplomacy’ and other radical measures implemented during the demonstrations, the British officials in Tianjin approached the Movement in a more lenient way. Notably, both CMC officials’ statements complained of using a boycott as a method, but they were not especially alarmed by the boycott’s outcome.

The British, as the controllers of the CMC, had reserved themselves the right to regulate international trade and monopolise the customs system in China. Agreements at the beginning of 1910 had strengthened the Chinese Maritime Customs’ domination over Chinese revenues from wine, tobacco and salt tax. Subsequently, the collecting and depositing revenues in foreign banks was under foreign, and especially under the British control. But the general prediction was that the Chinese would eventually attempt to control carefully protected trade privileges given to the British by the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) and Treaty of Tianjin (1858).<sup>108</sup> Shanghai’s International Settlement had been established for foreign trade and the boycotts had a deteriorating effect on the business

<sup>105</sup> Yuan Shikai had compiled Beiyang army around Beijing in the beginning of the 20th century. After his death in 1916 the army gradually spilt into Anhui and Zhili cliques of which the first group supported Anfu-club. Nathan, *Peking Politics 1918-1923*, pp. 57-58, 226.

<sup>106</sup> *Returns of the Trade and Trade Reports 1919*, China, the Maritime Customs, (Shanghai, 1920), pp. 1-2.

<sup>107</sup> SOAS, Sir Frederick Maze papers [hereafter Maze papers], Semi-Official Letters, 5, no 413, letter to Sir Francis Aglen, 10 June, 1919.

<sup>108</sup> Roberta A. Dayer, *Bankers and Diplomats in China 1917-1925*, (London, 1981), pp. 21,24; William F.

world, because by boycotting the Japanese trade, the May Fourth protestors had already appropriated foreigners' trading rights and disturbed export and import transactions. The use of native goods had become a patriotic deed for Chinese protestors throughout May and June 1919 and it supported the political statement against Japanese intrusion which will be analysed in the following chapter. As a result, the Chinese used Western products, particularly British and American, rather than Japanese goods. It was evident that the British commercial community ultimately benefited from the Japanese trade embargo, because Japan was their strongest business competitor in China. Hence, disturbances in Japanese trade were directly profitable for the British business community.

### **Conclusion**

The foreign society's ultimate fear was that the May Fourth demonstrators' upsurge would demolish their privileges in the International Settlement. In addition, the extraterritorial jurisdiction had made the foreign authorities responsible for restraining aggressive enthusiasm, and for maintaining law and order in Shanghai for the sake of their economic and political interests. The British officials perceived the demonstrators' activities as intimidating towards the Land Regulations which formed a legitimate constitution for foreign presence in the city. In May, the notification had referred to "persons' unlawful pressure upon residents" and hereafter the Council's attempt was to stop misconduct by using legislative coercion. At that stage, the Movement was perceived merely as a potential risk that had to be dealt in a precautionary way. In many instances, however, the Movement seemed to fulfil the requirements for organised

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Mayers, (ed. of 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1877), *Treaties between the Empire of China and Foreign Powers*, (Shanghai,

uprising or riot, and the Council's response was accordingly suppressive as their actions during the general strike revealed. Here the British officials once more failed to recognise, or refused to recognise, the characteristic actions of the May Fourth Movement that separated it from riot or mob. The most significant denominator was the May Fourth participants' recognition of their common interests that translated the potential for movement into collective action and this common solidarity was something that common riot or mob was able to construct only on a temporarily basis<sup>109</sup>. Throughout the early part of the Movement, the British officials' May Fourth discourse remained sceptical, but reasonably understanding towards the activities. The intensified encounter with the May Fourth demonstrations, and finally, June's general strike aggravated the hostile rhetoric, and this was followed by aggressive measures to suppress the Movement.

A co-operative approach between the Council and Fraser closed the SSU's office in the Settlement, secured extra British naval forces and justified all foreign officials' operations during the May Fourth Movement. As an alternative to verbal propaganda, the additional police, navy and volunteer forces were ordered to patrol the streets, to tear up posters and flags, and if necessary, to arrest those students who violated the Settlement's peace and order. Moreover, the new Expeditionary Forces were established and civil disturbance emergency regulations were implemented to restrain the Movement. In spite of Fraser's status as the leader of the British community, the British-run Council practised real decisive and executive power in Shanghai. Fraser's correspondence during the May Fourth Movement seemed to strengthen the image of him being a 'rubber stamp' for the Council's activities. The British government officials frequently dominated the foreign power relations in Shanghai and Beijing. Here, it is important to remember that

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<sup>5</sup>th edition, 1906.), pp. 1, 13-19.

neither the Consular Body in Shanghai nor the Diplomatic Body in Beijing had legal power over the Council's operations. The Court of Foreign Consuls held the exclusive right to prosecute the Council as a corporation, in a situation where the Council was sued, and furthermore, all the Land Regulation amendments were subject to diplomatic approval<sup>110</sup>. The Diplomatic Body sent instructions and memos of protest against the Council's heavy-handed operations during the May Fourth Movement, but apart from writing irritating comments there was nothing the diplomatic powers could do to alter Shanghai policy. The British Minister's remark after the May Fourth Movement's explained much of the Legation's attitude: "I have always endeavoured to refrain from unnecessary interference with the local affairs in Shanghai"<sup>111</sup>.

The police leaders had dissenting views about the Movement's origins and organisers, and from the beginning Hilton-Johnson evaluated the Movement as being a political revolt. Following the Council's May Fourth rhetoric, he implemented extreme measures to suppress the Movement. Not surprisingly, his plans formed a blueprint for police action during the general strike and his suggestions composed the core of the future security system in the International Settlement.

In the crucial period during the general strike, the British officials' May Fourth discourse was defined to establish common principles in order to understand the Movement. At this stage several distinctive features were repeatedly manifested. First, the Movement was an illegal act that threatened the Settlement's security, and therefore it was a "riot" or "rebellion" against the foreign authority. Second, the international or national political parties controlled the May Fourth activities. However, the British could not quite decide whether it was the Bolsheviks, the Guomindangs, the North/South

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<sup>109</sup> Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, pp. 4-5.

military leaders or the Germans who were orchestrating the Movement. Third, the fear of anti-foreign sentiment was constantly expressed as a possible future outcome after the May Fourth operations. Understandably the Boxer uprising and poisoning rumours played a significant part in enforcing British fears.

Parallel with the concerns of potential insurrection, the diverse rumours flourished in the city. The Boxer rumours particularly expressed not only symbolic collective fears, but also very realistic worries about how foreign society would act in an emergency situation. The Boxer rumours formed a metaphor for the fear of brutal cruelty and provided immediate images of the Chinese crowd attacking and killing the foreigners, as this had happened almost twenty years previously. Rapid spreading panic and mass hysteria were associated with the Boxer uprising and seemingly some of the May Fourth activities encouraged similar mental images. In this context, it was not unreasonable to sustain such images especially when the newspapers reported the success of the Movement around China. To complete the British officials' fears the attacks on Japanese residents had intensified, the general strike had closed Shanghai, and moreover, the students' peacekeeping troops were patrolling the streets and rumours of poisoned food and water supplies circulated. Such rumours therefore conveyed emotionally significant messages of general fear among the foreigners. The British officials' correspondence, however, provided no evidence that they associated the May Fourth Movement directly with the Boxer uprising, but obviously the rumours influenced their decisions and actions to suppress the May Fourth operations.

The British officials' reactions had an instant effect on the development of the May Fourth Movement, and this will be examined more closely in Chapters Five and Six. Some

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<sup>110</sup> *Land Regulations and Bye-Laws*, (Shanghai, 1923), pp.11-12.

initial results were obvious however. The Movement had to reorganise itself in order to continue operations inside the Settlement. Still, whatever measures the May Fourth demonstrators had taken to prevent unlawful operations in the Settlement, the Council instantly condemned all actions. The foreigners feared that the students' uniformed peacekeeping forces would take over the work of the SMP which patrolled the streets and restrained people from violence. Similarly, the May Fourth protagonists' flags, handbills and posters were supposed to emphasise the non-violent nature of the activities, but the British interpreted them differently and believed that the prevailing hegemony had been challenged by the protestors' written propaganda. Meanwhile, the foreign officials received regular reports from students and other May Fourth organisations explaining their objectives and stressing their willingness to co-operate with the Council.

Students had temporarily succeeded in uniting various Chinese classes of literate, merchants and poor people to join the general strike<sup>112</sup> and not only the Chinese people, but also many foreigners supported their cause. As a result, the May Fourth demonstrators' actions and operations challenged the Settlement's foreign administration in the city. The British officials especially were strongly defensive and tried desperately by all means to control the Movement, but all officials' life and work were inevitably affected by the May Fourth protests, boycotts and strikes. The British businessmen and missionaries however had their own views to express and a slightly different kind of Movement to describe, as the following chapters will explain.

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<sup>111</sup> PRO, FO671/447/566, Jordan to Jamieson, 9 January, 1920.

<sup>112</sup> For more detailed analysis on succeeding student-worker-merchant disunity see e.g. Mary Backus Rankin, "State and Society in Early Republican Politics, 1912-18", in Frederic Wakeman, Jr. and Richard Louis Edmonds (eds.), *Reappraising Republican China*, (Oxford, 2000), pp. 6-27.

### 3. 'OVERHEATED MARKETS' - THE BRITISH COMMERCIAL COMMUNITY AND THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

This chapter will consider the way in which the British business community perceived the May Fourth activities as an advantage and also as a threat to its presence in China. As argued in the previous chapter, there were various ways in which the British officials considered the activities deliberately destructive for the International Settlement in Shanghai. As the Shanghai official and business communities worked in close co-operation to maintain the foreign society's economic and political stability, it is essential to analyse the other half of this marriage.<sup>1</sup>

A primary objective of British foreign policy was to create a world market economy based on free trade, freedom of capital movements and a unified international monetary system. Therefore, the relationship between economics and politics was the key issue in British relations with China. At the dawn of twentieth century the Americans and Japanese had intensified their influence in China, whereas the World War had exhausted Britain, leaving her struggling with her own domestic and imperial problems. Generally, the rise of British economic power in the nineteenth century and the feeling of superiority which spread simultaneously with industrial progress at home and the expansion of territory abroad, was gradually weakening in China. Unrealistic aspirations of enormous Chinese markets in reality shrank to 2-3% of Britain's total exports between 1911-1937<sup>2</sup>. Britain, however, had to act to perpetuate her established position within the economic and political spheres of influence in China. In this sense, British interests were less important in terms of the domestic economy than in terms of the regional supremacy they represented. The war

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<sup>1</sup> In this research unless specially mentioned *the business community* or *the commercial community* refers to the British businessmen and the bankers.

<sup>2</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 238.

had offered a welcoming boost for British sales in the East, yet, the Armistice had brought a sharp cut in market prices. The Jardine, Matheson & Co.'s (Jardines) agent in Hankou complained that prices obtainable in Europe had dropped by about 50% since the peace negotiations began<sup>3</sup>. The prices of commodities were higher than companies were able to sustain, as during wartime normal processes of production and distribution had been restricted. Thus, prices had risen phenomenally. In spite of diminishing government exports to China the British companies' investments in property, industry, land, commerce and banking guaranteed their domination in Shanghai's municipality administration. Understandably, the businessmen's decisions had significant effects not only on each other but also in the larger sectors of China's economy, culture, society, politics and foreign affairs. As business community's interests and motives in China differed from those of the British officials and missionaries, their May Fourth rhetoric was based on different assumptions.

Since the opening of Shanghai as a treaty port, trade had shifted from Hong Kong -based business to cover larger regions of northern and western China, making Shanghai the most active trading port. This multifunctional economic centre was ideally situated at the mouth of Huangpu, a tributary of the Yangzi River, close to the sea. It was located approximately halfway along the coast and served as a centre not only for north-south trade, but also between the western and eastern parts of China. Furthermore, in Shanghai, the International Settlement's location was good, in comparison with the French Concession, as it had long shoreline, and the wharves had berthing accommodation even for the steamers. Successful

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<sup>3</sup> Cambridge University Library, Jardine, Matheson & Corporation Archives [hereafter JMA], Twentieth century correspondence, Semi-Official Correspondence exchanged between Shanghai and Other Ports [hereafter S/O Shanghai and Other Ports], August to September 1919, no. 32/65-81, W.S. Dupree, Hankou to Alfred Brooke-Smith, Shanghai, 14 August, 1919.

business was, however, strongly dependable on the internal peace in the country, and as will be demonstrated, the foreign traders willingly supported the means to maintain stability. In particular, British businessmen and bankers were conservative, but influential, and as a rule were prepared to protect their interests in Shanghai. The political authority that British businessmen possessed was not always accompanied by political responsibility and when the objective was to make profit, their first and foremost responsibility was to the clients and stockholders.

Jardines, established in 1832, was the largest foreign trading concern in China. Its massive twentieth century correspondence has so far not been researched, as the materials were only made available two or three years ago and have still not been examined by scholars. Hence, the materials provide a fresh perspective on the British expatriate society, life and business in China during the turbulent twentieth century. An independent part of Jardines was the British-Chinese Corporation and their materials form an extensive and previously non-researched part of the British presence in China. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, since its establishment in 1865, served not only as the British governmental and company trade financier in China, but also as banker to the Chinese government. A comprehensive collection of the bank's correspondence has remained and is invaluable in the analysis of the May Fourth influences among the business community. These three companies, along with the Butterfield and Swire Company, were the most influential agents in the formation of commercial politics around 1920 in Shanghai. Of the various multinational companies that were partly British owned, the British-American Tobacco Company is briefly discussed in relation to the May Fourth activities. The Asiatic Petroleum Company (today Shell), a joint venture between Britain

and the Netherlands, had opened offices in Shanghai in 1908 and saw the city as the most important trading centre in the East Asia. During the May Fourth Movement the company had many representatives in Shanghai, but unfortunately, the Shell archives do not provide any correspondence relating to their May Fourth activities<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, the commercial community used special pressure groups such as the China Association, the British Chamber of Commerce and the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce as instruments to implement their business strategies and political agendas relating to China and Asia as a whole. The associations' minutes and journals have been analysed in this research. The China pressure groups were established by British enterprise and bank directors and they possessed open and secret connections with the foreign and Chinese officials on both local and government levels. Inevitably the network stretched to the companies' headquarters in London, and via the Foreign Office to the British government. To incorporate the British enterprises' mutual interests, a member was appointed to another company's directorate, a manoeuvre which also strengthened horizontal integration within the mercantile community. Hence, Jardines frequently had a representative in the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank Corporation's directorate in London<sup>5</sup>.

### **3.1. 'Serious Inconvenience' Troubled Jardines**

Jardines had nearly a century of experience in trading across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and the company history reveals its excellent survival skills and ability to modify

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<sup>4</sup> Shell Group Archives, GHS/2b/24, The History of the Group, working papers -country files: China and Hong Kong 1891-1959, Personnel, agreements.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Collis, *Wayfoong: the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, (London, 1965), footnote in p. 155 and Appendix A. p. 257; Frank H.H.King, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking*

its activities throughout the turbulent nineteenth century in China.<sup>6</sup> Jardines provided various services such as buying and selling inside China and shipping products to Europe, India and America. It also promoted railways and founded banks and insurance companies. Altogether, it had positioned agents in twelve different cities and towns from Harbin to Hong Kong and from Chengdu to Shanghai. The number of representatives was augmented by an extensive network of Chinese middlemen, and therefore, Jardines' business covered most of the provinces. In Shanghai alone the company owned, for example, three cotton mills, a silk filature, a brewery, a coal company and an insurance company.<sup>7</sup>

At the time of the May Fourth Movement, Alfred Brooke-Smith was Jardines' Senior Director in Shanghai, the Council member of the Shanghai Municipal administration, and an active member of the British Chamber of Commerce, the China Association and the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce. Undoubtedly he was one of the three most influential British businessmen in Shanghai and besides his extremely omnipotent position in China, his views were widely respected in the Jardines' headquarters in London and at the Foreign Office. It is notable that he recognised immediately the profitable situation created by the Japanese boycott and encouraged Jardines to benefit from it. The company's

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*Corporation, III, The Hongkong Bank between the Wars and the Bank Interned 1919-1945: Return from Grandeur*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 46-47.

<sup>6</sup> Jardine, Matheson & Company's vivid nineteenth century trade is described in Robert Blake, *Jardine Matheson: Traders of the Far East*, (London, 1999); W.E. Cheong, *Mandarins and Merchants: Jardine Matheson & Co., a China agency of the early nineteenth century*, (Malmö, 1979); Maggie Keswick, (ed.) *A Thistle and Jade: A Celebration of 150 years of Jardine, Matheson & Co.*, (London, 1982); Edward LeFevour, *Western Enterprise in late Ch'ing China: A Selective Survey of Jardine, Matheson & Company's Operations, 1842-1895*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1970); Alain Le Pichon, *Aux origines de HongKong, Aspects de la civilisation commerciale à Canton: le fonds de commerce de Jardine, Matheson & Co. 1827-1839*, (Paris, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> JMA, Twentieth century correspondence, *passim*.

record profits probably provided him with incentive to express a surprisingly sympathetic view towards the May Fourth demonstrators in the International Settlement.<sup>8</sup>

Post-war universal financial stringency and the deflation in value of all commercial commodities had a depressing influence on all business and Jardines had been hit by the recession as severely as the other companies. Jardines had struggled to find new products, clients and markets to balance its China trade. Hence, there was a relentless search for marketing strategies to enhance the appeal of goods and to find potential customers. To make circumstances even worse, the fluctuation of currencies had made business and investments highly insecure and unprofitable. In contrast, the May Fourth protestors' economic weapon in the form of a strike at the Japanese factories and a boycott of Japanese products respectively, were remarkably profitable actions from Jardines' perspective. In these circumstances, the important short-term implication was a boost of Jardines' business which resulted in a multiplied demand when the prices increased. As it happened, most of their goods were cleared directly from the wharf, which allowed the foreign traders to keep the prices exceptionally high. Extra value for Jardines' sales was created by an invaluable business takeover from the Japanese companies and in terms of the business activities it revived the company's golden times during the World War. Auspicious trading conditions guaranteed Jardines' supportive opinions and reactions towards the Movement. As far as Jardines was concerned, the May Fourth boycotts had strengthened its influential position and presence even further.

The Chinese campaign against Japanese commodities was effective. Numerous Chinese consumers participated in the boycott. Consequently, Jardines succeeded in securing extra

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<sup>8</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, April to May 1919, no 6/1, Brooke-Smith to John Johnstone, Hong Kong, 12 May, 1919; S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June to July 1919, no 12/1, Brooke-Smith to Johnstone,

sales in sugar, seaweed, cotton, yarn, cloth and mill products, that is, commodities that had recently been delivered mainly by the Japanese. Jardines' boats were running down the river carrying more cargo than before, and meanwhile, the Japanese vessels were standing idle in the harbour. To avoid total bankruptcy, the Japanese enterprises were further humiliated by being forced to borrow money from Chinese banks at an extremely high interest rate.<sup>9</sup> During the following weeks, the May Fourth activities initially boosted all British trade throughout China. Since the business conditions continued to be beneficial for foreigners, except the Japanese, a Chinese protestor cleverly demonstrated it in the open letter to the Anglo-Americans.

"[...] Friends if you happened to be inconvenienced for having no beef for a day, please be patient with us. If we happened to put money in your pocket in our fight against Japanese goods, please be quiet. [...] English piece goods have gone up 20% since boycott started.[...]"<sup>10</sup>

However, in the longer run the success of the Shanghai May Fourth demonstrators' struggle caused a change in Jardines' tone, hitherto favourable as the full-scale general strike was causing "serious inconvenience, not to speak of losses". The Jardines subsidiaries, the China Coast Steam Navigation Co. and the Indo-China Steam Navigation Co. steamers, were gradually paralysed as their dockyard workers, seamen, coolies, engine drivers and firemen joined the patriotic movement and stopped working at the Shanghai wharf. The increasingly volatile shipping transportation was paralysed when the British rival, Butterfield and Swire, encountered similar problems with their boats in Shanghai. As a final blow, stagnation of business became apparent when the steamers' cargo, already

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29 May, 1919; Brooke-Smith's JMA correspondence *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> *Chinese Maritime Customs, I, Statistical Series: Nos. 2 to 5, Foreign Trade of China, 1920*, (Shanghai, 1921), pp. 8-9; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 12/1, Brooke-Smith to Johnstone, 29 May, 1919; no 12/85, Qingdao Agency Business Report for May 1919; no 14/135-147 Hankou Business Report for May 1919; PRO, FO371/3695 no 111300, Consul Cecil Kirke to Jordan, 5 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/29 British Consul at Jiujiang to Jordan, 5 June, 1919.

cleared by customs, was now held up in the port, as the Chinese workers refused to handle it. Not only the workers forcefully supported the Movement, but the Chinese merchants also refused to buy, sell or ship any products.<sup>11</sup>

An interesting report at the height of the general strike stated that a large Japanese mill was attacked and was forced to close. Jardines, meanwhile, succeeded in keeping their mill running in spite of Chinese public pressure.<sup>12</sup> It is true that the May Fourth activities were systematically mobilised against the Japanese presence and politics in China. The May Fourth strikes against the Japanese represented the articulation of widely approved political demands, and consequently, workers in the Japanese enterprises were susceptible to demonstrators' manipulation. On the other hand, the actions against Western firms were more difficult to justify, but at this stage Chinese national sentiment was becoming more powerful than rational arguments to keep factories running. The Jardines' mill, however, seemed to represent an exceptional case among the Western enterprises in Shanghai as many of the other enterprises were forced to close their doors due to the workers' strike. It is possible therefore that the manager's inflexible attitude on the one hand, and Jardines' good working conditions on the other were strong incentives to make the workers remain in the factory, even though it meant extremely long working days of 11 3/4-13 3/4 hours. Overall abuse of authority in the form of striking, beating and squeezing was apparently less practised in the Jardines' mill than in the Japanese or Chinese establishments. As another convenience, the Jardine mill had organised a night school for young men and Jardines had a tradition of paying advances promptly. According to the Jardines directors'

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<sup>10</sup> *China Press*, 8 June, 1919, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> *China Press*, 11 June, 1919, p. 4; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 14/1-12, Brooke-Smith to D.G.M. Bernard, Hong Kong, 11 June, 1919.

strategy, the skilled, well-fed and housed labourer was the element of future success.<sup>13</sup> In terms of local twentieth century standards Jardines' working conditions were advanced in comparison with the Japanese or Chinese mills. In practice, though, the fear of losing work was probably an even stronger motive to continue working. With so much at stake, the Jardines' mill workers remained at work throughout the May Fourth Movement.

At the same time, Shanghai's Chinese cotton industry received special attention from the May Fourth protestors. This was a logical outcome of the national goods campaign to promote Chinese products that had been actively advocated among the cotton manufacturers in response to the May Fourth students' need for white uniforms, banners, caps etc. continued throughout the summer of 1919. While the Chinese manufacturers were unable to produce enough fabric for the patriotic movement's requirements, the British cotton entrepreneurs were perceived as a non-conflicting alternative for the Japanese cotton goods. Thus, the growing consumption may have saved the Jardines' factories from closure. These developments initially increased the British post-strike cotton sales, but later endangered smaller businesses in China as the demand and production was soon severely imbalanced. As we shall see, the May Fourth activities eventually caused complete disorder among the British cotton traders.

Brooke-Smith's position on the Council was in accordance with the Jardines' corporation tradition. Thus, the London headquarters required the Jardines' director to join the Council and similar was the compulsory-like membership of the other China pressure groups. But

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<sup>12</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 723; SMA, U1-91-18, Shanghai Municipal Police, Manager of the Nagai Wate Kaisha Ltd to McEuen, 9 June, 1919.

<sup>13</sup> Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese and Chinese Corporations in China 1880-1937*, (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 99-100; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June to July, 1919, no 25/1-15, Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 14 July, 1919; JMA, Semi-Official Letters Shanghai to Hong Kong, 1925, see reports of July, 1925, to the Consulate; *NCH*, 7 June, 1919, p. 657.

the private correspondence revealed his real opinion as follows, "I hate like anything going to the Council it is a poor game and the firm's business interests me more than Municipal affairs". Jardines' political dominance was practised in the treaty port's foreign municipal administration as representatives were placed in both Hankou and Tianjin.<sup>14</sup> In Jardines' case the paralysed markets of Shanghai were hit by alarming news of strikes and boycotts in the countryside and other towns. Moreover, all the financial transactions were risky as the continuing considerable currency fluctuation confused the situation. However, Jardines, followed by the other foreign companies, were not willing to adopt any direct measures towards the May Fourth protestors, and as explained in the preceding chapter, the Council's notifications provided an official and anonymous channel to express their hard-line policy. Brooke-Smith was present at every Council meeting where the repressive measures to suppress the May Fourth demonstrations were implemented and although his earlier comments supported Chinese public opinion, there is no evidence that he ever disagreed with the Council's decisions. Obviously, in the situation, the company's interests were more important than any personal opinions.

The British commercial community's fear of growing anti-foreign sentiment, similar to the British officials' anticipations, was again articulated in Brook-Smith's predictions on Chinese politics. In his arguments, Chinese patriotism was frequently affiliated or confused with rising anti-foreign feeling and the May Fourth protestors' post-strike atmosphere was predicted to advocate anti-foreign attitudes. Another of Brooke-Smith's assumption related to the May Fourth Movement's consequences was that if in future either the Chinese

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<sup>14</sup> British Municipal Council, Hankou, *Annual Report, 1919*, p. 2; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 19/29-32 E.P. Peters, Tianjin to Brooke-Smith, 28 June, 1919; no 23/1-8 Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 9 July, 1919; JMA, S/O Shanghai to Hong Kong, Originals, January-March, 1920, no 97-98 Brooke-Smith to Johnstone, 6 February, 1920.

government or the Council treated the Chinese residents wrongly, another uprising would certainly occur. The incidents in the summer of 1919 stimulated Brooke-Smith to advocate a strengthening of the Settlement's foreign police forces by suggesting the recruitment of one hundred new men to secure political and economic stability in the city. The Council's minutes revealed a heated discussion of an urgent need to build up a modern security system to guarantee foreigners' safety during future conflicts. It was, however, Brooke-Smith's authoritative remarks and his discussions with Chinese informants, and finally, his profound analysis of current political and financial situation that convinced other Council members. Accordingly, at this meeting the immediate need was recognised to order armoured cars and to strengthen the Settlement's armament.<sup>15</sup> In tracing the reasoning for Brooke-Smith's arguments we find that they were undeniably based both on his personal and Jardines' experiences during the May Fourth strikes. Consequently, his main concern was to secure the continuation of their trade. Implementing his ideas into the framework of 'peace and order in the International Settlement', he convinced his colleagues of the emerging urgency to enforce new measures to protect the *status quo* in the Settlement. Since the spring of 1919, Brooke-Smith's May Fourth rhetoric had become more inflexible towards the students' activities and more protective, at first towards the trade balance and secondly, towards the foreigners' quasi-colonial position in Shanghai.

As soon as Shanghai, the commercial heart of China, stopped beating, various Jardines' agents in the interior saw a decrease in their business. In addition to the stoppage of ordering products, the railway and river communications to Chengdu, Chongqing, Hankou, Qingdao, Tianjin cities were interrupted along with Jardines' business between the interior

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<sup>15</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 14/44-46 Brooke-Smith to C.H. Ross, London, 20 June, 1919; no 15/1-13 Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 19 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-23, Shanghai Municipal

and Shanghai. The trade relations between Shanghai and other cities in the west and north were completely reciprocal and as a result, the interior agents' business relied on the Shanghai merchants orders, which in turn was heavily dependent on the internal peace of the city.<sup>16</sup> Shortly afterwards, Jardines' own workers provided an ultimate surprise when some of the reliable Chinese managers, or compradors<sup>17</sup> as they were called, refused to consummate their business. Even if these incidents did not result in the complete cessation of business in the countryside, they provided a serious warning of the national movement's potential to interfere with Jardines' trade. Moreover, the boycotts crossed national borders rapidly and deals were cancelled in Japan when the Chongqing and Chengdu mint managers refused to buy Japanese copper that Jardines had shipped from Kobe, Japan.<sup>18</sup>

Qingdao, the old German lease in Shandong province, represented a financially strategic territory not only for Jardines, but also for the whole British business group. The city had an excellent harbour for water transportation, as it was ice-free and suitable for the ocean ships. Moreover, it had railway connections to Tianjin and Beijing and to the western interior areas and with these advantages it challenged British business life in Tianjin which had already been threatened by the Japanese entrepreneurs. The Jardines agent's feisty message attempted to unite the British businessmen in pursuing the country's interests in Qingdao. More importantly, it revealed a desire to form shared British attitudes towards the

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Police, the Shanghai Municipal Council Minutes, 28 November, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> *China Press*, 8 June, 1919, p. 4; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 15/43 J.F. Owen, Chongqing to Dupree, Hankou, 12 June, 1919; no 22/64-65 Qingdao Agency Business Report for June, 1919; no 23/84-85 Chengdu Agency Business Report for June, 1919; no 23/86-93 Tianjin Agency Business Report for June, 1919.

<sup>17</sup> The comprador was the foreign company's Chinese manager or middleman in China and he was employed on contract to its Chinese side. For more detailed study of the compradors see Yen-p'ing Hao, *The Comprador in Nineteenth Century China: Bridge between East and West*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

<sup>18</sup> JMA, Semi-Official Letters from Yokohama to Hong Kong [hereafter S/O Yokohama to Hong Kong], 1919, no 158-159 [most likely J.F. Owen] Chongqing to C. Chicken, Kobe, Japan, 25 June, 1919; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 22/39-40 A.E. Smith, Harbin to Brooke-Smith, 30 June, 1919.

trade politics in the area. Ironically, the Jardines agent's comments on the issue seemed quite irrelevant, because the British had already succeeded in securing the Japanese trade for themselves during the summer of 1919.<sup>19</sup>

Jardines formed the May Fourth rhetoric, which in many respects followed closely and was intertwined with the British officials' perceptions in Shanghai. Not surprisingly, when the strikes disrupted sales, Jardines relied on the Council's policy in the Settlement. Consequently, the widely distributed correspondence around the country instigated shared expectations of how to react towards the Movement. In the short term, the regional and economic power struggle with Japan was the determining factor in Jardines' politics. It was related to the Shandong question and undeniably this fear was reflected in the company's discussions and especially articulated in the arguments relating to the May Fourth's legacy. As I have already discussed, Brooke-Smith required more than the mere application of standard operating procedures in a non-routine business environment, caused by the May Fourth Movement. In the long term, Jardines' objective was to stabilise the trading systems and return to the profitable pre-strike conditions when only Japanese trade was boycotted. Therefore, the May Fourth rhetoric defined Jardines' further strategies, which were later realised as the requirement for a revised defence policy and also as a willingness to obstruct the Chinese representation on the Council, and finally, as an eagerness to support regulations to licence the press in the Settlement. Jardines' May Fourth analysis revealed various presumptions of their presence in China. It was based on the principle of free trade, but in reality, the concept was often interpreted as solely a Western right, excluding for example Russian and Japanese traders. In addition, it reflected the British imperial interests

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<sup>19</sup> *British Chamber of Commerce Journal* [hereafter *BCCJ*], Shanghai, vol. IV, no 6, July 1919, pp. 89-91; JMA, S/O Shanghai to Other Ports, August - September, 1919, no 36/42-45 J.W. Bateman, Qingdao to

in China and in the whole of Asia. The May Fourth discussion certainly reflected local foreigners' political and economic fears of the Chinese community's expanded presence and influence in the International Settlement. Furthermore, it clearly expressed the British desires for their future life in Shanghai.

The British commercial community's hegemonic stability was shattered after the June strikes. Earlier weeks' profitable business secured from the Japanese merchants was brought almost to a complete standstill in June 1919. The limited remaining business was characterised by considerable fluctuation in prices and trade was therefore highly unstable and vulnerable to speculation. Commercial instability increased rapidly as the local stock markets closed down following the Chinese banks' suspension of business. The closure of the native banks in Shanghai was followed by restricted transactions of the Chinese bank drafts and cash, and eventually, limited sales across China.<sup>20</sup> In the words of a bank manager, "the nightmare situation" progressed among the British bankers, when the Nanjing mint personnel decided to join the patriotic strike and stop the coinage of dollars. The direct outcome was a cessation of circulation of currency, and later the Chinese prohibited money export to Shanghai and this decision was potentially going to force the foreign banks to shut down.<sup>21</sup>

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Brooke-Smith, 27 August, 1919.

<sup>20</sup> *BCCJ*, vol. IV, no 6, July 1919, p. 102; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 741-743.

### 3.2. The HSBC Encountered 'Nightmares'

There is no doubt that China's financial stability depended upon private foreign bankers, and accordingly, their decision to invest acquired considerable political influence in the nation's domestic and international issues. The bankers were said to be the most influential unofficial British people in China, and ultimately their predominance was above any other civil group in China. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), as the largest foreign bank in China, formed the hardcore of bankers, and it played an important role in advising the internally weak and fragmented Chinese government on monetary and banking policies. It also implemented schemes that were beneficial to British investors and businesses in China. Public loans for railway construction and other infrastructure projects and in 1910's especially, the direct political loans to the Republican-era governments guaranteed the bank's indisputable influence in Chinese politics. The authority to issue banknotes was also an important contribution to the foreign business services in China. In Britain, the HSBC's resolutions were frequently decisive in directing the course of imperial foreign policy. Hence, from the end of nineteenth century onwards the HSBC stood as the British Foreign Office's financial arm that supported the British commercial and territorial interests in China.<sup>22</sup> However, the bank's functions were vulnerable to unpredictable local politics, as seemed to happen during the era of the May Fourth Movement. In order to understand the bank's reactive policy, their May Fourth rhetoric will now be evaluated.

The British government's decision to exclude the British Minister at Beijing, Sir John Jordan, from the Versailles Peace Conference evidently disillusioned the bank's demand to

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<sup>21</sup> HSBC Holdings plc, Group Archives [hereafter HSBC], SHG II/60 Shanghai Managerial Correspondence, A.G. Stephen, Shanghai to N.F. Stabb, Hong Kong, 18 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/45 Fraser to Jordan, 10 June, 1919.

have a powerful participant in Paris to represent the British economic interests in China. This disappointment explained partly the bank's attitude to the Peace Conference, and initially, they shared the Chinese feeling of disappointment and betrayal after the spring of 1919 negotiations. Beijing manager E.G. Hillier, was dissatisfied with the part played by the League of Nation in the peace process and perceived "the integrity of China" as a meaningless concept. In terms of political failure the bank blamed all 'the Big Powers' namely Britain, the USA, France and Japan for betraying China, but in particular American policy seemed to reflect double standards in relation to its politics in East Asia.<sup>23</sup> The bank itself was hardly in a position to accuse anyone, as it found no difficulty in discarding British ideological baggage in order to trade with war enemies. On the contrary, the bank traded equally with all applications which were found credit-worthy. Rumours of the Japanese government's massive loans to China's military factions added tensions in the banking world, and in so far as the Peace Conference had not been willing to constrain the Japanese expansion in the East Asia, it challenged the British financiers to organise similar loans to China<sup>24</sup>.

Like some other contemporaries, Hillier feared that possible Chinese reaction towards the Big Powers' politics might be comparable to "the madness in 1900", that is, the Boxer uprising. It has to be remembered that Hillier was one of 'the old China hands' and his career in China had passed the milestone of 35 years at the HSBC office and before that he had been working for Jardines in Hong Kong. In spite of vivid 'Boxer images', he had no past experiences of the Boxer uprising as he had been on leave in England in 1900. Yet

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<sup>22</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 238; E.W. Edwards, *British Diplomacy and Finance in China, 1895-1914*, (Oxford, 1987). For an interesting analysis of the HSBC's long history see Frank H.H. King's four volumes *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*.

<sup>23</sup> HSBC, K.1.7, King letters 1919, E.G. Hillier, Beijing to C.S. Addis, London, 13 May, 1919.

foreigners' collective 'mental images' were concretely part of his reality, because he was almost totally blind. He was not able to see the May Fourth demonstrators or their activities, and thus, his May Fourth experience was completely based on other peoples' visual recounts.<sup>25</sup> As in the officials' case, the collective memories were maintained also among the British bankers. Thus, these past images were projected onto the highly ambiguous May Fourth atmosphere and the situation was interpreted through collective memories. In Hillier's case, he had created an association between the Boxer's mass activities after the Germans' seizure of Qingdao as a sphere of influence in 1900, and the May Fourth actions in 1919, when Qingdao was intended to be transferred to Japan. Hillier's arguments were based on the Western powers' political situation in China in 1900 and 1919, and according to his observation, conditions appeared to be similar. Even if the Boxers' massacre was definitely on his mind, his analysis emphasised political aspects of the situation particularly in Beijing. Another one of his 'prophecies' coincided with Brooke-Smith's and the Shanghai Municipal Council's warnings. Therefore, a fear of increasing internal troubles in China seemed to be prevalent in Hillier's mind.

At this point it is important to recognise that despite the gravity of the situation, Hillier remained supportive towards the Movement in Beijing, and by doing so he offered a more positive counter narrative alongside that of his British colleagues' antagonistic approaches in Shanghai. In general, the British officials', businessmen and bankers' opinions tended to be more understanding towards the students' activities in the northern cities of Beijing,

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<sup>24</sup> HSBC, K.1.7, King letters 1919, Hillier to Stabb, 21 May, 1919.

<sup>25</sup> HSBC, K.1.7, King letters 1919, HSBC Beijing to Stephen, 3 March, 1919; Hillier, Beijing to Addis, London, 13 May, 1919; Hillier to Stabb, 21 May, 1919; HSBC, SHG II/60 Shanghai Managerial Correspondence, Stephen to Hillier, 25 February, 1919; King, *History of the HSBC*, vol. III, p. 27; Frank H.H. King, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, II, The Hongkong Bank in the Period of Imperialism and War, 1895-1918, Wayfoong, the Focus of Wealth*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 164-165.

Tianjin and Qingdao. Apparently the British May Fourth reactions were related to the political and economic influence in each city. This detail emphasises how differently British officials and businessmen perceived themselves in Shanghai, compared with cities elsewhere. In reality, the British had more influence in local Shanghai politics than in any other treaty port in China. The International Settlement's *status quo* became the central slogan for political and economic stability in Shanghai. Later, in the 1920's, this imperialistic attitude was described as the 'Shanghai Mind'<sup>26</sup> by a visiting British journalist.

In Shanghai, the HSBC manager A.G. Stephen who also had decades of experience in administering China's financial policies, opposed Hillier's May Fourth rhetoric. Earlier in the spring Stephen's pro-British attitude led him to accuse the China Association of "pernicious and unpatriotic agitation". Furthermore he warned the association of their "Hunward policies". His German antagonism was obvious, as his son had died in the World War. It is possible that this outburst was related to the personal arguments within the association where Stephen was a committee chairman. Because of this complaint and his actions, he was temporarily removed from the chair.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, this incident illustrated his public patriotic British and anti-German attitude, which in turn created the framework for his judgements on the May Fourth Movement.

Stephen's financial nightmare was caused by the Nanjing mint's closure and the cessation of circulation of currency, in other words, incidents that on their own caused the bank to lose control over money transaction into Shanghai. Unluckily for the bank, the strike had

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<sup>26</sup> Arthur Ransome, *The Chinese Puzzle*, (London, 1927), pp. 28-32.

<sup>27</sup> HSBC, SHG II/60 Shanghai Managerial Correspondence, Stephen to Stabb, 15 March, 1919; King, *History of the HSBC*, vol. III, pp. 12, 25.

coincided with the post-war depreciation of dollars<sup>28</sup> and the bank's cash stocks were limited because it had recently lent large quantities of dollars outside the city. The bank had been momentarily left with insufficient cash reserves and the uncertain financial situation prevented the money flow back to the bank. Another blow came when twelve Chinese banks suddenly decided to suspend their businesses, partly for patriotic reasons, but the general cash shortage had also accelerated this process. As a consequence, all the foreign banks headed by the HSBC were in trouble.<sup>29</sup> Speculations - which appeared to be the business and finance community's concept for rumours - over the impact of the strike had caused instability in Shanghai and the panicking Chinese investors had started to cash their notes. After the Chinese banks closure investors turned to the foreign banks, but the foreign bankers were completely unprepared for this action. In fact, the HSBC had no cash stock left due to its earlier investments. As already explained, the closure restricted transactions of Chinese bank drafts and cash, and inevitably the local banks were not able to meet their obligations to the foreign banks. In addition, when business was at a standstill, the merchants and investors were not able to pay their loans back to the banks. The Japanese banks, particularly, relied on the HSBC's survival ability and were eager to continue normal business in spite of the tense political situation.<sup>30</sup> As a result, the restricted monetary transactions seemed to paralyse the trade within the city and in the interior.

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<sup>28</sup> Foreign bankers used several currencies in China and the exchange process was a complex mixture of the Hong Kong dollars, the Shanghai taels, the Mexican dollars and silver, and their exchange rate was compared with sterling. King, *The History of the HSBC*, vol. III, p. xxxv.

<sup>29</sup> *China Press*, 8 June, 1919, p. 4; HSBC, K.1.7, King letters 1919, Stephen to Stabb, 17 June, 1919; *NCDN*, 14 June, 1919, p. 741.

<sup>30</sup> HSBC, SHG II/60 Shanghai Managerial Correspondence, Stephen to Stabb, 18 June, 1919; HSBC, SHG II/48 Tianjin Managerial Correspondence, 1919, A.B. Lowson, Tianjin to A.C. Hynes, Shanghai, 10 June, 1919.

With the financial world of Shanghai in chaos, the foreign bankers urged the Senior Consul of the International Settlement, D. Siffert to alert the Diplomatic Body in the capital to persuade Chinese central government to stabilise the situation. This manoeuvre prompted an emergency meeting of the Diplomatic Body but the capital's diplomats were apparently as confused as their counterparts in Shanghai and too cautious to react promptly. In addition, they were hesitant to take any radical measures in order to manipulate the Chinese government. The internal report recounted the diplomats' fear of arousing already nervous Chinese public opinion even further, and by practising extremely prudent politics they rejected the bankers' request and demanded further information in the form of required help.<sup>31</sup>

What determined the bankers' actions was the fact that recently ended World War had dislocated the economic system and the resulting world depression had made the bankers lose their confidence in the 'political wire-pullers', as the politicians were called. Therefore, the bankers began to secure for themselves a more active role in local and international politics, sometimes in a more subtle and invisible manner than the diplomats. Hence, the HSBC had no intention of relying solely on the politicians' attempts and they had already implemented a supplementary plan. The bank manager, Stephen, presumably personally instigated the rumour of cash arriving from Hong Kong, as \$ 5 000 000 cash reserves were said to arrive to rescue the bank and its clients. Stephen had indeed asked for \$ 500 000 to be sent to Shanghai to reassure the community and to stabilise the financial world, but the sum had multiplied in transit and these speculations were never denied. The rumours

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<sup>31</sup> PRO, FO228/3352, 148ème Séance du Corps Diplomatique, 11 Juin, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/49, 50 Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, Beijing to Jordan, 11 June, 1919; Dean's circular, Beijing, 11 June, 1919.

eventually calmed the situation and according to Stephen's satisfactory explanation, they saved the HSBC's Shanghai branch from closure.<sup>32</sup>

Undoubtedly, there was a difference between the rumours feared in the business community and in the official and missionary communities. The rumours and speculation related to circulation of money were dreaded in commercial circles, but they differed from missionaries' or officials' Boxer rumours in the sense that the latter type of stories were greatly encouraged by violence and the threat of physical harm. In this respect the May Fourth rumours' had encoded the imagined collective threat that was possessed by one class to another or one race to another, and therefore, the imagined "outside"<sup>33</sup> of the British world in China was expressed in the form of the Boxer threat. When the Boxer rumours were unnerving Shanghai's populace and while anxiety was being aggravated by the water and food poisoning rumours, the British municipal officers attempted to control and terminate them. In contrast, as happened during the May Fourth Movement, the business related rumours were sometimes purposely created and distributed to maintain trade and banking services throughout unstable political and financial times. The British commercial community used rumours skilfully as a tool to circulate news and the process involved many participants including their Chinese and foreign clients. Both Jardines and the HSBC represented the British political and economic oligarchy. Therefore, continuation of business throughout strikes was unquestionably a matter of prestige and honour, reinforced by a fear of financial losses.

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<sup>32</sup> HSBC, K.1.7, King letters, 1919, Stephen to Stabb, 17 June, 1919; HSBC, SHG II/60 Shanghai Managerial Correspondence, Stephen to Stabb, 18 June, 1919.

### 3.3. S.F. Mayers, Observer Connecting the Communities

An insider's view of the interaction between the British commercial and official community is personified both in the profile of Sidney Francis Mayers, Director of the British and Chinese Corporation (BCC)<sup>34</sup> and in his May Fourth discussion. He arrived China in 1895, aged 22, afterwards he had over 14 years tenure in the British consular service. Following in his father's footsteps, Mayers had had a successful career initially as Vice-Consul and Mixed Court Assessor in Shanghai, and at the time of his resignation he was the Assistant and Acting Chinese Secretary at the British legation in Beijing. Moreover, his family connections were influential as his brother worked for the Chinese Maritime Customs. Mayers was one among many British Foreign Service's men to be recruited by a private foreign company in China. In 1909 his ambitions led him to choose a more profitable career and he left the diplomatic service in order to become a highly competent director of the BCC.<sup>35</sup> In this position he represented the British diplomatic service's, the HSBC's and the Jardines' economic and political interests. Extensive consular, legation and business connections afforded him easy access to uncensored private and official sources, which were otherwise classified materials closed to the public. Indeed, Mayers' May Fourth analysis reflected his in-depth knowledge of Chinese domestic and international affairs in the after-war situation. Consequently, his reports offered invaluable guidelines for all British people in contemporary China. Moreover, his May Fourth rhetoric provided glimpses of collective British fears but also common hopes connected with the Movement.

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<sup>33</sup> Ramsay, *The Ideology of the Great Fear*, p. 242.

<sup>34</sup> The British-Chinese Corporation (BCC) was founded in 1898 by the HSBC and the Jardines who acted jointly as the BCC's managing agents in China. The company's function was to conduct public works and undertakings and acquire working rights in China. King, *The History of the HSBC*, vol. II, pp. 295-298.

<sup>35</sup> Coates, *China Consuls*, pp. 352, 505, 523; JMA, Semi-Official Correspondence 1900/1911, envelope title: Letters from Hong Kong & Shanghai to W. Keswick, London, 1903-1911, Gresson, Hong Kong to Mr. Keswick, London, 24 December 1909.

Although based in Beijing, Mayers was in Shanghai during the first weeks of the May Fourth Movement and thereafter evaluated the situation in the capital and Shanghai. Instead of perceiving the Movement as economic aggression executed by the boycotts, strikes and demonstrations as understood by Brooke-Smith and Stephen, Mayers' perceptions were different from those of his colleagues. Mayers' descriptions of the Movement changed from "a state of great confusion" in May 1919, to an "outburst of popular feeling" in June. Finally, in July he defined the Movement as "the most remarkable manifestation of national consciousness".<sup>36</sup> During these one and half months his perspective changed notably, which is a significant point, in that Mayers appeared to present exceptionally 'progressive' opinions, whereas his British colleagues' attitudes, in contrast, tended to grow more negative as the Movement deepened. Once more the different reactions among the British in the capital and in Shanghai were visible. In the latter city foreign trade and administration privileges were fiercely defended when the May Fourth activists were perceived as a threat to an existing system.

The political stirrings affected to a part of Mayers' May Fourth rhetoric and he blamed the Americans for not living up to their principles, and in doing so he seemed to emphasise their failure to implement President Wilson's thesis to assist China against Japanese invasion. In the same letter Mayers expressed not only the British economic fears of post-war competition with the Japanese and the Americans, but he also revealed the unchanging nationalistic power struggle between the Western countries and Japan over regional hegemony in Asia. The international political threat was expressed in the form of the old war enemy and he associated the Germans' persistent influence in China with the May

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<sup>36</sup> Cambridge University Library, the British and Chinese Corporation Archive [hereafter BCC], box 75, Letters to G. Jamieson, 1911-1920, S.F. Mayers to G. Jamieson, London, 17 May, 1919; 14 June, 1919; 7/8

Fourth activities. Mayers confidently argued that German firms had funded the pro-German Chinese who now actively encouraged violence among students, whereas abolition of the German extraterritoriality rights was thought to result, in exchange, in a separate peace between China and Germany. Apparently his thoughts followed similar lines to those of the British Commander-in-Chief of China Station, F.C.T. Tudor, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Tudor predicted that the Chinese would turn towards German officers and soldiers to receive moral and material support, whereas Mayers believed that their old German competitors in the business world were manipulating Chinese domestic politics. At the same time, ideological fear was, once again, built up around the Bolshevik doctrines and Mayers was absolutely certain that the Russians were mastering the Movement behind the scenes.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Mayers and Tudor appeared to continue the British wartime propaganda with the calculated purpose of instilling in the British business and official community certain convictions inherited from the war.

Mayers speculated that Chinese political factions had assisted the Movement and alleged that the leaders of the Southern and Northern military parties had acted as student agitators. According to Mayers' predictions, the *Jin-bu-dang*<sup>38</sup> -party had encouraged students to organise boycotts and strikes, and public indignation has been demonstrated to scare their Chinese political opponents and the Japanese militarists. Mayers noticed that in a situation where the *Jin-bu-dang* was to return to control the Chinese government, foreign assistance

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July, 1919.

<sup>37</sup> BCC, box 75, Mayers to Jamieson, 17 May, 1919; 14 June, 1919; 7/8 July, 1919; PRO, FO228/2986 M.W. Lampson's notes of information given to Mr. Mayers by General Ting, 11 June, 1919.

<sup>38</sup> The *Jin-bu-dang*, or the Progressive Party was established by Yuan Shikai in 1913 to integrate all anti-Nationalist politicians and it formed the parliament in 1913-1914. Richard T. Phillips, *China since 1911*, (Hampshire, 1996), pp. 19-20.

was required. Therefore the Consortium's<sup>39</sup> financial aid and large measures of foreign control had to be implemented. The British newspapers came to the same conclusion, namely promoting the necessity for its direct intervention in China's political affairs, if certain political factions were to take power in Beijing. No doubt the local press's arguments inspired Mayers' perceptions.<sup>40</sup>

By understanding China's contemporary political environment, Mayers, succeeded in formulating a comprehensive list of domestic and international parties as potential actors in the May Fourth Movement. A mixture of nationalistic, political and economic British interests were filtered into his May Fourth rhetoric, interwoven with sympathetic comments on Chinese intense feeling against the Japanese. This, according to Mayers, was supported by all the foreigners in the area.

#### **3.4. Weathering the Stormy Markets**

It is necessary, at this stage, to evaluate the wider commercial community's activities during the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai. Japanese predominance in China was based not only on the political articles of the 'Twenty-one Demands', but also on effective trade and investments. As time went on, Chinese protestors found it intolerable to purchase

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<sup>39</sup> The first International Banking Consortium of 1909 was negotiated between the American, British, French, German, Japanese and Russian Groups that consisted of banks and enterprises. The Consortium's original purpose was to manage the Qing-dynasty by controlling its supply of capital by proving loans and acquiring contracts to build e.g. railways and mines. In 1919 the New Consortium negotiations were under discussion and the treaty included all other old consortium members except Germany and finally it was signed in October 1920. Hence, the idea was to eliminate special claims in spheres of influence and to open China for co-operative and international development. For further information see Warren I. Cohen, "America's New Order for East Asia: The Four Power Financial Consortium and China 1919-1946", in Kwan Wai So and Warren I. Cohen, *Essays in the History of China and Chinese-American Relations*, (Michigan, 1982), pp. 44-52; Dayer, *Bankers and Diplomats in China 1917-1925*, pp. xvi, 49-56, 75-82; King, *The History of the HSBC*, vol. II, pp. 397-415; King, *The History of the HSBC*, vol. III, pp. 84-98.

Japanese products or use their shipping services because of the initiation of the Movement. Instead, they encouraged fellow citizens to buy national products, and as a result the Japanese merchandise was rejected as being of inferior quality and the use of Chinese commodities was pronounced a patriotic act. If national goods were not available, American and British equivalents were requested to be used.

The May Fourth demonstrators supported the cotton industry, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, and the continuous need for cotton products such as yarn and cloth brought substantial sales for businesses. Shanghai was traditionally an important centre for the Chinese cotton industry: out of sixteen foreign cotton mills in China all but one was situated in the city<sup>41</sup>. At this point there was no fear of Japanese rivalry as the boycotts had terminated their operations and the markets were wide open for other foreign manufacturers and retailers. Within weeks the demand and production of cotton was imbalanced which caused sharp price rises and record results for the companies, and for the smaller British entrepreneurs it provided a refreshing boost in sales. The D. & Co.'s performance throughout 1919-1921 illustrates how unexpected and far reaching the May Fourth incidents were in Shanghai and how quickly, in less than two years, enormous expectations had been replaced with an atmosphere of impending bankruptcy.

Prompted by an increased demand for cotton commodities and trusting in over-optimistic predictions of future trade, the D. & Co.<sup>42</sup> placed huge cotton orders for manufactures in Britain to supply overheated Chinese markets as their native dealers were lacking in cotton products. Encouragingly high prices, up to an 80% rise between the summer of 1919 and

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<sup>40</sup> BCC, box 75, Mayers to Jamieson, 14 June, 1919; *NCH*, 17 May, 1919, p. 405; *NCH*, 24 May, 1919, pp. 491-492.

the spring of 1920, advanced the value of cotton and the British manufacturers were in a position to determine their own terms for deliveries. Hence, they took more orders than they could realistically manufacture on time. As a result, when the products were finally shipped to Shanghai, after several months' delay, and in some cases after one year, Japanese cheap cotton had already broken the trade embargo and the prices had collapsed. To make the situation worse, the Chinese dealers did not carry out their contracts and refused to buy expensive goods from the D. & Co. At the same time valuable cotton goods were piling up in the D. & Co.'s warehouses and huge profits were turning into severe losses. A 50% drop of in the value of their stocks had paralysed the company's trade. The unreliable business damaged the D. & Co.'s performance on many levels and finally in 1921, the firm had to appeal for financial assistance from the HSBC to avoid complete bankruptcy.<sup>43</sup> This example typified small foreign firms since they usually had no interest beyond Shanghai, assuming that their interests in the city would serve the whole foreign business community's interests.

In contrast to small foreign companies, the Chinese commercial world was developing faster than was generally expected. During the World War a marked decline in imports to China had promoted the development of national capital, which was promptly invested in local tobacco or cotton industry. As a result, 32 cotton mills were established between 1920-1922, most of them in Shanghai. Inevitably stiff competition in the textile industry grew as the May Fourth boycotts had enabled the Chinese industry to develop

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<sup>41</sup> Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of History, *Wusi yundong zai Shanghai shiliao xuanji* (Selected historical materials on the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai), (Shanghai, 1960), table between pages 8 and 9.

<sup>42</sup> The HSBC archivist's condition to make a reference to their clients is to use only the company's initials.

<sup>43</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 5, June 1919, pp. 61,66; no 6, July 1919, pp. 98, 102; HSBC, SHG 764.1 Correspondence between Shanghai and London and copies of correspondence to branches in China 1918-

independently with the help of invested national capital and without overwhelming Japanese traders' dominance. National cotton industries were promoted also in Tianjin, which inevitably threatened British business in the area.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the May Fourth commercial boycotts and strikes were later recognised as the promoters of new domestic production in China. As considerable British capital had been invested in Shanghai, the situation was perceived as alarming for British entrepreneurs, since the developing local industries introduced a new threat to their business in the area. Moreover, the revivalist May Fourth atmosphere instigated the fear that political disputes between the British and Chinese communities would result in a boycott of British products.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, it was apparent that economic nationalism, promoted partly by the May Fourth ideologies, stimulated the future growth of national industries and commerce in Shanghai. As a result, some of the Chinese businessmen rejected foreign capitalism and imperialist powers, whereas others tended to compromise with foreigners, as illustrated below.

In a situation where a Chinese company was found to have Japanese business connections, May Fourth Movement's patriotic labour sometimes attacked their own company. This was the case in the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Co. in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Generally, apart from boycotts and sporadic strikes, the British Crown colony of Hong Kong was relatively peaceful during the May Fourth activities in the summer of

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1932, D. & Co., Shanghai to the HSBC, Shanghai, 18 February, 1921; HSBC, SHG/470 the HSBC Ordinary Yearly Meeting Minutes 1917-1935, Yearly meeting, Hong Kong, 26 February 1921.

<sup>44</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 34-35; *NCH*, 5 July, 1919, p. 17; SOAS, Maze papers, I Confidential letters and reports etc., vol. I Chinese Maritime Customs Service, Annual Trade Reports 1900-1928, Tianjin Trade Report 1919, pp. 178, 195; Zhongli Zhang, "The Development of Chinese National Capital in the 1920's", in Tim Wright (ed.), *The Chinese Economy in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 45-49.

<sup>45</sup> PRO, FO228/3527/105, Harry Fox, Commercial Counsellor, Shanghai to Sir Beilby Alston, Minister at Beijing, 13 June, 1921.

1919. Apparently later movements and resistance activities which occurred in the 1920's in Hong Kong were not direct results of the May Fourth activities.<sup>46</sup>

The Western multinational competitor, the British-American Tobacco Company (BAT) and its local agents successfully inflamed May Fourth protestors' intentions to boycott the native tobacco manufacturer, and in spite of aggressive advertising campaign, the Nanyang Brothers suffered severe losses in sales. Both tobacco companies carried out expensive countercampaigns to defame the competitor and publicise their patriotism. An extra asset, added to the BAT's commercial and nationalistic appeal was its ongoing structural management transformation. This occurred partly because of an intensified request, if not to nationalise the enterprise, to at least allocate contracts to Chinese agents. The year 1919 marked a clear change in the BAT's management in which Chinese mediators and their networks were given more personal responsibility to trade across the country. The appropriate timing of this managerial change seemed to guarantee the patriotic May Fourth protestors' support for the company.<sup>47</sup> Interaction between the BAT and the Nanyang Brothers Co. provides an interesting example of an alternative Westerners' operation during the May Fourth Movement. Unfortunately, the researched sources do not explore this point any further. Nonetheless it offered a significant counter narrative to the usual foreigners' perceptions of May Fourth activities.

Meanwhile, Jardines' discussions revealed a totally opposing attitude on negotiating the shifting of administration to Chinese agents. This hard-headed stance resulted in the

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<sup>46</sup> *Hong Kong Administrative Reports for the year 1920*, (Hong Kong, 1921), p. 1; Butenhoff, *Social Movements*, pp. 15-30, 49; *China Press*, 21 June, 1919, p. 2;

<sup>47</sup> Sherman Cochran, *Big Business in China: Sino-Foreign Rivalry in the Cigarette Industry, 1890-1930*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), pp. 103-122; Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks*, pp. 57, 69. Much detailed research on the BAT's marketing and advertising strategies can be found in Sherman Cochran, "Transnational Origins of Advertising in Early Twentieth-Century China", in Sherman Cochran (ed.), *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900-1945*, (Ithaca, New York, 1999), pp. 37-58.

company's withdrawal from the Anglo-Chinese Trade Corporation negotiations initiated by the British government. Jardines refused to continue discussions as the Corporation's original objective was to allocate more responsibility to Chinese management. A more broad-minded British Commercial Secretary, Archibald Rose predicted that in future the co-operative enterprises, like the ones set up between China and America, would characterise business in China. Moreover, he recognised Chinese disappointment following the Versailles peace negotiations, and their increased distrust created by foreign powers' policy towards China. Rose acknowledged the May Fourth boycotts as the first signs of an increasing consciousness of China's own potency and success in the business world.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Jardines was too colossal and influential company to be frightened by the British Legation official. Moreover, it had not been shaken by the Chinese government or warlord crusades throughout the decades of trading in the country. In contrast, the May Fourth activities had alarmed company directors and agents across China and it reflected Jardines' vulnerability to confront the mass movement.

### **3.5. Business Associations' May Fourth Scenarios**

Overall, British trade was flourishing during the first month of the Japanese boycott and it was echoed in the British Chamber of Commerce's (BChC) journal in June 1919. The articles covering the May Fourth activities revealed cautious optimism and the Movement was praised for its non-violent nature and for not acquiring any Chinese politicians' support. At this stage, the Chinese merchant associations had already approached the

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<sup>48</sup> JMA, S/O Yokohama to Hong Kong, 1919, no 168-170 Johnstone, Yokohama to Archibald Rose, Commercial Attaché, Beijing, 7 July, 1919; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, August-September, no

British companies by sending circulars in order to justify their patriotic activities. The Chinese traders' manifesto included the ordinance to refuse to handle any Japanese products or money. Moreover, goods shipped by Japanese boats were also part of the embargo. The Chinese merchants declared that first, they had the right to limited liability and second, they were justified in claiming damages for orders made in contrast to their regulations. Another British business lobby, the Shanghai Branch of China Association (CA)<sup>49</sup>, had as early as May 8, 1919, expressed its disagreement with the Versailles Peace Conference clause to transfer former German holdings to Japan.<sup>50</sup>

Obviously neither of the organisations complained when the students' movement successfully paralysed their worst rival's business in the area. In addition, the materials suggest that in spite of closed businesses, Chinese merchants were constantly monitoring the markets and were prepared to return to business as soon as domestic political conditions would allow. Therefore, they kept Westerners well informed of this fact. Although the competition in China was severe, the Chinese merchants were anxious to co-operate with the foreign business partners and in many cases, were eager to substitute the Japanese competitors.

The British Chamber of Commerce's initial comments regarding the boycott revealed that the activities were cautiously accepted. Consequently, the May Fourth observations were connected with the Japanese merchants' inability to do business in a British manner. Critical analysis was made of the Japanese unfair business style which included the forging of trademarks, unreliability in fulfilling contracts and favouritism of their own people. As

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41/27-29 Archibald Rose, Beijing to Brooke-Smith, 8 September, 1919.

<sup>49</sup> For details of establishing the China Association and the politics behind it see Nathan A. Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office*, (New York, 1948), pp. 157-189.

expected, after the general strike the BChC's attitude had changed thoroughly,<sup>51</sup> and organisation separated itself entirely from the Movement, as reported in its journal:

"Part of the Chamber's time during the past month was taken up by deliberation in connection with so called students' strike, a movement which, in its later phases, passed out of control of the students and assumed political characteristics with which as a commercial body the Chamber felt it had nothing to do."<sup>52</sup>

According to the Chamber's conclusion, the boycotts in May against Japan's intrusion into Qingdao and against the Japanese manipulation of the Beijing government, had not been politically motivated. Only when the May Fourth strikes intimidated the foreign community in Shanghai and disturbed business, it turned - as stated by the BChC - into a Movement with political characteristics.<sup>53</sup> Yet in reality, the whole May Fourth Movement began as a massive action to resist the imperialist oppression and domination of China. Presumably, it was politically correct to protest against Japanese imperialism, and to see instead, the British quasi-imperial dominance as a more acceptable form of supremacy.

It is a different question, though, as to whether the BChC was a democratic and representative association among the British commercial community. Similar to numerous other foreign organisations in Shanghai, it was controlled by taipans, heads of the local British merchant houses and banks such as the Butterfield and Swire, the HSBC and Jardines. Reflecting the Council's hegemony, the taipans exercised political as well as economic leadership in the Settlement and organisations like the BChC and the CA emphasised their dominance among their business colleagues.

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<sup>50</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 5, June 1919, pp. 39-42, 61, 66; SOAS, China Association Archives [hereafter CA], China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, number 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, China Association Shanghai Branch to CA in London, 8 May, 1919.

<sup>51</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 5, June 1919, p. 2; no 7 August 1919, p. 113.

<sup>52</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 6, July 1919, p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

In this case, the British manufacturers' spokesman raised the issue of representation during the Chamber's May Fourth discussions by accusing the association for neglecting the British imperial interests in favour of local interests. In alleging this, he refused to join the Chamber. The Chamber journal's editorial fiercely opposed this argument and insisted that the BChC has never taken a purely Shanghai perspective on any question related to the city. That statement was certainly not true as the BChC's reports and activities towards the May Fourth Movement had already been proven. Another example revealed that individual voices were indeed occasionally allowed to be presented in the journal. An article in the August 1919, supported "the Young China and the Students' Party" of Shanghai as "the intellectual capital of China" against "the militarist government" in the capital. It was an exceptionally radical view to be written and published in a British business journal, especially as it was published just after the May Fourth general strike. But in the next issue, published correspondence revealed mainstream British businessmen's perceptions of the Movement, and at this point, the opposing article strongly criticised students' disturbances and underlined the special status of the International Settlement as a politically neutral enclave built for its foreign residents. Furthermore, the journal projected foreigners' rights to protect their privileges when they were confronted by Chinese political agitators in the Settlement.<sup>54</sup>

On the question of security in the International Settlement, the China Association had independently decided to be an appropriate instrument in conveying demands for the London governmental officials, and at this juncture, the CA pressed the Foreign Office and the Admiralty to reinforce the British military presence in East Asia. "The very serious

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<sup>54</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 7, August 1919, p. 124; no 8, September 1919, pp. 171-172, 191.

recent troubles" was behind the reasoning for the request to firstly, get a strong fleet in Eastern waters, and secondly, to have at least one large gunboat permanently situated in Shanghai's harbour. To intensify pressure on the British government, the report published in the autumn entitled 'Future in Shanghai' reflected the British commercial community's common concerns over the Settlement's defence system. In the light of recent events, the future of Shanghai, which undoubtedly meant British future presence there, 'was in the clouds', as the CA secretary metaphorically expressed.<sup>55</sup> Fear for their future existence in Shanghai guided the British commercial community's decisions in preparing the society for the worst possible scenarios. It is therefore not surprising that the CA's 'gunboat diplomacy' coincided with the Council's decision to strengthen the armed force as they, together with the British businessmen, formed an inseparable unit. Intimidated by the May Fourth strikes and boycotts, the foreign community used all means to secure extra British police, naval and volunteer forces in the city as described in the previous chapter. In addition, the Expeditionary Forces were established, new armed cars were to be ordered and civil disturbance emergency regulations were implemented. Heated discussions concerning these issues continued among the British officials and the commercial community throughout 1919-1920 and are examined more closely in Chapter Five.

In contrast to the two above-mentioned associations, the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce (SGCC) was not exclusively British, although over 50% of its member companies were. In 1919, the chairman and most of its committee members were British merchant house directors, and therefore, undeniably dominated the SGCC policies.<sup>56</sup> In

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<sup>55</sup> CA, China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, number 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, China Association Shanghai Branch to CA in London, 9 July, 1919; China Association Shanghai Branch to CA in London, 14 October, 1919.

<sup>56</sup> Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce [hereafter SGCC], Annual Report 1919, pp. 1-3.

spite of the British enterprises' supremacy, the SGCC was reputed to be the whole foreign mercantile community's representative organ in the city and an excellent pressure group to utilise when negotiating with the Consular Body in Shanghai or with the Diplomatic Body in Beijing. In addition to the British taipans' personal representation on the Council and in other business pressure groups, the SGCC was able to provide an alternative organ used to manipulate Shanghai expatriate politics.

Similar to the British associations, the SGCC received petitions from various Chinese Christians, students, educational and mercantile groups in order to persuade the companies to contact their home governments and appeal to them to return Germany's possessions in Shandong to China. A short time later, following the BChC's hard-line policy the SGCC disassociated itself from Chinese domestic politics, and instead contacted the Diplomatic Body. In the name of all foreign nationalities in Shanghai, and basing their arguments primarily on the Settlement's Land Regulations and the statement "to maintain peace and good order", the SGCC addressed a letter to the Senior Consul and demanded that he must intervene in order to relieve the situation in Shanghai. The letter naturally reflected foreign commercial society's trade interests in Shanghai. The SGCC's strong statement accused Chinese activists of intimidating and blackmailing the foreigners in the Settlement during the general strike. Even more significant were the serious losses in business and the inconvenience of closure of the International Settlement. The SGCC had predicted that future riots and bloodshed related to these events would occur. Certain unrest among the workers did trouble the foreign companies throughout following years, but not for the reasons the foreigners' anticipated during summer and autumn 1919. Thus by the spring of 1920, the worldwide labour movement advocating better working conditions and higher

wages had already reached Shanghai.<sup>57</sup> The SGCC's decisions seemed to support those of the CA and the BChC. It is evident, therefore, that British bankers and business directors constantly manipulated the Western merchant majority's opinion towards the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai.

### **Conclusion**

The events of 1919 not only reflected the world's changing dynamics in Great Power relations in Europe. China too was a natural platform for international economic and political disputes as various countries projected their expansionist foreign policy into the Asian area. The worst possible scenario was, however, the weakening of hegemonic power, an essential component of the British ideological vision and part of its regional supremacy strategy which they stood for in China. It was obvious that the British trading position was threatened by the group of May Fourth students who had advocated that workers and merchants protest against the domestic and international mistreatment of China. The extent to which the May Fourth strikes were aimed directly at other foreigners apart from the Japanese or the British is open to debate. Nevertheless, all the business activities were seriously affected. Since the general strike began, the British expatriates' existence which depended on trade, industry and banking was their main concern. In spite of British initiatives to encourage the people to resume business, Chinese public opinion condemned all business transactions and the strikes continued. Evidently, as the situation rapidly deteriorated the British began to lose capital, shares, investments, contracts and

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<sup>57</sup> SGCC, Annual Report 1919, Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Letter from Chinese organisations in Shanghai to the SGCC, June 4, 1919; the SGCC to D. Siffert, Senior Consul, June 12, 1919; SGCC, Annual

connections at accelerating speed. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to highlight the severe impact of the May Fourth strikes on British economic stability in China during the next few years. When vast commercial interests were jeopardised by the May Fourth strikes, the British mercantile community refused to compromise with its commercial interests and its May Fourth rhetoric reflected its inflexible policy.

Inasmuch as the May Fourth demonstrators' rights to express their indignation publicly towards Japanese imperialism was recognised at least on the personal level, the general strike and its results were collectively condemned by the British businessmen, their companies and by the business associations. Hence, the unity among the commercial community's May Fourth rhetoric was based on their business discourse. Therefore, the purpose was to produce implicit collective principles for their strategies against the strikes. By continually repeating the commonly accepted principles in correspondence and presumably in their meetings, the community held shared expectations in reaction to the Movement. What followed was a set of key expressions which emphasised various needs and fears that defined and ratified the British mercantile community's position in China. Collective principles of security, stability, active markets and equal rights for free trade appeared to form the united front of the business community's May Fourth rhetoric. When business associations generally disclaimed official connections with the Movement, personal correspondence and articles published in papers provided a forum for individual perceptions. The businessmen's fears relating to the Movement seemed to align themselves with those of British officials, namely the fears of growing anti-foreign sentiment and Bolshevik intrusion. One significant difference, however, separated the business community's point of view from the officials. The businessmen were first and foremost

interested in trade and all their fears and demands reflected this principle. In contrast, the officials had to consider other aspects such as British national interests in China.

The last part of the analysed British triangle in China introduces the largest and politically least influential group, the missionaries. Their influence, however, on social and cultural 'grass root' level was profound in Chinese society and their perceptions towards the May Fourth Movement and their influence on its developments are important as the following chapter will illustrate.

#### 4. 'SPIRIT OF SHANGHAI' - MISSIONARIES AND THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

This chapter explores the British missionaries' responses to the May Fourth Movement. As discussed in the previous chapters, the following analysis concentrates on British missionaries who personally experienced the Movement. The approach therefore embraces the missionary organisations that had a permanent resident station in Shanghai: the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), the China Inland Mission (CIM), the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Religious Tract Society (RTS), the Young Men's/Women's Christian Association (YMCA/YWCA)<sup>1</sup>. The BFBS, the BMS, the CMS, the LMS and the RTS were solely British associations. The missionaries, more than Western businessmen or officials, came into daily contact with the Chinese people, and their extensive correspondence network distributed news of Shanghai demonstrations, strikes and boycotts rapidly across the whole country. For this reason the missionaries were more 'tuned' to the May Fourth Movement than other foreign groups. The 'Spirit of Shanghai'<sup>2</sup> slogan, invented by a British missionary from the countryside, initially established a negative image of the Movement, but the Shanghai missionary society willingly turned it into a positive one and transmitted this positive May Fourth image into the interior areas. Simultaneously, the news from the countryside was widely discussed in the Shanghai newspapers. Moreover, personal and official letters narrated the events around China. Obviously all this information had a profound effect on the Shanghai missionary community's perceptions of the Movement. Therefore, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Charles L. Boynton (ed.), *Directory of Protestant Missions in China 1917*, (Shanghai, 1917), *passim*. Dan Cui, *The Cultural Contribution of British Protestant Missionaries and British-American Cooperation to China's National Development during the 1920's*, (Lanham, 1998), pp. 355-358.

<sup>2</sup> *NCH*, 21 June, 1919, p. 766.

necessary to also evaluate some of the British May Fourth experiences in other missionary centres.

Assuming we can talk of collective group experience<sup>3</sup>, no two British groups encountered the May Fourth Movement in the same way. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the missionary context of the May Fourth Movement, to evaluate differences of experience, but especially to highlight analogies between the encounters and the ways in which these experiences were described to other Christians. Like British officials and businessmen, the missionaries formed the May Fourth discourse by which they expressed their common Christian, British and Western values. Moreover, they revealed and formed shared expectations on how to react towards the Movement. The May Fourth discussions also created implicit collective rules for their communal behaviour. This coherence within the missionary society created common attitudes towards the May Fourth Movement, and it also formed key words and principles which were constantly repeated. Not only did foreign Christians analyse the Movement, the converted Chinese also talked about the situation with their foreign counterparts and undoubtedly these encounters had a significant influence on the British missionaries' reactions to the May Fourth Movement<sup>4</sup>. As soon as the Chinese Christians joined the Movement, they provided extensive firsthand information about the May Fourth activities.

Researchers have argued that missionaries' published correspondence such as articles, books and travel letters did not necessarily represent their genuine perceptions about the Chinese people and society. It is argued that missionary authors regularly concealed their

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<sup>3</sup> Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> For the Chinese Christians' discussion of the May Fourth Movement see for example the articles in the missionary journals during 1919-1921, *China's Millions*, *The Chinese Recorder*, *The Chronicle of the L.M.S* [hereafter *The Chronicle*]; or the annual reports *Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist*

personal views, and in addition, the missionary officials at the headquarters in Britain carefully censored the most radical opinions before publication.<sup>5</sup> The London Missionary Society's (LMS) publications were no exception to this policy and various articles published in their monthly journal, *The Chronicle*, were notably censored. This procedure becomes particularly apparent when comparing the published articles with the original letters and reports. The careful comparison between original materials and printed materials has revealed that modification of texts was usually made by cutting out some parts of the contents, but not generally changing the wording of texts. As a result, the statements were taken out of context and this alteration occasionally created new meanings to the original writings and produced something that was nearer to the LMS's officially accepted views than individual missionary's perception of the events. Therefore, on occasions where the original correspondence was not found it was essential to evaluate missionaries' printed materials cautiously as the published opinions about the May Fourth Movement did not necessarily represent the personal point of view. The study of their private and published correspondence, however, has provided one story of the Movement and has created a more comprehensive picture of the British May Fourth Movement discourse.

#### **4.1. The London Missionary Society and the Students' Movement**

Every missionary working in China seems, sooner or later, to have come to Shanghai. It was the administrative centre of Protestant work and as one missionary ironically stated,

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*Missionary Society 1919 and 1920*; and the English newspapers *Celestial Empire*, *China Press* and *NCDN* of 1919.

<sup>5</sup> Bickers, "To Serve and not to Rule", pp. 213-214.

“Shanghai was the place for talking”. Being an executive member of 10 missionary committees, this missionary appeared to have sound reasoning for this statement.<sup>6</sup> Shanghai was an important resident station for the LMS and in the 1920's there were about twenty missionaries placed in the city. Conveniently, two of the three centres were situated in the International Settlement and the first station combined the self-supporting Chinese church and the hospital. The second centre was the Medhurst School compound incorporating girls' and boys' boarding schools and the college. Shanghai's surrounding district formed the third centre.<sup>7</sup>

Reverend Charles George Sparham had accepted an invitation to become Secretary of the China Advisory Council and moved to Shanghai in 1917.<sup>8</sup> He was, therefore, in the middle of the turbulent May Fourth Movement and commented on it frequently. His journeys were intensified with the new post and constant evaluation of the Chinese society was expressed in his letters, articles and books. Sparham's letters to his wife contained regular remarks on Chinese politics and the topics he commented actively covered areas such as the government's problems with the north-south civil war, manipulation of elections, corruption of the government, widespread distrust towards the regime, and finally, current developments of public opinion and nationalism.<sup>9</sup> Here he differed significantly from the average missionary as he observed and evaluated the surrounding political environment. Many missionaries, besides narrating their

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<sup>6</sup> SOAS, Council for World Mission archives, London Missionary Society [hereafter LMS], Central China, Correspondence, box 26, folder 1, W. Hopkyn Rees to Francis H. Hawkins, 25 February, 1915.

<sup>7</sup> LMS, *Foreign Field Series LX*, ca 1910; LMS, *The 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report of the Chinese Hospital, Shanghai, for the year 1919*, (Shanghai, 1920), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 3, A Year's Work for the Advisory Council, C.G. Sparham, 1918.

<sup>9</sup> Sparham's articles: 'China in the Meting Pot', *The Chronicle*, vol. 28, April 1920, p. 91; 'Co-operation in China', *The Chronicle*, vol. 29, March 1921, pp. 62-65; 'Christian Education in China', *The Chronicle*, vol. 30, Nov. 1922, pp. 258-259; Westminster and Cheshunt College, Cambridge, B6 Sparham papers, [hereafter Sparham papers], *passim*.

evangelisation, education or hospital work, often wanted to leave politics out of their discussion. Therefore, Sparham's vast correspondence offers an exceptional perspective of the Movement. Moreover, his in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture and his personal interest towards current issues made him a meticulous observer of the Shanghai May Fourth Movement. Personal experiences combined with authority had been achieved throughout the country and made Sparham's views meaningful in missionary circles. In addition, his extensive contacts with British officials added credibility to his views in the whole foreign community<sup>10</sup>. In order to understand his passion to observe the May Fourth Movement and to provide background for his perceptions some of his earlier works and life will now be discussed.

Initially Sparham had received an education in Brighton in the 1870's which would have, according to him, "fitted me for a commercial life". However, his personal interests and activities with the Sunday School, School Bible Class, and missionary meetings at the home church encouraged him to choose another path. Sparham had studied at the Cheshunt College in Cambridge where he obtained good grades from his examinations in languages and religious subjects. The Principal's comments on his qualifications as a preacher were extremely encouraging. Furthermore, he was ordained a minister. Sparham's aspiration "I have a strong desire to throw myself into the battle of the Lord's against Heathenism", became true in 1885 when, aged 25, he sailed to China.<sup>11</sup>

In Hankou, Dr. Griffith John, 'the grand old man' of missionaries, who had arrived in China 30 years earlier, took Sparham as his disciple. They travelled around Hubei and

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<sup>10</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 3, Sparham to Hawkins, 1 July, 1919; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 4, Report of A.C. Secretary's visit to Central China, Nov 1-Dec 11, 1919.

<sup>11</sup> LMS, Candidate's Papers 1864-1885, box 28, Answers to Printed Questions, 451-632, Folder 24, C.G. Sparham; LMS, Candidate's Papers 1796-1899, box 15, names Sh-Ste, C.G. Sparham.

Hunan province hinterlands spreading the Christian word, and they wrote reports about local conditions in order to evaluate areas for missionary work.<sup>12</sup> Missionary co-operation was further strengthened with the marriage between Sparham and Griffith John's daughter Mary, in 1891.<sup>13</sup> While staying in Hubei province in the spring of 1900, the Boxer rebels attacked Sparham's family, but even at the height of this dangerous situation Sparham remained calm, and later, did not criticise the Chinese attackers. Instead, he thanked the British Consulate for the offered help and was delighted by the opening of an anti-foreign district for missionary work.<sup>14</sup> In 1920's Sparham was one of the most experienced missionaries among the LMS community and his May Fourth observations reflected this mature background.

A slightly contrasting picture of his acceptance of Chinese traditional culture was conveyed in his book *Christianity and the Religions of China - A Brief Study in Comparative Religions*. In this book Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and popular religions were presented as inferior religions.<sup>15</sup> This perception was reasonably common among contemporary missionaries in China and because the publication was directed to the larger mission congregation, it was most likely purposely provocative. Consequently, it described Chinese religions in the way the missionaries wanted to perceive them. It was also published immediately after the Boxer uprising when the Buddhists, especially, were understood to be extremely dangerous to the Christian missionaries. Unlike some of his countrymen's perceptions, and based on his own experiences, Sparham never connected the May Fourth Movement with Buddhist or Boxer activities. In spite of his book's

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<sup>12</sup> Sparham papers, Box 2, Files B6/4-6, Rev. Griffith John to William Gladstone, 28 January, 1892; Griffith John and C.G. Sparham, *The Situation in Hunan*, no date.

<sup>13</sup> *The Chinese Recorder*, October, vol. 62, 1931, p. 655.

<sup>14</sup> Sparham papers, Box 2, Files B6/4-6, Sparham to Fraser, 13 and 16 March, 20 April, 1900.

critical tone, Sparham had quite an understanding attitude towards the Chinese people, or more precisely he had a hopeful perception of society's future. As I will discuss below, his May Fourth Movement observations promoted this belief.

Sparham described the general strike in Shanghai of 1919 as "a state of great excitement" that had surrounded the city. He explained that students' activities were a part of the passive resistance movement protesting against the transfer of the Shandong area to the Japanese. The Chinese railway workers' boycott had had an immediate effect on Sparham's work as it caused a suspension of the missionaries' administrative council meeting in Ji'nan city, forcing him to stay in Shanghai until the situation was resolved.<sup>15</sup> Sparham's letter opened dialogue with the LMS missionaries on the May Fourth Movement. None of the other missionaries' or Sparham's earlier correspondence revealed any comments about the strained situation. Simultaneously, regional foreign and Chinese newspapers had bombarded their readers with reports on the Versailles Peace Conference and the students' strikes of Shanghai which were spreading around the country. Moreover, a peaceful atmosphere in the city had changed into a highly tense situation during students mass meetings, demonstrations, and boycotts against the Japanese products and in June it had all culminated in the general strike. Of all the foreigners, the missionaries were always physically closest to the Chinese, and many Chinese LMS members without doubt supported the Movement, which affected the society's activities directly. The events could not have gone unnoticed by missionaries and it was just matter of time before they would write down their experiences.

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<sup>15</sup> Charles G. Sparham, *Christianity and the Religion of China - A Brief Study in Comparative Religions*, (Hankou, ca. 1902), pp. 3-4, 11.

<sup>16</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 9 June, 1919.

The LMS Shanghai District Council, however, made no official comments concerning the Movement even though it had a meeting in the middle of the strike, which included Sparham as an invited guest, but the issue was presumably evaluated at least in their informal discussions. Instead, characterising factors of the Movement's background, Sparham expressed his special interest towards it. He supported the students' national objectives openly and spoke of the "obnoxious statesman", who was forced to resign after the May Fourth demonstrations. At this point he was presumably referring to the former Minister of Communication, Cao Rulin, who had become the demonstrators' archenemy by advocating Japanese interests in the Chinese government.<sup>17</sup> Sparham sympathised with the Chinese people's frustration over the Versailles Peace Conference's unsatisfactory outcome. Moreover, he argued that their bitterness towards the British was provoked by the wartime affiliation with Japan. According to Sparham, Japanese militant interests in China were, in turn, to be defined as frightening and disliked just as though they were "Huns of the East".<sup>18</sup> Undoubtedly Sparham utilised effectively the collective Allied wartime memories and fear of the Germans to justify contemporary Chinese feelings and actions. His other metaphor defined the situation as follows:

" [...] The feeling is largely one of national fear; the fear that China may suffer as Corea has done. It also touches a deep sentiment for Shantung which contains a birthplace and sepulchre of Confucius is in a sense the Chinese Holy Land.[...]"<sup>19</sup>

By indicating that the Shandong area was the Chinese Holy Land, Sparham created an association between the Confucian sacred place and the Christian Holy Land. Therefore,

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<sup>17</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Minutes of the Shanghai District Council, 10 June, 1919; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919; Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> This concept was used in articles to describe Japanese expansion in the East Asia, see *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 714.

<sup>19</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919.

in writing this he wanted to make the reader understand the symbolic significance of the place. As a Christian he approved the protection of sacred land and sympathised with the Chinese actions to preserve it. The original symbolic connotation of Shandong as a Holy Land was created by the Chinese Versailles Peace Conference negotiator, Wellington Koo's metaphor expressed in January 1919<sup>20</sup>.

In contrast, another British missionary saw the place as a destination for Buddhist pilgrims to practise heathen worshipping. Moreover, one declaration explained that Christianity was receiving a deserved phenomenal public recognition after the church members had successfully participated in the Movement.<sup>21</sup> In many instances the missionaries interpreted Chinese aggression towards the Japanese as an outcome of awakening from paganism. Furthermore, missionaries acknowledged that the May Fourth Movement demands were understood to be appropriate promoters of the Christian religion. Missionaries frequently analysed the Shandong question as their spiritual triumph followed by a national enlightenment that would convert more Chinese to Christianity, whereas the British officials perceived the May Fourth demonstrators' debate over restoration of Shandong as a politically motivated movement to restrain Japan's escalation policy. It is important to understand that all British groups interpreted the May Fourth Movement in a way that was suited to their own interests in Shanghai.

Mr. and Mrs. Sparham accidentally encountered a more real confrontation between the May Fourth demonstrators and the SMP forces during their evening walk outside their missionary premises. It happened on the last evening of the strike when protestors were

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<sup>20</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919; Yongjin Zhang, *China in the International System, 1918-1920: The Middle Kingdom at the Periphery*, (London, 1991), pp. 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> LMS, North China, Correspondence, box 21, folder 5, travel letter from Rev. George T. Scott and Rev. William P. Schell, 8 October, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, J.Murray, Tianjin, 1919.

celebrating their victory from 'the three traitor officials' and were intending to continue festive activities in the International Settlement.

"[...] As Mrs. Sparham and I left the compound we heard the hospital Christian Endeavour singing their closing hymn - one of Sankey's - while from the Ma Kia Chuan church where a big evangelistic service was being held came the sound of another hymn - also Sankey's - most lustily sung. We were scarcely out of the compound before we came on the fracas - mounted Sikhs, officers in Khakhi, one man lying on the ground and the men firing at that time into the air. Before long the wounded were being carried into hospital and reinforcements were being hurried up. Such is China!"<sup>22</sup>

This story summarised the Western missionaries' position in China. After all, the spreading of the Christian gospel was their primary reason for being in China, in a country where revolutions, rebellions and demonstrations gave an interchangeable rhythm of life. Only God's word appeared to be permanent and according to the missionaries' parlance, it would eventually save China from moral turmoil. Obviously Sparham interpreted the May Fourth Movement's activities as an excellent opportunity to manifest the Christian belief among the Chinese.

In his letter, quoted above, Sparham used various expressions manifested in the Shanghai Students' Union pamphlet that was attached to the letter, and in synchrony, the American and English newspapers published concise versions of the message.<sup>23</sup> The students' pamphlet was printed on fine paper and written in English, and therefore, was directed particularly at the foreign community. "*The Students' Strike - An explanation*" (see Appendix 1) as its name illustrates, was a sentimental appeal to "the Allied Friends of China", to join the students' battle against militarism, and according to the pamphlet, this was the first genuine democratic movement that had been able to combine all Chinese classes. In addition, the historical settings of May Fourth campaign were discussed together with students' current demands, and a blueprint of their actions was

<sup>22</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919.

<sup>23</sup> *China Press*, 10 June, 1919, p. 6; *NCH* 14, June, 1919, p. 715.

introduced. The plan outlined foreigners' responsibilities in Shanghai as being the fight against militarism in Asia, and a demand to pressure their governments to return the Shandong area to China. The pamphlet gave an alarming example of the missionaries' destiny in Qingdao where the Japanese had excluded the foreign missionaries from the region. In the near future, as predicted in the pamphlet, the Japanese would certainly restrict the Westerners' trade in their territory. Sparham declared that this manifesto was "a sane statement of the situation from the Chinese point of view".<sup>24</sup> Sparham obtained a wider perspective on the May Fourth activities by travelling around the country, but as his correspondence revealed, he remained very understanding towards the Movement. Although he opposed the use of boycotts as a method to resist Japanese politics, the May Fourth Movement was "a wonderful movement, intensely patriotic, and well guided from every point of view". He was convinced of China's future capacity to be a modern country with an independent church that would organise Christian education to all Chinese. This would be, in his opinion, the only way to save China.<sup>25</sup>

Another British missionary experience of the May Fourth Movement was presented by Dr. W. Hopkyn Rees who had arrived in China in 1883, two years prior to Sparham. Rees was born in Wales and was forced to leave school at the age of eleven to work in the cotton mills. He was able to continue his education by attending evening classes which also helped him to be promoted gradually from errand boy to bookkeeper at the mill. Like Sparham, Rees studied theology at college and was actively engaged with Sunday School

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<sup>24</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919.

<sup>25</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Rev. Frank Lenwood, 11 October, 1919; Sparham papers, Box 1, Files B6/2-3, Sparham to Mary Sparham, 19-20 and 22, March, 1920.

and missionary work. He had been working as a pastor for two years before he and his wife followed the call: "God points me to the foreign field".<sup>26</sup>

Rees had been working in Beijing and Tianjin but was transferred to Shanghai in the second decade of the twentieth century. The Chinese Emperor had honoured him with the exceptional decoration of the "Blue Button" with the rank of Mandarin for his services. The badge of honour was given in connection with the settlement of the Boxer indemnity money paid by the Chinese government to the foreigners to cover destruction of life and material expenses caused by the Boxer uprising.<sup>27</sup> Rees too was an 'old hand' in China and even though he had experienced the Boxer uprising, his May Fourth encounters revealed a relatively 'modernist' approach to Chinese society. Rees' network throughout the British community was impressive and his duties combined various Christian, patriotic and educational activities. Missionary and educational interests encouraged him to join the China Continuation Committee and the Christian Publishers Association, and since 1916, he had acted as the General Secretary of the Christian Literature Society. At the end of the decade he was also the Secretary of the LMS in Shanghai. Rees' British engagements were fulfilled by participation in the British War Propaganda Committee, the Patriotic League of Overseas British, the Navy League and his Welsh identity was emphasised with the St. David's Society. The Shanghai Municipal Council respected his advice by appointing him a member of the commission, which improved the Volunteer corps regulations. The school run by the British Chamber of Commerce organised Chinese language classes outside the missionary communities and Rees was one of the school's leading teachers. He also worked as an interpreter for the British and Chinese

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<sup>26</sup> LMS, Candidate's Papers 1864-1885, box 28, Answers to Printed Questions, 451-632, Folder 27, W. Hopkyn Rees.

<sup>27</sup> LMS, Annotated Register of L.M.S. missionaries 1793-1923, W. Hopkyn Rees.

Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, the Chinese and foreign press asked frequently for his advice on translating technical terms and other types from Chinese to English or vice versa. Apparently, the Chinese names for foreign individuals and enterprises were constantly requested as the foreign population of Shanghai increased steadily. Finally, long lasting co-operation with Fraser had secured Rees' contacts with the pre-eminent British officials.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the services in the missionary community, his numerous activities verified that Rees' working field comprised both the foreign and Chinese communities. Enthusiastic commitment to assist co-operation between different communities and his numerous projects probably lowered barriers between missionaries and the rest of society. He was a highly esteemed and exceptionally trusted missionary in Shanghai, which explains his close connection with the May Fourth students, which I subsequently will discuss. In combining his personal connections with fluency in the Chinese language, it is obvious that he was up to date with current issues in Shanghai.

Sharing Sparham's hope for a stronger Chinese government to secure peace and growth in the country, Rees called on the attention of the Christians, who would be the crucial actors in this strengthening process. Believing that sensible patriotism instead of bigoted antagonism would eventually win Chinese minds and hearts, Rees, likewise, cautiously supported the contemporary Republican government established after the 1911 revolution and which was, in the 1920's, centred in Beijing.<sup>29</sup> Just after Shanghai's May Fourth general strike he accused the Versailles Peace Conference participants of making "a huge blunder" by allowing the Japanese to demand the Shandong area. It is interesting to note

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<sup>28</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, W. Hopkyn Rees, Shanghai, 1917; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Rees to Hawkins, 21 June, 1919; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 3, Sparham to Hawkins, 1 July, 1919.

that he actually confessed to having worked as an adviser to the Shanghai Students' Union during the May Fourth Movement. Furthermore, he proudly claimed to be the only British adviser for students. According to his story he had, as an adviser, supported student activities in keeping the agitation within limits of order and justice. Evidently, he was extremely honoured to have been chosen to assist the May Fourth students. Yet, he simultaneously wanted to disguise it from other missionaries and foreigners in China and Britain for reasons he never explained.<sup>30</sup> Unquestionably the British and American newspapers would have eagerly reported the well-known and widely respected community member's May Fourth connections, if it had been revealed.

A few American missionary teachers openly supported the May Fourth operations by attending the inauguration meeting of the Chinese Students' Union, and offered advice on how to organise the democratic election of a national assembly. In another case, the American lawyers Mr. Jernigan, Mr. Lineberger and Mr. Rose served as a 'warning example', since they provided counselling services to May Fourth demonstrators. Their activities were widely reported in the papers and strongly criticised by the Settlement police.<sup>31</sup> It can be presumed, therefore, that fear of an active British missionary being labelled as a supporter of the Chinese mass movement forced Rees to participate anonymously and to conceal his activities. Rees' participation remains unclear with regard to what instructions he offered to the students, along with his overall influence on the development of the Movement. It is significant, however to recognise Rees as the only British missionary participant in the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai. None of

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<sup>29</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, Rees, Shanghai, 1917.

<sup>30</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Rees to Hawkins, 21 June, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, McEuen to Jamieson, 12,13,14 and 18 August, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, McEuen to Phillips, 17 June, 1919; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on

the official reports or newspapers revealed any information related to Rees' activities, but the British missionary's political functions would certainly have infuriated local British officials on the Council and at the Consulate. Unquestionably his operations would have shocked the British conservative community.

As Rees was leaving for his furlough to Britain, an American newspaper interestingly wrote that the local Chinese educational bodies had asked him to forward a petition to the British Premier Mr. Lloyd George to gain his sympathies in assisting China. This claim was never discussed in any other paper or correspondence, and therefore, its reliability is questionable.<sup>32</sup> Even if the argument was suspicious, it confirmed the well-known connections between Rees and the Chinese educationalists.

It certainly was true that missionary engagements with the May Fourth activities were not completely uncommon phenomena in an attempt to pursue further co-operation with the Chinese people, especially to attain the students' confidence. The Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA) agenda to "build of a new world civilisation" and its American secretaries' operations in Shanghai provided a relevant example of missionary involvement. By establishing a Christian patriotic association, which integrated both Chinese educational and student unions, they tried to promote interaction between Westerners and students. Officially, the YMCA separated itself from its individual members' activities, and as an organisation disclaimed its connection with the May Fourth Movement, predominantly because of its alleged political connections. In spite of official statements, on various occasions the International Settlement police identified the YMCA schools with the May Fourth boycotts and assumed that foreign tutors were

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the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

encouraging the activities.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in contrast to the British missionaries' hesitant response to the May Fourth activities, the American YWCA women in Shanghai joined the protest against the Versailles Peace Treaty decision to transfer Qingdao to Japan.<sup>34</sup> None of the British YMCA missionaries seemed to publicly advocate the May Fourth operations, but it is difficult to estimate whether this was from personal choice, or fear of general judgement that prevented participation. Some missionaries, however, strongly disagreed with the YMCA's activities and claimed that their participation in Chinese politics would discredit their spiritual influence within the Christian community<sup>35</sup>. Fraser shared this opinion with some other British consulate officials and was convinced that the Chinese YMCA members and foreign YMCA missionaries had been inflaming students towards political activities during the summer of 1919.<sup>36</sup>

The LMS's Medhurst College's academic term was seriously affected by general unrest among the students, and consequently, enrolment numbers dropped from 190 in September 1918, to 128 in September 1919, almost one-third of whole intake of students. The British missionary teachers confronted the May Fourth protagonists with a firm attitude and consequently the Movement leaders were expelled from the college. This action gave the remaining students an opportunity to continue their studies even though other schools had joined the strike. Reasons for some British missionary institutes' success on restraining students' activities were usually twofold. Firstly, the British

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<sup>32</sup> *China Press*, 13 July, 1919, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Shirley S. Garret, *Social Reformers in Urban China, the Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), pp. 165-166; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson to Phillips, 21 June, 1919; Jun Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution, the American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China: 1919-1937*, (Bethlehem, USA, 1996), pp. 55-56.

<sup>34</sup> Hollis A. Wilbur and Mary Mattenson Wilbur, "An American Missionary Family in Asia IV", C. Martin Wilbur (ed.), *Chinese Studies in History*, Summer 1999, vol. 32, no. 4, p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> *NCDN*, 23 July, 1919, p. 4; *NCH*, 21 June, 1919, p. 782.

<sup>36</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/8 Xiamen's consul to Jordan, 20 May, 1919; PRO, FO671/447/591, Fraser to Jordan, 30 January, 1920.

Christian schoolteachers had no similar external political reasons to support the Movement as their counterparts in the governmental institutes had. It was also well-known that various May Fourth Movement ideologies and activities had originated from the Chinese university professors. Furthermore, Chinese educational leaders such as school principals and college presidents had quickly approved the new radical nationalism. As a result, political pressure on Chinese educators to advocate the Movement was immense, and negligence of nationalist duty was perceived as a strongly unpatriotic act. Secondly, since the missionaries preferred that converts should attend mission institutions, the British Christian institutions generally had limited contact with the Chinese educational community. In addition, the Chinese government had refused to formally recognise missionary schools. Therefore, graduates from governmental schools were granted special privileges which were denied to the Christian college's alumni. This fact split Christian and non-Christian educational communities even further. If the Christian students chose not join the Movement, the government school students accused them of betraying their country and of being under foreign imperial influence. However, in Shanghai, the May Fourth demonstrators found it difficult to disseminate their ideologies among the British missionary school students.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to the British missionary schools, many of the American missionary institutes, led by St. John's University, especially its Middle School, operated as the centre for student activities in Shanghai. Immediately after the May Fourth Movement was launched, the university provided premises for patriotic meetings and for publishing a newspaper, and also for organising volunteer patrol groups to maintain peace and order

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<sup>37</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 75-77; Jessie G. Lutz., *China and the Christian Colleges 1850-1950*, (Ithaca, 1971), pp. 206-207, 214; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Gerald Luxor, Shanghai, 1919 and Ernest Box, Shanghai, 1919.

on the streets. St. John's University administrators finally decided to close the school before the end of summer term, thus, avoiding more embarrassing confrontations with students as the Movement had gone beyond the missionaries' control. To emphasise the administrators' toughened stance some students were expelled from school. In all, the university was forced to close down three times during the 1919-1920 student demonstrations. Nevertheless, the university continued to promote Chinese nationalism actively, and opposed the missionary authorities constantly throughout the 1920's, and especially after the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925.<sup>38</sup>

In general the LMS missionary teachers in Shanghai perceived growing national consciousness as a positive symbol in a changing China, but disapproved of the Movement's political side and suggested instead more spiritual and ethical dimensions to enlighten growing nationalism. Obviously the missionaries promoted the Christian belief and practices as appropriate guidelines for the Chinese students pursuing political liberation. The British educators encouraged their students to direct their energy to serve God, instead of the country. Hence, the above-mentioned operations were strictly restricted in the British schools. Participating in the patriotic demonstrations, however, was usually prohibited for academic reasons and the British missionaries maintained the view that students' primary duty was to study and not to get involved with the nation's politics.

The 'Spirit of Shanghai' continued to spread across the country, encouraging people to actively participate in the Movement. In fact, Shanghai's May Fourth events served as a clear example of how the students and labour should react to the growing radical

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<sup>38</sup>*China Press*, June 1, 1919, p. 16; June 8, 1919, p. 8; December 6, 1919, p. 12; Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, pp. 212-213, 248-249; *NCH*, May 10, 1919, p. 371; Wen-hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937*, (Cambridge, Ma., 1990), pp. 83-84.

nationalism. Operations initiated in the city were frequently repeated in the smaller towns and the idea of a general strike was adopted particularly from Shanghai. Numerous socio-political factors, however, prevented the nation-wide general strike, and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. In the end Shanghai was the only place where it was successfully implemented. The foreign presence and the city's peculiar three-fold administration system undoubtedly had an impact on the successful launching of a full strike.

The British missionary centres in the interior reacted vigorously to the May Fourth Movement and updated their colleagues in Shanghai by writing letters and articles about the incidents. The London Missionary Society's Griffith John College in central Hubei was attacked by a massive student rally which disturbed the whole town's life and annoyed especially some of its British missionaries. The yearly report, given by the Head of the Anglo-Chinese Department, Stanley V. Boxer, was instantly censored in the London headquarters with the comment "Not for publication", and indeed, Boxer's analysis of contemporary Chinese society and politics provided a striking contrast to those described above.

Boxer had arrived in China in 1910 as an engineer under the United Universities Scheme and became connected with the Griffith John College. Consequently, in few years time, he was appointed to work for the LMS. The past ten years at the college had, in Boxer's opinion, shown a steady growth of character and seriousness among students. Moreover, Christian education had been able to suppress the "maudlin characteristic of Chinese".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Stanley V. Boxer, Hankou, 1919.

Even if we acknowledge Boxer's threatened position as a missionary authority, his further remarks proved that he was extremely intolerant towards the Movement. As his disillusion deepened, he judged the anti-Japanese boycott operations as "a sickly cant of the so-called patriots"<sup>40</sup>. As far as Boxer was concerned, the missionary institutions were firstly, not venues for political propaganda, and secondly, the students were not mature enough to handle situations potentially arising from their political activities. Boxer further emphasised the Chinese government's mistakes in international and domestic politics, and therefore, concluded that the present difficulties were due to China's own failures. Boxer's fierce statements claimed that the American educators had advocated the Movement participants to act, and as a result of this foreign agitation, the Boone University was forced to close its doors. Their students were walking around the streets encouraging other students to join them. Boxer explained that the students at Griffith John College had not been involved in the demonstrations, the preventive factors being taught school discipline, and confidence in the missionaries.<sup>41</sup> In some cases, Boxer's accusations appeared to be reasonable, as nearer Shanghai in the treaty port of Hangzhou, an American missionary was inspired by the Christian students' involvement in the Movement and wrote a four verse poem to commemorate their patriotic activities as the following extract from the poem illustrates.

"Students Rise!

Students Rise! Your country needs you, Rise and make her strong. Follow where the Right will lead you.  
[.] Rise for country, home and freedom - with the battle song.[.]"<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Stanley V. Boxer, Hankou, 1919.

<sup>41</sup> LMS, Annotated Register of L.M.S. missionaries 1793-1923, Stanley V. Boxer; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Boxer to Hawkins, 27 April, 1919; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Stanley V. Boxer, Hankou, 1919.

<sup>42</sup> *China Press*, 7 December, 1919, p. 6.

The May Fourth Movement threatened to undermine the missionaries' position by introducing newly formed student unions that challenged educators' discipline in the schools. Thus, to a certain extent, Boxer's fears for losing authority were also understandable. As a matter of fact many British teachers around China resented the authority which student unions could exercise over the students and perceived this as the most threatening feature of the Movement. On the other hand, some missionaries accepted student unions as a predicted sign of Christian unity among "the Young China" which will be discussed later. Obviously, in a more peculiar way, Boxer was deeply offended by the Movement. It seemed almost that the demonstrators had attacked him personally. None of the other analysed missionaries experienced the Movement in such an utterly hostile manner, or at least there is no remaining evidence of it. It made Boxer "almost physically sick" when he suspected that the Movement could, without an effort, dismantle his decade's work with the students and the energy devoted 'to cultivate the Chinese character' with the Scout movement<sup>43</sup>. Indeed, one of the important methods of interpreting the British educational ideals to the Chinese students had been to connect them with the Scouts activities, which in Hankou included the celebration of the World War Armistice at the British Consulate and salutation of the British flag<sup>44</sup>.

For the Head of Higher and Middle Schools in Hankou, Rev. Bernard Upward, it had been "a year of success" and this argument was strengthened by the growth of college students' self-restraint, and self-control when facing the "wave of mental unbalance" of the May Fourth Movement. He too accused the student union of provoking "the quasi-patriotic" student strikes. Upward urged students to leave politics until their education

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<sup>43</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Stanley V. Boxer, Hankou, 1919.

was completed, and he gave a tangible order to disperse the student assembly at the college. In Upward's opinion, people in the West often misleadingly perceived the Movement's activities as the spontaneous actions of the educated Chinese. However, he understood it to be a professional politicians' carefully arranged plot against the government. Both Boxer and Upward praised Chinese colleagues for supporting the missionaries' stern and intolerant attitude, and mentioned that the parents' co-operation had further strengthened the college's conduct. In opposition to his colleagues, the third British missionary at the college, the Principal and Head of Divinity, Arthur Bonsey, provided a different point of view. Apparently, his reassuring and understanding attitude allowed him to deter students' attempts to join the May Fourth demonstrations. Yet he admitted that if the Griffith John College had been in any other city in the Hubei province, the situation might have been impossible to control. Bonsey's observations made him sympathetic towards students who had decided not to join the patriotic movement, and who, consequently, were accused of being traitors to the country and cursed on the streets by their fellow students.<sup>45</sup> Throughout the duration of May Fourth Movement's existence, the missionaries were strongly convinced of the fact that British education was the primary force behind the development of modern China. A long-term missionary educator had expressed it as follows.

"[.]We are not in the first instance "British". We are in purpose and desire Christian; but by our upbringing and our educational instincts, we are British, and we believe that the best contribution that will be made to Education in China will be that which comes from those in a wide and progressive British manner.[.]"<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Stanley V.Boxer, 'The Boy Scouts and the League of Nations', *The Chronicle*, vol. 29, March 1921, pp. 107-108.

<sup>45</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folders 4 and 5, Rev. Bernard Upward, Hankou, 1919 and 1920; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Arthur Bonsey, Hankou, 1919-1920.

<sup>46</sup> LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, Samuel Lavington Hart, Tianjin, 1918.

The missionary secondary schools were, therefore, managed rigorously following the lines of British state middle schools and the Griffith John College obviously was fulfilling its duties honourably.

The LMS educational circles were forced to respond to the May Fourth Movement, and the missionary schools across China reacted in their own peculiar way. The students' anti-Japanese boycott and strike had immediately affected the northern part of the country and the teachers at the Tianjin Anglo-Chinese College (TACC), which was the best known British Protestant institute in North China, were unanimously sympathetic towards the May Fourth activities. The Principal, Samuel Lavington Hart, defended students' passive resistance as a necessary act to express their national spirit. Furthermore, he accepted changes in the curriculum and changed some Chinese staff members as the students had requested. The recently established, "*Independent Government*" student society at the college had also earned Hart's approval. This was not surprising since the student society's leader was a Christian scholar, and Hart explained enthusiastically that the leader had had a significant influence on shaping the Movement. Another positive aspect that Hart recognised was the Gospel's intervention in students' politics, especially when many of the college students were not Christians. Moreover, his colleague listed other positive effects of the Movement as follows: the formation of a Boy Scouts corps, practice in organisation skills, submission to student authority, and finally, a sense of responsibility and a development of a stronger college spirit.<sup>47</sup> It is important to note that out of the many British missionary establishments in China, the TACC was one of the very few institutions, which openly supported the May Fourth Movement.

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<sup>47</sup> LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, Samuel Lavington Hart, Tianjin 1919; A.P. Cullen, Tianjin, 1919 and 1920; Freer Kelsey, Tianjin, 1919; C.H.B. Longman, Tianjin, 1919 and 1920; Sparham papers, Box 1, Files B6/2-3, Sparham to Mary Sparham, 19 and 20 March, 1920.

Recognising the agitated political situation in the country, the British missionaries expressed empathy and support for the students' cause, and not only did they allow students to hold meetings at the college in Tianjin, they showed their approval by attending some of their gatherings. Compared with their missionary fellows in Shanghai and Hankou, the Tianjin educators revealed exceptionally courageous and 'progressive' thinking when accepting May Fourth activities in their own institution. The direct result of the missionaries' supportive involvement with the Movement was shown by increased student enrolment at the TACC in September 1919. The Griffith John College had been able to stabilise, numerically, its staff and students and the admission numbers increased slightly in autumn 1919, whereas at the Medhurst College the enrolment numbers had dropped drastically.<sup>48</sup>

In view of the situation in Shanghai, a woman missionary from Beijing, Mrs. Georgina Biggin, was alarmed by the Movement's effect on the school's future in the capital, as the Boys' school, due to the sharp decrease of students' attendance had been forced to close down before the end of the term. Further reductions in teaching staff seemed inevitable. Another uncertainty created by the May Fourth Movement was the school's worsening financial situation. In spite of the missionary societies' financial support, numerous institutions were increasingly dependent on non-Christian students' higher tuition fees. Secularisation of the student body had been a general phenomenon among urban missionary institutions. For instance, in the Tianjin Anglo-Chinese College's Middle School only 19-20% of students were Christians or from a Christian background. About the same proportion of non-Christian students had been accepted to the missionary

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<sup>48</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, Gerald Luxon, Shanghai, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, A.P.Cullen, Tianjin, 1919.

institutions in Shanghai. Thus at the St. John's University only 20-25% of students were Christian. Christian institutions therefore faced financially disastrous months when students went on strike and refused to pay their fees.<sup>49</sup>

Southern China had experienced thrilling moments when the Guangzhou Christian College's Christian and non-Christian students argued over the commitment to join the Movement, a dispute which put the school authorities into immediate conflict with students and local police. The missionaries' reports expressed their willingness to act as mediators not only between school students and local authorities, but also between the students themselves. Missionary educators tactfully commented on the college's leading role "in a purely patriotic movement", but on the other hand they convincingly denied any direct involvement with the May Fourth strikes. Obviously, the local British missionaries did not view of the boycott as a patriotic deed. This understanding was in sharp contrast with the May Fourth ideology where the greatest patriotic act was to boycott Japanese products and to join the strike. In the countryside, some of the LMS chapel schools had been used as headquarters to provoke an anti-Japanese climate, which in turn created a fierce protest from the local British missionary, who accused the Chinese Christians of misusing the society's money. The allegation was that "a man paid from the Society's funds will spend an enormous amount of energy on anti-foreign propaganda". Meanwhile, the missionary girls' schools were actively promoting the Movement, as the reports from Fujian province explained.<sup>50</sup> The local British Consul

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<sup>49</sup> Cui, *The Cultural Contribution of British Protestant Missionaries*, p. 160; LMS, North China, Correspondence, box 21, Mrs. Georgina Biggin to Hawkins, 12 June, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, J.D.Liddell, Peking, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, C.H.B. Longman, Tianjin, 1918; Yeh, *The Alienated Academy*, p. 66.

<sup>50</sup> LMS, South China, Correspondence, box 21, W.W. Clayson to Hawkins, 10 June and 17 November, 1919; Alex Baxter to Hawkins, 10 October, 1919; LMS, South China, Reports, box 5, Alex Baxter, Guangzhou, 1918-1919, 1919 and 1920; W.W. Clayson, Guangzhou, 1919; C. Dixon Cousins, 1919; LMS,

confirmed the news and requested the missionaries to stop abusing their premises for political purposes.<sup>51</sup>

Foreign evangelists soon discovered that the wave of nationalism was problematic, as patriotic duties isolated people from Christianity. Instead of spreading the Gospel, many Chinese Christians preached national salvation. When the Chinese Christians neglected the Bible classes, Sunday Schools and evangelistic volunteer work, the missionaries were annoyed yet hesitant to interfere as they were unwilling to get involved in the activities. Therefore, when after the summer holidays the May Fourth operations continued through autumn and winter, they caused regular class disturbances and cancellations in schools. The situation created further tension when complaints began about poor teaching, and finally, students demanded complete reform of the curriculum. Undoubtedly all these problems exhausted many foreign educators. As time passed, the foreign school administrators inevitably lost their enthusiasm and exerted pressure on students to keep them in the classrooms. Hence, critical views of students' activities became apparent in the correspondence.

The coming months confirmed that the May Fourth Movement had exacerbated already existing problems within the Protestant missionary society. Despite the fact that the evangelisation of 'heathen China' had been the shared objective of all missionaries, at the turn of the twentieth century disagreements arose over the question of how to accomplish this goal effectively. Both Sparham and Rees represented the liberal approach among the LMS missionary circles in supporting the principle of education and the formation of independent churches in China. On the other hand, many pioneering evangelists

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Fujian, Correspondence, box 12, Miss G. Oviden, to Hawkins, 1919; LMS, Fujian, Reports, box 4, Mora Wheeler, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, A.P. Cullen, Tianjin, 1919.

<sup>51</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/8, 107 Xiamen's consul to Jordan, 20 May and 9 June, 1919.

promoted the traditional method of direct preaching and foreign missionary controlled churches. The May Fourth Movement experiences widened this division between some liberal/progressive educators and fundamental/traditional evangelists. The disunity in the Protestant church will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The fundamentalist approach was well articulated in LMS veteran J. Wallace Wilson's correspondence. After 40 years' work in the field he continued to believe in the primacy of direct evangelism. He condemned the modern school education and the Chinese New Literature Movement as insufferable and the anti-Japanese boycotts as a "stupid affair". Wilson supported the *North China Herald's* demand to introduce an outside power to organise Chinese politics, but instead of suggesting the obvious option, that is, the Western countries' administration in China, Wilson surprisingly approved Japanese political activities and was willing to see the Chinese government under their control. According to the LMS missionaries' May Fourth rhetoric, Wilson was certain of the Gospel's saving power in uplifting the nation.<sup>52</sup> None of the other British missionaries dared to express their admiration of Japan, especially since it had become the archenemy of China during the May Fourth Movement.

#### **4.2. 'Man's Extremity is God's Opportunity' – British Missionaries' Reflections across the Country**

The final part of this chapter evaluates other British missionary societies' discussions about the May Fourth Movement. No other British missionary society, however, has such

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<sup>52</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, J. Wallace Wilson to Hawkins, 24 June and 10 December, 1919; LSM, Central China, Reports, box 8, J. Wallace Wilson, Hankou, 1918, 1919 and 1920; *NCH*, 17 May, 1919, p. 405.

vivid surviving correspondence about the May Fourth experiences in Shanghai as the London Missionary Society. Possible reasons for missing materials will be discussed together with materials that have been found.

The notoriety of the Shanghai May Fourth Movement had activated people in various towns and villages to join the mass movement. The stimulating atmosphere had enhanced socio-political participation to pursue nationalist ambitions which the Shanghai operations had provided as a relevant example. By the beginning of June, 1919, Shanghai had become the promoter of the surge of Chinese nationalist fervour. Given the size and diversity of China, regional responses to 'the Spirit of Shanghai' were in some respects as important as the national ones and will now be analysed.

In the course of 1919, the Church Missionary Society's (CMS) strategy was to withdraw its activities from Shanghai even though China and Japan had become core areas for their missionary work in the East. In doing so, they attempted to concentrate their efforts in the Zhejiang province, which is just below the Jiangsu province. It is important to remember that Shanghai was the centre for over 40 evangelistic, literature, medical, philanthropic, educational and other Christian societies. Therefore, competition had turned out to be overwhelming in some societies.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, Ningbo's treaty port remained an active CMS base, and Bishop Herbert Molony expressed his concerns for the British evangelists' position in China. He realised that the Versailles Peace Conference had had serious negative effects on British missionary work, since from the Chinese perspective Britain was an ally of the deeply hated Japanese government. Undeniably, the contemporary patriotic Movement had strengthened these negative

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<sup>53</sup> Boynton (ed.), *Directory of Protestant Missions, passim*; Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999*, (Richmond, Surrey, 2000), p. 23.

attitudes. If this situation was not fragile enough to shake the British missionaries' position, Molony reminded his colleagues of their enduring role as a foreign church using foreign money in an attempt to establish an indigenous Chinese church. Instead of forming an authentic Chinese church, the missionaries had once more created "a very foreign thing", as he called it. Here, Molony anticipated the foreign-native disputes which escalated in the 1920's into the anti-foreign and anti-Christian movement, and as time went by, anti-Christianity fears were reported from other CMS centres. By the end of 1919, the CMS body, at the Zhejiang Conference finally decided to prohibit their students' participation in strikes, as it had instigated other CMS schools to join the Movement.<sup>54</sup> Obviously, the ban was unable to prevent students from joining student unions, and as a consequence, reports to the British officials highlighted revolts in the classes which took place throughout the academic year. In response, the British government officials' reports blamed the missionaries for supporting students' activities, and, in a malicious tone, expressed satisfaction when the May Fourth activities began to trouble the missionary schools.<sup>55</sup>

Parallel development with the 'Spirit of Shanghai' progressed in the Western areas of China in distant Sichuan province where the CMS missionaries' May Fourth discourse was echoed in the *West China Missionary News*. The journal reported on the distribution of the "Ten Men Squad Pamphlet" and it was feared that activities would disturb the schools' work. A teacher was furious when students wanted to "spend time in

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<sup>54</sup> *NCH*, 28 June, 1919, p. 839; University of Birmingham, Church Missionary Society Archives [hereafter CMS], Original papers, G1/CH2/O, Bishop Molony's Annual Letter, Ningbo, 1 October, 1919; Recommendations and resolutions of the C.M.S. Chekiang Conference, Hangzhou, 9-12 March, 1920; Statement by Miss Weightman at the Meeting of the Mary Vaughan High School Committee, Hankou, 10 March, 1920.

<sup>55</sup> PRO, FO228/3527/80 A. Martin, Acting Consul, Ningbo to Jordan, 1 January, 1920; PRO, FO228/3280 Ningbo Intelligence Report for Quarter Ended June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1920, by J.W.O. Davidson.

'pamphleteering' and make speeches on the street to stir up patriotism". The writer further described students' activities to be "folly and potentially seditious" for the school's discipline. The *NCH* newspaper had described the 'Group of ten' in May 1919 issue. Therefore, the author clearly knew that the students were faithfully imitating the Shanghai students' duties which included patrolling streets to promote patriotism. The *NCH* and the *Celestial Empire* were widely read British newspapers in the interior. Thus, the missionaries frequently used the newspapers to get wider foreign and especially British acceptance for their views. Consequently, probably the same author as above, publicly accused the May Fourth circulars called "*Qingdao gone, Shandong lost, China lost*", of fusing "the misguided patriotism among the students [which] is all bred in ignorance".<sup>56</sup>

Further south, the May Fourth Movement's power had already shocked the CMS's Fujian mission workers. In spite of the missionary educators' joint efforts to constrain activities, unrest among the middle schools and in the Fujian Christian University continued, and the institutions were forced to close. The closure appeared to be inevitable as the student union was directed by the Christian students, and the missionary educators proudly described their pacifying effect on the Movement. Again, the self-controlled and balanced Christian students were praised for their exemplary behaviour. When the Christian students voluntarily chose to join the Movement, and took authority into their own hands, some CMS members recognised this as the country's grave desire to hear the Christian Gospel. Accordingly, the May Fourth Movement was acknowledged to be its

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<sup>56</sup> *NCH*, 21 June, 1919, p. 782 and *NCH*, 28 June, 1919, p. 839; *The West China Missionary News*, vol. XXI, August, 1919, p. 23. More about establishing the 'Groups of ten' in Chapter Six.

divine instrument.<sup>57</sup> In some cases, however, British missionary assessments accused unsettled Chinese government school students of provoking and forcing Christian students to join patriotic activities.<sup>58</sup>

The missionary strategies towards the May Fourth Movement appeared to be constructed according to a particular local situation, and in juxtaposition with the worst possible scenarios in other places like Shanghai. In principle, the missionaries' reactions seemed to support the May Fourth demonstrators' protests against the corrupt Chinese government, as long as they did not interfere with the missionaries' own projects, that is, spreading the Gospel and educational objectives at schools. But a conflict of interest with the May Fourth ideology arose when the May Fourth protagonists changed the British missionaries' daily routines. As a result, when students challenged and in some cases took over authority, they, according to the missionaries, were questioning Christian principles. Beyond doubt the missionaries eagerly protected Christian values and rules, and their presence in China was based on these principles. Therefore, the May Fourth students' threatened their existence by assuming control in the schools. Similarly, the British official community felt intimidated by the May Fourth demonstrators' activities to assume power in the International Settlement.

The Baptist Missionary Society's work (BMS) had been affected similarly by the World War as other missionary societies. Numerous members had joined the war service and had worked for the Red Cross or the YMCA. Meanwhile, others in the field found

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<sup>57</sup> CMS, Original papers, G1/CH4/O, John B. Carpenter, 18 June and 1, 6 December, 1919, and Fujian Christian University President's Report, 10 October, 1919.

<sup>58</sup> The Chinese government schools were blamed also in other missionary societies' correspondence see e.g. LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, Gerald Luxor, Shanghai, 1919; LMS, South China, Correspondence, box 21, W.W. Clayton to Hawkins, 17 November, 1919; SOAS, Methodist Church Overseas Division, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society [hereafter WMMS], Women's Work Collection, South China, 1920-1947, fiche box 1, Sadie K. Laird to Miss Hellier, 3 February, 1920; SOAS, Presbyterian Church of

that the situation was becoming increasingly difficult for financial reasons. In addition, the lack of fresh recruits seriously limited evangelistic work.<sup>59</sup> The war had unquestionably restricted all missionary correspondence, but in the case of the BMS, for reasons not known, there is a visible discontinuity of male missionaries' correspondence between 1914-1922, whereas the women's correspondence is available. As a result, several May Fourth assessments presented below are based on the secondary materials.

Modern BMS educator's perception of the May Fourth Movement was presented in Dr. Harold Balme's booklet *The Awakening of China in Relation to the Modern Missionary Programme*. The analysis of the Movement was combined with the suggestion that a new missionary strategy should be implemented in China. After presenting a concise history of Shandong province and an account of the injustice which happened in China's domestic and international politics, Balme praised the growing power of Chinese public opinion which expressed common national principles. Emphasising Western liberal values, he described May Fourth participants' fight for liberty and democracy as being against the burden of militarism. According to Balme, contemporary student leaders had been influenced by "the free and democratic gospel of Jesus of Nazareth", and that the Western education system introduced by the Protestant missionaries had naturally formed a framework for change, and the permanent influence of Christianity in China would be achieved by reinforcing the missionary education work. Above all, to achieve a more permanent position in the country, Balme believed that the missionary programmes should be primarily educational, not evangelistic as the fundamentalist missionaries were

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England, Foreign Missions Committee and Women's Missionary Association, [hereafter PCE], South Fujian, Individuals A-J, box 18, A.S.M. Andersson to Rev. Dr. Maclogan, 20 June, 1919.

<sup>59</sup> In total, there was over 70 British missionaries engaged in war service, *China Mission Year Book 1918*, (Shanghai, 1918), p. 409; H.R. Williamson, *British Baptists in China 1845-1952*, (London, 1957), pp. 100-101.

proclaiming.<sup>60</sup> Balme was among the first British missionaries to have made concrete suggestions on how to attach contemporary nationalist sentiment with Christian objectives. He perceived that the primary goal was to educate enlightened May Fourth leaders.

Shandong was one of the three principal areas where the BMS' evangelists worked and an escalation of the Japanese boycott immediately reduced the numbers of church volunteers and caused problems in daily missionary routines. Further West, Miss C.A. Waddington convincingly stated, in contrast, that her school had not become affiliated with patriotic fervour. On the contrary, her report explained that prayer sessions had been held to support Chinese nationalism. Furthermore, it boasted the founding of the Women's Patriotic League, in which the objective was to intensify women's practical duties for the country.<sup>61</sup> Inevitably these activities were practised primarily to support the strengthening of Chinese nationalism. Her narration was undoubtedly another example of missionary reasoning during the May Fourth Movement. Formally, as explained, most church organisations maintained an official position of neutrality towards the May Fourth Movement, while at the same time they made no effort to suppress students' operations.

Nevertheless, there were obvious signs of more official missionary society's approval. The BMS deputation touring China in 1919-1920 portrayed the May Fourth Movement demonstrators as an excellent recruitment group for Christian evangelism. Furthermore, the report described widely the positive signs of the Movement and once more emphasised the missionaries' opportunities among the Chinese youth. Even the China

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<sup>60</sup> Harold Balme, *The Awakening of China in Relation to the Modern Missionary Programme*, (London, ca. 1921), pp. 1, 4, 9, 11-12.

<sup>61</sup> Regents Park College, Angus Library, Oxford, Baptist Missionary Society Archives [hereafter BMS], Annual Report of the BMS, 21 March, 1920; box CH/24, Secretariat: Shaanxi, Miss C.E. Waddington, Report of Girls' School, Xi'an, January, 1920.

Sub-Committee in London expressed hopeful opinions about the perplexed condition of Chinese politics that had been described by the Rev. Evan Morgan in Shanghai.<sup>62</sup>

Long before 1919, Protestant Christianity had had a profound influence on the process of creating the New Culture Movement and May Fourth ideology in China. Since the 1870's, the BMS member Timothy Richard's missionary agenda had placed special emphasises on teaching Western values and sciences. When the programme was first implemented, it included translation of Western books into Chinese and 'the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese' (later the Christian Literature Society for China) was established for the publication work. Moreover, the YMCA's educational programmes that had been established on Richard's ideas preached the virtues of Western science and technology. Therefore, the May Fourth Movement's educated elite studying at the missionary schools had the opportunity to integrate the ideas of Western liberalism with the awakening of Chinese radical nationalism.<sup>63</sup>

So far, all the missionary societies analysed have had some correspondence materials. Unfortunately the China Inland Mission (CIM), easily the largest Protestant missionary society in China, has no surviving correspondence related to the May Fourth Movement. In general, a few scattered personal memoirs and letters have survived from that period. Therefore, the missionary journals have been the only available source to evaluate the society's attitudes. In contrast to other analysed missionary materials, the initial editorial comments in the CIM's *China's Millions* about the May Fourth activities warned of a

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<sup>62</sup> *The Challenge of China, Being the Report of a Deputation sent out to visit the China Mission Fields of the B.M.S. 1919-1920*, (London, 1920), pp. 8, 70-72; BMS, China Sub-Committee, Minute Books 1919-1923, Meeting, 16 September, 1919, p. 20.

danger of rising anti-foreign sentiment that would endanger the missionaries' presence, and which would eventually complicate their evangelistic work. Strong negative attitudes continued in the following year when the May Fourth Movement was discussed in the journal under the subtitle "Forces of Evil" together with "the Military Peril", "the Menace of Bolshevism" and "the Opium Peril". It may not have revealed the individual missionaries' attitudes, but officially the CIM appeared to condemn the Movement openly.<sup>64</sup> The reasons for their hostile approach might differ, but obviously incidents of the Boxer uprising were vivid in their memory as the CIM had lost more members than any other missionary society during that crisis. Consequently, the renewal of a Boxer - type mass movement was a fearsome threat to the society's existence. It has been acknowledged also that the CIM as a nondenominational mission usually attracted fundamentalists of the missionary community. Moreover, it was a strongly evangelistic society, which sponsored little educational work.<sup>65</sup> When the students launched the May Fourth Movement their activities appeared to be outside the CIM missionary agenda. The detachment was also physical, because even though its headquarters was situated in Shanghai, most of the CIM stations were situated in the interior, far away from active student centres. Furthermore, the CIM's decision to oppose May Fourth activities seems to support the assumption of a visible friction between the liberal and conservative wings within the Protestant church.

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<sup>63</sup> Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions, The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28*, (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1988), pp. 45-46; Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag, Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Leicester, 1990), pp. 138-139.

<sup>64</sup> *China's Millions*, Editorial Notes, vol. XLV, September, 1919, pp. 107-108; *China's Millions*, vol. XLVI, May, 1920, pp. 59-60.

<sup>65</sup> Cui, *The Cultural Contribution of British Protestant Missionaries*, pp. 155-156; Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, (New York, 1929), pp. 385-386, 517.

Various changes in the distribution of the Christian Gospel in the nineteenth century Protestant missionary society had by the 1910's developed into a perceivable disunion within the missionary community in China. The social gospel method supported by Timothy Richard, Charles Sparham and W. Hopkyn Rees and many others, formed the liberal or progressive faction which promoted Christianity through education and medical work. Moreover, the liberal missionaries encouraged the inauguration of indigenous churches and supported literary reform in China. By contrast, the CIM was at the core of the conservative/fundamentalist or evangelical approach where traditional preaching was seen as the most successful way to teach Christianity.<sup>66</sup> Both sections were well represented in the May Fourth discussions and apparently the Movement found more support among the liberal missionary societies than from the conservative community. This situation was hardly surprising since the progressive missionaries had established many of the institutions where the Movement flourished, and educated some of the students who led the student unions. For the fundamentalists, the May Fourth Movement represented indisputable disorder allegedly advocated by the liberal missionary education programmes.

The missionary societies already discussed all had a resident station in Shanghai, and had, therefore, a direct connection with their colleagues. However, a brief discussion of the missionaries who did not have formal connections with Shanghai is necessary in order to unravel a more complete British missionary May Fourth experience and to see whether 'the Spirit of Shanghai' had spread into these missionary communities. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's (WMMS) views seemed to fit with some

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<sup>66</sup> Cui, *The Cultural Contribution of British Protestant Missionaries*, pp. 8-30; Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions*, pp. 794-795.

British missionaries' discussions. Therefore, they spoke about the "undeveloped Chinese school children passing over a wave of madness" and believed that "they need caning rather badly".<sup>67</sup> At the same time, in their journal, the May Fourth activities were mainly praised as the students tried to sway public opinion by using Christianity as an instrument. The missionaries wrote of May Fourth Movement leaders who, they said, possessed qualities required for 'the earnest Christian' such as aptitude of service, willingness to sacrifice, and the ability to lead groups. Many of the desired characteristics had been exposed during the Movement and were therefore appreciated by the foreign missionaries.<sup>68</sup>

The Presbyterian Church of England (PCE) correspondence provided an inclusive view of educational administrators' actions at the height of the Movement's activities in June 1919. Again, in public, the missionaries were initially sympathetic towards the students' actions, but the fear of spreading insubordination at schools diminished the missionary authorities' readiness to continue their support. Like the WMMS missionaries, the PCE accused government institutions of inflaming sentiment in the missionary schools by arguing that "the Students from Government's schools here were sending letters accusing them [Christian students] of unpatriotism and being under foreign influences and even the shop people were taking quite a strong attitude".<sup>69</sup> The missionaries seemingly resented the influence the student union could exercise over its students. Moreover, the

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<sup>67</sup> WMMS, Correspondence, Hubei, 1905-1945, fiche box 7, Dr. W.A. Tachhell to Rev. C.W. Andrews, 15 June, 1919; WMMS, Correspondence, Hunan 1907-1945, fiche box 4, Mr. Gilbert G. Warren to Mr. Loudis, 10 January, 1920; WMMS, Women's Work Collection, South China 1920-1947, fiche box 1, Sadie K. Laird to Miss Hellier, 3 February, 1920.

<sup>68</sup> *The Story of 1919, Being the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, pp. 58-60; *The Story of 1920, Being the 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, p. 67.

<sup>69</sup> PCE, South Fujian, Individuals A-J, box 18, A.S.M. Andersson to Rev. Dr. Maclagan, 20 June, 1919; *Westminster College Magazine*, vol. III, no 1, September, 1919, pp. 1,20; PCE, South Fujian, General

'irresponsible' use of strikes and demonstrations caused great concerns over the future developments within the missionary community.

Indeed, the May Fourth Movement had developed a nation-wide question for the Christian church to answer in China and it required a unanimous reaction. The controversy over the church's participation in the Movement created an immediate division of opinion, which was visible within the Chinese Christians and within the foreign missionary community. It became obvious that whilst the missionary societies should not get involved officially, the Christians as individuals were encouraged to support the Chinese cause. These questions were reflected in the widely distributed and multi-denominational journal, *The Chinese Recorder*, which in July's editorial discussed the proper means to promote the national movement. In the same issue two pictures of "the recent student-commercial passive revolution", as it was described, reminded the readers about the May Fourth demonstrators and their objectives. The picture of the girls' school parade with girls wearing white uniforms and caps and carrying the Movement banners presented the students' deep commitment to the present situation. In addition, the Chinese-English signs in the shop windows brought images of the commercial community's connection with the Movement.<sup>70</sup> These pictures and texts conveyed a message of peaceful and rightful revolution that was inviting the Western Christians' acceptance, and that the general Protestant missionaries' sentiment therefore encouraged their members to support Chinese nationalism. Yet in practice the degree and substance of missionaries' involvement were unregulated. Dr. Rees in Shanghai seemed to

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Correspondence, 1910-1919, box 10, Reports of the year 1919, Westminster College, A.S.M. Andersson and R.D. Rogers.

<sup>70</sup> Editorial, *The Chinese Recorder*, vol. L, July, 1919, pp. 432-437; the LMS reports and correspondence, *passim*.

represent the active side of the participation, whereas others just expressed their sympathy and support for the Chinese and commemorated the patriotic activists quietly in their prayers.

While the Protestant missionary congregations were generally hesitant to be officially identified with the May Fourth activities, the Tianjin Missionary Association sent a petition to the British and American ministers in Beijing. Signed by 42 British and American missionaries, including for example A. Lavington Hart, C.H.E. Longman and A.P. Cullen from the LMS, the appeal was addressed to the British and American governments, and was an unusual step outside the missionary community's non-political presence in China. A similar petition was dispatched also by the Beijing Missionary Association. The plea criticised the pro-Japanese Peace Treaty in Versailles and predicted that it would eventually endanger the Allied Powers relations with China and would in future, generate distrust and unrest in the country.<sup>71</sup> The Tianjin missionaries were naturally concerned about the May Fourth activities around the area, but mainly, they were disturbed by Japanese anti-American, anti-British and anti-Christian propaganda published in local papers. Translations of these hostile articles were also sent to the Ministers in Beijing, and to the English newspapers in Shanghai.<sup>72</sup> The fact that newspapers had connected the churches and the Shandong Christian University with May Fourth activities in a very inauspicious manner probably explained the urgency behind the missionaries' petition.

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<sup>71</sup> PRO, FO371/3695, no 111286, Copy of the Tianjin Missionary Association's petition to Jordan and Paul Reincsh, 11 June, 1919.

## Conclusion

As I have illustrated throughout this chapter, the British missionaries' May Fourth experiences and discussions were not always in unison. The missionaries' understanding of their experience was in many ways circumscribed by the geographical, cultural and social space within which they operated. Not only had the foreign observers sets of contextual co-ordinates, the May Fourth Movement also changed its appearance and activities from city to village. Therefore, the coherence of the missionaries' May Fourth experiences was based on the use of certain rhetoric, that is, key expressions and principles that were expressed to produce implicit collective instructions for their communal behaviour. By continually repeating the common Christian and Western values in their correspondence and most likely in their meetings, they formed shared expectations of how to react towards the Movement. When the church organisations generally disclaimed official connections with the Movement, these missionaries' May Fourth discussions set rules for their individual participation. The other feature of the May Fourth rhetoric was that it was embraced more enthusiastically in some places and by some missionaries than in others.

Missionaries used different concepts to describe the May Fourth Movement, and by classifying the Movement, they revealed their attitudes and perceptions towards it. Hence, their writings formed a framework for individual experience, for example, within a particular missionary community. The missionaries occasionally suggested more general behaviour models for all missionaries or for all Britons in the city and even for all foreigners in China.

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<sup>72</sup> *NCH*, 28 June, 1919, p. 836; *Peking and Tientsin Times*, 14 May, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/25 and 70 Report of Consul of Ji'nan to Jordan, 5 June, 1919 and Jordan to FO, 14 June, 1919.

In the writings from Shanghai, the Movement was labelled as the “passive resistance movement” or “patriotic/national movement”. Sometimes it was referred to as “creating general unrest among the students”, but there was scarcely any negative associations attached to the Movement. It was more acceptable, when it supported the Western values of liberalism and democracy, and thus, the terms “patriotic/national movement” were constantly repeated in the missionary reports. To increase the messages’ effectiveness, the passive nature of the Movement was highlighted in order to guarantee foreigners’ safety during the activities. Despite the troubles caused by the student strikes and demonstrations in Shanghai, British missionaries were willing to present a positive side of it.

In terms of geography, 'the Sprit of Shanghai' was soon given more negative and contrasting characteristics as the May Fourth Movement approached all corners of the country. When comparing reflections across China, repeated definitions such as “pseudo-patriotic student strike”, “misguided patriotism”, “grotesque movement” or “wave of madness” provided a different perspective of the Movement. Geographically, the most negative characteristics were given from the interior stations especially from Hankou, but convincingly cynical attitudes were also communicated from the larger coastal cities of Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Generally, the interior missionaries seemed to have a rapidly declining tolerance towards the Movement. One practical reason behind this type of reaction was that the smaller towns and the countryside were more vulnerable to violent movements and in the case of an emergency, the treaty ports’ “gunboat diplomacy” – style protection was not automatically available. In that situation, any kind of mass movement was approached with suspicion and caution.

Another type of May Fourth discussion was created around the missionary institutions' authority. New student unions were mushrooming around China and every self-respecting government school, and most of the missionary schools had either formed their own, or had joined the national students' union. The Shanghai Student Union (SSU) was one of the leading unions and already during its inaugural meeting on May 11, 1919, represented over 12 000 students from 61 schools in Shanghai. Various other student unions replicated the SSU policies and activities and they disseminated May Fourth ideology around the country. Finally, the separate unions formed a nation-wide student network.<sup>73</sup> In a short time, the national student union members were knocking on the missionary institutions' doors encouraging students not only to join the demonstrations, but also persuading them to leave the classes and to contribute time to patriotic activities. Many of the Movement leaders were educated by the missionaries, and for some missionaries, the May Fourth era had become an opportunity to demonstrate the value of Christianity to the Chinese people. As such, indigenous Chinese nationalism appeared to fulfil the missionaries' aspirations for the nation's spiritual growth. Occasionally this situation created special connections between foreign missionaries and May Fourth activists. Rees' active involvement as an adviser quelled the inflamed sentiments of patriotism and provided a good example of trust and co-operation between the May Fourth activists and the missionaries. In contrast, other British educators in Shanghai restrained their students from partaking in the May Fourth activities, if necessary expelled students from school and remained confident of their control over the students. Taken as a whole, when the missionaries understood that the May Fourth Movement represented the Christian and Western values of free speech, liberty and democracy

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<sup>73</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, p. 83; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 62-63.

against the corruption and oligarchy of the Chinese government, the student unions and their duties were also accepted. The Christian Gospel's positive role in leading the Movement and providing spiritual guidance was constantly praised in the published articles<sup>74</sup>.

In the smaller administrative towns, the student union was perceived as a recognised threat for the missionary authority at the school. Fear of losing control produced strong negative comments such as "the Students' League, however noble its objectives were, undermined school discipline and must ultimately lead to lawlessness" and further "the Students' Associations have begun to feed their power and are exercising a tyranny's influence over the students"<sup>75</sup>. These missionaries were so concerned of being defeated by the student union's expanding influence on the Christian students that they ignored their students' difficult position. For students, placing studies before politics was selfish and unpatriotic, whereas the action of the British missionaries was seen as proof of intent to denationalise their pupils. Hereafter, some Chinese Christians found it difficult to reconcile their church allegiance with patriotism and decided in favour of their country.

Differences between missionary and government institutes were highlighted in the May Fourth discussions in favour of the former. Therefore, 'our students and the government school students' was a commonly used concept in order to demonstrate the superior position of the former. The missionary school students were proclaimed as self-controlled and disciplined leaders, whose possible involvement had only a pacifying effect on the Movement. Troublemakers were frequently found in other schools. Furthermore, various comparisons were made between unrest in Shanghai and Beijing, and more so with the

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<sup>74</sup> A.P. Cullen, 'Young China Seeks a Prophet', *The Chronicle*, vol. 28, May 1920, pp. 121-122; A.H. Jowett Murray, 'Patriotic Strikes in China', *The Chronicle*, vol. 29, April, 1921, pp. 80-81.

problems at the American missionary institutions. Troubled centres were constantly under discussion, and incidents were enumerated to remind everyone how bad the circumstances were somewhere else. According to British missionary rhetoric the boycotts, demonstrations, strikes etc. always happened elsewhere, not in their constituency, nor in their institutions. Even if a missionary conceded the occurrence of May Fourth activities in his own area, by definition the advocator was found to be an outsider. Usually this outsider was from the Chinese government school.

Previous chapters have concentrated mainly on British reactions during the first months of the May Fourth Movement. It is now necessary to evaluate the British May Fourth discourse during and after the summer of 1919, and to analyse its possible short and long-term consequences in Shanghai.

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<sup>75</sup> CMS, Original papers, G1/CH4/O, John B. Carpenter, 6 December, 1919; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Stanley V. Boxer, Hankou, 1919.

## **5. 'APPEAL FOR STATUS QUO' - THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT AFTER JUNE 1919**

Though briefly discussed in the previous chapters, it is now essential to examine incidents which the British perceived as May Fourth activities after the general strike was over in June, 1919. The theme of this chapter relates to changes in British rhetoric on the May Fourth activities and it suggests possible reasons for these changes in attitudes.

In contrast to the previous three chapters, the British community is analysed as a combined unit rather than focusing on one group at a time. Here, British May Fourth rhetoric is categorised under sub-headings that are roughly in chronological order, according to unfolding events occurring after the general strike. Different groups are discussed together in order to follow the general development of May Fourth rhetoric and common experiences, and also because the framework for British perceptions has been discussed in the earlier chapters. At this stage, such an approach is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, the collective experience of the general strike that was contrived by the Council had similar attitudes towards the May Fourth Movement. Hence, collective perceptions seemed to prevail in the British community. Secondly, the Council's ambiguous policies during May-June 1919 prompted severe collective criticism from other foreigners living inside and outside the city, and significantly among the Shanghai British society itself. The former group of people seemed to approve of the May Fourth Movement as such, and therefore, they opposed the Council's repressive operations, hence, challenging the existing power structures in the International Settlement. This dualistic understanding of the Movement was especially reflected in the British municipal and consulate officials' and businessmen's correspondence after the general strike. Thus, by carefully comparing the second phase of British May Fourth rhetoric, my aim is to

extract initial British attempts to mythologise the events, and moreover, to legitimise their actions taken during the May Fourth general strike.

Among the British there were certain general features which accelerated the creation of a logical continuity between pre- and after-strike conditions, even after the strain of the general strike was lifted and business was gradually returning to normal. At first sight, the Chinese students appeared to be continuing with Japanese boycotts, since their demands were only partially fulfilled. Releasing students from bail and the dismissal of three pro-Japanese officials in Beijing, were perceived merely as a stepping stone on the way to a victorious modern China. Newly established Chinese newspapers and magazines supported their representatives in Paris who were still, in June 1919 struggling against international pressure to sign the Versailles peace agreement. Encouraging articles and pamphlets were written to strengthen the May Fourth spirit and the Chinese delegates' determination in Paris. In addition, the Chinese associations which were based on shared interests such as the shop-owners' street unions, student groups, labour unions, and finally, anti-Japanese boycott societies, were mushrooming in Shanghai. All of them ceaselessly supported the May Fourth principles. Untamed rumours spread around the Settlement, notwithstanding the Council's efforts to restrain them. Moreover, many of the notifications issued during May and June 1919 were still in force. The British gunboats remained in the Customs Jetty for some weeks to build up foreigners' predominance and to recover their control system which had been shaken during the June strikes.

### **5.1. The Council's Hard-line Policy and the Press Licence of July 1919**

The second phase of the May Fourth Movement was, according to the foreign municipal officials, to be regulated strictly by the Council's orders. The Council Chairman, E.C.

Pearce's speech at the Ratepayers' Special meeting on 10 July 1919 drew lines for tougher policy and emphasised local British nationalism exercised in Shanghai. It is therefore necessary to quote it in its entirety (see Appendix 2). It was without doubt the textual embodiment of British authority in the International Settlement.

Pearce's utterances provide a relevant example of the discourse of authority or authorised language discussed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and since the audience - the International Settlement's ratepayers - recognised it as authoritative, much of the Council's power was articulated in Pearce's speech. This sounds feasible as the speech was given in legitimate circumstances at the Ratepayers' meeting which in practice represented the highest 'quasi-democratic parliament' in the International Settlement. Only the Consular Body in Shanghai and the Diplomatic Body in Beijing had the authority to veto its decisions. Moreover, the Council Chairman held the legitimate license to express foreign Shanghaianders' requests in the meeting and as the leader of a privileged business and financial community, he was allowed to propagate this particular type of discourse. Finally, the speech was enunciated according to the sanctioned forms of rhetorical speech, that is, Pearce used impressive metaphors such as "our needs as a cosmopolitan community" and threatened with "paths of violence" or the Settlement being "a pawn in Chinese politics".<sup>1</sup> By using them he communicated the Council's commanding message. Coupled with its authoritative and executive tone, the speech also conveyed the symbolic power possessed by the Council. Again, as in the case of authorised language, it has to be remembered that symbolic power can be exercised only if it is acknowledged as such. Initially, the audience had belief in the legitimacy of the Council Chairman's words in that it created hegemony to maintain the existing political and social order in the International Settlement. What followed was that during unsettled

times, such as during rebellion or movement, the Council had to actively maintain their position by presenting themselves as having the legitimate right to rule the community. However, to be able to strengthen its control, the Council wished to manifest its symbolic hegemony over the Sino-foreign residents. In other words, it was obliged to confirm the united vision of the world within the borders of the International Settlement. In so doing, the Council's discourse insisted on providing to others a sufficient understanding of the reality in the Settlement. All this indicated that by expressing its perception of the May Fourth Movement, the Council attempted to form a collective, appropriate myth-like understanding of the incidents and to legitimise their actions towards the Movement. Another case of creating 'the official myth' after the May Fourth strikes in Shanghai will be analysed later in this chapter.

Yet another dimension of Pearce's speech was to redefine the nature of foreigners' presence in the city. In contrast to Britain and America, Shanghai was described as a cosmopolitan community, with unique conditions beyond any comparison. It was not a coincidence that comparison was made between the city and two Western independent countries<sup>2</sup>. In this context the Council used 'the Shanghailanders' identity to emphasise the whole foreign community's special nature.<sup>3</sup> For this reason a code of local laws, that is, the Land Regulations and Bylaws, had been implemented based upon foreign nations' extraterritorial laws. In doing so the Council expressed its willingness to operate within the symbolic framework of a modern democratic society, but reserved for itself the

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<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, pp. 107-116, 163-170; *Municipal Gazette* 10 July, 1919, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, pp. 17, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Pearce's speech offered a partly different perspective to conventional 'Shanghailanders' identity. For similar usage of the Shanghailander concept, see *Municipal Gazette*, 9 April, 1920, p. 157. Compare with Robert A. Bickers' in-depth evaluation of 'the Shanghailanders' identity, which excluded particularly the managers of larger British companies and missionaries. In contrast, on July 1919, the meeting included all the influential Ratepayers to the 'Shanghailander community'. It seemed that when needed, the Council used the term to form a united front and therefore categorised the powerful British business managers under the concept. See Bickers, *Britain in China*, pp. 15, 67; Bickers, "Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity", pp. 161, 171-172, 175-185.

privilege of constituting its own laws according to particular needs. The Council had no internationally recognised judicial power and had established its jurisdiction on incoherent Land Regulations and later, added Bylaws.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, at the Ratepayers' meeting the Council sought foreign acceptance on dealing with the aftermath of the May Fourth activities. To begin with, arguments were based on the Council's claimed knowledge of the Settlement's affairs. Secondly, they alluded to the Council's practical experience on maintaining peace and good order, and lastly they trusted in its own accurate evaluation of the Movement's potential threat to the foreign society. Relying on such statements, the Council claimed to possess a qualified understanding of the Movement while simultaneously presenting its world vision to the ratepayers. Accordingly, the Settlement had been "dictated by the students, political malcontents and agitators" who had propagated violence by "malicious press and distributed false rumours creating more unrest"<sup>5</sup>. For the model world of Shanghai<sup>6</sup> "the seditious, violent and scurrilous printed materials" were not appropriate instruments to communicate. Hence, the Council called for an immediate implementation of the Bylaw of Press Licence.

The Council had tried to introduce the press licence before<sup>7</sup>, but the Consular Body of Shanghai had blocked it. This time, by connecting it to the May Fourth strikes, rumours, and moreover, to printing and publishing disturbing pamphlets and newspapers, the Council was committed to introduce the law. Without hesitation the Ratepayers' meeting approved the law proposal despite the fact that the American Council representative, the Chairman of the Ratepayers and allegedly over 100 British ratepayers opposed it, some of

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<sup>4</sup> Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court*, pp. 557-575

<sup>5</sup> *Municipal Gazette* 10 July, 1919, p. 242.

<sup>6</sup> 'The model world of Shanghai' was an ideal of the city created by the British and it was frequently referred to in the British correspondence and books to define its advanced characteristics when comparing it with surrounding Chinese areas. Charles M. Dyce, *The Model Settlement*, (London, 1906), *passim*.

them by walking out of the meeting<sup>8</sup>. To implement the press licence, the Council had, via Senior Consul D. Siffert, sought the Consular Body's approval on revision of the Land Regulations. Instead it received firm rejection from even the British consulate. The French Concession had already adopted a press law and after the May Fourth incidents this law was introduced to convince doubting foreign officials in the International Settlement. In addition, just 24 hours before the Ratepayers' meeting the Council revised the press licence, presumably to satisfy the foreign consuls. Thus, from the beginning, it was clear that the ultimate decision of the press licence question depended upon the Consular Body, which eventually, though not unexpectedly, rejected the law.<sup>9</sup> The Council's propagandised communication was, however, published in local foreign newspapers and the law itself was the subject of wide debate during the summer of 1919, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter.

Why was the Press Licence so crucial to the Council's hegemony and legitimacy after the May Fourth incidents that a Special Meeting of Ratepayers needed to be convened? Why, on the other hand, was the press bylaw strongly opposed especially by Americans and some other foreigners and Chinese citizens?<sup>10</sup> In principle, the suggested press bylaw gave the Shanghai Municipal Police and the Revenue Office officials free access to search any printing or publishing houses, Chinese and foreign, in the International Settlement without a warrant. Besides having permission to confiscate and seize any printed materials perceived as being "published in breach of seditious or scurrilous

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<sup>7</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1918*, pp. 82B-84B.

<sup>8</sup> *NCDN*, 10 July, 1919, p. 6; *NCDN*, 17 July, 1919, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *China Press*, 9 July, 1919, p. 7; *Municipal Gazette*, 5 July, 1919, pp. 216-217; PRO, FO671/447/661-665 Pearce to Siffert, 25 June, 1919; the British, American, Spanish, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese Consulates responses to Siffert, June-July, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Pearce to Siffert, 26 June, 1919.

<sup>10</sup> As Bryna Goodman has pointed out British-American transnational press interests also collided here, since both the British and the Americans also represented Chinese interests whose publications they supported. Bryna Goodman, "Improvisations on a Semicolonial Theme, or, How to Read a Celebration of Transnational Urban Community", in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no 4 (November 2000), pp. 902-912.

character or of a character that is calculated to incite a breach of the peace or the disturbance of good order", the printing houses that were deemed dangerous were subject to immediate suspension<sup>11</sup>. Thus, the Council had the ultimate power to decide which materials fitted into the above mentioned categories and in times of unrest, such as the May Fourth demonstrations had brought to the International Settlement, the 'seditious' printing materials and houses were certainly primary targets to censure. In other words, according to the *China Press*, by implementing the Press Licence the Council wanted to muzzle all voices of protest against its administration, while simultaneously they inconsistently claimed to respect freedom of expression<sup>12</sup>.

In the present circumstances the Mixed Court, at the Council's request, gave permission to search. However, the ruling process was too inefficient and slow for the Council's operations to be effective during emergency situations. In addition, the foreign controlled Mixed Court had authority over the constitution and jurisdiction at the Settlement, and it possessed disciplinary measures such as the closure of illegal premises which the Council was willing to acquire for themselves, as their report revealed. Traditionally, the primary function of the Council had been to possess an executive control over the municipal affairs and it had limited legal authority under the Land Regulations. This was not, however, the position that the Council wished to hold. As a result, the report required amendments to the Land Regulation to enlarge its legislative powers by empowering the Ratepayers' meeting to issue laws without final approval from the Consular Body, the Diplomatic Body or the Chinese government.<sup>13</sup> The Press Licence argument seemed to fortify the Council's 'grand plan' to expand its self-government in the International

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<sup>11</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 11 July, 1919, p. 242.

<sup>12</sup> *China Press*, 26 June, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 3 July, 1919, p. 12; *China Press*, 8 July, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> CA, China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, number 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, China's Future and the Future of Shanghai, N.O. Liddell, Secretary of the Council, 10 December, 1918; Stephens, *Order and Discipline in China*, pp. 51-52, 103-106.

Settlement. The Press law appeared to demonstrate the Council's persistent policy to control the region and by superficially amending the details, the foreign oligarchy unsuccessfully attempted to restrict the press during the next consequent five years in the annual ratepayers' meetings<sup>14</sup>.

During May Fourth activities, the Council had experienced attacks from two separate quarters. Firstly, in spite of the prohibitions issued, publications printed by fervent Chinese students and merchants flooded into the Settlement, therefore undermining the Council's prohibitions. As a response, the foreign municipal police confiscated massive amounts of printed materials which propounded issues such as the poison rumours; the spread of Bolshevism; the boycott of Japanese products etc. Moreover, an appeal to the foreigners to provide support in fighting against Japanese imperialism was distributed throughout the Settlement.<sup>15</sup> According to the Council's perception, these messages threatened its well-maintained control system and incited people to disturb peace and order. The uncontrollable press was associated with 'dictatorial students and political agitators' who had provoked strikes. Initially this type of rhetoric accused the press of causing recent political disturbances. Once the press law had been implemented, the Council would possess the means to censure opposing publishing houses in the Settlement.

In fact, outside the student and educated class, illiteracy levels among the Chinese populace were high, and mouth-to-mouth communication remained the most common and fastest way to transmit information. Indeed, the May Fourth students used vivid imagination to invent means to promote their cause. Popular lectures were held on street

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<sup>14</sup> *Land Regulations and Bye-Laws: Amendments proposed and Amendments completed: 1898-1931*, (Shanghai, no date), pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> SMA, U1-91-18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Consul-Général de France, Auguste Wilden, 20 June, 1919; SMA U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Wilden, 18, 19, 20 June, 1919;

corners, parades passed through the city and patriotic plays were shown in the markets<sup>16</sup>. The crucial factor deliberately ignored by the Council during their campaign for the press licence, but pointed out in the *NCH*, was that the Chinese newspapers, handbills and posters printed in other parts of Shanghai nonetheless flooded effortlessly into the International Settlement regardless of the printing prohibitions.<sup>17</sup> Apart from their efforts to restrain the students' 'virulent press' and 'malicious rumours', this detail revealed that the Council's primary intention was to attain control, particularly over the American press in the Settlement.

The second type of criticism came from the American press. At the time of the May Fourth events especially, the daily *China Press* had been a frequent nuisance to the British municipal authorities. Soon after the general strike had loosened its grip over Shanghai's commercial world, the American newspaper began to criticise the Council and its actions towards the Movement. In its six point declaration of 'things that were done wrongly', the paper entirely condemned the Council's policies. Mishandled operations included the SVC's display of military pomp, enforcement of opening the shops and the rule to remove all banners including those urging the crowds not to commit violence. In addition, the paper mentioned the Council's order to close the students' headquarters at the Settlement and it also marvelled at their non-acceptable stance towards students' victory parade. Finally, the *China Press* criticised the Council's refusal to co-operate with the strike leaders. Later, the readers' correspondence seemed to adopt the paper's accusations. The British citizen who remarkably expressed strong criticism in his letter, accused the Council of despotism and for unconstitutional jurisdiction. Further, the Council was accused of instigating an anti-Chinese atmosphere. In this situation, the

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SMA, U1-91-22, Shanghai Municipal Police, Rough translation of note from the commercial, educational and labouring communities to the Council, 9 June, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 60-62.

writer recommended that the Council should take a prolonged holiday and forget Shanghai for a while. On the other hand, the *China Press* had no delusions about the consequences when it criticised the authorities' operations, therefore, acknowledging the possibility of becoming muzzled by the Council if the press licence was implemented.<sup>18</sup>

Another American paper, the *Far Eastern Review* assumed a provocative tone, but attempted to represent diversified opinions at the Settlement. While recognising the May Fourth demonstrators' aims, the editorial saw the Council's policy as destructive and as mismanaged as foreigners' operations had been preceding the Boxer uprising. Furthermore, even the capital's military government was declared to be more tolerant than the foreign authorities. Elsewhere, the *Far Eastern Review's* attitude was more reconcilable in providing a lengthy exposé of the "non-Japanese foreigners" confused position in relation to the Shandong question and analysed reasons for foreigners' active responses against the Versailles Peace Treaty implementations in China.<sup>19</sup>

A few years later, the consular materials confirmed the assumption that the British officials were eager to connect "the Young China - movement" with American propaganda against the British. The anti-British provocateurs were said to include professor John Dewey, and "the American hot heads of the YMCA".<sup>20</sup> Prof. Dewey was indeed touring China during the May Fourth incidents and also held lectures in Shanghai in May, 1919. Yet according to his account he merely observed the situation with great interest rather than get involved with the May Fourth Movement itself.<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly Dewey's radical lectures had a profound impact on the 1920's student movements in

<sup>17</sup> NCH, 26 July, 1919, p. 204.

<sup>18</sup> *China Press*, 20 June, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 26 June, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 27 June, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 2 July, 1919, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> *Far Eastern Review*, vol. XV, July 1919, pp. 485-489 and 494-497.

<sup>20</sup> PRO, FO671/437/560 Letter from Shanghai [possibly Sir Everard Fraser] to British Minister at Beijing, 25 August, 1921.

<sup>21</sup> John and Alice Dewey, *Letters from China and Japan*, (New York, 1920), pp. 150- 311.

China, but apparently in the summer of 1919 he was merely observing the situation and not directly involved in the May Fourth activities.<sup>22</sup>

It is easy to recognise the Council's impulsive operations from the American newspaper's articles in the summer of 1919. Obviously, with its reputation already bruised from the May Fourth incidents, the Council was not happy to receive any criticism from foreign newspaper columns. However, such criticism was representative of a growing body of opinion, which considered that the British authorities' harsh responses had precipitated the events.

In contrast to the major American papers, the British press supported strongly the Council's repressive measures executed during the May Fourth demonstrations. By engaging in constant repetition of the mantra "in this Settlement, peace and order will be maintained", the British papers reproduced the authorities' principles. The *Celestial Empire* urged that "our Settlement streets should be sacred". Their rationale for this statement was the perceived intimidation of foreigners. As a consequence, the paper argued that in future, the strategy was to equip the authorities with efficient powers to prevent similar unrest.<sup>23</sup> Serving as the location of the Council's notifications and the most respected English publication in the city, the *NCH* had no reason to fear closure during the unsettled times. Therefore, it eagerly supported the implementation of the press licence. The moment for 'a complete insult' to the American journalists came immediately after successful voting for the press licence, and the American "unworthy accusations and hysterical language" towards the Council were condemned in the *NCH* "as outrageous". Throughout the summer of 1919 the *NCH* had carefully supported the Council's actions and when necessary, obediently defended its policy. As a result, China's

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<sup>22</sup> John and Alice Dewey, *Letters from China and Japan*, pp. 150- 311; Cecile Dockser, "John Dewey and the May Fourth movement in China: Dewey's social and political philosophy in relation to his encounter with China 1919-21", Harvard University, unpublished PhD thesis, 1983, *passim*.

demands at Versailles were treated as a joke. Indeed, Chinese requests starting from nationalising all police and army forces on Chinese soil and ending with the abolition of foreign municipal concessions must have sounded over-optimistic for the British residents in Shanghai. The opinions of Chinese society or supportive comments expressed by the foreign community were sporadically published. If they criticised municipal authorities or their actions, however, the paper frequently separated itself from such accusations.<sup>24</sup> The Settlement's organisational structure and its Council were praised in a newspaper and in its reader's letter which urged the ratepayers to act as 'Shanghaianders' and not as individuals or representatives of particular nations. The reader's letter advocated that all British people express their loyalty to the Council by voting for the Press Licence.<sup>25</sup> Finally, one May Fourth article in the American paper favoured British attitudes and it clearly approved the mobilisation of troops as a precautionary measure to prevent anarchism. It conveniently omitted to mention, however, the shooting incident of 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1919. Moreover, cleverly created images of the Boxer uprising were utilised to refresh the foreign society's collective fear when dealing with Chinese crowds, and to justify, therefore, the Council's earlier operations to restrain them.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of some supportive opinions within the *NCH* originally, as I briefly discussed in the third chapter, it may be argued that the majority of journalists fitted meticulously into British municipal officials' policy during and after the May Fourth strikes. Since the famous editor of the paper, O. M. Green did not return to Shanghai until the beginning of July 1919 and since most of the reporters were not named, it is difficult to link the editorial articles with their authors. Therefore, only incomplete traces of the *NCH*

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<sup>23</sup> *Celestial Empire*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 517-518, 524; *Celestial Empire*, 21 June, 1919, pp. 565, 571.

<sup>24</sup> *NCH*, 5 July, 1919, pp. 9,13; *NCH*, 12 July, 1919, pp. 75, 80.

<sup>25</sup> *NCDN*, 10 July, 1919, p. 4.

journalists' private May Fourth rhetoric were revealed throughout the May Fourth Movement. Moreover, the Council's legitimate understanding of these activities often prevailed over personal perceptions, making it difficult to separate the personal from the Council's rhetoric.

In an effort to prevent journalists and agitators, Chinese and foreigners alike, from distributing 'seditious' materials and publishing judgmental articles, the Council advocated a more intrusive hegemony over the Settlement. The Ratepayers' meeting, propaganda for implementing the press licence, and a careful construction of a collective May Fourth image as 'a menacing movement' were signs of the Council's clever attempts to legitimise their operations. At the same time, it was an early attempt to mythologise their actions in the eyes of the Shanghai foreigners.

Meanwhile, British businessmen seemed to accept a course taken by the local foreign authorities. In spite of an apparently united opinion recording the May Fourth Movement, revisionist views were occasionally voiced among the commercial community that supported, for instance, the Chinese representation in the Council or freedom of public opinion and some of these ideas were expressed in newspapers and in annual reports<sup>27</sup>. It can scarcely be denied that the political importance of such views was minimal, but at the individual level it represented a slowly changing attitude in creating a more open society in the International Settlement.

To a certain extent the Council succeeded in manipulating some foreign residents' opinions to agree with theirs and the Japanese obviously belonged to this group. The rest of the Shanghai foreigners were left to express their dissenting views along with foreigners living outside the city. In the capital, the Shanghai Municipal Council's efforts

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<sup>26</sup> *Far Eastern Review*, vol. XV, July 1919, pp. 503-504.

<sup>27</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 7, August 1919, p. 124; China Association, Annual Report, Shanghai Branch, year ending March 31, 1920, pp. 3, 7.

to license the press had seriously affected the New Consortium<sup>28</sup> negotiations as the Council's campaign to muzzle press freedom had antagonised many Americans in Shanghai and Beijing, therefore, complicating co-operation between Britain and America. Some Chinese political parties eagerly encouraged disagreements among the Westerners in China since their objective was to undermine the consortium. Apart from warning the Council for abusing its legal power, Sir John Jordan, the British Minister at Beijing, accused the organisation of being out-of-date with the rest of the world. In particular, the HSBC's Hillier agreed with Jordan and together they struggled to neutralise the British sensitive political position in the country and to resume normal business after the Council's hard-line operations in Shanghai.<sup>29</sup> The British in Beijing were understandably disturbed by the Council's operations which endangered their economic and political interests in the country and threatened British prestige in Asia.

On the political front, the smouldering anti-British atmosphere was evidently spreading, because the news of British interests in Tibet, Gansu, Yunnan and Sichuan province was published in the newspapers around China. From the British perspective this seemed to be a part of Japanese propaganda and a tactically skilful attempt to shift public scrutiny from the Shandong issue to the British regional politics in China. Yet another sensitive question was added to British politics in China when Mayers' scheme on unification and internationalisation of the Chinese railways, introduced in the Versailles Peace Conference, was again brought out in the open. The British officials denied the accusations immediately. However, if Chinese propaganda was to continue, more permanent damage to the British reputation was expected to occur. The anti-British

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<sup>28</sup> More detailed information about the New Consortium see chapter three.

<sup>29</sup> BCC, Box 112, Mayers to E.M.Gull, Secretary of British Chamber of Commerce, 27 September, 1919; John and Alice Dewey, *Letters from China and Japan*, Peking, 17 July, 1919, p. 284; HSBC, K.1.7, King letters, 1919, Hillier to Stephen, 8 July, 1919; Hillier to Stabb, 17 July, 1919; PRO, FO671/447/539 Jordan to Jamieson, 16 August, 1919.

pamphlets distributed in Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin verified British fears of Japanese propaganda activities.<sup>30</sup>

The Japanese propaganda machinery undoubtedly modified the information to serve its own political purposes, but the British government had indeed sent researchers to Western China to investigate possible business ventures in the region. The Tibet negotiations particularly were a matter of imperial importance for British government representatives, as Jordan's correspondence during autumn 1919 illustrates<sup>31</sup>. The internationalisation programme for the Chinese government railways was 'an open secret' as many newspapers had included reports on it in relation to the Versailles Peace Conference.

## 5.2. Rate Agitation

The May Fourth mass protests, parades and strikes had demonstrated the great potential of public opinion to force the Chinese central government and foreign municipal officials to change their policies in Shanghai. Perhaps the most significant accomplishment had so far been its success in exercising authority over the foreign municipal administration. As numerous demonstrations among the Settlement's Chinese community continued, the British frequently associated them with the May Fourth Movement and the Council accordingly exercised its non-tolerant policy against the protestors. However, public attention began to focus upon the increasingly energetic operations of street unions and

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<sup>30</sup> BCC, Box 42, 'Internationalisation & Unification of the Chinese Government Railways' -file, S.F. Mayers in 1918-19; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 23/84-85 Chengdu Agency Business Report for June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/57 W.P. Thomas to Lampson, 11 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/85, 93 Jordan to FO, 16 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/115 Ji'nan's consul to Jordan, 17 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3276 Political and Intelligence Reports, Guangzhou, September, 1919; see also various articles during summer and autumn of 1919 e.g. in the *China Press*, *NCH*, *North China Star*, *Peking Leader*, *Peking and Tientsin Times*.

<sup>31</sup> PRO, WO106/37 Jordan to FO, 10 and 13 October, 1919 and 20 November, 1919.

student associations established throughout May-June of 1919. The students had already proven that they were capable of organising disciplined political operations and were therefore carefully observed by the local British police members and press. In addition, new political pressure groups such as the patriotic street associations, shopkeepers' and labour unions took part in the campaigning<sup>32</sup>. Soon after the general strike, various associations instigated a different style of agitation among the Settlement Chinese by encouraging the people to refuse to pay municipal taxes that were due in July. In the days immediately following the launch of the rates agitation, the British perceived it as an continuation of the May Fourth operations.

Rate Agitation, as the British named it, had started unexpectedly and was quickly understood as another direct attack against foreign predominance in the city. As long as the Chinese at the International Settlement obediently paid taxes, the foreigners allowed them to live in 'the model Western style community'. The Settlement was, after all, allegedly "a Foreign Settlement" built up primarily for the foreign community and the Chinese were tolerated only if they obeyed the Land Regulations which required remittance of various kinds of licences, fees, tariffs, taxes and rates. Of these, the General Municipal Rate which was assessed as a percentage of paid rent was a particularly important source of revenue. Income from various payments was used to cover the routine maintenance of the Council's administration including police, health, education and public works.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *NCH*, 12 July, 1919, pp. 84, 86; *SMA*, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 3 July, 1919; *SMP*, Special Branch, roll 64, dossier 2882, Report on: Wen Tsung Yao and alleged meetings at the Cantonese Club, J. Sullivan, D.S.I., 23 July, 1919. For more detailed discussion on formation of labour unions and societies just after the May Fourth strikes see Jean Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labour Movement 1919-1927*, (Stanford, 1968), pp. 159- 163.

<sup>33</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 8, September 1919, p. 172; *NCH*, 19 July, 1919, pp. 143, 148-149; *PRO*, FO228/3526/75 Fraser to Jordan, 11 June, 1919.

Rate agitation was not in a new phenomenon at the International Settlement<sup>34</sup>. This time, however, British existence in Shanghai and world politics precipitated the agitation. Of the hundreds of British volunteers who had joined the war service and returned to Europe to fight in 1914-1918, many worked for the International Settlement's municipal administration and in return were granted half pay for the period they served with H.M. Forces during the war. To meet these extra municipal expenses it had been decided in the Ratepayers' meeting in April 1919 to levy a special tax of 1% payable only in 1919, and in addition, to impose a 2% increase on the general municipal rate. As it happened, a new framework for international politics had taken shape in the Versailles Peace Conference and it had drawn the Chinese public's attention. Therefore, in April the resolution was passed without notable Chinese opposition. Instead in the summer of 1919, the May Fourth spirit to protest against the Council's unfavourable notifications, as Brooke-Smith from Jardines had predicted, continued in the form of the rate agitation almost in conjunction with the rallies against licensing the press.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, another crucially important justification for levying additional taxes was the fact that the Council had, for years, lived beyond its means and was near bankruptcy. Hence, the foreign banks, presumably guided by the HSBC, were pressing it for larger revenues.<sup>36</sup> Undoubtedly the Council was conscious of rising opposition that would greet any announcement of increased taxation of the Chinese community in the Settlement, and that was the main reason why the Council had attempted to implement the new rate quietly. In contrast, the peace negotiations in Paris and the May Fourth demonstrations across the country had activated people to react vigorously and crossing class boundaries.

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<sup>34</sup> For statistical information of the anti-taxation mass actions see C.K. Yang, "Some Preliminary Statistical Patterns of Mass Actions in Nineteenth-Century China", in Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Carolyn Grant (eds.), *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China*, (Berkeley, California, 1975), pp. 189-191.

<sup>35</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 11 April, 1919, Annual Meeting of Ratepayers, pp. 125-133; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no 15/1-13 Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 19 June, 1919.

Therefore, the rate increase infuriated the whole Chinese community in the International Settlement.

The refusal to pay the required rate led to confrontation with British officials and to a series of protests including the distribution of pamphlets and to a partial closure of shops. Due to the shopkeepers' and street associations' resistant campaign, the collection of taxes in July had to be temporarily suspended.<sup>37</sup> The situation reminded the British of the recent May Fourth operations and it was instinctively judged as such. As a result, the Council announced promptly that the protests were politically motivated and required an uncompromising response according to the policy constituted in the previous Ratepayers' meeting.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the Council's statement, the American press persistently condemned this hard-line policy along with British municipal officials' operations during the May-June 1919 demonstrations, and also blamed them for arousing the present rate agitation.<sup>39</sup>

While the more prominent Chinese groups such as commercial guilds and associations had been traditionally granted access to negotiate with British senior officials and businessmen, the newcomers, representing the street unions, were also eager to have their existence recognised. With the help of formal protocol, the newly formed organisations sought opportunities to express their collective opinions on current issues such as taxation, rents and salaries. Shortly after the rate agitation was launched, they sought discussions with the Settlement foreigners, which in turn irritated some British officials including the Council members and the Consul-General. The Council's superior attitude was reiterated in the authoritative language articulated as follows: "[.] in the past the

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<sup>36</sup> PRO, FO671/447/536, Jamieson to Jordan, 12 August, 1919.

<sup>37</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 65A.

<sup>38</sup> PRO, FO671/447/534, N.O. Liddell, Secretary of the SMC to Phillips, 21 July, 1919; PRO, FO671/447/542, Jamieson to Jordan, 21 August, 1919.

<sup>39</sup> *China Press*, 1 August, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 14 August, 1919, p. 10.

Council had never communicated with the Chinese officials on the subject of taxation. After the new taxes had been voted at the Ratepayer's meetings, they were supposed to be known to all concerned."<sup>40</sup> It was obvious that if the Chinese officials' opinions were not taken into consideration, the new associations' petitions had even less chance of being taken seriously in the British municipal politics.

In addition to increased visible presence on the street by student and labour unions, the rate agitation strained the Sino-foreign relations even further and again challenged the foreign municipal administrators' authority. Chinese public opposition towards foreigners' repressive operations during the May Fourth activities was expressed through various anti-foreign circulars distributed around Shanghai.<sup>41</sup> Of these, the messages projecting incidents of June 12 1919 were especially sensitive to the British, since during that night the British police inspector, with his troops, had opened fire at the unarmed crowd. The incident was embarrassing and afterwards British officials criticised it quietly, but the issue was omitted from public discussion<sup>42</sup>. One Chinese anti-foreign pamphlet predicted that the shooting of a Chinese shoemaker had been an example of the future era in Shanghai, whereas another leaflet complained of foreigners' insulting policies during the Chinese celebrations just after the May Fourth general strike. 'Rebellious' exhortations were written in Chinese and sometimes translated in English to warn foreigners. These arguments gathered increasing momentum among street associations' propaganda. By distributing pamphlets the new associations such as "The Real Patriotic Society" and "The National Disgrace Memorial Party" appeared eager to operate as a radical wing for

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<sup>40</sup> PRO, FO671/447/542, Jamieson to Jordan and an attachment 'Notes of the meeting held at the Consulate-General', 21 August, 1919.

<sup>41</sup> PRO, FO671/447/536 Jamieson to Jordan, 12 August, 1919; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, pp. 95A-99A.

<sup>42</sup> Jordan's and M.W. Lampson's hand written comments on file PRO, FO228/3526/98 Phillips to Jordan, 15 June, 1919.

the commercial or student organisations.<sup>43</sup> The latter groups, however, frequently detached themselves from the anti-foreign agitation<sup>44</sup> and the following chapter will analyse, in detail, the measures taken to assure foreigners of their pro-foreign sentiment, and while simultaneously maintaining the Japanese boycott.

Fear of raising anti-foreign sentiment connected all the British communities and it also expressed foreigners' collective feelings in China. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, the fear of a Boxer type popular uprising appeared to illustrate the worst possible manifestation of the anti-foreign movement. Elsewhere in China, British national interests had generated opposing comments against Shanghai officials' imprudent operations which had agitated an anti-British atmosphere around the country. In researching the rate agitation it seems apparent that the May Fourth participants, for the first time, critically analysed the Council's, and accordingly, the municipal police's actions during the general strike. Certainly, the operations did not seem to respect the Chinese people's principal rights to express their public opinion in the manner which Western ideologies had illustrated. One method of displaying their disapproval was to refuse to pay the rates and to disseminate negative pamphlets that criticised the British municipal authorities. Moreover, rumours of potential new strikes and protests were circulated throughout the city to emphasise popular dissatisfaction towards the foreigners' policies<sup>45</sup>.

A reluctant compromise, at least from the Council's perspective, was reached in August when a special levy of 1% was agreed. This was to be collected in three equal quarterly

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<sup>43</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson and attached circulars 7, 11, 12, 14 July, 1919.

<sup>44</sup> *NCH*, 5 July, 1919, pp. 42-43; *NCH*, 12 July, 1919, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Council, McEuen to Jamieson, 3 August and 3 September, 1919.

payments in October 1919, and later in January and April, 1920.<sup>46</sup> Each time, however, the Chinese taxpayers ignored the payments and organised instead demonstrations and strikes. Using effective pamphlet campaigns, the protestors once more intimidated the Settlement authorities and their activities undoubtedly complicated business transactions and also irritated the British business community.<sup>47</sup>

In a politically active atmosphere one recognised injustice brought about another one and rate payment soon became cleverly connected to the requirement for Chinese representation in the International Settlement's Council<sup>48</sup>. Discussion about the Chinese merchants' legitimate privilege to add their own representatives in the Council was a question that foreigners had tried to avoid since the establishment of the foreign administration in Shanghai. So far the prominent Chinese residents' efforts to include Chinese representation had failed, but in the current turbulent situation debate could no longer be avoided.

### **5.3. Chinese Representation on the Council**

As early as 1864, the Diplomatic Body had, in theory, established the principle of "a Chinese element that was essential for the municipal system" that would have made Chinese representation possible in the Settlement's governance. But because this clause was not found 'feasible', it was soon eliminated from the Land Regulations, the Council envisaged no legal obligation to fulfil the Chinese merchants' sporadically presented demands for representation. Thus, for the first forty years of the Settlement's existence

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<sup>46</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 97A.

<sup>47</sup> CA, China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, number 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, the Shanghai Branch of CA to CA in London, 14 October, 1919; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, January-March, 1920, no 70/2-10 Brooke-Smith to Johnstone, 7 January, 1920.

there was no tangible pressure to include Chinese merchants in municipal self-governance.<sup>49</sup> The Council's operations to restrain the local disturbances in 1905 instigated an anti-foreign and especially anti-British campaign which culminated in the demand to appoint a Consultative Committee of Chinese Merchants to promote Chinese issues in municipal politics. In spite of failing to receive the ratepayers' recognition for their committee, this initiative resulted in manifestation of Chinese rights in municipal politics.<sup>50</sup>

The issue had last been debated in 1915 in connection with an extension of the International Settlement's territory<sup>51</sup>. This time the proposal had suggested the formation of a Chinese Advisory Board consisting of representatives from the merchant guilds and one delegate from the local Chinese administration. But by concentrating on global politics, the Council's operations focused on World War which provided a suitable excuse to postpone the decision-making procedures, and as a result, the board was never installed.<sup>52</sup>

By contrast, the post-May Fourth atmosphere coupled with heightened Chinese public opinion praised Chinese co-operation with the Allies during the war in Europe and in return demanded a modern Western-type democratic representation in the International Settlement. In retrospect, the landmark for Chinese demands for self-representation in the Council was the summer of 1919 and throughout long and futile negotiations, the Chinese never withdrew their demand for it, or never reached any agreement that would allow the prevention of it. Newly established associations raised the issue of Chinese representation

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<sup>48</sup> Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles Ca., 1995), pp. 260-277.

<sup>49</sup> Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council*, pp. 14-15, 35-36.

<sup>50</sup> *NCH*, 22 December, 1905, pp. 645-646; *NCH*, 9 March, 1906, pp. 505-506, 534-535; *NCH*, 16 March, 1906, p. 625.

<sup>51</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Memorandum on Settlement Extension*, (Shanghai, 1912).

<sup>52</sup> Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council*, p. 37.

in Shanghai politics much stronger than ever before. In addition, fresh memories of the May Fourth shootings placed the Council in an unfavourable position and it could no longer avoid or postpone the question.

Thus after intense negotiations, the Chinese Advisory Board was established in theory in 1920, but the first three Chinese full-members of the Council were not accepted before 1928<sup>53</sup>. In comparison, French Concession regulations allowed the consul-general to appoint a few 'respectable' Chinese members to participate in discussions relating to their interests<sup>54</sup>. In Tianjin, the local British Municipal Council already had a Chinese representative.<sup>55</sup>

This was certainly not a simple issue to deal with, as the colourful correspondence illustrated, and British political prestige, especially, appeared in Shanghai to be undermined by the protestors' demands to achieve representation. Deep seated British prejudices tended to underestimate Chinese competence to govern in an appropriate Western style. The central government's constant problems seemed to confirm British suspicions. Throughout the process the Council and British political and commercial pressure groups launched propaganda programmes which involved politicians not only in China, but the Foreign Office members in London were also frequently consulted and pressed to influence this issue.<sup>56</sup> The Council faced the dilemma of whether to delegate authority to Chinese merchants and, as it was feared, gradually lose control over the Settlement or attempt to maintain its 'old-fashioned foreign bastion' against Chinese public opinion and international pressure. The option taken was predictable. Apart from

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<sup>53</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the question see for example PRO, FO671/477 Chinese representation files. SMA, U1-3-157, file 1167, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, the Council minutes, 19 April, 1928.

<sup>54</sup> Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 9 April, 1920, p. 156.

<sup>56</sup> CA, China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, number 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, the Shanghai Branch of CA's correspondence 7 August, 1919 - 9 January, 1920; PRO, FO671/447/568 Jamieson to Jordan, 12 January, 1920.

using every legal manoeuvre to prevent Chinese access to the municipal administration, certain illegal and politically ugly features of the foreign oligarchy were revealed in the process.

The Shanghai Intelligence Bureau was promptly activated to assess the representation question and the topic was soon connected to the Cantonese Guomindang members who had allegedly agitated local residents to challenge the Council by demanding representation. Rumours of new strikes and demonstrations circulated in the Bureau informants' ears and they predicted similar riots as witnessed in the summer of 1919.<sup>57</sup> None of the British police reports analysed, however, indicate that there was any particular political party behind these activities. It is more likely that, by requesting access to the Council's meetings, the associations expressed their newly adopted Western ideas of free speech and democratic representation. Obviously the strengthening Chinese merchant class was restlessly searching for new means to extend its influence in the city and perceived the situation as suitable for attaining it.

Misleadingly, the Bureau later concluded that the Amalgamated Association of Street Unions (AASU) had been established in order to support Chinese representation in the Council. In contrast to the Bureau's assumptions, British police reports revealed that although representation became a crucial part of the AASU's agenda, it was initially organised to strengthen shopkeepers' group power to protest against signing the Treaty of Versailles and to reduce increased rates.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, this Council's 'reliable source' appeared to produce a significant amount of inaccurate information, and as a result, exaggerated assumptions and far-reaching associations were constantly revealed. Since

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<sup>57</sup> PRO, FO228/3214, Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for weeks ended July 31<sup>st</sup>, August 14<sup>th</sup>, August 21<sup>st</sup>, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

<sup>58</sup> PRO, FO228/3288 Political and Intelligence Reports, Summary of Intelligence Reports, December quarter, Shanghai, 1920; PRO, FO671/447/557, 558 Hilton-Johnson to Jamieson, and attached handbill, 1 and 2 January, 1920; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 65A.

rumours were taken as news, they then reflected the uncertain situation<sup>59</sup> in the British community. The rumours were interpreted in a manner which reinforced British preconceptions, which in this case prevented the Chinese from achieving full membership of the municipal administration in the Settlement.

In explaining the street unions' influence in the Settlement, it is worth noting that neither Jeffrey Wasserstrom nor Joseph Chen, notwithstanding one footnote in his book<sup>60</sup>, paid any attention in their research to the AASU's political activities around the city in the summer 1919. But as Bryna Goodman argues<sup>61</sup> the AASU, however, had become a significant shopkeepers' lobbyist, and when necessarily, supported Chinese national interests, therefore forming an important component of the collective political protests in Shanghai. The Chinese community acknowledged its power when the AASU representatives held discussions with the British Consul-General and the Council members as they were then comparable with the honourably treated Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs.<sup>62</sup>

In such tense circumstances and against British Consul-General Jamieson's advice to approach the situation with extreme caution, the Council stubbornly sent tax collectors to collect increased municipal rates, using force if necessary. Since the rates payment and representation had been interwoven into the same issue, the rate collectors were met with general refusal, and this agitated the Chinese associations even further.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, confrontation with the foreign officials deepened.

Due to the British quasi-imperial oligarchy, continuance of the Council's undemocratic composition was decided without compromise or consideration. In spite of American

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<sup>59</sup> Ramsay, *Ideology of the Great Fear*, p. 137.

<sup>60</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, p. 185f; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, *passim*.

<sup>61</sup> Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City and Nation*, pp. 271-272.

<sup>62</sup> PRO, FO671/447/542 Jamieson to Jordan, 21 August, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 14 and 20 August, 1919.

member, Mr. Dollar's opposition, the British majority, including another American representative, Mr. Merriman who operated in close association with them, the Council voted strongly against Chinese representation. In response to political pressures, and to reduce the associations' agitation, the Council agreed to create a Chinese Advisory Board.<sup>64</sup> At the following year's Ratepayers' meeting, the deeply hostile attitude had been modified into the following 'understanding rhetoric'.

"We want to get in closer touch with the views of our Chinese fellow residents. We want to be in a position to feel the pulse of the Chinese feeling better than we now can, and on the whole we have come to the conclusion that it is through a Chinese Advisory Committee that we can best achieve this end."<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile in the autumn of 1919, the Council was preoccupied with ensuring control over the Chinese Board and its constitution. As a result, it developed divergent instructions to regulate the formation of the Board. Whether it was intentional or not, some of these peculiar prerequisites complicated the process of selecting Chinese members. Hence, the convocation of Board was once again postponed.

The Council directives required from the Chinese nominees were as follows: five years residence in the Settlement immediately prior to nomination, and according to the property-based nomination it meant five years assessed rental of not less than 1200 taels per year. In comparing this rent sum with the British community, it was the same amount that already excluded most local British expatriates from standing for the Council election. Therefore, in this sense it was an equal requirement, as all the foreigners had to fulfil similar requirements. But in the case of a Chinese resident it even more radically diminished the possibility of being nominated. Moreover, fear of transforming the Council into a body for dealing with local political disputes, or even worse, to be utilised "as a pawn in Chinese politics" as Pearce's authoritative speech had warned, the Council

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<sup>63</sup> PRO, FO671/447/536, 542 Jamieson to Jordan, 12 and 21 August, 1919.

added a few more prerequisites. Hence, the Chinese Advisory Board member was not permitted to hold any official appointment under the Chinese government. As a final safeguard to prevent any unsuitable Chinese member disturbing the Council's 'invaluable' work, the Consular Body had a veto over all nominations.<sup>66</sup> In reality, these clauses blocked most Chinese residents from standing for election and it took another year before the Board was finally accepted by the Council in May 1921.<sup>67</sup>

The China Association, as the right-hand organ for promoting the Council's policies, launched a lengthy propaganda project to attain British officials' support in Beijing and London in order to prevent direct Chinese representation. The Council's detailed memorandum on the subject was thoroughly analysed and fears rising from the notion of Chinese representation were listed in the CA's report *The Future of Shanghai*. To illustrate their ideas, the CA carefully created the image of unlimited attempts by the Chinese to occupy posts at the Consular Body and at the Ratepayers' meeting, or to attain the privilege to vote in the municipal administration's meetings. Consequently, it was feared that this would end by forcing foreigners out of the Settlement. By interpreting the political situation in such a manner the Shanghai foreigners' future seemed uncertain. Hence, the current state of affairs initiated the CA's cry for maintenance of "the Status Quo in Shanghai" and this message was addressed directly to the British governmental officials in London.<sup>68</sup> By making use of the fashionable concept of regional political balance, the CA sought the British government's acceptance for the British expatriates'

<sup>64</sup> PRO, FO671/447/553 the Council to Siffert, 24 October, 1919.

<sup>65</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, 9 April, 1920, p. 153.

<sup>66</sup> *Land Regulations and Bye-laws*, p. 10; *Municipal Gazette*, 9 April, 1920, p. 153; PRO, FO671/447/553 Pearce to Siffert, 24 October, 1919.

<sup>67</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1921*, p. 194A. According to the British official reports the Board was not elected before October 1922 see PRO, FO671/447/629 Fraser to B.F. Alston, British Minister in Beijing, 16 October, 1922.

<sup>68</sup> CA, China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, number 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, China Association Shanghai Branch minutes, 7 August, 1919; China Association Shanghai Branch to CA in

authoritarian rule in Shanghai. The CA probably expected also a confirmation in the form of additional gunboats or funding for the additional police forces. The determined request coincided conveniently with the ongoing debate in the Council to purchase armed cars. An expensive purchase had, during the autumn, been transformed into a matter of imperial security. Therefore, from the Council's perspective it needed the British government's commitment<sup>69</sup>. Moreover, in support of the Council, the CA's concept of the 'status quo' followed the rhetoric to 'maintain peace and good order' that had been the ordinance manifested particularly during and after the May Fourth demonstrations.

The CA, at its London headquarters did not hesitate in approving the Shanghai branch's requirement in accepting Chinese participation only as a consultative Advisory Council and "ensuring that the right class of responsible men should be elected". Accordingly, direct representation in the Council was not thought to be advisable. At this stage the Foreign Office had also expressed its acceptance for the plans, but this compromise was in practice an empty manoeuvre since it was commonly known that the Chinese Advisory Council would not have a share in the municipal decision making process.<sup>70</sup>

At this stage, Hilton-Johnson submitted a fourteen page in-depth report on the local situation and the report reflected the political and social unrest which had captured all foreigners' attention since the May Fourth Movement was launched in Shanghai. According to Hilton-Johnson's prediction, the trouble in June was merely a forerunner to greater disturbances, and the Press licence protests, Rate agitation, the Chinese representation arguments and the Land Regulation revision demands were examples of

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London, 14 October, 1919; CA Shanghai Branch to CA in London, 13 December, 1919; China Association Shanghai Branch, *Annual Report 1920*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> SMA, U1-3-157, file 1167, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, the Council minutes, 27 November and 3 December, 1919.

<sup>70</sup> CA, China Association Minute Book E, 1911-1922; China Association General Committee minutes, 6 September, 1919; China Association General Committee minutes, 16 March, 1920; China Association, London, *Annual Report 1920*, p. X.

these crises. Inevitably, the Settlement was forced to prepare for similar incidents in the near future. In Hilton-Johnson's imaginary emergency situation, the Chinese activists from trade and street unions would agitate the crisis and he colourfully described in detail how events would develop within the Settlement borders. Hilton-Johnson predicted that indecisiveness and an inactive policy would lead to disaster and to the indiscriminate killing of foreigners. Consequently, the strengthening of the police and the purchasing of new motor cars was required to prepare the police for the future crisis.<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, the Council issued a list of emergency notifications which were categorised according to the seriousness of the situation. Thus, in the case of a general strike, the same prohibitions were issued as those during the May Fourth activities in the previous summer, for example, the forming of processions and the distribution of inflammatory materials. During the potential labour strike, the police would in future give further instructions to foreign companies to deal with the disturbances. For the convenience of all foreigners, an emergency supply of food was stored.<sup>72</sup> These emergency declarations and orders were immediately implemented to control the demonstrations that followed the shootings which occurred during the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925 and which I will now discuss.<sup>73</sup>

Apart from the instructions given by the Council, Hilton-Johnson, in late 1919, had amended the Police Mobilisation Instructions which he first drafted in 1914. None of the research material indicates whether the Council had ever ordered these changes. Nevertheless, it was apparent that these revisions were approved by British authorities. In fact these mobilisation instructions were a direct outcome of the foreign authorities' May Fourth Movement containment policy and the same orders were later to change

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<sup>71</sup> SMA, U1-91-23, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson to the Council, 13 December, 1919; Liddell to Hilton-Johnson, 4 January, 1920.

<sup>72</sup> SMA, U1-91-23, Shanghai Municipal Police, Liddell to Hilton-Johnson, 5 January, 1920; Hilton-Johnson to the Police Officer in duty, 11 January and 4 February, 1920.

drastically the future of the Settlement. The mobilisation instructions were unexpectedly found in the Diplomatic Body Board's file, the Board that had investigated the causes of the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925<sup>74</sup> and which examined the foreign police's responsibilities during the troubles. Part of Hilton-Johnson's instructions issued in 1919 stated as follows:

"Action to be taken out-stations.

[..] if disorder occurs in his district he [police] will immediately take what steps he considers necessary to deal with it bearing in mind that a display of force at the outset may nip the trouble in the bud and that any undue delay may result in the situation getting out of hand. In regard to the real rioters the drastic action is not only justifiable but essential in the public interest. Police officers acting alone or in charge of parties will accordingly not hesitate to open fire if necessary. The necessity arises when it appears that loss of life or serious damage to persons or property at the hands of rioters is imminent, and that the occurrence of such loss or damage can be prevented by no other means. If circumstances allow, due warning of the intention to open fire should be given but on no account will shots ever be fired over the heads of a riotous or unruly mob to frighten it. This is a dangerous and unnecessary practice and one which has accounted for many innocent lives. It is to be understood that whenever the police are called upon to use firearms during riots and other disturbances in the Settlement, the object is to kill or disable the persons or person fired at. [..]"<sup>75</sup>

In 1925, the British police had dutifully followed the British inspector's orders, who in turn obeyed the police regulations, and police opened fire on the Chinese crowd, immediately killing twelve people and wounding more than ten. Further deaths among the Chinese community resulted from the repression of riots around the country. Even then Hilton-Johnson persistently argued that there was very little change required in his instructions. These police rules were valid until 29 April, 1926, when the board, appointed by the Diplomatic Body, demonstrated that the rules had constituted one of the causes of the May Thirtieth Incident. As a result, the clause "object is to kill" was replaced with the more lenient regulation "to use minimum amount of fire to prevent loss

<sup>73</sup> *NCH*, 6 June, 1925, p. 414; Richard W. Rigby, *The May 30 Movement, Events and Themes*, (Canberra, 1980), pp. 41-42.

<sup>74</sup> The incident happened when the Chinese were demonstrating in the International Settlement on 30 May, 1925 and the foreign-Chinese police opened fire towards the protestors. As a result, the events provoked severe anti-foreign and especially anti-British protests, strikes and boycotts across the country. For further information and detailed description of the events related to the May Thirtieth Incident see Rigby, *The May 30 Movement*.

<sup>75</sup> Underlines according to original text. SMA, U1-91-23, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson, Police Mobilisation Instructions, 22 November, 1919.

of life or serious damage".<sup>76</sup> However, the damage had been, done as the numerous anti-British and anti-imperialist protests, boycotts, and strikes around the country revealed.<sup>77</sup> One British business magnate summarised the troubled situation as follows "the whole British position in China is now at stake, our reputation, our trade, our shipping our investments and the extraterritorial status".<sup>78</sup> Another immediate outcome of this serious misconduct was that the Captain-Superintendent of Police, McEuen was forced to a humiliating resignation after twenty-five years service in the International Settlement police force. The Council had to pay later also the indemnification money for the dead and wounded to calm the demonstrating people.<sup>79</sup>

When analysing the contents of police reports during 1919, the above quoted police regulations might easily have partially described the fracas during the May Fourth general strike already discussed in the third chapter.<sup>80</sup> In a peculiar way Hilton-Johnson had revised the police operations during that last night of the strike into regulations, and accordingly, legitimised them. From the viewpoint of the British police force, these instructions mythologised the May Fourth demonstrators as a 'riotous or unruly mob' which had to be suppressed by police in order to maintain peace and order in the Settlement. In addition, the police operations were officially legalised. Therefore, opening fire on unarmed demonstrators and shooting them blindly were approved as necessary conduct in a given situation. Indeed, the regulations transformed the actions

<sup>76</sup> SMA, U1-3-2998, file 4301, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Hilton-Johnson, Police Mobilisation Instructions, 22 November, 1919; Hilton-Johnson's note, 18 January, 1926; Board formed for the purpose of considering regulations governing the use of firearms in time of riot and disorder by the Shanghai Municipal Council, 27 April, 1926.

<sup>77</sup> See for example the BCC, HSBC, JMA, John Swire & Sons archive materials during 1925-1926.

<sup>78</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai to Hong Kong, 1925, Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 19 August, 1925.

<sup>79</sup> SMA, U1-3-592, file 1652, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, K.J. McEuen files, McEuen to the Council, 21 December, 1925.

<sup>80</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Chief Inspector T. Vaughan's report, 13 June, 1919; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, C.I. Vaughan's and Trooper Sergeant E. Rock's reports, 13 June, 1919.

into the norm that was to be followed when taking action against future rioters. Similarly to sentiments in Pearce's speech in July 1919, the amended police mobilisation instructions also reinforced the formation of another type of mythologisation, which could be called 'an official mythologisation'. Apparently, Hilton-Johnson's police regulation amendments were based on British official and business communities' immediate mythologisation of the May Fourth Movement.

Paul Cohen has established comprehensive categories to mythologize the past in the following way: to interpret events past with poems, stories, autobiographies; or to publicly remember them by celebrating anniversaries or establishing museums. The official myth, as suggested above, serves as a supplementary explanation of past incidents. In principle, the official myth is interrelated with Cohen's genre myth where the myths are published in newspapers, periodicals and books.<sup>81</sup> Beyond this, the British official myth intentionally created a collectively accepted understanding of the incidents while simultaneously justifying British operations to suppress the May Fourth Movement. One of the British objectives was to unify all foreigners behind this reasoning. In particular, though, the official myth was implemented to strengthen British economic and political supremacy in the city. As I have analysed in this chapter, the British successfully increased their dominance over Settlement politics.

Economic reality of British hegemony in the city connected the British commercial community with the Council in opposing Chinese representation. Brook-Smith from Jardines again provides a relevant example of this connection. It is important to remember that in spite of Brooke-Smith's strong personal opinion which favoured Chinese presence in the Council, he, with his countrymen, voted against it. In other

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<sup>81</sup> Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, pp. 215-222. An illustrative work on more recent mythmaking see Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "History, Myth and the Tales of Tiananmen", in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J.

words, the Council's procedure "the Council or Committee acts as a whole; the individual opinions, though recorded in the Minutes, may never divulge to outside parties" appeared to overrule any dissenting opinions. In Brooke-Smith's correspondence, it seems that the question tormented him during the months of discussions between the parties concerned. However, the official records reveal no such hesitation.<sup>82</sup> Brooke-Smith's correspondence indicates that he engaged in pragmatic politics which allowed him to analyse circumstances notwithstanding his influential position as part of the British expatriate community in China. This approach recognised the Chinese community's demands, but also accepted possible repressive operations resulting from these demands. Another example, already analysed in the third chapter, was Brooke-Smith's change of opinion which resulted in the sudden importance of strengthening the Settlement's police forces to maintain political and economic stability in the city. This obviously occurred after he had experienced the summer strikes and demonstrations. However much Brooke-Smith empathised with the May Fourth demonstrators' demands in the summer 1919, foreigners' existence was based on the uncompromising principles of political and military authority within the Settlement.

Foreigners' fears, individually expressed but often collectively experienced, were revealed in correspondence published in the journals. They included the fear of student predominance in the Settlement's administration if the Chinese were allowed to participate in the Council.<sup>83</sup> Relying on judicially questionable Land Regulations, the legal justification to reject Chinese representation was pointed out in a furious article

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Perry (eds.), *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, (Boulder, 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, pp. 273-308.

<sup>82</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, August-September 1919, no 34/4-13 Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 20 August 1919; January-March 1920, no 70/2-10 Brooke-Smith to Johnstone, 7 January, 1920; January-March 1920, no 72/1-10 Brooke-Smith to Johnstone 12 January, 1920; SMA U1-3-157, file 1167, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, the Council minutes, 19 April, 1928.

<sup>83</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 8, September 1919, p. 172.

which insisted that: "According to the Constitution of Shanghai they [the Chinese] have no say in its [the International Settlement's] management as they perfectly well know". On the other hand, Chinese administrative skills were assessed as weak and incompetent. This was revealed in their inability to manage complicated issues such as municipal drainage and in the recruitment of a police force as the British newspaper narrated. In the same newspaper comparison was made with Western administrative standards of impartiality, honesty and integrity, and Council members were perceived as relevant examples of this. Even the standard British rhetoric 'Shanghai, the mudflat that foreigners built up to be a modern city for foreigners only' was incorporated in the criticism. When expressed by the highest British official in the city, it reflected a British arrogant attitude towards the Chinese in the city.<sup>84</sup> The inflexible opinions reflected the British understanding in that they perceived the requirement for Chinese representation originating from the May Fourth Movement. From a foreigners' perspective, the May Fourth demonstrations continued in various forms throughout the autumn and winter of 1919-1921, but were not necessarily as controlled as the Council had planned.

Repeating earlier anti-Council rhetoric, trouble was also expected from the American press. Indeed, the *China Press* had the in-depth report on anti-British demonstrations in Chengdu over the Tibet issue. Moreover, the Council was blamed for its heavy-handed operations during the June demonstrations and the paper insisted that the current turbulent atmosphere, the refusal to pay rates and the demand to secure Chinese

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<sup>84</sup> In traditional foreigners' rhetoric Shanghai had been just a mudflat before their arrival in the nineteenth century and foreigners had built it as a modern city. G. Lanning and S. Couling, *The History of Shanghai*, II, (Shanghai, 1921), p. 277; *NCDN*, 19 August, 1919, p. 7; *NCDN*, 21 August, 1919, p. 4; *NCDN*, 22 August, 1919, p. 4; *NCDN*, 23 August, 1919, p. 6; *NCDN*, 4 September, 1919, p. 4; PRO, FO671/447/584 Fraser to Jordan, 23 January, 1920.

representation in the municipal administration were a direct result of earlier mishandlings.<sup>85</sup>

#### **5.4. May Fourth Nationalism in the International Settlement**

Closely related to the Chinese representation question was the Chinese demand to abolish the foreign extraterritorial rights in the International Settlement. This request was based on international principle to guarantee countries' national self-determination as it had been agreed after the World War. Earlier in the spring 1919, the Armistice had been discussed firstly by the Chinese intelligentsia, and students had been especially active in campaigning for finalisation of the Armistice. Furthermore, President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Demands were understood to oppose the preservation of secret agreements, such as the one between Japan and Britain which allowed the Japanese to take over the German position in China. In spite of some American activists' support of the May Fourth Movement and its ideology in Shanghai, officially the American government and president Wilson offered only their sympathies, but never seriously considered the possibility of co-operating with Chinese nationalists to solve the country's problems.<sup>86</sup>

As early as January 1919, the Shanghai merchant organisations had distributed circulars to mobilise their groups to rally against the secret agreements. When the Chinese negotiators had refused to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty, agitation to abrogate the special spheres of influence and extraterritorial rights immediately intensified. As I have already explained in relation to the Press Licence discussion, the British press nullified all

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<sup>85</sup> *China Press*, 18 July, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 22 July, 1919, p. 9; *China Press*, 14 August, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 26 August, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> Zhang, *China in the International System*, pp. 76, 121.

claims which would endanger foreigners' *status quo* in the Settlement. However, in view of the operation of the Wilson's principles, China had legitimate rights, for example, for national post and telegram systems and for autonomy in respect of its customs tariff. According to the Chinese, withdrawal of foreign police forces and an abolition of foreign concessions appeared to be a natural continuation of this process. Modern Western rights, such as freedom of speech and of the press, and the right to public assembly were frequently analysed and published in the newspapers and distributed as pamphlets.<sup>87</sup> In fact, the whole May Fourth Movement had been partly initiated to actualise these expectations. For the most part, China's societal change was the most urgent question and in order to achieve it, certain political changes, especially those related to the foreigners' prerogative establishments in China, were necessary.

From the British point of view, undermining the precious rules that justified their existence in the city was a serious violation of their virtually sovereign jurisdiction, with its own government, army and police force. Indeed, versions of amended Land Regulations for the International Settlement were distributed by the Chinese street unions and they were drawn up by their counsellor and lawyer Mr. Lineberger, to the great dissatisfaction of the British community. Mr. Lineberger promoted Chinese representation in the Council by connecting increased taxation with it, and in order to secure approval, the extension of the Council's administrative authority was seen to be imperative. In this case it indicated a possible Settlement extension. Another amendment was to limit the Mixed Court's jurisdiction only to police cases excluding criminal and

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<sup>87</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, p. 67; *NCH*, 5 July, 1919, pp. 9, 13; SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 8 September, 1919. For the full-length Memorandum presented by the Chinese Delegation in Paris see Kotenev, *Shanghai: Its Mixed Court and Council*, pp. 37-40.

civil cases.<sup>88</sup> The Mixed Court responded neither to the Chinese government's ruling, nor to Chinese traditional group authority exercised by the guild officials and the gentry, and the Mixed Court exercised power that the Chinese commercial community in particular was keen to possess. It is obvious that the merchants' effective interference in the form of the May Fourth strikes, demonstrations and the attempt to take charge of the Mixed Court particularly intimidated British expatriates. As for the Land Regulations, it is true that the legal status of these, in relation to treaty port nationals, was always open to debate and subject to challenges in Western courts. For this reason, British officials attempted to keep them hidden from closer juridical scrutiny.

Even though the British press had failed to recognise it, the Consulate, the Council, and the business community seemed to identify the looming threat of Chinese popular opinion which would gradually turn against the treaty port system. On this occasion, British official correspondence revealed fears of surrendering foreign prerogatives and deeply entrenched vested interests back to the Chinese government. It is apparent that foreign disparagement of Chinese nationalism reflected these fears.<sup>89</sup> When the Chinese, in challenging foreigners' authority, required the abolition of extraterritorial rights, it appeared that British official rhetoric resisted the idea on the grounds that the current Chinese administration was corrupt and incompetent in controlling the country. It especially appeared to be unable to secure British prevalent policy of free trade in the whole of China.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> PRO, FO671/447/555 Commissioner for Foreign Affairs to Senior Consuls and attachments, 4 December, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 18 August, 1919; Stephens, *Order and Discipline in China*, p. 51.

<sup>89</sup> PRO, FO671/447/576, 579 Fraser to Siffert and Fraser to Jordan, 19 January, 1920.

<sup>90</sup> PRO, FO671/447/553 Pearce to Siffert, 24 October, 1919; PRO, FO671/447/584 Fraser to Jordan, 23 January, 1920.

At this point it is feasible to argue that the principles presented and accepted in the Washington Conference of 1921-1922<sup>91</sup>, reflecting the ideas of sovereign China as part of the international community, had already been presented in Beijing and Shanghai during the May Fourth demonstrations of summer and autumn 1919. Since Shanghai's general strike, however, the centre of the Movement had moved to Shanghai, where the foreign areas were politically immune to Chinese central government control. To some extent the growth of Chinese nationalism in the International Settlement was explicitly reflected in the agitation for Chinese representation in the Council. Just as an initial attempt to present national oneness was occurring, protests against the press licence were provoked in order to maintain the May Fourth protagonists' freedom to express opinions. Despite all these actions, there remained a lack of distinct national objective and on the whole, Chinese responses to nationalist issues lacked cohesion. Hence, by using International Settlement power politics, British officials and businessmen had again succeeded in postponing another major crisis of mounting nationalism.

### **5.5. Missionaries' May Fourth Agenda**

The emotionally charged weeks at the missionary school unions had exhausted many foreign missionary educators. As a result of the May Fourth activities, class disturbances and cancellations had emptied the classrooms and the students committed themselves to

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<sup>91</sup> The Washington Conference was initiated by the Americans to tackle many problems left after the Versailles Peace Conference, and moreover, to establish a military equilibrium in the Pacific. The Beijing delegation had had high expectations and presented a proposal which asked the Conference participants to, for example, honour China's territorial integrity and political independence and to remove all limitations on her political, jurisdictional and administrative freedom. The Washington Conference system was, thus, not against to the colonial status quo in the region. In a way it protected a stable colonial order in the hands of the victors of the WWI. Westel W., Willoughby, *China at the Conference: A Report*, (Baltimore, 1922), *passim*.

patriotic activities orchestrated by student unions, and numerous educational institutions had therefore become centres for political discussion.

The May Fourth aftermath and the International Settlement's Chinese residents' agitation had pushed British missionaries to the point where the return to daily evangelistic duties appeared to be more attractive than involvement in local disturbances. There is minimal evidence in the British missionary correspondence or in the published materials that they had any direct comments to make regarding the press licence, the rate agitation or Chinese representation in the Council protests. Despite casual remarks about redefining reasoning for student protests, missionaries appeared to avoid political issues<sup>92</sup>. Local politics in the Settlement was selectively excluded from missionary activities<sup>93</sup>.

On the contrary, inactive functioning in local May Fourth politics was not reflected in the missionaries' work among the May Fourth participants. While the foreign municipal officials struggled to maintain political supremacy over Chinese residents, the missionary community united its forces to transform the May Fourth actions into 'a battle for the Christianity' in China. It is worth noting at this stage that the Protestant missionaries attempted to establish a collective response for 'China's urgent need for Christian Gospel', as it was interpreted. Thereafter, the Gospel's role in developing the Movement and in providing spiritual guidance was understood to be essential. Taken as a whole, as soon as missionaries recognised that the May Fourth Movement represented the Christian and Western values of public opinion, liberty and democracy, against the 'corrupted' Chinese government, the May Fourth operations were perceived as less threatening. In this case, May Fourth ideas encouraged closer co-operation with the missionaries.

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<sup>92</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Gerald Luxon, Shanghai, 1920.

Parallel with May Fourth political activities in Shanghai, missionaries developed their own agenda in answer to the Chinese Christians' nationalistic aspirations. A multi-denominational organisation, the China Continuation Committee, invited over one hundred missionaries and Chinese Christians to Shanghai in November 1919 to launch the 'China for Christ' movement. Although the Chinese church members had promoted the meeting, over half of the participants were British and American missionaries. The primary objective of the gathering was to investigate the May Fourth Movement, and similarly, after evaluating the Movement, to gauge the Christians' contribution to helping the nation during the present troubled times.<sup>94</sup> In a sense, the idea of an independent Chinese church fitted perfectly with the May Fourth ideas of strengthening national unity. Thus, the 'China for Christ' campaign successfully combined the patriotic and Christian objectives of initiating a stronger Chinese church. Because many of its organisers around the country were Chinese the agenda was well adopted in the Christian community.<sup>95</sup>

In the 'China for Christ' meeting the missionary organisations named seven different commissions, each with a special perspective, to study the problems of China. The British missionaries of Shanghai were represented at least in 'the Organisation' committee by Rev. Sparham and in 'the Social and Moral Welfare' committee by Dr. Davenport. Other committees analysed themes such as the spiritual life, missionary spirit and leadership cultivation. Sparham emphasised the Christians' need to educate themselves in directing the present national crisis that affected all missionaries. The message was clear. Even if students' and officials' connections with the Christians were sceptically approved as a

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<sup>93</sup> Missionaries were, however, active in suppressing brothels and successfully campaigned against taverns, see Christian Henriot, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*, (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 291-300.

<sup>94</sup> *Bulletin of the China for Christ Movement*, no 1, 10 January, 1920; *The Challenge of China, Being the Report of a Deputation sent out to visit the China Mission Fields of the B.M.S. 1919-1920*, pp. 70-71; Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, pp. 776-777; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 31, E.C. Lobenstine, Shanghai to London, 28 January, 1920.

<sup>95</sup> *The Story of 1920, Being the 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, p. 64.

means to serve their own political interests, the Chinese educational and official groups were, however, too important to be ignored. As a result, it was decided to further activate the relations.<sup>96</sup> Presumably the ultimate target was to strengthen the Chinese enlightened classes' interest in examining Christian values and truth. The Chinese educated class and officials had traditionally been the groups of people the Christians found most difficult to convert. In terms of Christianity's permanent presence in the country, the support of these classes was crucial, as they were intellectually and politically the most influential people in China.

However, intellectuals' May Fourth activities instigated future problems for the Christian community, which exploded as anti-Christian sentiment at the beginning of the 1920's. At that time Christians were accused of supporting and implementing Western cultural and political imperialism.<sup>97</sup> On the contrary, during the May Fourth period missionaries presumed that it was the Christian religion and the missionaries' persistent social, educational and evangelistic work in the area that had been the origin of national liberation in China. In reality, very few missionaries associated their belief and work with imperial invasion of which they were accused. Missionaries' efforts to validate Christianity by promoting it as a source of democracy through Western education and religious practices made it an easy target for anti-imperialist and anti-Christian protestors.

Naturally, 'the Chinese Renaissance', 'the New Civilization Movement' or 'the New Thought Movement', as it was named in the missionary conference dominated the annual agenda. From the speakers' perspective the Movement challenged missionaries to practice genuine tolerance. Moreover, it provided a better means to promote their social welfare

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<sup>96</sup> *China Press*, 17 December, 1919, p. 7; *China Press*, 18 December, 1919, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, pp. 55-59; Chen-main Wang, "The Chinese YMCA and the Anti-Christian Movement in China in the 1920's", *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies*, vol. 6, 1996, pp. 104-105.

work.<sup>98</sup> By the time the annual missionary conference was held, this kind of work had already been started in China. Besides relying on the evangelical organisations, Christians established more patriotic societies such as, "the Christian Church Save the Country Society" in Shanghai or "the Patriotic Prayers Union" in Tianjin.<sup>99</sup> The materials do not reveal how extensive the British missionaries' support was or whether they actively attended the meetings. Perhaps the earlier policy of disclaimed official connections with the Movement was still being followed. Thus, the missionary organisations officially avoided involvement, but they allowed individual members to co-operate with student groups, and to support their Christian-patriotic associations.

From a very early stage it was apparent that the American missionaries actively promoted and supported the May Fourth Movement more openly than the other missionaries. At the foreigners' popular holiday resort area in Moganshan, near Hangzhou city, missionaries organised a seminar on the subject of the "Student Patriotic Movement". Their programme covered the latest topics analysing the relationship between the Christians and the May Fourth Movement. The argument in favour of active co-operation with the Movement on the part of missionaries revealed the general perspective approved by the seminar participants. As it was proudly expressed: "Missionaries are in some way responsible for the movement. Christianity is a source of liberty - physical, intellectual, moral." The American influence was highlighted in the YWCA's programme which promoted lectures on democracy, patriotism and Christianity as uplifting, especially, the position of women.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, protests against the corrupted Chinese politicians and officials were constantly supported within

<sup>98</sup> SOAS, Conference of British Missionary Societies Archives [hereafter CBMS], Area files, Asia-China, FBN1, China Continuation Committee Meetings 1914-1921, Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, Shanghai, 5-10 May, 1921, pp. 4, 12-25, 33-37.

<sup>99</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Ernest Box, Shanghai, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, J. Murray, Tianjin, 1920.

YMCA/YWCA circles. Undoubtedly the Council was aware of the societies' active participation in providing premises for May Fourth activists in Shanghai.<sup>101</sup>

Another feature that illustrated missionaries' and all foreigners' experiences after the May Fourth general strike was that the variations in geographical, economic and social circumstances in the provincial cities, towns and villages began to highlight the differences between the Movement in Shanghai and in the other areas. An example came from a comment of a missionary in Jiujiang, who criticised the Chinese in the International Settlement for promoting nationalism that was unworthy and irrational. In contrast to problems in the interior, the Chinese Settlement residents were under the protection of foreign administration, and therefore, lived in a secure place where Chinese officials' punishments or local military troops' attacks could not reach them, as the missionary recalled. He argued in the commentary that most people in the Settlement had no understanding of life outside Shanghai. Therefore, sympathising with China was safer and more convenient for the Chinese in the Settlement than for their counterparts in the countryside and in the smaller cities.<sup>102</sup>

The provincial information reports from the consuls verified the significant change in the Movement's appearance around the country after the general strike in Shanghai.<sup>103</sup> Due to Shanghai's special characteristics and particularly its powerful foreign community, the Movement had adopted some unusual features there. The general strike was admired and similar attempts to strike were attempted in various towns across the periphery, but none of them succeeded in closing businesses as happened in Shanghai.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *China Press*, 17 August, 1919, p. 21.

<sup>101</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 4,5,16 and 22 September, 1919.

<sup>102</sup> *NCH*, 12 July, 1919, pp. 100-101.

<sup>103</sup> For reports of fragmented Movement see PRO, FO228/3288 Political and Intelligence Reports, 1919-1921.

<sup>104</sup> Attempts to follow 'the Shanghai Spirit' are analysed in PRO, FO228/3526, *passim*; various *China Press* and *NCH* issues in 1919-1921.

There was no point in the other May Fourth demonstrator group arousing protests against licensing the press, as the Chinese government had already censured it. No efforts were made to ensure Chinese representation in the local foreign administrative council. Similarly, the rates agitation was an irrelevant question for students in the other towns. Although 'the Spirit of Shanghai' had disseminated the May Fourth ideals into the countryside and cities, after the summer of 1919, the Movement gradually changed to incorporate regional issues.

This divergent construction of the May Fourth Movement has been illustrated in Yeh Wen-hsin's research on the Movement in Hangzhou and its surrounding province of Zhejiang. Here, the analysis of the Movement as a national phenomenon concentrates on the spatial dimensions of centre versus periphery. The study evaluates the Hangzhou students' co-operation with student representatives in Beijing or Shanghai. Since the provincial government of Zhejiang had acted instantly in dispersing classes for early summer recess, students could not actively campaign in May and June. For the same reason, students had no opportunity to associate with merchants and workers.<sup>105</sup> The need for localised and multi-centred May Fourth research has also been recognised by Jeffrey Wasserstrom. He challenges the researchers to examine the fringe areas of the May Fourth Movement, and not only to widen the spectrum geographically, but also to extract themes that so far have been left unresearched. He too agrees that the Movement adopted some special features in Shanghai due to foreigners' presence in the city, but does not expand on his reasoning for this.<sup>106</sup>

A few incidents from across China are illustrated below in order to demonstrate the magnitude of participatory activities of the May Fourth demonstrators. In Tianjin, the governor jailed students as they had illegally arrested local shop-keepers for selling

Japanese products. This incited the town, and students launched a strike in the schools. In a later instance, they succeeded in convincing some merchants to close the shops. This was a local dispute between the Chinese authorities and students, and apparently students had no formal connections with their colleagues in Shanghai or Beijing.<sup>107</sup> On another occasion, the local general in Ji'nan city had promulgated a martial law to control protesting students and to make his point clear three anti-Japanese leaders were tortured and later executed.<sup>108</sup> Foreigners' fear of rising Bolshevism was due to students' anti-Christian propaganda distributed in Guangzhou, and anti-Japanese strikes were befittingly combined with arguments of local officials' appointments.<sup>109</sup> Lastly, in Fuzhou city, the events took a different turn in November, 1919 when Japanese soldiers shot and wounded some YMCA students during their demonstrations. The governor hastened to shut down the student union office, but the damage was done and widespread strikes and strengthened boycotts against Japanese products spread around China.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to the earlier flow of information, this time the Shanghai May Fourth protestors responded to the provincial problems and the Fujian Guild in Shanghai initiated parades and distributed pamphlets to support the abolition of the Japanese extraterritoriality in Fuzhou.<sup>111</sup> In spite of keeping Shanghai journals and lectures as the source of inspiration for their ideological orientations and the activities as guidelines for practical operations, from now on, the Movement which continued its activities at the provincial centres was characterised merely by the local conditions.

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<sup>105</sup> Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, pp. 147-173.

<sup>106</sup> Wasserstrom, 'The Missing May 4ths', pp. 9-10, 22-23; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 234-237.

<sup>107</sup> LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, H.B. Longman, Tianjin, 1920; Sparham papers, Box 1, Files B6/2/3, Sparham to Mrs. Sparham, 19 March, 1920.

<sup>108</sup> *NCDN*, 6 August, 1919, p. 7; *NCDN*, 8 August, 1919, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> PRO, FO228/3288 Political and Intelligence Reports, Guangzhou, September and December Quarters, 1919.

<sup>110</sup> CMS, Original papers, G1/CH4/O, John B. Carpenter, 1 and 6 December, 1919.

<sup>111</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, Hilton-Johnson to Jamieson, 24 November, 1919.

## Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on evaluating some British experiences of the May Fourth activities after Shanghai's general strike. In particular, Pearce's speech attempted to orchestrate the foreign opinions by creating unified images, and as a result, the Movement was described as seditious and dangerous to the foreign presence in the Settlement. In due course the events were mythologised and British officials' operations were legitimised in order to strengthen British supremacy in the city. In British minds the peaceful student movement had turned into 'the June Riots', which by its operations attempted to overcome British hegemony. Because of this, May Fourth activities were routinely condemned as anti-foreign acts. In preparation for future riots a wide range of preparations, from strengthening the armament to providing emergency laws and food supplies were arranged.

In chapters three to six I have attempted to characterise the British missionary, official and commercial community's experiences and reactions during the May Fourth events in the summer and autumn 1919 and continuing throughout the winter of 1920. All these groups formed peculiar rhetoric initially to define their attitudes, and accordingly to justify their position in the country. More specifically, three perspectives on the May Fourth experience appeared. British officials constructed the image of the May Fourth Movement as a rebellious protest against authority, and in the Settlement, against the Council's entrusted administration of affairs. According to the British officials' view, the principal objective was to challenge the regulations and to maintain peace and good order. In the contemporary commercial community's correspondence, the May Fourth protestors were almost invariably perceived in the context of a Japanese business boycott. Initially, the economic weapon of strike at the Japanese factories and the boycott of their products were remarkably profitable for the British companies. But later when the

standstill of market transactions dislocated the business and created immediate losses, British economic pre-eminence became threatened. The memory of paralysed markets and fear of its reappearance controlled their May Fourth image, as for the British commercial community it was essentially a boycott movement. The missionaries had identified the May Fourth activists as representatives of 'new young and Christian China' who fought against corrupt officials and warlords with the 'enlightened spirit and power of Christianity'. According to the missionaries' May Fourth image, it glorified the Christian teaching and promised a final salvation for the country.

However different the images created by British residents, they still shared some collective perspectives about the Movement. At first, fear of spreading xenophobia was illustrated in the Boxer rhetoric attached to a backward anti-foreign activity. Secondly, the need for peace and stability in the Settlement or in the area where the British operated was emphasised as it was obvious that the May Fourth demonstrations had disturbed British lives and work in the society. Thirdly, all researched groups had something 'British', or at least from their perspective it was characteristically British to protect even if it was only the British education system illustrated by the missionaries. In another case it was the principle of free trade as demanded by the commercial community including the free capital movements and a unified international monetary system. Finally, respect for the law and regulations were equated with British officials' principal ideals of the model society established in the International Settlement and no power was to question the authority the Council executed there.

Numerous police and consulate reports, however, confirmed the continuation of the Japanese boycott across the country until at least 1925<sup>112</sup>. Meanwhile, anti-Christian

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<sup>112</sup> *Municipal Gazette*, years 1919-1925; PRO, FO228/3214, Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, years 1919-1920; PRO, FO228/3288 Summaries of Intelligence Reports, years 1919-1925; PRO, FO228/3527, Boycotts and Strikes, 1919-1922.

sentiment seemed to activate more profound anti-foreign and anti-imperialist movements which fully exploded after the May Thirtieth Incident of 1925. But for now, the British community was able to pause and concentrate on strengthening their presence in the International Settlement and in China.

My next chapter will analyse the Chinese response to foreigners' policies and operations and how this affected the development of the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai.

## 6. 'OUR FOREIGN FRIENDS ON THE NANJING ROAD' - CHINESE EXPERIENCES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT DURING THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

This chapter will examine the ways in which the British were affected by the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai. It discusses the implications British attitudes and reactions had on the development of the Movement. In other words, the purpose is to identify the various forms of May Fourth activities which resulted from foreign operations and to determine the extent of foreign, particularly British influence, on the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai.

Scholars such as Joseph Chen, Tse-tsung Chow, Yingde Hao, Vera Schwarcz and Jeffrey Wasserstrom have already extensively researched the Chinese student, merchants and labour classes' activities in Beijing and Shanghai.<sup>1</sup> However, this chapter focuses on Chinese May Fourth activities in relation to the Shanghai British community. Therefore, the analysis concentrates on operations, methods and techniques May Fourth protagonists used, especially when dealing with foreigners. Another purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the dynamics of interaction between the British and Chinese. It was apparent that from the beginning May Fourth activists benefited from operating under the International Settlement's protection, since the foreign area provided a haven in which to activate their 'progressive' ideas and actions. There is no doubt that it was an ultimate meeting place for educational, social and political societies which had been banned in other parts of the city. The situation was aggravated even further after Chinese officials' proclamation that prohibited all 'illegal' associations and it focused on politically

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<sup>1</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*; Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*; Yingde Hao and Pengwen Shao, *Zongguo xuesheng yundong jianshi, 1919-1949*, (A basic history of the Chinese student movement, 1919-1949), (Hebei, 1985); Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*; Wasserstrom, *The Student Protests*.

subversive groups<sup>2</sup>. Under these circumstances, many associations formed by urban workers, merchants or students were successfully activated in the Settlement. In principle, it offered a censorship free zone for printing pamphlets, handouts and magazines and provided the means for an extensive network to distribute printed materials around Shanghai and the whole country. Hence, by June 1919, Shanghai's International Settlement had become a centre for the May Fourth publications. It was also apparent that lack of intensive co-operation between three different jurisdictions in Shanghai (the French Concession, the International Settlement and the area of the Chinese Municipality) created a fertile ground to circumvent the prohibitions simply by moving the activities from one area into another administrative territory.

In contrast, in other parts of the country the governmental censorship had targeted protestors' newspapers, pamphlets, posters and handbills and it frequently paralysed communication channels which happened when the telegram connections were cut off in the beginning of May. In Beijing, a variety of publications were issued, but there the local officials were able to frighten some publishers by imprisoning their colleagues and censoring their materials. Students soon found out that it was difficult to organise themselves into working groups, as the police was constantly guarding the government's universities and colleges.<sup>3</sup>

After careful comparison the available research materials appear to support May Fourth students' statements. Initially, and for most of the Movement's duration, the Chinese were eager to co-operate in every way with foreign officials and residents in the city. The

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<sup>2</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 18, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 24 July, 1919; Hilton-Johnson to Jamieson, 25 September, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> *China Press*, 5 June, 1919, p. 2; *China Press*, 8 June, 1919, p. 4; *Far Eastern Review*, vol. XV, July 1919, pp. 485-487; PRO, FO228/2986/24 Jordan to FO, 24 May, 1919.

maintenance of good relations with the British was a principal objective of students' policy in the International Settlement. Hence, British officials were actively contacted in order to obtain their approval for the May Fourth activities, and to assure them of the students' sincere attempts to maintain law and order. The May Fourth demonstrators applied various methods in expressing their May Fourth ideology. Accordingly, although their immediate intention was to convince all foreigners as a community, each British group was, nonetheless, also approached separately. In this process the students' role of distributing information by using multiple channels and techniques was crucial as the following discussion will explore.

The May Fourth protagonists' direct contacts with the British were conducted by personal visits, processions, volunteer corps, letters, articles, rumours, and circulars, all of which, in a different manner, communicated the May Fourth principles to foreigners. In addition, the message was given in indirect ways by holding meetings and by boycotting Japanese products. Numerous May Fourth operations in the Settlement were characteristically based on two principles. Firstly, protestors took active initiatives to communicate and explain their intentions and actions to foreigners, and secondly, they demonstrated persistently their eagerness to co-operate with the Settlement officials by obeying the Council's orders.

In doing so, students actually supplied the impetus to British repressive and extensive operations described in the previous four chapters. By making use of slogans and handbills, May Fourth protestors aroused their fellow countrymen to reshape Chinese society. Students' discursive practices were intended to, and, in fact did, shape reality in the Settlement, rather than merely passively reflecting or mirroring it. British rhetoric was

designed to shape public sentiment, influence government politics, and to justify their existence in China. Similarly the May Fourth protagonists positioned themselves as advocates of similar principles and communicated this discourse to foreigners.

### **6.1. Chinese Experiences and the British Officials**

Following the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement in Beijing, student activists in Shanghai held a meeting to discuss, among other issues, which measures they should implement in order to avoid friction with local foreigners. In practice, it was well known among the Chinese residents of the Settlement that when May Fourth activists disturbed the Settlement's peace and order, or had any kind of serious confrontation with British municipal officials, the police, with the help of volunteer corps would immediately terminate the whole movement. Therefore, May Fourth protestors' strategy to prevent such agitation was decided during the early stage of the Movement, and they were eager to demonstrate their peacekeeping methods in collaboration with the Settlement authorities. As a result, the Council and foreign consulates were approached on this matter. In order to discipline the strikers, Chinese student volunteer groups were established and Boy Scout Brigades were mobilised to patrol the streets to suppress any potential violent demonstrations in the Settlement.<sup>4</sup>

At this point it is important to note that just as the contemporary May Fourth ideology attracted Chinese male participants, women's activism was also stimulated by the Western thoughts promulgated through the May Fourth Movement. Advocating a

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<sup>4</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 89, 92, 95, 101; *NCH*, 31 May, 1919, p. 579; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 67-69.

Western liberal concept of human rights, this new position empowered women to actively participate in the May Fourth operations. In this revivalist May Fourth atmosphere, the intellectual agitation for women's emancipation became a mark of modern citizenship.<sup>5</sup> Discovering their opportunity to influence and make their voices heard in Shanghai, local Chinese women established the 'Shanghai Social Services League'. In association with the YWCA's the 'Shanghai Returned Women Students' they sent telegrams to the Chinese government and to British and American ministers in the capital to announce their opinions for the sovereignty of China. In addition, Chinese women workers backed their fellow countryman and the police reported that thousands of female employees had shown their patriotism by walking out of the factories and mills.<sup>6</sup>

The May Fourth demonstrators' symbolic warfare against disturbances was conducted in an appropriate Western manner and by following the example of the Shanghai Municipal Police. To maintain the pretence that the student corps were merely positioned in order to mediate between the May Fourth protestors and the Settlement police, the student corps marched on the streets wearing uniforms which were decorated with badges bearing Chinese characters, 'no violence'. In the process, they tore down Japanese advertisements, and ordered demonstrators to avoid causing trouble. In addition, the May Fourth corps identified possible troublemakers and if necessary, threatened disobedient people with punishment. To complete the official look-alike appearance, some Chinese

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<sup>5</sup> For the feminist upsurge during and after the May Fourth Movement see Zheng Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999), *passim*. In order to read some personal accounts of women's May Fourth activities in Shanghai, see for example fascinating life stories of Lu Lihua pp. 145-172 and Chen Yongsheng pp. 259- 277 in the same book. Women's May Fourth operations in the other parts of China are discussed in Dymphna Cusack, *Chinese Woman Speak*, (Sydney, 1958), pp. 185-186 and Susanna Hoe, *Chinese Footprints: Exploring Women's History in China, Hong Kong and Macao*, (Hong Kong, 1996), pp. 93-96.

<sup>6</sup> NCH, 14 June, 1919, pp. 719-720; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 9 June, 1919.

demonstrators bore Red Cross armlets to provide first aid in an emergency situation. Motor car drivers and cyclists who carried banners stating "Commit no violence" drove around the region, and similarly, megaphones were used to proclaim the importance of avoiding trouble.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, students' appealed for British authorities' acceptance to legitimise their safeguarding position in the Settlement. Hence, a hierarchical discipline was constructed to validate the student volunteer corps' position, as was illustrated in the second chapter. The symbolic war conducted by slogans and uniforms had therefore become a part of the May Fourth collective challenge initially expressed by obstructing Japanese business and organising strikes<sup>8</sup>.

The apparent tension between the Shanghai Municipal Police and the Chinese student corps had steadily increased since the beginning of the boycotts and it intensified during the strikes. This tense situation seemed to have been recognised by May Fourth activists who attempted to neutralise this strained atmosphere by placing the student corps around the Settlement to assist the police when necessary. Even the Chinese traditional social discipline organisations, called the 'group of ten', were re-established to carry out disciplinary investigations and to locate shops that were selling prohibited Japanese products. As a result, Japanese advertisements were torn down and burned along with products that had been confiscated from shops. From the British perspective these were violent actions, but the SSU interpreted that activities were non-violent and necessary for the cause.<sup>9</sup> 'No violence' tactics were further demonstrated in written format and

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<sup>7</sup> *China Press*, 1 June, 1919, p. 2; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 717; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Police daily report, 6 June, 1919.

<sup>8</sup> Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> 'Group of ten' or *baojia* was a traditional household registration system, but for the May Fourth protestors it was a method to control the crowd as by swearing a collective oath of ten men to boycott Japanese products, individual members were each responsible to the group. *Far Eastern Review*, vol. XV, June 1919, p. 441; *NCH*, 17 May, 1919, pp. 415-416; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 66-67. 'Groups of ten' were

thousands of circulars were distributed. Various types of posters were placed in doors and on poles. All of this was to encourage May Fourth protestors to stay calm.<sup>10</sup> Yet, in spite of these efforts to constrain violence and disturbances some Japanese were assaulted and a few of them were killed. Some other foreigners were also attacked.<sup>11</sup> The May Fourth activists' initial strategy to co-operate with foreign municipal officials was, however, well followed. As soon as Chinese student corps were prohibited in the Settlement, students cancelled activities. In some cases, however, the student operations were hidden from the public and according to the foreign municipal police, meetings were held in secret locations.<sup>12</sup>

These activities were proof of discipline within the Movement that the foreign community refused to recognise. Certainly, May Fourth student corps saw themselves as legitimate as the British authorities. As it turned out, the student corps played a determinative role and eventually they agitated the foreigners to suppress the Movement. Especially when the student corps attempted to implement vigilante law, they were categorised, by the British, as 'a rebellious group anxious to control the whole society'. The resulting situation promised and subsequently produced friction between the two. In other words, the Chinese students failed to express their political significance and their operational mechanism for the foreign oligarchy, who, in turn, were unwilling to sacrifice the precious privileges in the Settlement. The common belief that the British administration would resist any degree of Chinese control was soundly based. For the

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established around country, as a missionary report from west China narrated, *The West China Missionary News*, vol. XXI, August, 1919, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> PRO, FO228/3214 Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week ended May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/31 Fraser to Jordan, 9 June, 1919.

<sup>11</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 714, 716, 723; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, pp. 64A-65A, 85A, 87A; PRO, FO228/3526/20 Fraser to Jordan, 8 June, 1919.

<sup>12</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Phillips, 20 June, 1919.

time being, the Chinese student corps who patrolled the Settlement streets undermined British prestige. For the Chinese students, it paved the way for May Fourth demonstrators' future activities and was an example of the students' ability to supervise the Movement. Moreover, it is apparent that the International Settlement provided students with 'a testing ground' where various persuasive and coercive May Fourth operations could be experimented with and modified for future operations.

The May Fourth activities in the International Settlement demonstrated that it was a matter of Chinese national pride to display strength and unity when they confronted foreign residents. A new sense of modern national identity introduced by the May Fourth Movement had to find a way of dealing with the Western and Japanese challenge, as during earlier periods Chinese national life had humiliatingly failed to do so. This manifestation was particularly important, as the Chinese often believed that the Settlement foreigners were not taking seriously their attempts to administer vigorously the growing May Fourth campaign. More significantly, Japanese newspapers had characterised the May Fourth Movement as a "five-minutes patriotism" that was merely a renewal of previous short-lived enthusiastic attempts to boycott and which would therefore die off as soon as activities threatened Chinese merchants' business or personal interests.<sup>13</sup>

It is true that even the most sympathetic British observers tended to underestimate the May Fourth Movement's future potential. Meanwhile, British extremists preferred to characterise it with patronising assumptions, predicting its coming failure or naming it, as

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<sup>13</sup> Lin, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*, pp. 62-63; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919; *NCH*, 17 May, 1919, p. 446; *NCH*, 24 May, 1919, p. 507; *NCH*, 31 May, 1919, p. 579.

the British Consul-General did, as "blind folly".<sup>14</sup> In general, May Fourth demonstrators recognised those policies that fortified national honour crucial to the success of the Movement. In fact, all Chinese patriotic activities were perceived as essential to confront the Japanese and Western treaty port people. In the foreigners' community, there was no disposition to favour this view. The opposite, 'keeping face' was recognised instead as a deeply embedded characteristic in the psyche of the Chinese people. 'Face pidgin' was another British concept that was used to criticise the Chinese way to respect maintaining of the face, and hence, your status.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Chinese May Fourth demonstrators' demand to conduct a final flag waving procession through the Settlement in order to celebrate the achievements of strike was identified by the British as another attempt to usurp the city. The victory parade was even more feared as predicting the foreign community's defeat by Chinese nationalism.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, for the May Fourth protestors, the ending of the general strike was the Movement's first major victory, and a powerful demonstration of Chinese patriotism. At the same time, Chinese merchants apparently expected a moral acceptance of their strike and boycott activities and needed a victory parade after a symbolically, but also realistically, successful strike<sup>17</sup>. Instead, celebrating demonstrators received a hostile response from British municipal authorities and the peaceful and patriotic parade was condemned as "a riot of a belligerent mob". For the time being, this incident revealed the ugly side of British authority. In contrast to all

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<sup>14</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/33 Fraser to Jordan, 7 June, 1919.

<sup>15</sup> *NCH*, 7 June, 1919, p. 649. Various contemporary British books and correspondence regularly listed the negative Chinese mental and physical characteristics to define the Chinese race. See for example *The China Year Book, 1921-1922*, (Tianjin, 1921), p. 547; *Notes on Shanghai*, (London, 1928), p. 35, appendix E; SOAS, PP/MS 49, Papers of the Scott Family, Box 1, file 2, Rev. Francis J. Griffith, Qingdao to Miss Heathcote, 19 August, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/33, 75b, 79,116 Fraser to Jordan, 7 and 11 June (2 letters), 1919 and Phillips to Jordan, 21 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 13 June, 1919.

expectations expressed by the Chinese community, the Council rejected the parade and surprisingly attacked it. Yet, the qualities of 'stiff upper lip' or 'protecting Western values and principles' were the equivalent principles the British expected to be respected by the May Fourth demonstrators. While the 'stiff upper lip' and 'Western values' mentality were seen as positive characteristics among British expatriates and to some extent among the Chinese intelligentsia, the Chinese 'maintaining face' or 'face pidgin' -disposition was described as a weakness from the British perspective.

In relation to victory parades, Wasserstrom has interestingly pointed out that by expecting certain types of activities to conclude the general strike honourably, the May Fourth demonstrators actually combined traditional Chinese festival celebrations with the idea of Western style victory processions, similar to the one organised in Shanghai after the Armistice to celebrate the victory of the Allies in the World War.<sup>17</sup> Hence, the question of a victory parade in June 1919, represented British misinterpretation of the May Fourth students' objectives and manifestations throughout summer and autumn of 1919. Predicating this possibility of misunderstanding, May Fourth students utilised alternative methods to gain British officials' acceptance.

Obviously, the student and merchant demonstrators were well aware of British officials' hegemony over the foreign and Chinese community in the Settlement. When analysing the May Fourth activists printed materials, it is possible, therefore, to obtain some understanding of their visions and expectations relating to British officials' operations. At one level, the hope was to establish a profound collaboration between the May Fourth protagonists and the British residents in the International Settlement and to salvage the

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<sup>17</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>18</sup> Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 81-82.

Movement from the Council's repressive notifications. A particularly interesting part of the communication was the manifestations designed and directed especially for foreigners.

The Shanghai Student Union had prepared itself for extensive propaganda work and formed a communication department to deliver internal messages to its members and to maintain external connections with other Chinese groups and foreigners.<sup>19</sup> It was obvious that the students' influence on social events and public sentiment, through their propaganda campaign, was overwhelming. Various accounts garnered by the press and from official documents attest to the reality of the distribution of printed materials in the Settlement. The British consular officials, the Council members and police officers were frequently reminded of May Fourth principles, such as the policy to maintain the Movement's non-violence and they also emphasised the patriotic nature of the Japanese boycott. In addition, co-existence in the Settlement under the foreigners' regulations was another principle incorporated in the May Fourth agenda and the continuance of 'friendly relations' with Westerners was included in the manifestations.

At the beginning of the general strike, the SSU addressed a letter to the Council, indicating its earnest desire to serve "our foreign friends" at the Settlement, and it attempted to assure British officials of its ability to guarantee peace and order in the region. Coupled with this propaganda, a students' special committee had been appointed to promote understanding between May Fourth demonstrators and foreigners. Even before launching the general strike, the Citizens' Society had issued an explanatory letter to several Consuls-General in the city. It articulated the reasons for boycotting Japanese products and in another letter the society promised to advise all Chinese to purchase their

goods only from British and American shops.<sup>20</sup> Exaggerated rhetoric praising foreign friends was revealed in notices issued by Chinese student, merchant and educational organisations. A substantial part of texts complimented the whole foreign community's sympathy and goodwill towards the Movement. Brief references were made to the exceptional, organisational skills of the May Fourth demonstrators to maintain order during the strikes.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, it was difficult to identify any British consulate, Council or police members' attitudes from this description, especially when the British in particular had, in the meantime, tried to suppress all May Fourth activities. Despite this beautifully constructed discourse of 'foreign friends', in reality the notices were cleverly constructed propagating tools for the May Fourth demonstrators to receive popular acceptance for their operations among the foreign and Chinese communities. Indeed, it was a perceptibly fawning advertising campaign to attain approval from the suspicious British and to recruit more Chinese people in support of May Fourth activities.

On another occasion the British were reminded once more in a highly articulate and persuasive manner of their position as guardians of the Chinese Maritime Customs and administrators of the Settlement. Alongside these concessions, they had responsibilities towards the whole country, as the May Fourth pamphlet indicated. According to this conception, by supporting the Chinese nation against imperialist Japan, the British would in future ensure the continuation of their privileged presence in China. As the British now learned, the only opportunity to maintain a powerful British hegemony was to help the May Fourth demonstrators in their operations against Japanese aggression, otherwise the

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<sup>19</sup> Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 266.

<sup>20</sup> *China Press*, 10 June, 1919, p. 2; *NCH*, 7 June, 1919, pp. 649-650.

Japanese would simply discard the British from the Settlement. Similarly, the letter addressed to the municipal electricity department repeated the rhetoric of the Western principle of democratic righteousness to protest when encountering imperialist aggression.<sup>22</sup> Here, it is important to realise that the promulgation implied that the Japanese, and not the Chinese, were the hostile agents and were, in due course, forcing the British out of the Settlement in order to practice militarist politics in Shanghai. By including this in the letter, the May Fourth demonstrators wanted to establish a high level of co-existence and shared values and interdependence - perceived and actual - between the Settlement British and Chinese. In fact, it seemed as if the British and the May Fourth activists' collaboration to fight against a mutual enemy was a fundamental prerequisite in these types of political and financial circumstances. Another point to stress is that the demonstrators' discourse repeatedly articulated well-known Western values such as democracy, national liberalism, general education and women's emancipation. Underlying this reasoning was the idea that the British would understand and instigate a movement which represented modern ideologies similar to their own.

Shortly after starting the general strike, the SSU's immediate concern shifted from manifesting the May Fourth ideologies, to ensuring their own and other demonstrators' survival in the Settlement. The Council's domineering notifications in May and June 1919, and the closure of SSU office at the Settlement was followed by shutting down the French Concession premises, an incident which was undoubtedly initiated by British Council members. Eventually it forced students to accept a more intolerant Chinese

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<sup>21</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 718-719, 724.

<sup>22</sup> *SMA*, U1-91-22, Shanghai Municipal Police, Note from the commercial, educational and labouring communities to the Council, 9 June, 1919; *SMA*, U1-3-67, file 1044, Shanghai Municipal Council,

municipal administration.<sup>23</sup> Apart from losing the perfect site for headquarters, May Fourth demonstrators' operations in the Settlement did not seem to be greatly affected by the Council's notifications. The first order to not to interfere with shopkeepers' business was ignored by the student and merchant inspector corps and 'the groups of ten', who relentlessly investigated business premises in order to find prohibited Japanese products. In spite of the second note which called for the cessation of distributing inciting printed materials, the constant flow of printed propaganda was uncontrollable. In the Settlement alone the police reported that it possessed over 500 different kind of handbills and cartoons. Other than preventing some processions, the third declaration to stop rumours and crowd gatherings was, in reality, fairly ineffective. A wave of political and social agitation was too exciting to stop people from gathering together to exchange rumours and experiences and to predict future events. In fact, since the strikes had closed almost all schools, shops and factories, people simply had nothing else to do except to gather on the streets and talk about the situation. Eventually, the streets were crowded with increasing audiences who listened to the student street-corner speakers. A more effective prohibition was issued on 8 June, 1919 which removed May Fourth protestors' white clothes, caps and banners that had provoked the Chinese to ally with demonstrators to agitate around the city, as the British commonly believed. For the British it had been a recognisable signal for trouble in the Settlement.<sup>24</sup>

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Secretariat, Shanghai Patriotic, Educational and Commercial Federation to the Manager of the Electricity Department, 12 December, 1919.

<sup>23</sup> *NCH*, 21 June, 1919, p. 759; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

<sup>24</sup> Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 88A; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

More significantly, as Steve Smith has pointed out, the street corner orators came also from the merchant class who had thrown themselves into the business of educating and organising labour, discovering in the process a new political role in Shanghai.<sup>25</sup> To strengthen their protest against the Council's prohibitions, Chinese printers working for the British printing house which published the notifications went on strike.<sup>26</sup> But not even the Council's last notice was able to restrict the May Fourth operations. This is not to say that the SSU and street unions did not recognise the Council's manifestos. On the contrary, every notification was responded to by voluminous letters to the Council and the British newspapers, and each letter reminded the foreign authorities of existing 'friendly co-operation' between the parties, and promised to fully obey orders. But once more, as they did earlier in May and June, the British probably realised that in practice, it was impossible to exercise complete control over May Fourth activists and their operations.

The May Fourth printed materials, especially those produced for foreigners in the Settlement, were compiled skilfully and the visual image was designed to support the Movement's ideology. Modern style and accurate reasoning expressed by using Western models demonstrated May Fourth protagonists' abilities to produce rational and intelligent ideas. This created some uneasiness among foreign circles in Shanghai and gave an added impetus for British authorities to suppress the Movement as soon as possible. A May Fourth demonstrator represented the modern, active and educated new Chinese generation that could easily challenge British privileges and extraterritorial rights. It was well acknowledged that by using their position, scholars were able to bring

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<sup>25</sup> Steve A. Smith, *A Road is Made: Communism in Shanghai 1920-1927*, (Richmond, Surrey, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 8 June, 1919.

considerable pressure to bear on more reluctant patriots. The traditional Chinese respect for scholars was still in vogue and if the British needed more proof of their influence, the recently experienced general strike had realised scholars' potential to unify all classes in support of the Movement.

The May Fourth students' impressive communication skills were illustrated in *The Students' Strike -An explanation* (see Appendix 1) -pamphlet which was already discussed in the fourth chapter in relation to British missionaries. When analysing the pamphlet in relation to May Fourth demonstrators' propaganda skills, it provides a relevant example of sentimental yet sophisticated reasoning. Finishing with a direct petition to foreigners, it used the May Fourth demonstrators' rhetoric to accentuate values that were honoured by the Westerners. This time priorities such as justice to the nations, battle against militarism, free trade and education were expressed. Finally, the Allies were reminded of a resemblance between the Japanese and German imperialists and the metaphor "Hun of the East" was effectively used in the concluding statement. The pamphlet also indicated in its conclusion that Japan was an equivalent enemy to China as Germany had been to the Allies in Europe. Not surprisingly, May Fourth students claimed that they were fighting for foreigners in China.

In contrast, short sentences and vernacular language were used in the May Fourth propaganda to promote ideas among the Chinese populace. Easily memorable phrases were recited to underline the principles of the Movement; "Return our Qingdao", "Down with Militarists", "China belongs to Chinese", "Boycott Japanese goods" were some of

the popular slogans used to deliver their message.<sup>27</sup> The difference between the rhetoric addressed to foreigners and the Chinese intelligentsia and on the other hand to the common Chinese people was immense. The former groups obviously needed more 'eloquent argumentation' and accordingly the May Fourth propaganda reflected its target audience.

The British and American newspapers published numerous Chinese students' letters and articles. Therefore, the scope and scale of published materials confirmed the British argument that the foreign media was 'shrewdly used for the May Fourth propaganda'.<sup>28</sup> Chinese Western Returned Students in particular distinguished themselves as an active group, partly due to their good English language skills. They claimed to possess an appropriate knowledge of Western manners and ideologies. Moreover, according to them, they "had the blessing of higher Western learning". It was proudly announced that the Western Returned Students' Union was actually created to promote the May Fourth ideology which supported Western ideals to fight against militarism. Their discourse was particularly persuasive because, in a sense, the juxtaposition between democratic "Allied foreign friends" and "Hun Oriental militarism" represented by the Japanese was supposed to help the British choose whose side they were on in this struggle. In order to help "the foreign friends" to select their side correctly, the British were reminded to live according to the principles they had advocated in international politics, and particularly at the Versailles Peace Conference. It is interesting to note that the researched materials give the impression of the Western educated students' eagerness to act as mediators

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<sup>27</sup> *NCH*, 31 May, 1919, p. 579; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 696; for more detailed discussion on the May Fourth propaganda among the Chinese populace, see Steve A. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses: Nationalism and Labour in Shanghai, 1895-1927*, (London, 2002), 92-108.

between the Chinese people and Shanghai foreigners.<sup>29</sup> The Western educated students' activities were acknowledged by the contemporary Guomindang leaders, and consequently, Dr. Sun Yat-sen urged students to maintain patriotic principles.<sup>30</sup>

Under the guise of co-operation, however, the Western educated students formed a critical faction of Chinese intellectuals who had already begun to scrutinise British hegemony in the country. Thus, initial attempts to challenge the British semi-colonial presence were expressed during the May Fourth Movement. As local newspaper correspondence revealed, an extensive press licence discussion had infuriated Western educated students who claimed that the proposed press law had been manufactured and implemented by the British in order to undermine growing Chinese public opinion. Apart from receiving strong American support for this accusation, the Western returned students were not able to threaten British domination in the International Settlement. Yet, it represented a growing radical intellectual opinion that had begun to question Westerners, and particularly the British position in China.<sup>31</sup> Defined largely in Western terms but presented as culturally unspecific, a variety of notions and practices were used by the Western educated students to launch appeals for the right to pursue Chinese national independence and to mobilise popular movement to implement it. Their co-operative and pro-British rhetoric initially used was, however, about to change within the

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<sup>28</sup> For more Chinese May Fourth articles and letters published in the British and American newspapers see for example *Celestial Empire*, *China Press*, *Far Eastern Review*, *NCH* issues from May to December 1919.

<sup>29</sup> *China Press*, 10 June, 1919, 2<sup>nd</sup> section, p. 10; *China Press*, 11 June, 1919, p. 10; *China Press*, 12 June, 1919, p. 3; *NCH*, 31 May, 1919, p. 577; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 714 and pp. 721-722; *NCH*, 21 June, 1919, p. 782; *NCH*, 5 July, 1919, p. 43; *Milliard's Review of the Far East*, vol. VIII, number 7, 12 April, 1919, pp. 237-239. The Western Returned Students Union combined earlier formed English and American Returned Student Clubs in Shanghai. Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West: Society and Culture 1815-1937*, (London, 1979), pp. 168-173. More detailed research on the Chinese students abroad and their activities in China during the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement see Y.C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West 1872-1949*, (Durham, NC, 1966), pp. 306-361.

<sup>30</sup> *China Press*, 31 August, 1919, p. 1.

next five years. At the height of the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925 the same Western educated students were among the first to accuse the British government of oppressing China and as a final verbal attack accused Jardines of both segregating the Chinese and their "despising of the yellow race".<sup>32</sup>

Possibly overestimating their cordial connections with Westerners in the summer 1919, the Western returned students devoted their energy to patriotic and propaganda activities and continuously expressed hope that mutual understanding between all the Settlement inhabitants might be reached on a firm basis. In spite of their active participation, the SSU remained the most influential of all May Fourth associations and societies.

But even more important May Fourth manifestations, perhaps, were the famous four demands to the Beijing government. Every literate and illiterate inhabitant of Shanghai was bombarded with resolutions which culminated in the following May Fourth principles. Firstly, the three traitors should be dismissed and punished, secondly, all secret and unequal treaties concerning China should be abolished, thirdly, all students should be released, and fourthly, the Qingdao area should be unconditionally returned to China. For British officials the demands reflected the Chinese central government's long-term internal problems of corruption and militarism. They were, therefore, unwilling to become involved and insisted on the maintenance of neutrality in the Settlement.<sup>33</sup> Yet, Chinese articles and letters published in the newspapers encouraged the British to take collective action and to carry out their responsibilities to Chinese people by persuading their governments to act. For the message to be effective, it was hoped that practical

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<sup>31</sup> *China Press*, 13 July, 1919, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai to Hong Kong, January to June, 1925, Yui Wang, on behalf of Western Returned Students, 2 July, 1925.

nuisances such as deprivation of bread and meat would eventually press foreign governmental officials to use their power<sup>34</sup>.

Some May Fourth demonstrators, inspired by their early successful campaigning and with a greatly increasing number of followers, felt that the time was right for direct confrontation with the British. Hence, occasionally local May Fourth activists encouraged certain individuals and societies to threaten British expatriates. In the midst of the general strike a threatening letter was addressed to Sir Everard Fraser in order to intimidate British officials to change their offensive policies towards May Fourth demonstrators. 'The Red and Blue Forces' society threatened to destroy all British and foreign property unless the Council withdrew its notifications. Moreover, this society demanded the names and addresses of those who had interfered with May Fourth students and the crowd. At this point it naturally meant both foreign and Chinese police members. However, the strongly worded letter did not seem to present any tangible threat to British officials, and no action was taken to investigate the matter more thoroughly.<sup>35</sup>

A different type of opposition towards Westerners emerged immediately after Westerners' decision to organise the Allied Versailles Peace Treaty celebrations in Shanghai. Only a few weeks earlier the May Fourth demonstrators had been refused permission to hold a parade to celebrate their victory over the corrupt and inefficient central government. Now the Allied expatriates, led by the British majority, had made grandiose plans to commemorate victory in the war in Europe in the International

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<sup>33</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/22, 33 Fraser to Jordan, 6 and 7 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-22, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 6 June, 1919; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 86A.

<sup>34</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Fraser, 7 June, 1919.

<sup>35</sup> PRO, FO228/3526/75 Fraser to Jordan, 11 June, 1919; SMA, U1-91-22, Shanghai Municipal Police, Note from the 'Chinese Republican Association interested in Japanese affairs' to the Shanghai Municipal Police, 11 June, 1919.

Settlement of Shanghai. For many Chinese, however, the peace treaty was nothing to celebrate. In spite of Chinese delegates' successful and widely publicised refusal to sign the peace treaty because of intensive May Fourth campaigning, the oppressive Japanese 'Twenty One demands' were still effectively manipulating Chinese internal politics. A sense of betrayal on the Westerners' part had humiliated the Chinese people and in the reinvigorated May Fourth atmosphere it infuriated the patriotic Chinese who associated the victory with concepts such as national 'disgrace', 'defacement' and 'injustice'. Accordingly, Chinese residents in the Settlement were advised to act in a similar way as they would during national mourning or during funerals, that is, to walk in an unusually quiet manner and to keep flags at half-mast. Not surprisingly, British police officers' correspondence again classified these Chinese operations as representing "the most obvious expression" in inciting anti-foreign sentiment in the Settlement.<sup>36</sup> The peace treaty had only partly fulfilled Chinese patriotic expectations, but it had not yet completely transferred their feelings into radical anti-foreign sentiment, despite the fact that the British municipal police undoubtedly overreacted to all circulars distributed in the summer and autumn of 1919.<sup>37</sup> The Settlement police themselves were occasionally attacked, particularly when they attempted to tear down provocative posters and banners, or when they tried to force Chinese merchants to open their shops. Meanwhile, the SSU

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<sup>36</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, letters and circulars, 10,12 and 14 July, 1919.

<sup>37</sup> May Fourth researchers such as Chen and Wasserstrom have profoundly analysed numerous Chinese May Fourth publications in Shanghai and found very few anti-Western notes. See Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai, passim.*; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 52- 71.

maintained its neutral policy and disassociated itself publicly from all violent operations whether against the Japanese, or other foreigners.<sup>38</sup>

As has been pointed out earlier, the Settlement police forces were the principal informants of the socio-political currencies present in the city, and therefore, were recognised as potential May Fourth collaborators, since they had recruited various Chinese people into their ranks. Undoubtedly Chinese police members were the primary targets of the May Fourth propaganda, but simultaneously, the foreign police and especially British commanding officers were approached directly. In order to convince the foreign police of their supervising abilities, May Fourth activists distributed manifestos among the police giving solemn evidence of their civic peacekeeping potential. The future character of the May Fourth demonstrator was praised as disciplined and reliable, which was in total opposition to the view taken by the central government's officials. Moreover, the proclamation accused the Council of not allowing the student volunteer corps to assist in the maintenance of order and condemned the Council's attempts to forcibly open shops. In summary, the May Fourth manifesto to the police pleaded for police co-operation and anticipated their approval. The British police were also expected to show that justice was done by remaining quiet and by not becoming involved in the Council's coercive policies.<sup>39</sup> In trying to demonstrate their co-operative skills, the SSU's went one step further and suggested calling upon the police and SVC

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<sup>38</sup> SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

<sup>39</sup> SMA, U1-91-22, Shanghai Municipal Police, Note from 'the Chinese Republican Association interested in Japanese affairs' to the Shanghai Municipal Police, 11 June, 1919; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 86A; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

troops if the situation required it. The announcement was published in Chinese and foreign newspapers to reaffirm the collaboration with 'foreign friends'.<sup>40</sup>

A small number of Chinese from the Settlement introduced a surprising element to police involvement in the Movement as they secretly contacted the British police officers to request protection against the May Fourth demonstrators. Some Chinese bankers and businessmen had privately encouraged the merchants to resume business. This infuriated May Fourth demonstrators who sent threatening letters in the name of 'the Iron and Blood Union' to 'the country's traitors'. British police expressed their respect for the Chinese who attempted to pacify the situation in the Settlement and provided a detective to protect them free of charge.<sup>41</sup> Evidently, the British police were anxious to co-operate with the influential Chinese in the Settlement rather than with 'rioting' and boycotting students.

Neither the Chinese student's organisations, nor merchant associations were properly equipped to control the message flow that was aptly described as 'Dame rumour'.<sup>42</sup> In people's mental images she floated around the city whispering of present dangers and constantly predicting future discomforts. A major prerequisite for the emergence of the fear and the shared mentality of its participants, was created by Dame rumour. The highly volatile situation encouraged the activation of rumours when the free flow of information, for example, concerning the events in Beijing, was prevented. Rumours were circulated not only to define the uncertainty of the situation, but also to validate a course of

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<sup>40</sup> *China Press*, 7 June, 1919, p. 1; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

<sup>41</sup> SMA, U1-3-30, file 1037, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Hilton-Johnson to Secretary of the Council, 12 December, 1919 and Sung Hang-chang from the Bank of China to Commissioner of Police, 12 December, 1919.

<sup>42</sup> *NCH*, 21 June, 1919, p. 761.

collective action.<sup>43</sup> A collective fear among the Chinese related to the unverified information of Japanese expatriates poisoning food supplies or water wells. This belief most likely recruited more Chinese support for the May Fourth boycott than the distribution of any ideological pamphlets. As suggested in the previous chapter, the Japanese, in return, circulated rumours of British imperialist activities in various parts of China to incite anti-British sentiment.<sup>44</sup> It was true that after repressive measures taken by the Council to suppress the Movement especially after the shooting on 12 June, 1919, the revivalist May Fourth atmosphere had developed to the point where anti-British protests were likely. It was apparent that both the Boxers' potential reappearance and anti-foreign rumours were equally feared among May Fourth organisers as they were among the British. The experience of the Boxer uprising had been a sufficient indication of danger more than any development could present for British interests. For the Chinese, the threat of civil war was an equally dreaded option as it might bring another full-scale military intervention from outside in defence of the foreign settlements.

Until the beginning of June, 1919, the main body of the Movement had been composed of student groups and patriotic merchants, but after successful strikes, new labour and business associations were eager to manifest patriotic feelings. By joining the May Fourth campaigning, they expressed their willingness to achieve more visible authority in the Settlement's daily politics. According to their ideas, since the Settlement itself had provided an ideological and physical environment to form new societies, it would surely function as an ideal ground for executing their activities. For the Chinese living in the

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<sup>43</sup> Ramsay, *The Ideology of the Great Fear*, p. XVI; Rosnow, *Rumour and Gossip*, pp. 51-56.

<sup>44</sup> SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 12 July, 1919; SMP, Special Branch, roll 65, dossier 6691, Extracts from the file on the 1919 Japanese Boycott and the activities of the

Settlement, British local politics certainly provided grounds for further improvement in the form of accepting Chinese representation in the Council. At the same time, the events in the summer and autumn of 1919 appeared to put new societies' organisational skills and ideological principles to the test. The associations' involvement in Settlement politics was prominent during the rates agitation. The press license dispute also strengthened the groups' power, and similarly, the question of Chinese representation on the Council further united the newly formed groups.<sup>45</sup> What now rapidly emerged from the May Fourth activities was the co-operation between street unions, labour groups with traditional merchant guilds and student societies. Therefore, after successful boycotts and strikes, British officials' operations to introduce new rates and censorship the Settlement press faced strong resistance in the form of new Chinese pressure groups and their protests. The most pressing political consideration for foreign authorities was, however, growing public opinion to ask that Chinese representation be granted in the Council. There is no doubt that this issue was further hastened by the attitude which the Council adopted towards the May Fourth demonstrations and their subsequent campaign to obtain fuller powers to deal with the Settlement press. The question of Chinese representation was activated as a result of May Fourth incidents and although it was not fully realised before 1928, the issue was never again ignored by the British residents.

It was feared in foreign circles that the above-mentioned activities would mature into more serious confrontation between foreigners and Chinese. The prevailing British official perspective was well articulated in the Consul-General's letter as follows:

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Students in connection therewith, Chief Detective Inspector Reeves to Headquarter Staff, 25 September, 1925.

<sup>45</sup> PRO, FO671/447/537, 540, 541 McEuen to Jamieson, 13,18, 20 August, 1919.

"Having had experience of a mild form of anarchy in the shape of students' riots, certain sections of the Chinese in the Settlement have swallowed and absorbed the microbe of self-determination and have revived a cry of 'no taxation without representation'." <sup>46</sup>

Co-operation with British officials was a vital factor in allowing May Fourth activists to concentrate on the Settlement. The prospects of obtaining acceptance to operate in the Settlement clearly depended in the first instance upon agreement between demonstrators and the Council. When confronted with British municipal officials it soon became evident that the May Fourth demonstrators had to adapt their operations to fit the regulations prevalent in the Settlement, and riots or violent activities were out of question. Therefore, the May Fourth organisers found it essential to place volunteer corps around the area to secure peace and order within the Settlement borders. By imitating the manners and practices of the British police, students' attempted to control the Movement. The root cause for collision, however, still remained the same: British officials were extremely reluctant to accept any other authority in the Settlement, and consequently, student corps and their operations were prohibited. It was apparent that when the May Fourth leaders chose symbols with which to frame their manifestos, they set a strategic course between their cultural setting, political opponents, ordinary citizens and the British expatriates whose support they relied on.

Another tactic of ensuring British support for May Fourth operations was to implement propaganda machinery geared to produce information to foreign authorities. Consistent campaigning was directed at all foreign groups in Shanghai, but in particular, uncompromising British officials were primary targets, because without their approval the May Fourth operations would have been quickly terminated, and it would have caused an embarrassing situation for May Fourth demonstrators. It was apparent that the

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<sup>46</sup> PRO, FO671/447/536 Jamieson to Jordan, 12 August, 1919.

Settlement provided fertile ground for anti-government campaigns not only because of the area's 'untouchable' status, but also British general opinion utterly disregarded the central government in Beijing. In the ideal world of the Britons, foreign intervention was required to modernise the Chinese traditional administration system, and in this way the anti-governmental demonstrations served British political and financial interests in China. What was desired, in practice, was a strong stable government, which would ensure conditions favourable to foreign trade.

May Fourth activists' 'friendship' rhetoric was based on an assumed mutual understanding between two parties concerned. Thus, Westerners were May Fourth demonstrators' 'friends' and allegedly approved their actions, while the Chinese, in return, agreed to respect and primarily promote British interests and presence in China. At least, in analysing Chinese conduct, this might be the case. Given the quasi-submissive posture of the May Fourth demonstrators in the face of the Council's uncompromising operations in the Settlement over the previous weeks, the demonstrators had good reason to believe that their undertakings were finally in accord with the Council's policy. By following the Council's regulations, the May Fourth activists in return expected a more positive attitude from the British. None of the British sources researched, however, support the fulfilment of the May Fourth protestors' expectations for extensive co-operation with the Council. May Fourth protagonists' operations connected with the foreign commercial community suggest, however, that the Chinese commitment to cordial co-existence with Westerners was also fragile, and open to misinterpretations as the following analysis of Chinese attempts to collaborate with the British business community will reveal.

## 6.2. Chinese Experiences and the British Commercial Community

The May Fourth commercial boycotts and strikes operated to paralyse Japanese business, but later they disturbed entire Western and Chinese trade in the country. In contrast, prior to the general strike in Shanghai, May Fourth demonstrators had actively encouraged their fellow citizens to consume British and American products. Following the initiative and acting on the advice of May Fourth demonstrators, Chinese consumers had begun to utilise non-Japanese commodities, and within weeks British business had almost recovered to profitable wartime conditions. In addition, in order to promote national and Western goods, the Chinese merchants and guilds also approached the foreign commercial community to obtain their understanding in pursuing economic nationalism.

Jardines was an ideal target for the May Fourth operations for four obvious reasons. Firstly, it was the most influential company in Shanghai and China, both politically and financially, and its actions were always monitored and frequently adopted by the smaller treaty port entrepreneurs. Jardines' impact was easily justified, as the corporation employed, in China, over 100,000 workers in its factories, godowns, insurance companies and mills. Since following May Fourth protestors' demand for collective action, all classes including industrial workers had been persuaded to participate in the Movement. It was apparent that success in implementing May Fourth ideology and boycotts among the Jardines' workers would have provided a great propaganda victory for Chinese nationalism.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, Jardines had an extensive network for up-country distribution

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<sup>47</sup> Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China*, p. 81; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June to July, 1919, no. 14/1-12, Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 11 June, 1919; August to September, 1919, no. 45/7-22, Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 9 October, 1919; Bernard Wasserstein, *Secret War in Shanghai: Treachery, Subversion and Collaboration in the Second World War*, (London, 1998), p. 5.

which, in turn, maintained commerce and service trade in Shanghai. Actually, it seemed that trading problems in the interior were followed by further irregularities in the already depressed Shanghai markets. Jardines' influence in the other provinces was fortified with numerous investments in property and land, and in all probability, from the perspective of May Fourth demonstrators, Jardines' interior connections provided a valuable avenue to disseminate patriotic ideas and consolidate the May Fourth Movement's impact around the countryside. Understandably, powerful compradores' perceptions of and reactions to the May Fourth Movement played a crucial part in the interior areas. The feasibility of the May Fourth activists' plan was unquestionable. Thus, Jardines' distressed reports recalled spreading boycotts, work stoppages and in normal circumstances highly trustworthy compradores' decisions to join the Movement and to boycott the business.<sup>48</sup> The third important impetus in encouraging Jardines' management to recognise May Fourth principles was its trade with the Chinese government. British imports of railway equipment and machinery, and in addition, the production of fabric to manufacture army uniforms, had strengthened the company's connections with Beijing government. It was therefore assumed that by pressuring Jardines, British government officials would act on behalf of the enterprise and would eventually urge the Chinese government to accept May Fourth demonstrators' conditions in order to end financially burdensome boycotts and strikes.<sup>49</sup> Fourthly, it was crucial to intervene with Jardines' exports from Japan. Cross-border deals with Japan included the importation of coal which was cheaper than

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<sup>48</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June to July, 1919, no. 22/39-40 Smith to Bernard, 4 July, 1919; no. 23/84-85 Chengdu Agency Business Report for June, 1919; no. 30/64-69 Qingdao Agency Business Report for July, 1919; August to September, no. 28/120-123 Qingdao Agency Business Report for September, 1919.

<sup>49</sup> JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June to July, 1919, no. 19/15-17, D.R. Mackenzie, Beijing to Brooke-Smith, 13 and 26 June, 1919; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, January -March, 1920, no. 72/54-57 Davidson to Owen, 19 December, 1919.

Chinese inland coal. Therefore, half of the International Settlement's coal supplies were of Japanese origin. In accordance with May Fourth co-operational principles, a variety of British firms were approached with circulars which appealed to them to terminate shipping of Japanese products on patriotic grounds. Another pamphlet was sent to Chinese workers employed by British companies to demand them to join the patriotic strike. The general strike finally succeeded in interfering with Jardines' strongly criticised export of Japanese goods.<sup>50</sup> Thus, while in theory, boycotts of non-Japanese goods were over, in practice, Jardines discovered during the following months that continuing boycotts of Japanese products complicated sales and paralysed business particularly with Japanese merchants.<sup>51</sup> It was evident that the interests of Chinese consumers had become unfavourable to Japanese products. Therefore, Jardines' shipments and profits declined.

Changing the socio-political situation had had a severe impact on Chinese consumers' behaviour and it was reflected in market conditions. As a result, current events had formulated a renewed concept of consumption as 'a national act'. To some extent, the Japanese boycott, provoked after the Twenty-One demands in 1915, provided an appropriate example of successful trade embargo prior to the formation of May Fourth Movement. The 1915 boycott was, however, smaller in scale in its economic effectiveness.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, it was not fashionable for modern and patriotic Chinese to

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<sup>50</sup> *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no. 5, June 1919, p. 39; *JMA*, S/O Yokohama to Hong Kong, 1919, no. 27-28 List of Japanese Business Connections and no 158-159 [J.F.Owen most likely] to Chicken, 25 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/29 Consul of Jiujiang to Jordan, 5 June, 1919; SMA U1-3-67, file 1044, Shanghai Municipal Council, Secretariat, Shanghai Patriotic, Educational and Commercial Federation to the Manager of the SMC Electricity Department, 12 December, 1919; Manager of the SMC Electricity Department to Shanghai Patriotic, Educational and Commercial Federation, 17 December, 1919.

<sup>51</sup> *JMA*, S/O Shanghai to Hong Kong, January to March, 1920, no. 216-228, 'Report on Visit to Tientsin and River Ports', January-February, 1920.

<sup>52</sup> Remer, *A Study of Chinese Boycotts*, pp. 46-54; for further discussion on "national goods" -campaigns see Wen-hsin Yeh, "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City", in Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Richard Louis Edmonds (eds.), *Reappraising Republican China*, (Oxford, 2000), pp.121-140.

buy or use products imported from the country that oppressed China and violated her sovereign rights as a nation. Understandably this description fitted Japan perfectly. Instead, use of domestic products was encouraged, and if necessary, goods imported from 'friendly countries' that is, America and Britain, were approved. May Fourth activists initiated anti-Japanese campaigns which condemned Japanese products as inferior in quality. Moreover, it was claimed that they were highly overpriced when compared with products from other countries. The commitment to paralyse the menace of a Japanese economic invasion culminated in the destruction of storage facilities in the harbour and around commercial areas in Shanghai. To illustrate the success, piles of Japanese straw hats were burned on a 'victorious' bonfire.<sup>53</sup>

In carrying out their programme to demolish unpatriotic products, enthusiastic Chinese nationalists indiscriminately targeted British companies and commodities. In a few cases British goods were boycotted or their supplies were destroyed. Yet despite May Fourth demonstrators' assurance that the incidents were purely unintentional, such occurrences obviously infuriated the British business community. When analysing the cases, both parties seemed to present relevant arguments because earlier in May, 1919, the Japanese had forged British trademarks and used them in their own products to circumvent the boycott. Apparently May Fourth activists detected this, and assumed accordingly that some British products were originally Japanese. According to other sources, British companies had allegedly terminated the shipments from Japan and stopped distributing

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<sup>53</sup> HSBC, SHG 764.1 Correspondence between Shanghai and London and copies of correspondence to branches in China 1918-1932, D. & Co., Shanghai to the HSBC, Shanghai, 18 February, 1921; *NCH*, 24 May, 1919, p. 508; Shanghai Municipal Council, *Annual Report 1919*, p. 85A.

Japanese products in China due to May Fourth protests.<sup>54</sup> If these sources are reliable, British firms had little or no Japanese products in storage.

With the awakening of Chinese nationalism, domestic commodities came to be regarded as a form of human struggle for survival and development. The May Fourth protagonists utilised this image to accentuate economic patriotism. The development of the national economy accelerated the competition between domestic and foreign commodities and this time greatly enhanced the opportunity for the former to increase demand and expand the markets. Therefore, some researchers' tendency to regard Chinese economic post-war advances primarily as a result of reduced foreign competition ignores completely the growing nationalist consumerism initiated by the May Fourth demonstrators' anti-Japanese boycotts and the successful general strike in Shanghai<sup>55</sup>.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, May Fourth demonstrators, by implementing the commercial strike, attacked the heart of the British business establishment in China since the maintenance of their profitable trade was the major interest in the country. Apart from the period during the general strike, however, May Fourth activists' primary objective in Shanghai was to avoid confrontation with the Western business community. Almost all May Fourth propaganda appears to support this principle. Furthermore, according to the May Fourth blueprint, Westerners' were supposed to replace Japanese business activities and reinforce an insufficient and often obsolete local economy.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> BCCA, box 75, Letters to G. Jamieson 1911-1920, Mayers to Jamieson, 14 June, 1919; *BCCJ*, Shanghai, vol. IV, no 5, June, 1919, pp. 1-2; no. 7, August, 1919, p. 113; no 8, September, 1919, p. 151; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June to July, 1919, no. 14/1-12, Brooke-Smith to Bernard, 11 June, 1919; PRO FO228/3526/9, 78 Acting Consul of Ningbo to Jordan, 29 May and 8 June, 1919.

<sup>55</sup> Blake, *Jardine Matheson*, pp. 219-223; Smith, *A Road is Made*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> BCCA, box 97, Correspondence of S. F. Mayers, S.W. Lao to Mayers, 19 June, 1919; Maze papers, I Confidential Letters and Reports etc., vol. I, Chinese Maritime Customs Service Annual Trade Reports 1900-1928, Tianjin -Trade Reports for the Year 1919, pp. 178-179, 195; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 718, 722.

Nonetheless, May Fourth students needed Jardines' cotton fabrics to produce uniforms and caps which symbolised their unified commitment to the cause as has been discussed earlier. In this context, British business directly consolidated May Fourth demonstrators' efforts to build the national economy based on domestic and Western ventures and at this stage British companies were needed as co-operative partners. In the meantime, Chinese businessmen attempted to develop their own industry and commerce in Shanghai and other larger cities. The process of constructing a modern national identity involved the development of a domestic industry, which, at least implicitly, reinforced subsequent demands in the 1920's to abolish foreign business establishments, revise the treaty ports' extraterritorial rights maintaining them, and eventually, to recapture the wealth and power that foreign capitalists had taken for themselves.

In the midst of the commercial strike, some Chinese employees working for foreign firms found themselves in a contradictory position between patriotic demands to join the students' and merchants' strike and as a result be dismissed from the company, or alternatively, face the humiliating prospect of being labelled as unpatriotic citizens. In many ways, the latter option carried a real threat of becoming a target for sporadic collective violence which had frequently troubled 'the national traitors' around the country. Clearly, public beatings and burning properties or commodities were not uncommon during the May Fourth period. Unpredictable conflicts threatened citizens and their businesses as long as the aroused crowds were looking for outlets in order to express their indignation. In spite of imminent public pressure to join the general strike, some Chinese workers held meetings and decided against joining, although in principle, they supported May Fourth ideas. It was announced that the most likely way to resolve the

situation was to ensure peace and order in the Settlement and to maintain friendly relations with foreigners, and it was declared that any confrontation would conflict with foreigners' understanding attitude towards the May Fourth activities. The decision was congruent with many other Chinese inhabitants working for foreign firms in the Settlement.<sup>57</sup> Again 'the foreign friend' rhetoric was invoked, this time to express the workers' motives. It is apparent, however, that the fear of losing well-paid and highly respected work at the foreign company had an equally important impact on this decision-making process. Furthermore, reacting to the grave situation, certain individuals had begun to question the validity of a strike as the hardship among workers and small merchants was becoming unbearable. The united front of the May Fourth Movement was soon challenged by the labouring classes, as losses in salaries, production and sales were gradually becoming more important than patriotic enthusiasm.

According to the researched sources, May Fourth protestors working for foreign firms in other cities or in the interior frequently acted in an opposing way to their colleagues in Shanghai. Some May Fourth success stories were distributed in business reports throughout the country, which affirmed that large sections of workers attempted to express their rising national consciousness. Almost everyone who wished to join the Movement was inevitably confronted with the fear of imminent dismissal from work.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the May Fourth Movement had inspired a rising national sentiment which had succeeded in reaching 'the grassroots' of Chinese society and encouraged people from all classes to express their national integrity by boycotting and striking. The situation was

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<sup>57</sup> *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 720-722; *SMP*, Special Branch, roll 64, dossier 2882, Meeting at the Cantonese Club, 23 July, 1919.

exceptional since the rural population, in general, remained uninvolved in political issues outside their localities. But as the May Fourth events confirmed, particularly in the smaller towns and in the interior where foreign political authority was less influential, the situation enabled more active participation of Chinese workers.

These activities are congruent with the argument that May Fourth demonstrators in Shanghai implemented divergent operations in order to adjust their Movement to maintain the city's modern consumerism and apply various methods to satisfy foreigners' and especially British policies. Accordingly, there was a discrepancy between May Fourth activities in the capital and in other treaty port centres of industry and commerce, and in the interior on the one hand and in Shanghai's International Settlement on the other. Obviously foreign hegemony affected the prevailing political atmosphere in Shanghai and it was reflected in the development of the May Fourth Movement. Understandably, the foreign presence created a different physical and intellectual environment. It was a fruitful arena for new May Fourth ideas and practices to arise and ultimately spread around the country and eventually dominate the broader May Fourth debate.

In another case the Shanghai May Fourth activists prohibited certain segments of the work force from striking. This included telephone, water and electricity company workers and postal workers who were recognised as indispensable for distributing May Fourth ideology and maintaining the basic infrastructure of the city. Similar reasoning

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<sup>58</sup> Cochran, *Big Business in China*, pp. 103-104; JMA, S/O Shanghai and Other Ports, June-July, 1919, no. 22/39-40 Smith to Brooke-Smith, 30 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/78 Consul of Ningbo to Jordan, 8 June, 1919.

was articulated to certain vegetable and meat shopkeepers to encourage them to keep their premises open.<sup>59</sup>

In the financial world, the HSBC received a fair share of pronouncements from May Fourth activists. At this time it was apparent that although the bank represented foreign financial domination in the country, it made political sense to persuade the influential foreign bank to embrace the May Fourth activists' rhetoric, since the HSBC was seen as a smaller enemy than the Japanese banks. The HSBC surprisingly gained undeserved credit from May Fourth students for not joining the Japanese government's pact to provide another emergency loan for "the corrupted Chinese government", as it was perceived by students. The bank's correspondence, however, pointed out that two practical reasons, namely delays in the telegram system and the Chinese New Year having postponed the British government's agreement to authorise the loan, prevented, coincidentally, the HSBC from making loan arrangements. The bank managers' discussions simply revealed that the bank had no altruistic motives in favouring the Chinese radical nationalists instead of a business deal.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, the SSU's letter to the HSBC highlighted the urgency to acknowledge the formal equality of China within the international system of states and the right of its own territorial sovereignty. In the letter the means for national liberation was to be found in Western ideals of democracy and sovereign governance of the country, ideas which, in substance, were similar to British rights fought for during the World War when the militaristic despotism of Germany threatened those principles. These vocabularies and images of democratic governance and the people's right to

<sup>59</sup> Chen, *The May Fourth Movement in Shanghai*, pp. 151-152; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, p. 696.

<sup>60</sup> HSBC, K.1.7, King letters 1919, Stephen to Stabb, 17 June, 1919; HSBC, K.1.8, King letters 1919, Allen to Addis, 2 March, 1920; HSBC, SHG II/48, Tianjin Managerial Correspondence 1919, Lawson to Hynes, 10 June, 1919.

express their opinions freely, and further, to conduct righteous battle against oppressive nations were meticulously described in the SSU's letter to the bank. The letter assured that 'friendship' between the British and Chinese people was renewed in the HSBC's decision to support Chinese nationalism in refusing the loan for the Chinese government. In return, the SSU promised to secure open trade among all foreign and Chinese merchants in the country, and because of the bank's 'unselfish act', the letter predicted for it a prosperous business year.<sup>61</sup>

The message in the SSU's letter to the HSBC appeared to interpret the discourse of authority within the May Fourth Movement, since the SSU had obtained for itself a legitimate position to express the May Fourth activists' requests, in the same way as the Council held a sanctioned position in the International Settlement. In fact, the SSU spoke of a prolonged crisis of political authority in China which required efforts to strengthen the cultural as well as the political unity of the state. The long-term political reality of an unreliable national government had provided the conditions for Chinese students and intelligentsia to portray themselves as legitimate leaders of China as it took initial steps to establish a sovereign state. In addition, the World War and the Versailles Peace Conference had provided a legitimate framework to express and defend national demands similar to their counterparts in Europe. As representatives of the Chinese national movement the students and intelligentsia perceived themselves as authorised mediators in proclaiming the citizens' will. To strengthen their nationalist credentials, sanctioned forms of rhetorical speech, often adopted from Western propaganda, were implemented in the texts and speeches in accordance with May Fourth ideology. Hence, it is feasible to

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<sup>61</sup> HSBC, SHG 302.8 Correspondence June 1916-November 1922, SSU to HSBC, 26 February, 1920 (telegram and a letter).

suggest that the May Fourth activists, like the SSU, frequently utilised Western vocabulary in order to legitimise their position and operations.

### **6.3. Chinese Experiences and the British Missionaries**

Not surprisingly, out of all foreign groups in China, missionaries experienced the most intensive pressure to react to the Movement as they lived and operated within Chinese communities. For this reason and because of missionaries' involvement in teaching modern Western values and principles, various Chinese Christians approached their mentors and teachers and expected them to contribute to the creation of new nationhood. Given the extent of the Movement, foreign missionaries found themselves in a situation where it was practically impossible to remain neutral, and the intensity of the situation forced them to comment on the issue. As previously suggested, some British missionaries' correspondence revealed a sudden preoccupation and uneasiness with an unexpectedly explosive nationalism<sup>62</sup>. For others, the patriotic wave had brought opportunities to reach different 'convertible' audiences since the previously untouchable and influential classes of Chinese merchants and intelligentsia actively participated in May Fourth Movement activities and attended meetings for nationalist reasons. It is understandable that some foreign missionaries began to join with the Chinese in

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<sup>62</sup> *The Land of Sinim*, North China and Shandong Mission Quarterly paper, Chronicle of the Church of England Mission, vol. XXVIII, no 1, January, 1920, Letter from Bishop Geoffrey Durnford Iliff, Shandong.

demanding the implementation of modern democratic values in Chinese society, but naturally, their blueprint was enriched with Christian teachings.<sup>63</sup>

Surprisingly May Fourth incidents encouraged some Chinese merchants to financially support the missionary schools in order to encourage Christian educators to continue their valuable work for the Chinese nation. One of the supporting arguments declared that "the new spirit of unselfish patriotic feeling in the country was the outcome of the Christian education which had been carried out for so many years in China."<sup>64</sup>

In contrast to British missionaries' problems in identifying their role in facing the national movement, the enthusiasm of Chinese Christians to promote the national spirit and facilitate a national revival among fellow countrymen was quickly transferred into active participation. Thus, manifestations of the May Fourth principles were often filled with religious aspirations. As for the rising tide of nationalism, Chinese Christians continually initiated new patriotic associations and the Christian denominations afforded them natural meeting places since the church buildings or school premises had been traditional venues for distributing information among the community. Accordingly, Sunday services or Bible school meetings served as communication channels and operated as recognised mediums in expressing May Fourth ideas.<sup>65</sup> In the coastal cities and in the interior towns extraterritorial treaties were drawn up during the nineteenth century to protect foreigners' imperialist privileges. These now operated as a protective

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<sup>63</sup> LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, Ernest Box, Shanghai, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, S. Lavington Hart, Tianjin, 1919.

<sup>64</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 3, Sparham to Lenwood, 11 October, 1919; LMS, North China, Correspondence, box 21, folder 5, Longman to Hawkins, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, 1919; S. Lavington Hart and J. Murray, Tianjin, 1919.

<sup>65</sup> LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, Freer Kelsey, Tianjin, 1919; PCE, South Fujian, Individuals A-J, box 18, Andersson to Maclagan, 20 June, 1919; PRO, FO228/3526/8 Consul of Xiamen to Jordan, 20 May, 1919; SMA U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 26 June, 1919.

shield in safeguarding foreign religious premises. Similar to the status of the International Settlement, Christians were able to sustain May Fourth projects which would have been immediately banned elsewhere by local Chinese officials. Entangled in the treaty system, the Chinese government never officially adopted the policy of investigating missionary compounds during the May Fourth Movement because of the fear of foreign intervention which may have followed inspection operations. Instead, Chinese officials fiercely criticised Christian May Fourth activities, but were unable to execute any oppressive censorship manoeuvres which were implemented in other areas.<sup>66</sup>

The Chinese Christians' methods of circulating May Fourth ideologies to missionaries and common people followed, in principle, those of the Shanghai Student Union. However, the May Fourth rhetoric directed to missionaries articulated not only nationalistic ambitions, it also promoted the Christian means to achieve them. Again it was Westerners whose presence determined the May Fourth rhetoric and operations, only this time it was, in principle, addressed to the foreign missionaries.

The typical orthodoxy emerging from the encounter of Chinese Christians with May Fourth ideology was the idea of identifying the Christian religion with global democratic values similar to those taught in missionary schools and colleges. Thereafter, the principle of self-strengthening of the nation was frequently discussed in relation to Christian practices. As a result, the concept of nation building became an integral part of Chinese Christians' May Fourth rhetoric directed at foreigners. The nation was a conceptual category as well as a physical reality for May Fourth demonstrators and they appealed to nationalism to unify the people to fight against Japan. In the eyes of Chinese

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<sup>66</sup> LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Sparham to Hawkins, 14 June, 1919; PRO, FO226/3526/8, 9 Consul of Xiamen to Jordan, 20 May, 1919 and Consul of Ningbo to Jordan, 29 May,

Christians this notion formulated the core of Christianity's formulated position, and redefined missionaries' responsibilities in relation to restoration and reformation of the nation.<sup>67</sup> At the same time foreign newspapers and companies were contacted by the use of articles and pamphlets and this correspondence reflected Chinese Christians' nationalist parlance which was offered to foreign residents.<sup>68</sup>

At the beginning of the Movement, the Christian students who had studied in the Western countries had been highly respected within missionary communities, mainly because of their determined rejection of conventional authority presented in traditional Confucian thinking. Moreover, returning Christian students embraced modern Western ideologies and values. But as the Movement intensified and gathered momentum these students appeared to switch their preferences from Christian ideology to a more secular philosophical perspective in order to save the nation. For the majority of missionaries, this was intolerable and against Christian principles.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, dissonant voices among the missionary societies expressed a growing split between modernist and conservative approaches within the church which I discussed in the chapter four. Moreover, what began as a sentiment against Confucianism during the New Culture Movement, progressed during the May Fourth Movement, to gradually embrace religions in general and Christianity in particular. By the beginning of the 1920's it had matured

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<sup>67</sup> *China's Millions*, vol. XLV, no. 9, September, 1919, pp. 100-102; *Chinese Recorder*, vol. LIV, August, 1923, pp. 447-489; *The Chronicle*, vol. XXVII, July 1919, pp. 99-100, 124-125.

<sup>68</sup> *NCDN*, 25 July, 1919, p. 4; *NCH*, 7 June, 1919, p. 648; *NCH*, 14 June, 1919, pp. 715, 719-720; *NCH*, 12 July, 1919, p. 87; *NCH*, 19 July, 1919, pp. 148-149; SGCC Annual Report 1919, Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Letter from Chinese organisations in Shanghai to the SGCC, June 4, 1919.

<sup>69</sup> *Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society 1921*, p. 68; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, J. Wallace Wilson, Hankou, 1919.

into making sporadic anti-Christian attacks and expanded later into a systematic movement against 'the imperialist religion of Christianity' in 1921-1922<sup>70</sup>.

In keeping with the May Fourth spirit, appeals for collaboration of Christian forces were distributed around missionary and Chinese Christian communities in 1919. They promoted total resistance against all oppressive powers. In doing so they did not differentiate between Japanese imperialists and domestic warlord leaders who had, by prolonging the North and South conflict, succeeded in terrorising interior regions for years. Furthermore, according to the contemporary May Fourth parlance, a few government ministers in Beijing who were portrayed as betrayers of the country were also perceived as unjust officials. In addition to moral support, Western missionaries were asked to contact their governments in order to achieve political and apparently financial assistance for the May Fourth operations.<sup>71</sup>

Reverend C.Y. Cheng, who had been actively working within the LMS and who was currently the Chinese Secretary of the China Continuation Committee, understood the importance of constructing an accurate May Fourth framework in which all the factors relating to the Movement were thoroughly analysed. He challenged prevailing arguments which had been formulated to criticise the Movement and initiated to condemn Christian participation in the May Fourth Movement. At the same time Cheng used rhetoric which combined Christian and democratic values, and undoubtedly captivated the missionaries' interest. His constant repetition of key concepts which included 'public consciousness' and 'national righteousness and justice' reshaped contemporary Christian evangelical doctrines and encouraged Christians to actively participate in the national movement. To

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<sup>70</sup> Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, pp. 40-54.

convince his readers Cheng emphasised that it was "a divine duty" to assist China in developing guidelines circumscribed in the Bible, and that the Christian church could not neglect its responsibilities in uplifting the nation.<sup>72</sup>

Similar to non-Christian students, some Christian scholars organised school strikes and demonstrations. In addition, they boycotted Japanese products and organised patriotic seminars, processions and meetings in Shanghai and other parts of the country. Following their colleagues in government schools they also confronted school authorities and teachers, demanding the revision of the national curriculum.

Undoubtedly, the most significant Christian organisation inaugurated to promote and evaluate the May Fourth principles was the 'China for Christ' movement initiated in Shanghai in November 1919. Since the prominent features of the 'China for Christ' movement from the British missionaries' perspective have already been defined in the previous chapter it is now necessary to explore briefly Chinese Christians' strategy in advocating the movement. An ambitious programme for nation building was launched in the autumn 1919 in answer to an alleged demand to discover the Christian solution to the national crisis. Hence, the principles in implementing the agenda were carefully constructed, and soon widely published within the community. As its name, 'China for Christ', revealed, the ultimate aim was to enlighten the whole society with Christian ideals and particular attention was directed at awakening the local intelligentsia. Traditional methods of praying, holding meetings and publishing pamphlets were organised, based on topics which included 'the Christian and the Political Crisis',

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<sup>71</sup> *China Press*, 5 June, 1919, p. 2; CMS, Original papers, G1/CH1/O, An Appeal to the Christians of Great Britain and America, November 1919.

<sup>72</sup> *Chinese Recorder*, vol. L, July 1919, pp. 456-460.

'Nationalism and Christianity' and the 'New Civilisation Movement'.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, women established separate prayer and social service groups to emphasise their commitment in promoting Christian objectives during national unrest.<sup>74</sup> The core objective of 'China for Christ' activities was explained as follows.

"The aim of the movement is to stimulate Chinese Christianity into a nation-wide movement through which their patriotism can find an adequate and satisfactory expression and through which the heart of China could be made to feel the power of Christ to produce the character which will save the nation."<sup>75</sup>

This inter-denominational movement attracted members from all major Protestant churches, connecting Christians evenly across the country. Foreign missionaries' participation in the 'China for Christ' operations was perceived as indispensable for maintaining co-operation between the foreign and Chinese societies.<sup>76</sup>

In general, continuing connections with the British missionaries was thought to strengthen the Movement itself since Christian education had introduced some valuable models for modern nation building. Hence, Rees' position as adviser for May Fourth student activities and foreign missionaries' participation in the new Christian organisations promoted national growth and provided examples of Christian co-operation.<sup>77</sup>

It is true that emerging Christian patriotism permeated various conferences, meetings, newspapers, magazines and associations throughout the country. Furthermore, strong

<sup>73</sup> *Bulletin of the China for Christ Movement*, no 1, 10 January, 1920, *passim*; *China Press*, 18 December, 1919, p. 7; CBMS, Area files, Asia-China, FBN1, China Continuation Committee Meetings 1914-1921, Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, Shanghai, 5-10 May, 1921, pp. 12-25.

<sup>74</sup> *Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society 1920*, pp. 64-65; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, folder 4, Alice Clark, Shanghai, 1919.

<sup>75</sup> *The Challenge of China, Being the Report of a Deputation sent out to visit the China Mission Fields of the B.M.S. 1919-1920*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>76</sup> *China's Millions*, vol. XLVI, no 5, May 1920, p. 60.

Chinese nationalist aspirations promoted reform of the national curriculum in schools following the lines of Western science and connected to the requirement of attaining qualified educators to teach new courses. These initiatives potentially encouraged the growth of radical activism amongst the student population.<sup>78</sup> Apparently, the YMCA's missionary agenda, where Christianity was presented as a religion of modernisation and as the ideological force behind the Western science and education, attracted radical Christians who also supported the May Fourth Movement. Under the influence of nationalism some Chinese educators joined the YMCA, since its modern science lectures programme and unreserved campaigns to support May Fourth principles appeared to demonstrate their notions of reconstructing China.<sup>79</sup>

From these activities emerged a new Chinese Christian sense of national identity. In principle, signifying oneself as a modern citizen of the Republic was open to men and women, Christian and non-Christian, but the church organisations naturally emphasised Christian values in achieving citizenship. The ambitious scheme focused on the concept of Christianity as an uniting and driving force which would help people form an internationally acknowledged sovereign country. In fact, Protestant Christianity had had a particular influence on the New Culture movement, in which China's new intelligentsia sought to integrate Western liberalism with rising nationalism. For the moment, Christian teachings appeared to provide sufficient structure for national reconstruction.

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<sup>77</sup> *China Press*, 17 December, 1919, p. 7; 18 December, 1919, p. 7; LMS, Central China, Correspondence, box 30, folder 2, Rees to Hawkins, 21 June, 1919; LMS, Central China, Reports, box 8, Ernest Box, 1919; LMS, North China, Reports, box 8, S. Lavington Hart, 1919.

<sup>78</sup> Balme, *The Awakening of China*, p. 15; *China Press*, 2 July, 1919, p. 6; *China Press*, 17 August, 1919, p. 21; Cui, *The Cultural Contribution of British Protestant Missionaries*, pp. 178-179; LMS, North China, Correspondence, box 21, C.H.B. Longman to Hawkins, 10 August, 1919; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 5 September, 1919.

Beneath the surface, however, Christianity was defenceless against fierce attacks which claimed Christian teachings were unscientific and that the church itself had supported Western exploitation, capitalism and imperialism<sup>80</sup>. It was inevitable that in principle the May Fourth Movement's and Western ideals of social evolution and human progress could easily undermine Christianity. Hence, the 1920's upsurge of anti-Christian sentiment was partly provoked by students' disillusioned understanding of the religion's powerlessness to guarantee nation-wide regeneration. Above all, Christian students were severely disappointed when they realised that some missionaries, particularly the British, maintained a conservative and uncompromising attitude towards the radicalisation of the May Fourth Movement and especially towards its positive implications to contemporary Chinese society. As a result, accusations gradually intensified against foreign Christians' role to expand Western cultural and political imperialism.

The final insult which triggered anti-Christian sentiment was the World's Student Christian Federation's annual conference in 1922 with its publication of "*The Christian Occupation of China*". Inspired by Communist ideology and scholars such as Bertrand Russell who strongly opposed Christianity, various anti-Christian associations were established in Shanghai and Beijing. More significantly, among the first associations to be criticised was the 'China for Christ' movement founded by Chinese Christians to respect May Fourth ideals and to promote Chinese nationalism by Christian education and social work.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, a few years later during the anti-Christian movement, 'the

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<sup>79</sup> *China Press*, 12 July, 1919, p. 2; *China Press*, 13 July, 1919, p. 2; *China Press*, 17 August, 1919, p. 21; Garret, *Social Reformers*, pp. 165-166; *NCDN*, 23 July, 1919, p. 4; *NCDN*, 25 July, 1919, p. 4; Wang, "The Chinese YMCA", pp. 103-104.

<sup>80</sup> *Chinese Recorder*, vol. LIV, August 1923, pp. 463-465.

<sup>81</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China*, (London, 1922), *passim.*; *The Christian Occupation of China*, (Shanghai, 1922); Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, pp. 48- 52; Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, pp. 142-143.

China for Christ' activists were allegedly attempting to denationalise Chinese youth, and education organised in missionary schools and universities was accused of advocating cultural imperialism promoted by the Western powers.

### **Conclusion**

As British government circles in Beijing anticipated, opposition against British municipal administration in Shanghai had intensified because of harsh treatment of the Chinese during the May Fourth Movement. A shooting incident at the end of the general strike stifled demonstrators' plans to organise processions and festivals to celebrate 'the first victory of the public voice'.<sup>82</sup> As analysed in the previous chapters, the Council had decided to suppress the protestors' operations at any cost. Many Chinese were arrested and the lawbreakers were charged with offences such as displaying inciting posters, distributing intimidating handbills or circulating poison rumours.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, the comparative success of the Council and comparative failure of the Chinese played an important role in determining the events that followed the general strike in the International Settlement. To summarise, strikes against new taxation, press licence and demonstrations for Chinese representation in the Council, and strengthening demands for the revision of the Land Regulations indicated a growing discontent among influential Chinese residents in the International Settlement. Since the success of the general strike had demonstrated to the May Fourth activists the value of organisation, from here on, the

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<sup>82</sup> PRO, FO671/447/539 Jordan to Jamieson, 16 August, 1919

<sup>83</sup> *Celestial Empire*, 21 June, 1919, pp. 587, 593; *Celestial Empire*, 28 June, 1919, p. 641; *NCH*, 28 June, 1919, p. 836; *Municipal Gazette*, 21 June, 1919, p. 202; *Municipal Gazette*, 19 July, 1919, p. 249; *Municipal Gazette*, 30 August, 1919, p. 300.

unification of the Chinese masses to support operations was perceived as crucial. In order to promote common interest, one of the immediate results of the Movement was manifested in the formation of unions and associations. It was verified in the coming months that new organisations were capable of exercising considerable influence in the Settlement, which seriously undermined British authority in the city.

Particularly, the Chinese intelligentsia, but increasingly the merchant and labour classes also were activated in promoting their occupational and national interests in Shanghai and in the whole of China. In addition to the associations already investigated, 'the Industrial and Commercial Association' and 'the Chinese Labourers Union' were established in Shanghai to improve the conditions of Chinese industrial workers in the factories. An indication of increased activity among the labour class were the sporadic strikes and boycotts organised in the Settlement during the coming years.<sup>84</sup> For the first time also women's consciousness and hopes of emancipation were illustrated by their active participation during the May Fourth Movement. Thus, forthcoming women's organisations demanded social, cultural and political changes that would allow their active involvement in every day politics. At this early stage, contemporary women in the West were perceived as models for this enlightenment process.<sup>85</sup>

Another important element was anti-British sentiment which had, after the May Fourth incidents, steadily intensified among certain circles in Shanghai. Provocatively strategically distributed propaganda pamphlets fostered images of famine stricken India

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<sup>84</sup> PRO, FO228/3214 Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week ended January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1920; SMA, U1-91-19, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, McEuen to Jamieson, 13 September, 1919; SMA, U1-91-23, file 19, Shanghai Municipal Police, Extract from the Council minutes, 26 November, 1919. For more detailed research on backgrounds and formation of labour organisations and unions and their activities during the 1920's see e.g. Chesneau, *The Chinese Labour Movement 1919-1927*, *passim*.

which was, according to the manifesto, ruled by the British imperialist government. Initially, this type of propaganda was directed at political imperialism conducted particularly by the British, but later at the other foreigners in China.<sup>86</sup> Hereafter, the Chinese intelligentsia and merchants perceived Britain's authoritative position in Shanghai as being more oppressive than ever before. British reaction provided an exemplary contrast to Chinese radical nationalists who promoted the doctrine of legitimate government that was national self-government. China was currently controlled, however, by foreign governments which were protected by the extraterritorial treaties. Exceptionally, the Russian government had, in 1920, provided an appropriate contrast to other foreign nations by abolishing all unequal treaties made between China and Russia<sup>87</sup>.

In the commercial world, British business was challenged by Chinese investments and gradual improvements were made to domestic industry in an attempt to modernise it, and by a nation-wide movement which encouraged buying national products only. British economic imperialism had been clearly visible in Shanghai and profoundly rooted in the commercial life of the city.<sup>88</sup> The May Fourth general strike in June, 1919 and the boycotts, however, challenged the commercial *status quo* in Shanghai and revealed its vulnerability during internal unrest.

Similarly, the anti-Christian movement was directed against foreign imperialism which flourished in the educational and cultural spheres of society. Ideological accusations were made against Western cultural exploitation, along with Christian doctrines and teaching

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<sup>85</sup> Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>86</sup> PRO, FO228/3214 Shanghai Intelligence Bureau Minutes of Meeting, Summary of Intelligence for week ended March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920; PRO, FO228/3288 Summary of Intelligence Reports, September Quarter, 1919.

<sup>87</sup> Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 210-213.

<sup>88</sup> PRO, FO228/3527 Harry Fox, Commercial Counsellor, Shanghai to Sir Beilby Alston, Minister at Beijing, 13 June, 1921

which allegedly supported the political invasion of foreign governments in Chinese society.

It was apparent that the May Fourth Movement had highlighted questions and problems in the International Settlement which had developed throughout decades of British domination in the area. Moreover, the seeds of future troubles were germinating, due to the disappearance of the Chinese imperial institution and the entire state structure supporting it. It had created a power vacuum which was to be partly replaced by modern foreign ideologies. Therefore, the rise of radical Chinese nationalism was connected with ideologies such as communism, bolshevism, socialism, liberalism and anarchism<sup>89</sup>. It was this transformation, more than any readily identifiable concrete changes which was responsible for the rise in popularity of democratic values. In addition, the realisation of foreigners' privileged position in China, and particularly the exploitation of this position, aggravated local nationalists. For the May Fourth activists, British inflexibility during the May Fourth Movement and their attempt afterwards to strengthen a semi-imperialist hold in China served as a classical example of foreign oppression conducted in China.

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<sup>89</sup> PRO, FO228/3288 Summary of Intelligence Reports, September and December Quarters, 1920.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the autumn of 1919, the May Fourth Movement protagonists altered their tactics, but continued to pursue nationalist policies in a more organised manner, because the prevailing political atmosphere in the International Settlement had changed greatly. Significantly, however, British post-movement correspondence created a different image, and the threat of Chinese radical nationalism was a major concern of the British community at that time, as the following letter illustrates.

"As you are aware Shanghai has, since I last wrote you at length, past [sic] through some troublesome times and the last has not been heard of them yet. We had the Students Demonstration over the Shantung question which eventually reached the proportions of the riot and necessitated the use of armed force to quell the disturbances. It is only fair to say that if the students had been able to control the situation, in all probability, no serious rioting would have taken place but once the demonstration was started it gave the opportunity to all the riff-raff and malcontents and loafers to join in and create trouble. The very fate, however, of the students demonstrations at all shows the trend of events in China and the inconvenience caused by the closing the shops and the striking employees in foreign employ showed the Chinese the power of 'passive resistance' tactics and one may be sure in the future they will not be slow to avail themselves of the same means of attaining the ends."<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably, the May Fourth Movement left a permanent mark on the foreign society's privileged presence in Shanghai. Likewise the British community significantly restructured the Movement's activities and challenged its ideology. It can be argued, therefore, that foreign, and especially British operations throughout 1919-1920 had a more profound effect on the development of the May Fourth Movement than recent scholarship has recognised. Apart from remoulding events in Shanghai, in some cases the effect of British policies implemented in the International Settlement spread across the country, as has been explained in previous chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> CA, China Association Circulars, vol. XVII, numbers 261-278, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1918-15<sup>th</sup> April, 1920, China Association Shanghai Branch to CA in London, 14 October, 1919.

### **The British May Fourth rhetoric**

A closer look at the nature of British experiences in the International Settlement from 1919 onwards reveals several distinctive features which constructed the framework for the May Fourth discourse and subsequent interaction between the Chinese and foreign communities. According to British officials' perception, the Movement's activities were no more than a rebellious protest against authority, and in the Settlement, against the Council's omnipotent administration. This understanding emphasised that the Movement's 'principal motives' were to overrule regulations and to disturb peace and good order. For the commercial community, however, the May Fourth Movement represented economic boycotts against Japanese businesses, and these operations were profitable for the British companies. It was not until the standstill of all market transactions and dislocated business activities that British economic superiority was threatened. The memory of paralysed markets and fear of a recurrence formed the British view of the May Fourth Movement. For British businessmen it was predominantly a boycott movement. In contrast, the British missionaries had identified May Fourth activists as representatives of a new, young and Christian China who fought against corrupt officials and warlords with the enlightened spirit and power of Christianity. Stimulated by this belief, the missionaries cautiously supported Chinese Christian students who had joined the May Fourth Movement, since they honoured the Christian teachings and promised a final salvation for the country.

Having witnessed the Movement, British residents shared some collective perceptions which, in turn, reflected fears and expectations related to their presence in China. At first,

fear of spreading xenophobia was illustrated in the Boxer rhetoric associated with the May Fourth activities and serious attempts were made to delegitimise the Movement as an anti-foreign demonstration. Secondly, the British community expressed the necessity to maintain peace and stability in the Settlement or in the area where the British operated. Thirdly, they all had something 'British', - or at least from their perspective it was characteristically British, - to protect. The British education system and the principle of free trade including free capital movements were examples of British prestige in China. Moreover, respect for Western law and regulations was equated with the British officials' principal ideals of the model society established in the International Settlement. Therefore, the British assumption was to expect everyone to respect the Council's authority.

Abandoning any idea of upsetting the *status quo* in the Settlement, British municipal officials constructed the May Fourth discourse and implemented policies to restrict the influence of the Movement. Recognition of British political superiority in the Settlement encouraged the Council's activities and supported the formation of the official May Fourth rhetoric. The official British myth was intentionally created to establish a collectively accepted understanding of the Movement and simultaneously this reasoning justified the Council's repressive measures against it. One of the British primary objectives was to unify all foreigners behind this myth. In particular, the official myth was implemented to strengthen British economic and political supremacy in the city. While the British community in principle supported the Council's worldview and actions maintaining it, personal opinions challenged the legitimacy of the Council's decisions and questioned the fairness of the policies implemented. British legitimacy to rule depended

on satisfying the expectations and aspirations of foreigners in the Settlement, but increasingly it was also affected by a changing Chinese urban society.

The British May Fourth discourse did not simply reconstruct an ideology or a set of ideas to be constantly repeated. It was, rather, a way of creating and responding to the reality that was infinitely adaptable in its function of preserving the basic structures of power. The British May Fourth rhetoric carried on a constant uncertainty that led to an inherent confusion of identity and difference, simultaneous avowal and disavowal of its own authority. This fundamental instability constructed a rich profusion of rhetorical forms which often clashed with one another, but which were all entered equally into the matrix of relations of power that characterised a British colonial-like presence in Shanghai. Observing the situation from a wider perspective, the British government had to constantly reconcile its long-term global imperial strategy with its short-term regional interests. Shanghai and its International Settlement, nonetheless, was not as important for imperial security and the economy as its British residents frequently alleged.

### **The Chinese May Fourth rhetoric**

The Chinese May Fourth propaganda, especially rhetoric produced for the Settlement foreigners, was compiled skilfully. In Shanghai, May Fourth activists implemented divergent operations in order to adjust the Movement to existing regulations in the Settlement. As a result, they applied various methods to satisfy foreign, especially British municipal authorities. Much of the Chinese May Fourth rhetoric in the International Settlement was carefully articulated and successfully established in May. Failure to

deliver an acceptable image of the Movement in June left the demonstrators without foreign support and the Council eventually attempted to eliminate all operations. Yet, the modern style and accurate reasoning expressed by using Western models verified the May Fourth protagonists' abilities to produce rational and intelligent ideas.

This sudden rise of Chinese radical nationalism was indeed a serious threat to foreign, and particularly British, hegemony in the International Settlement. For the British, May Fourth demonstrators represented a potential change in the existing intellectual, political, social and economic *status quo* which, for decades, had guaranteed a British privileged position in the city. The ideas which the May Fourth Movement imparted to the scholars was also evident among the Chinese bourgeoisie or the new urban élite including merchants and businessmen. Thus, in the form of street and labour unions their ideas became more dynamic also among workers in the factories. In addition to growing class considerations during the May Fourth Movement<sup>2</sup>, the greatest threat for the British municipal authorities was the May Fourth demonstrators' ability to agitate political consciousness among classes traditionally excluded from power, and who therefore, for the most part, had usually been reluctant to join mass movements.

The critical faction of the Chinese which included groups of students and intellectuals, but increasingly also sections of the bourgeoisie and workers had begun to scrutinise British hegemony in the country. As a whole, new Chinese organisations reinterpreted emerging resistance against domestic and foreign oppression in China and during the life of the May Fourth Movement these groups expressed initial attempts to challenge the British semi-colonial presence. As local newspaper reports revealed, the press licence

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<sup>2</sup> For more detailed discussion on development of class consciousness see e.g. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses*, pp. 92-115.

discussion had instigated Chinese Western -educated students to accuse the entire law being manufactured and implemented by the British designed to destroy growing Chinese public opinion. In addition, Westerners' unfulfilled promises of treaty revision gave a strong impetus to the rise of radical nationalism among the Chinese. It was partly due to British inflexible policies towards May Fourth Movement which caused the modernising and radical fringe in China to begin to question the Western, and particularly the British position in China.

The May Fourth protestors, especially the urban and educated men, dominated public articulations of national identities. With their control of knowledge production and in some cases control of state bureaucracies, élite men could make demands for the nation, often fusing their own group need with particular definitions of the nation. The Chinese search for equality in foreign relations was humiliatingly rejected during the Versailles Peace Treaty. Furthermore, humiliation and degradation of the country profoundly affected the students particularly. For Chinese nationalists, the May Fourth Movement provided, to some extent, an opportunity to express love of country in the foreign enclave beyond the immediate reach of the Chinese government. It was apparent, therefore, that successful May Fourth boycotts and strikes initiated permanent expansions in participation and provided the instruments for implementing radical activism required for later movements.

In the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement's activities, existing Chinese societal organisations were joined by numerous new associations and publications. Unquestionably, some of them had been established in response to British May Fourth policies. Shanghai's urban élite expressed their increased political consciousness in co-

operation with other classes and formed voluntary associations. Newly founded societies continued to promote various social and political issues among the Chinese in the city. Apparently British municipal officials' operations in the summer of 1919 at the International Settlement provoked some of these activities.

### **Legacy of the Shanghai May Fourth Movement**

Chinese May Fourth propaganda and operations undoubtedly challenged foreign presumptions of the world order in the Settlement and seriously undermined British authority. The International Settlement was, however, at least from the British perspective, part of the imperial existence and while protecting the Settlement they secured imperial peace and expressed their respect towards their home country. For the British, Nanjing Road was considered as important as Oxford Street in London. Therefore, British May Fourth discourse was implemented to reinforce the legitimacy of the foreign dominated *status quo* which had been threatened by May Fourth activists. As a result, British policies provoked and interfered with a series of May Fourth operations, and these operations were originally shaped and appropriated by Chinese indigenous politics, but were finally provoked by an international power struggle in Europe and Asia.

How did British May Fourth policies, then, encourage the emergence of anti-Christian and anti-foreign sentiment in the 1920's? According to this study, various reasons are offered for this phenomenon. One explanation emphasises the growing awareness of the collective interests of Chinese residents. This increased consciousness was partly provoked by British oppressive operations in the Settlement during the May Fourth

activities. Later debates aiming to secure Chinese ratepayers' representation in the Council, demands for lower taxation and the agitation to prevent the implementation of the press licence indicated a new Chinese urban élite's recognition of their political value in the Settlement administration. It is worth remembering that it was commonly known that the initiative to implement the above-mentioned schemes came from the British community. Another explanation stresses the growth of co-ordinated activities pursued for patriotic purposes. Thus, the tone of forthcoming boycotts, strikes and demonstrations was increasingly anti-foreign. Chinese sentiment of the disapproval of Japanese militarism was gradually compared with equally unacceptable Western cultural and political imperialism in China.

On the question of the anti-Christian movement of 1920's, it seemed to have been partly rooted to British missionaries actions during the May Fourth Movement. Apparently the British missionaries' very reluctant approval or complete rejection of the Movement's principles were perceived as indications of their intention to denationalise Chinese students. It also signified a fundamental crisis within Christian society in China and illustrated a fraction between the fundamentalist and modernist sections in Protestant missionary society. Above all, Chinese Christians were severely disappointed when they realised that some missionaries, especially the British, maintained a conservative and uncompromising attitude towards the radicalisation of the May Fourth Movement and against its positive implications in contemporary society. Beneath the surface, it had become evident that Christianity was had no defence against claims that the church itself had supported Western exploitation of capitalism and imperialism. It was inevitable that in principle the May Fourth Western ideals of social evolution and human progress could

be easily turned against Christianity. Hence, the upsurge of anti-Christian sentiment in the 1920's was partly provoked by students' disillusioned understanding of religion's powerlessness to guarantee nation-wide regeneration. Hereafter, some Chinese Christians found it impossible to reconcile their church allegiance with patriotism and decided in favour of their country. This was followed gradually by intensified accusations against foreign Christians who blamed the missionary societies for strengthening Western cultural and political imperialism.

Chinese anti-foreign and anti-imperialist sentiments culminated in the May Thirtieth Movement of 1925. In a way, British operations against May Fourth Movement were for the first time fully implemented in 1925, when anti-foreign sentiment arose against the British. Apparently, British municipal police actions were harsh enough to provoke anti-foreign demonstrations. But apart from British operations in 1925, an older anti-foreign atmosphere had prevailed for years and careful examination of the May Fourth events in the International Settlement has provided some evidence to explain the reasons for it. Throughout the early 1920's May Fourth ideology and activities had provoked great expectations for the country's modernisation. Thus, China's participation in the League of Nations was it was felt, sure to guarantee full membership in the international society. The failure of the Washington Conference, from the Chinese perspective, to fulfil these hopes provided another reason to reject and oppose foreign privileges in China. But as I discussed earlier, initial attempts to maintain control over foreign administered maritime customs, tariffs, postal communications, salt monopoly revenues and the abolition of the extraterritoriality rights had already been expressed during the May Fourth events.

Within the wider framework of research into China's Republican era and a reappraisal of the May Fourth Movement, the assessment of British May Fourth discourse in this thesis has addressed some of the issues identified by Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom as being relatively neglected. Research on the May Fourth fringe areas has broadened conceptions on the issues of the Movement's dynamics and increased appreciation of local, regional and national variances in the Movement. Furthermore, it has indicated how the May Fourth activities and orientations may have been linked. We cannot understand the fine nuances of the Shanghai May Fourth Movement without recognising the crucial role of foreign residents, particularly the British community's influence on the events. From this perspective, future research on American residents, especially their missionary societies' involvement in the Movement would undoubtedly evaluate some undiscovered areas of conventional May Fourth research. Similarly, the French Concession provided another haven for the May Fourth radicals and dissidents. Therefore, a study of the Movement's activities in this area would unquestionably introduce another piece for the May Fourth puzzle in Shanghai and China as a whole.

As operations in Shanghai have revealed, the foreign society played an active role in moulding and mediating May Fourth activities, which in turn encouraged the Movement activists to respond to the socio-political realities of the British controlled International Settlement. In other words, the foreign presence in Republican China can no longer be understood exclusively through evaluation of extraterritorial rights, economic domination and political oppression. Rather, the foreign presence in Shanghai represented constantly overlapping group interests between the Chinese and foreign communities. Moreover, a wide variation of national identities were mixed with either their governmental or

international strategies which were constantly present in Chinese politics. The May Fourth Movement in the Shanghai International Settlement was but one of these Sino-foreign encounters in Republican China.

## **The Students' Strike**

### **An explanation**

#### **Shanghai Students' Union**

51 Bubbling Well Road  
Shanghai, China

I

For the first time in the history of China a genuine democratic movement has appeared. The entire Chinese people have risen. No officials head this movement. No great men have attached their names to this cause. Spontaneously out of the schools, among boys and girls, among shopkeepers and merchants, among labourers and coolies, has arisen this historic defence the rights of the rights of China, this demand for good government.

On the anniversary of the Twenty-One demands when the Chinese people were mourning because of the shame their country had suffered at the hands of Japan, news arrived that China had been defeated at the Paris Peace Conference. For months previous to this day, since the signing of the armistice, China had high hopes that she would have an opportunity to develop as a nation, that the wrongs she had suffered from militarism while the nations of the world were fighting militarism in Europe would be righted. But now China was hopeless. In Peking was a government corrupt to the core. In one year it had borrowed £220,000,000,00 from Japan ceding to her richest resources of the land. Coal mines, iron mines, forests, future railroad rights, control of the army, control of the finances, control of the few great industries of the country, have been thrown away for a mess of pottage. Great China, the land richest in resources, richest in manpower, richest in territory had become a plaything because of the militarism of Japan and the corruption of her own officials.

The Manchus were driven out by small band of intrepid revolutionists in league with enlightened officials. But the Chinese people took no part in the first revolution. The monarchist movement of Yuan Shi-kia was killed by Peking officialdom. But the people of China were silent. Chang Hsun's attempted restoration of the Manchus was squelched by the very officials who are betraying their country today. But the people took no interest.

Since then a Great War has been fought in Europe. On the fields of France and Belgium the fairest sons of the great nations of the west had given their lives that the democracy and justice might exist upon the earth. Throughout the world like the voice of a prophet has gone the word of Woodrow Wilson strengthening the weak and giving courage to the struggling. And the Chinese people have listened and they too have heard. They have been told that their four thousand year old doctrine that peace is the greatest of all aims of the nation has become a slogan of mankind. They have been told that in the dispensation which is to be made after the war unmilitaristic nations like China would have an opportunity to develop their culture, their industry their civilisation unhampered. They

have been told that secret covenants and forced agreements would not be recognised. They looked for the dawn of this new Messiah; but no sun rose for China. Even the cradle of the nation was stolen.

The masses of people looked toward Peking. There they found only corruption and treason. They looked towards Paris. There they found that a compromise had to be made because of the injection of the question of Fiume and the racial discrimination. There was no hope there. They looked toward their own enlightened young men who had studied abroad. They found that they were inadequately prepared to offer a practical plan to save the country. The merchants lacked initiative; they were looking for a leader. And the leadership came from school boys and school girls who were ready to sacrifice their future careers, liberty and life that China might continue to exist. The students of China refused to participate in the usual affairs of life until China was free. They clogged the machinery of the nation. They brought the issue to a head. They demanded immediate restitution of the rights of China and the immediate democratisation of the government. These students were Chinese trained. They had never, most of them, left the country. They had not forgotten the nation in the glamour of foreign travel. Their cry was, "sell us, sell everything we have or may at anytime have, but let the nation live."

## II

Students of Shanghai spontaneously gathered in the Public Recreation Ground, West Gate, on May 7. There was no pre-arranged program but before the meeting had proceeded very far it was clear that the students demanded the dismissal of the corrupt officials, the return of Tsingtao to China or effective guarantees by the Allied Nations that Japan would make such a return with reasonable time, and that the Twenty-One demands and other secret treaties written between the Peking militarists and the Japanese militarists would be renounced.

Immediately the Shanghai Students' Union was organised. It consists of 83 Schools in S'hai and represents 20000 students including about 5000 girls.

Similar action was taken in Peking, Tientsin, Nanking, Hankow, Canton, Hangkow, Soochow, Ningpo and other cities in China.

The Peking organisation became particularly effective. Peking Government Univ. has during the past year, under the guidance of its Chancellor, Tsai Yuen-pei and other enlightened professors become an intellectual centre of China. The democratisation of the Chinese language, the development of a modern Chinese literature, the growth of political discussion centred about the Peking Government University were the first to strike for Chinese freedom. Mandarin-like the Government looked upon this as a schoolboy prank. They threatened. They cajoled. They intimidated. They attempted to bribe. But the Students would not return to the desks as long as Tsao Ju-lin, Chang Tsung-hsiang, Little Hsu and other traitors remained in power. Came a day when the Students marched to the house of Tsao Ju-lin. They wanted to tell him that he ought to resign. Who should be in his house but arch-traitor, China's Minister to Japan? And in their company was a Japanese. And on Tsao's wall was a portrait of the Mikado. The minds of the Students were inflamed. What new rascality was being hatched? What concession was being bargained away? What mine, what forest, what railroad was Japan stealing at the moment. The result was well known. Tsao Ju-lin ran away. Chang Tsung-hsiang was beaten almost to death. But much more important was the fact that this

demonstration awakened the entire student body of China to the fact that immediate action was necessary. In every city of China the students left their books and went out on strike.

### III

What is it that they demand?

1. First and foremost if China is ever to rise out of her present shameful condition every one of her sons must be taught that treason to this country is man's greatest crime. Chinese officialdom has grown up under the old Mandarin system in which corruption is not only tolerated but expected. The officials were poorly paid and they were to earn enormous incomes by robbing the country. Under the Manchus this system could prevail, in a Republic it has no place. The Peking officials have not only sold the wealth of the country but they have betrayed her integrity. The worst enemies of China are not in Tokyo but in Peking. Not only to avenge the wrongs that China has suffered must the traitors go, but to prevent the recurrence of treason, to inspire future generations to set an example for the very boys and girls, the future fathers and mothers of China, who are now on strike, must they be driven out. The fate of the nation depends upon it and with this principle there can be no compromise.

2. China demands that effective guarantees be secured from the Allied Governments that Tsingtau and the German rights in Shangtung be returned her immediately, Tsingtao was stolen from China by Germany. When China entered the war it was understood that this territory would be returned to her. When Japan prevented China from joining the Allies and captured Tsingtau she promised the Government of U.S. that she would return the territory to China. The Peace Congress has maintained the principle that territories forcefully seized and unjustly held shall be returned to the nation whose people inhabit them.

The foreigners will say "But Japan intends to return the territory". China has suffered too long from Japan's intentions. China cannot accept a promise from Japan for it is like a whisper in the wind. China has been betrayed too often by her island neighbour to accept her covenant. She is a nation whose word is bankrupt. One need only think of Korea, Formosa, Manchuria, Siberia to realise the uselessness of a Japanese promise. It is to avoid the blood shed that might be entailed in this use of force that the students want effective guarantees made now that Japan will not be permitted to deceive China in this matter.

3. The Students demand that the Twenty-One Demands shall be cancelled. They were agreed to by China under duress. When the nations of the western world were at war Japan sneaked in like a thief in the night and demanded that China give up her sovereign right. An ultimatum of war was made. What could China have done but to agree to Japan's proposal made at the point of the bayonet? But these demands cannot be acceded to. China can never agree to the Twenty-One demands. Until every one of them has been cancelled, China will always be in a state of turmoil. For the peace of Asia, of the world, they must be expunged from history.

4. The Students demand that freedom of speech and of the press shall be preserved as an inalienable right of citizens of the Republic. To secure this the Students desire that the Constitution of China shall be completed and this right included.

#### IV

To secure these rights the Students have adopted the principle of passive resistance. They are unable to fight against the Peking militarists and enough blood has already been spilled in China. There is no ballot in this country. The only thing that could be done was to strike, peacefully, quietly but effectively. To strengthen themselves the Students joined with merchants, bankers and labourers so that if moment arose when everything else should fail and it become absolutely necessary to force the hand of the Peking militarists there would be unanimity of aim and action in China. Such unanimity exists today.

The shops and banks are shut. The schools are without pupils. Labour is on strike. Can any government continue to exist in the presence of the unanimous will of the people of the country that the government should cease to be? Today China must decide whether she becomes a tributary of Japan or an independent nation. Four million heads are ready to fall before China will become servile to the Huns of the East.

#### **Allied Friends of China:**

Your statesmen are at this moment sitting in Paris trying to mete out justice to the nations of the world. You have given of all your strength to destroy imperialism.

But the danger is as great for you as it is for China. You have come here honestly to trade and to teach. One need no recite all the crimes that Japan has committed against you in China. You know them well. She has damaged your goods, forged your labels, opened your letter, broken every rule of honest competition. But do you need more proof of what will happen to you in a Nipponized China than what has already happened in Korea, Manchuria and Formosa. Your missionaries have already been expelled from Tsingtau. Your business will go next.

The Students are now fighting your battle. If they fail now you will have to take up the war against militarism in the East sooner or later. You can prevent their failure by sympathising with their cause, by bringing pressure on your government immediately to return Tsingtau to China. The Students are sacrificing themselves for you as well as for China. Do you who live in China help them to destroy the Hun of East.

## Appendix 2

*Municipal Gazette*, 11 July, 1919, p. 242  
**Special Meeting of the Ratepayers, in July 10, 1919.**

E.C. Pearce, Chairman, Shanghai Municipal Council:

The Power which we ask you to vest in us in terms of the Resolution which I shall shortly read, calling for the licensing of printing establishments and of the Press cannot be dealt with with such brevity as the last Resolution. For the part fortnight some of our local pressmen have held up their hands in horror, they have regarded you with trenchant articles on the sanctity of the freedom of the press; they have told you that the very idea of the restriction of this freedom by a system of licensing is repugnant to the constitutions of all free countries; they have told you that the laws of America and the Great Britain and of other countries will not tolerate such a thing; they have told you that the Council contemplates muzzling the press - the Council has told you that it does not: they have told you that the laws of each individual nation here represented provide all that is necessary in this matter of restraining the publication of scurrilous and inciting printed matter - the Council tells you that they do not.

Some of the opponents of the licensing of printing establishments and the Press seem to forget that this Settlement is not America, it is not Great Britain, it is Shanghai. You cannot by any stretch of the imagination compare conditions here with those of any city in the West. There are so entirely different, they are, I suppose unique. This fact has long since been recognised and for the purposes of local government, a code of local laws has been - so to speak - superimposed upon the extraterritorial laws of each one of us. As Americans and Britons or the subjects of other Nations, we are naturally jealous of our National laws, but these laws must on occasion by very reason of the different conditions under which we live here give the way to the Code of Laws devised to meet our needs as a cosmopolitan community - as Shanghailanders. Should this Code which consists of our Land Regulations and our Byelaws prove to be inadequate, and I say most emphatically that it has, surely it is up to us to see that we make good in this inadequacy. As your Council, entrusted with the administration of the affairs of the Settlement and with practical experience of the difficulties with which the maintenance of peace and good order are beset, I claim that we are qualified to advise you as to the powers that should be vested in us to enable us to properly carry out our duties to you collectively and individually.

In the North China Daily News of July 5<sup>th</sup>, the following paragraph appears under the caption of Shanghai Students Union caption: "The above Union being alive to the danger that the Students Patriotic agitation may lead to unscrupulous politician using it to serve the latter's own ends has. etc"

I ask you did those who bolstered up the students movement foresee whither that movement was leading? Did they realize, what the students are now realising themselves? The answer is no. Did your Council realize the danger of this movement - did it fore see what it would lead to ? - emphatically, yes. Now ladies and gentlemen, whose advice are you going to take - theirs or ours, which is that you vest in us the power to license printing establishments and the press, and thus enable us to combat in some

measure the printing and publication of indecent, seditious and inciting printed matter. You are told that if you vest us with this power, we shall abuse it by muzzling the press, you are told the newspapers won't be permitted to criticise our actions as a Council. That is ridiculous - if it is constructive, it is welcome - if destructive, it matters not so long as it does not disturb peace and good order. We do not wish to curb freedom of expression, constructive or destructive. It is likely that we should muzzle the press unless it became a danger to public order and peace.

Are we to govern the virulent press or is it to govern and lead public thought into paths of violence. Are we to allow the spread of false and malicious rumours which baseless as they are, and credited by the masses merely because they appear in print - rumours which baseless as to the poisoning of the food and water, that gave rise to attacks against the innocent Chinese and Japanese with fatal results in more than one instance during the recent unrest.[..] Are we in a state of unrest, when every trade in the place is on strike? Are we in this Settlement - which mark you was specially set aside for the residence of foreigners - to be dictated by the students, political malcontents and agitators, as to whether our markets are to be opened, as to whether our industries to be work? Or whether at their pleasure we are to be allowed chauffeurs to drive our motor cars? Is this Settlement to be used as a pawn in Chinese politics? Are we going to allow the Chinese population however well meaning and patriotic their motives may be to cause chaos, disorder and conditions that might conceivably lead to the worse from the Bolshevism. Remembering that the prosperity of the Settlement is largely founded on its neutrality, and allow abandon this neutrality in the politics of China and allow the Settlement to be made the jumping off ground for all political upheavals. I say, empathetically, no. What has the responsible press to fear, we are not after them, we are after the purveyors of seditious, violent and scurrilous printed material.

The usual process of law, whilst sufficient in normal times, is all insufficient in abnormal times. Under normal conditions the issue of warrant and the subsequent proceedings in Court meet the requirements of the case, but under abnormal conditions - conditions of unrest - is we are to obliged to await the issue of a warrant and the subsequent Court proceedings before we can take a drastic action, why, God help us, it might be too late - you know how quickly a flare-up can be set going in China and you know well as I know what a flare-up can mean.

You will be ask how is licensing going to provide the panacea for these ills, the answer it cannot, but it will assist in combating them. The measure of its assistance will of course depend on the license conditions that you may from time to approve and the Consular Body may confirm. With these conditions we are not at the moment concerned, but our views on the subject will be put to you in the next and last Resolution. All we ask you under the resolution to which I am now speaking is that you endorse the principle of the licensing of printing establishments and the Press with the safeguard that the conditions of license shall first be approved by you in meeting assembled and thereafter confirmed by the Consular Body, before they are imposed.

With the exception of Mr. Dollar, who is opposed to the principle of the licensing of printing establishments and the press, my colleagues on the Council are unanimous in support of the resolution.

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