

**THE SURVEILLANCE OF THE CHINESE
IN CANADA DURING THE GREAT WAR**

by

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ABSTRACT

Between 1915 and 1918, the Canadian government initiated and maintained a extensive surveillance of the Chinese population of Canada. The first two years of the surveillance targeted Chinese political factions and representatives of the Chinese government in Canada, and was extended in 1917 to encompass the domestic mail and telegraphic correspondence of all Chinese in Canada. By the autumn of 1917, Canadian surveillance authorities viewed the country's entire Chinese population with suspicion as pro-German and potentially subversive. This suspicion culminated in the September 1918 ban of the Chinese Nationalist League, one of the largest Chinese political organizations in Canada.

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the surveillance of the Chinese during the Great War in order to examine the process by which the Canadian government came to view the country's Chinese population as a threat to Canadian and Imperial security. It examines the surveillance in the contexts of British Imperial security, Chinese diaspora politics, and racism in Canada, and through this analysis, seeks to challenge the perception (suggested by some scholars) that the Great War was a period relatively free of anti-Chinese discrimination in Canada. It contends that a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese experience in Canada prior to 1923 must go beyond conceptual models that link public anti-Asian agitation with governmental discrimination. The Great War represents a unique period in the history of discrimination against the Chinese in Canada in that the measures taken by the Canadian government were based on a perceived threat to national and imperial security, rather than as a result of popular pressure.

This thesis draws much of its source material from the records of the federal government, especially those of the Governor General's Office, the Office of the Chief Press Censor, and the Borden Papers. It also incorporates relevant English-language literature regarding the history of the Chinese in Canada, overseas Chinese politics, Republican Chinese history and Canadian Great War ethnic policy. It also seeks to incorporate, wherever possible, translations of Chinese-language primary sources, such as the records of the Chinese consul for Vancouver and contemporary Chinese newspapers.

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Note on Romanization

This thesis uses the pinyin system for romanizing Chinese personal and place names, with the following exceptions:

1. Sun Yat-sen, Peking and Canton. These are retained in their older form, as they are widely familiar to readers in this form. Unless otherwise specified, 'Canton' refers to the city of Guangzhou rather than the province of Guangdong.
2. Names appearing in Canadian government correspondence. In some cases, such as intercepted Chinese correspondence, Chinese names appear with a variety of different spellings, or spellings that are in all likelihood phonetic rather than based on any coherent system of romanization (the trial records for Chinese Nationalist League Director of Party Affairs Zhen Shuyan, for example, give seven aliases, some of which are simply different spellings of his name). In such cases, I have not attempted to standardize the romanization of the names, but have rather retained the version of their name that appears in the archival record.

In all other cases I have used the pinyin system.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The history of the Chinese in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a history of discrimination. Recruited as a source of cheap labour to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Chinese were almost universally rejected by White Canadians as undesirable permanent residents. A series of anti-Chinese organizations, beginning in 1878 with the Workingman's Protection Association, pressured federal and provincial governments to restrict Chinese immigration and limit the rights of Chinese already in the country.¹ By 1914, the White majority had effectively marginalized the Chinese population of Canada.²

Public agitation against the presence of the Chinese ceased with the outbreak of the Great War. As Patricia Roy states in her examination of racism in British Columbia, "the attention of British Columbians turned away from the Orient" in August 1914, with the result that "anti-Asian agitation was largely set aside for the duration" of the conflict.³

¹ W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal-Kingston 1978), 33-34. Other anti-Chinese organizations founded in the pre-War era included the Anti-Chinese Association (1879), the Anti-Chinese Union (1885), the Anti-Chinese League (1892), the Anti-Mongolian Association (1896) and the Asiatic Exclusion League (1907). See also Patricia Roy, A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914 (Vancouver 1989), 60, 68, 93 and 190.

² Between 1871 and 1914, British Columbia passed fifteen pieces of legislation which denied the Chinese the franchise and the right to hold public office. In addition, the federal government passed legislation after the completion of the CPR to discourage further Chinese immigration to Canada: a \$50 Head Tax was imposed on new Chinese immigrants in 1885, which was raised to \$100 in 1900 and again to \$500 in 1903. See Peter Li, The Chinese in Canada (Toronto 1998), 28-34, and Timothy J. Stanley, "Schooling, White Supremacy, and the Foundation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia" in Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement, ed. Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat (Toronto 1996), 219.

³ Roy, A White Man's Province, 265. Ward makes a similar observation in his study of racism in British Columbia when he notes that "anti-orientalism was dormant in British Columbia" in the early years

This development was the result of a substantial decrease in Chinese immigration to Canada between 1914 and 1918. With many Chinese returning home and few entering Canada, Chief of Immigration William Duncan Scott was able to report with approval in 1917 that “since the outbreak of War, [Canada’s] Chinese population has appreciably diminished.”⁴

While public anti-Asian protest was absent from the years of the Great War, the Chinese in Canada did not enjoy a reprieve from discrimination. The legal and constitutional measures enacted prior to 1914 remained in place and denied the Chinese basic legal and civil rights. The Chinese were also subjected to a comprehensive government surveillance, censorship, and legal prosecution on the basis of political affiliation. The surveillance was initiated at the request of British Imperial authorities in August 1915 and was extended in stages until it encompassed the domestic mail and telegraphic correspondence of the entire Chinese population of Canada. By 1918, most Canadian surveillance authorities viewed the Chinese in Canada as pro-German, dangerous and potentially subversive.

The surveillance of the Chinese in Canada during the Great War is the topic of this thesis. The Borden administration did not view the Chinese as a threat to Canadian security at the outset of the War, as evidenced by the fact that Canada’s Chinese were not targeted by the measures enacted by the Borden Administration to counter the perceived

of the Great War, and that “organized protest [was] largely absent” from this period (Ward, White Canada Forever, 123.)

⁴ National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), RG 76, Vol. 121, File 23635, Part 3: William Duncan Scott to the Trades and Labour Council, 1917 (exact date unknown).

threat of subversive alien populations.⁵ By 1918, however, distrust of the Chinese was substantial and the Canadian government responded to a murder in Victoria's Chinatown in September by banning the Chinese Nationalist League, one of the largest Chinese political organizations in Canada. The ban represented the culmination of the suspicion and distrust of the Chinese that had built up over the course of the surveillance: in the view of Canadian authorities, the Chinese had evolved from an unwanted but benign presence in 1914 to a subversive alien presence by War's end.

Methodology and Sources

To analyze the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada, my approach is both chronological and thematic. It is chronological in that it follows a linear progression of events over a five year period that acted as catalysts in the evolution of the surveillance. It is thematic, however, in that the focus of my analysis is on the forces behind these events, and how they worked in concert to initiate, sustain, and eventually escalate the surveillance. This thesis contends that three primary forces shaped the surveillance from 1915 to 1918: British Imperial security, overseas Chinese politics, and racism in Canada.

The surveillance was initiated as a result of the British government's concern that certain Chinese in Canada were spying for the Central Powers and aiding Indian

⁵ The main target of the Borden administration with regard to immigrant populations was the country's large population of 'enemy nationals'. Borden ordered all expatriates of the Central Powers to register with Canadian authorities in October 1914, and as a result, nearly 8600 individuals were interned (2009 Germans, 5954 Austro-Hungarians, 205 Turks, 99 Bulgarians and 312 listed as miscellaneous.) The Chinese were subjected to security measures enacted against immigrants from all neutral countries, such as mail censorship, but were not specifically targeted as a security risk in the first months of the Great War. See Donald Avery, *'Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932'* (Toronto 1979), 66, and Greg Kealey, "State Repression and the Left in Canada, 1914-1920: The Impact of the First World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 73:3 (1982), 286-93.

revolutionaries based in North America. British Imperial concerns remained an element of the surveillance throughout the War, but the alleged threat posed by the Chinese intensified as a result of increased political tension in Canada's Chinese communities. This tension escalated into open violence in October 1916, and the resulting riot in Victoria's Chinatown raised the possibility in the minds of Canadian authorities that the Chinese in Canada represented a potential threat to order and security in Canada. This concern was heightened in the summer of 1917 as Canada became involved in plans to ship thousands of Chinese labourers from China to France, and peaked in September 1918 when Tang Hualong, a visiting Chinese government minister, was assassinated in Victoria's Chinatown. Racist stereotypes about innate Chinese deceit and treachery, which had sustained the surveillance of the Chinese throughout the War, informed the manner in which Canadian authorities investigated the crime. Despite a lack of clear evidence, investigators concluded that the assassination had been planned and carried out by the Chinese Nationalist League (CNL). The result was Order in Council PC 2384, passed on September 25, 1918, which suppressed the CNL and made membership in the organization a crime retroactive to the outset of the Great War.

This thesis draws most of its primary source material from the records of the Canadian federal government, especially the correspondence of the key figures within the Canadian internal security network. Foremost among these individuals are Col. Ernest J. Chambers, the Chief Press Censor for Canada, whose responsibilities included authority over telegraphic surveillance; Malcolm Reid, the Dominion Immigration Inspector for British Columbia, who conducted most of the investigations into Chinese political organizations in Canada; and C.H. Cahan, who was appointed by Prime Minister Borden

in 1918 to investigate the threat to national security posed by Canada's immigrant populations. To reflect the Chinese voice in this history, I have also incorporated evidence in translation from Chinese sources, such as diplomatic memoranda, newspaper articles and editorials, and personal correspondence intercepted by Canadian surveillance officials.

This thesis also incorporates existing historiography on the topic of anti-Chinese racism and discrimination in Canada, and hopes to build on the excellent work of historians such as Peter Li, Peter Ward and Patricia Roy. Li's The Chinese In Canada examines the history of Chinese in Canada on a national scale, but places primary focus on Western Canada in the pre-exclusion era, as the author contends that the anti-Chinese movement was "propelled by...structural forces related to the economic and political development of Western Canada."⁶ His theoretical model of "institutional racism" offers some promise to an examination of the surveillance of the Chinese during the Great War, as it considers the role of the federal government in sanctioning racism through legal and constitutional means, and also explores the arbitrary and superficial nature of race as a social construction.⁷ However, Li's extensive focus on Canada's need for "cheap casual labour" as the motivating factor behind the development of racism against the Chinese restricts the model's utility when applied to the period of the Great War, as the actions taken by the federal government against the Chinese between 1914 and 1918 were rooted in international relations, imperial security, and the perceived threat of alien populations

⁶ Li, The Chinese in Canada, 42.

⁷ Ibid., 39. See also Peter Li, "Race and Ethnicity" in Race and Ethnic Relations in Canada, ed. Peter Li (Toronto 1990), 6-7.

in Canada, and had little to do with Canada's need to secure a compliant immigrant labour force.⁸ Thus, though the Great War is within the temporal mandate of Li's book, he offers little comment on it, and no comment on the surveillance of the Chinese or the suppression of the Chinese Nationalist League.

Peter Ward examines the evolution of anti-Asian racism in British Columbia from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War, but like Li, Ward devotes no attention to the experience of the Chinese in Canada during the Great War. The primary focus of Ward's analysis is on "popular racial attitudes and popular radicalist movements" with only a secondary focus on public policy and, as such, he shifts his focus from Sinophobia to agitation against East Indians in 1914 with the arrival of the *Komagata Maru*.⁹ As a result, while his attempt to balance racism and class interests as causal factors in the rise of anti-Orientalism in British Columbia provides an interesting conceptual model for an examination of mass public attitudes, it is of limited utility when applied to the Chinese experience during the Great War. The surveillance of the Chinese was not the result of "psychological tensions" rising from the pressures of a plural society, and was not motivated by widespread public agitation.¹⁰

The work of Patricia Roy offers a more comprehensive study of racism against the Chinese in British Columbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While she acknowledges the significance of the psychological sources of racism explored by

⁸ Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, 38.

⁹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, ix. Ward does pass brief comment on anti-Chinese discrimination after 1918 with regard to the exclusion act, but does not comment at all on the Chinese in Canada in the years of the Great War.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

Ward, Roy argues that it is necessary to take into account “the economic and political circumstances of popular attitudes” as important factors in the development of racism in British Columbia.¹¹ Roy argues that anti-Asian protest movements in British Columbia encompassed a “wide variety of concerns” that “transcended particular economic interests” and reflected a “province that was immature, uncertain of its future, and internally fragmented.”¹² Furthermore, her work gives substantial attention to the impact of public agitation on policy at a provincial and, as British Columbian politicians delivered the anti-Asian message to Ottawa, federal level.

Roy’s A White Man’s Province has a provincial rather than national focus, and chooses 1914 as the end date for its analysis of racism against the Chinese. However, together the works of Roy and Ward offer a useful starting point for a study of the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada during the Great War because they both explore the issue of the perceived racial gulf between Whites and Asians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including some of the stereotypes that nourished the suspicion of the Chinese during the surveillance. Ward begins his book with an outline of the historical sources of Western conceptions of the Chinese (such as missionary, merchant and diplomatic testimonials), and surveys the most common stereotyped images of Chinese in Canada (such as the crowded and unsanitary nature of the living conditions in Chinatowns and the moral vices of gambling, prostitution and opium usage), all of which reflected a Western perception of Chinese culture as decadent and in irreversible

¹¹ Roy, A White Man’s Province, vii.

¹² Ibid., 267-68.

decline.¹³ Ward contends that these “convictions” were deeply ingrained in British Columbian society which in turn served to heighten the distinctiveness of the Chinese “as an element in provincial society.”¹⁴ Roy chronicles a similar set of racial stereotypes held by White British Columbians about the Chinese which contributed to the perception that the Chinese lived in “a world of their own.”¹⁵ Kay Anderson elaborates further on this concept in her examination of Vancouver’s Chinatown, noting that the European practice of measuring Western Civilization against its Chinese counterpart dates back to the thirteenth century.¹⁶ Anderson contends that the constructs of ‘East’ and ‘West’ were firmly entrenched in opposition to each other by the nineteenth century, an opposition that was “actively sponsored and enforced” by successive governments.¹⁷ This conceptualization of the inherent “difference” of the Chinese from European cultures persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and “informed the policies of powerful government institutions,” with tangible consequences for the Chinese residents of Vancouver.¹⁸ In Anderson’s analysis, this intervention of the state, in the form of policies that marginalized the Chinese minority and “affirm[ed] the identity and privilege

¹³ Ward, White Canada Forever, 4-7.

¹⁴ Peter Ward, “Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939,” *BC Studies* 45 (Spring 1980), 29.

¹⁵ Roy, A White Man’s Province, 13.

¹⁶ Kay Anderson, Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980 (Montreal-Kingston 1991), 95.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24, 96.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

of a white in-group,” gave the concept of the Chinese ‘race’ a “legitimacy that popular agitation could not alone have afforded it.”¹⁹

While racism certainly played an important part in the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada, elevating racism to primary importance in an analysis of the Great War period at the expense of other factors, as Jeffrey Keshen does, is problematic.²⁰ The focus of Keshen’s discussion of the surveillance of the Chinese is on Chief Press Censor Chambers, who he claims was motivated by “racist preconceptions about proverbial Chinese deceit and treachery.”²¹ He portrays Chambers as a single-minded racist that relentlessly pursued the country’s Chinese for no other reason than the fact that they were Chinese, and makes no meaningful mention of the surveillance prior to 1917.

Keshen’s approach clearly demonstrates the problems inherent in privileging racism at the main causal factor at the expense of other elements that shaped the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 247.

²⁰ Jeffrey Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War (Edmonton 1996), 101-104.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 103. Keshen leaves the possibility open that other factors existed, as he notes that Chambers’ motivation derived “in part” from racism. However, he fails to explore any factors other than race, and makes numerous errors in his research that undermines his discussion of the surveillance. He comments that the CNL was put under surveillance because of Sun Yat-sen’s opposition to Peking’s 1917 declaration of war on Germany and makes no reference to the suspected connections between the CNL and Indian insurrection (Keshen does comment briefly on the surveillance of Indian nationalists as well, but draws no connection between Indian revolutionaries and the CNL). Further, he claims that the “Chinese Consul-general in Vancouver” was treated with suspicion for vouching for the character of a CNL member in 1917. This errs by overlooking the allegations of espionage levelled against the Chinese consul in Vancouver (rather than the consul-general, who was based in Ottawa) in August 1915, which was the ultimate source for the initiation of the surveillance. He also confuses the *New Republic* newspaper based in Victoria with one in New York (either the *Mun Hey Weekly* or the *Chinese Republic News*): he claims that Chambers “bombarded his superiors with provocative quotes clipped from the pages of the already-banned *New Republic*” which he identifies as “one of the Nationalist League’s prohibited American-based newspapers.” (103-4) While there was a New York based publication that captured the attention of the Chief Press Censor in November 1915 for printing objectionable matter, the ‘provocative quotes’ cited as evidence of the CNL’s complicity in the murder of Tang Hualong were from the *New Republic* published in Victoria, which had not been banned at the time of the assassination (see NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to the Editors of the *New Republic*, Nov. 12, 1915 and Reid to Chambers, Nov. 2, 1916: Report on the *Mun Hey Weekly*, Nov. 2, 1916).

surveillance. Put simply, if racism alone motivated the surveillance officials, why did Canadian surveillance officials wait until September 1918 to suppress the CNL? Nothing stood in the way of suppression prior to 1918; the Chinese government and prominent Chinese Canadians would have welcomed it. Denied the franchise in Canada, the Chinese opposed to the ban would have been powerless to enact retribution at the ballot box. Yet Canadian authorities (especially Chambers, who Keshen judges too harshly, at least in relation to the Chinese experience) resisted the pressure to ban the CNL and the *New Republic* newspaper until after the Chinese were believed to represent a threat to internal Canadian security. The idea of 'the Chinese,' and the racial stereotypes that accompanied this construct were rooted in a long historical tradition in the West, and were certainly not new to Canada in 1918.²² The racial preconceptions that dominated the minds of Canadian authorities in 1918 were quite similar to those that existed in 1914; what had changed was the potential threat posed by the Chinese in the minds of Canadian authorities. The CNL was not banned solely because it was a Chinese political organization; the CNL was banned because it was a Chinese political organization that Canadian authorities viewed to be a threat to Canadian security.

The period of the Great War did not follow the typical pattern of pre- and post-War anti-Asian discrimination. The perceived economic and demographic threat posed by the Chinese, the root source of much of the anti-Chinese discrimination prior to 1914, was replaced by a perceived threat to imperial and national security. Pressure from public protest groups, which had compelled successive provincial and federal governments to

²² Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 22.

pass discriminatory legislation prior to 1914, was replaced by pressure from imperial and diplomatic sources. This thesis expands on existing historiography by considering issues such as imperial security and diaspora politics, in addition to racism, to examine the years of the Great War as a unique and important period in the history of anti-Chinese discrimination in Canada.

To balance my analysis, I have devoted one chapter to each major theme. Chapter Two will explore the Imperial dimensions of the surveillance. Chapter Three will analyze the impact of Chinese Canadian politics. Chapter Four will detail the importance of Canadian domestic issues in shaping the nature of the surveillance.

*Chapter 2*Imperial Dimensions of the Surveillance

Canadian and British surveillance officials (such as Malcolm Reid, Robert Nathan of the India Office, and Colonial Secretary Andrew Bonar Law) requested the extension of the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada in several stages over the course of the Great War. While different individuals initiated these surveillance measures for a variety of reasons, one common element united them: the suspicion that the targets of the surveillance were pro-German. This suspicion reflected a general conviction, held by the Canadian and British governments throughout the War, that the Chinese were pro-German and represented a threat to the Allied war effort and to British Imperial interests.

British and Canadian concern over the pro-German inclination of the Chinese developed as a result of events in China in the early years of the Great War. The British perception of pro-German sympathy in China, while perhaps exaggerated, was not wholly without merit; Germany's standing in Chinese public opinion in 1914 was high, while British support of Japanese aggression in China resulted in a deterioration of Sino-British relations. British observers in China, such as British Minister in Peking Sir John Jordan, interpreted this deterioration as evidence of strong German influence in Peking. This in turn nurtured fears that pro-German sentiment in China would manifest itself into open support for the German War effort, including support for German-sponsored plots to undermine British control of India.

These issues in international relations and imperial security motivated British and Canadian officials to request the initiation of the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada.

This chapter will detail the diplomatic and imperial dimensions of the surveillance and explain how events in China led imperial authorities to target two Chinese political factions in Canada: first, the Peking government's consular officials in Vancouver, and second, the Chinese Nationalist League, the North American wing of Sun Yat-sen's overseas revolutionary party.²³ It will also examine how the persistent belief in the pro-German sympathies of the Chinese helped to sustain the surveillance, even after both factions sided with the Entente and declared war on Germany in 1917.²⁴

Chinese Sympathies During the Great War

The British government perceived the general attitude in China at the outset of the Great War to be "mildly pro-German."²⁵ Two main factors heightened the relative popularity of Germany in the early years of the conflict, the first of which was Germany's active effort to win over Chinese public opinion. From the outset of the War, German diplomatic officials in China, with the support of German citizens and business leaders, launched an extensive propaganda campaign aimed at fostering pro-German and anti-British sentiment in China. German Minister in Peking Admiral Paul von Hintze spearheaded the campaign and invested Germany's entire monthly share of the Boxer

²³ I use the term 'Peking government' rather than 'Chinese government' to distinguish it from the other 'governments' that claimed legitimate power in China throughout the Great War. The Peking government, controlled from 1912-1916 by President Yuan Shikai and from 1916-1918 by Premier Duan Qirui, was recognized throughout the Great War by Canada as China's legitimate government.

²⁴ This dual declaration of war was made possible by the existence in 1917 of two governments that claimed legitimate power in China. The Peking government, headed by Premier Duan Qirui, declared war on Germany on August 14, 1917. Sun Yat-sen, the head of the Chinese Nationalist League, established a 'military government' in Canton on September 1, 1917 and soon after issued his own declaration of war against Germany. See Jonathan Spence, *The Search For Modern China* (New York 1990), 290-97.

Indemnity to finance it.²⁶ The German effort placed a specific focus on southern China; as early as October 1914, British Secretary for Chinese Affairs E.R. Hallifax reported to London that Chinese sentiment in Canton was “undoubtedly pro-German in the main” as a result of the activity of German agents.²⁷ The campaign received the support of German corporations in the region as well, such as the Deutsch Asiatische Bank, which bribed the Chinese press in Canton to print pro-German accounts of the War.²⁸ The success of the German propaganda effort in Canton was a source of substantial concern for British officials in China. Hallifax reported in the autumn of 1914 that the Chinese in Canton were “ready to welcome German success,”²⁹ and British Minister in Peking Sir John Jordan reported to the Foreign Secretary in March 1915 that British efforts to counter the German propaganda campaign in Canton had failed.³⁰ This success contributed to a perception that southern China was strongly pro-German, a perception that had important

²⁵ Feng Djen Djang, The Diplomatic Relations Between China and Germany Since 1898 (Taipei 1971), 175.

²⁶ Germany’s share of the Boxer Indemnity was approximately one million DM a month. Von Hintze was the subject of some concern for British observers in the first years of the Great War. In addition to his role in spearheading the propaganda campaign, he was suspected of involvement in Yuan Shikai’s attempted monarchical restoration in 1916. British diplomat in Washington Sir Cecil Spring-Rice described von Hintze as “an extremely adroit intriguer.” See British Foreign Office (hereafter BFO), British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part II, Series E (Asia, 1914-1939), Volume 1: Japan, August 1914-May 1915, ed. Ann Trotter (University Publications of America, 1994), 370: Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, April 30, 1915; and Thomas Edward Lafargue, China and the World War (Stanford 1937), 101.

²⁷ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part II, Series E (Asia, 1914-1939), Volume 22: China, August 1914-October 1918, ed. Ann Trotter (University Publications of America 1994), 17: Memo from Lord Hallifax to the Colonial Secretary, Oct. 15, 1914.

²⁸ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 22, 21: Memo from Jordan to Grey, November 21, 1914.

²⁹ Ibid., 17: Hallifax to Colonial Secretary, October 15, 1914.

³⁰ Ibid., 39: Jordan to Grey, March 9, 1915.

implications for Canada in that the vast majority of the country's Chinese population had originally emigrated from the region.³¹ It was also the region from which the revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen, leader of the Chinese Nationalist League, drew most of his support in China.

The second factor that contributed to pro-German sentiment in China was British diplomacy in Asia. Britain's open approval of Japanese aggression in China in the autumn of 1914 led to a wave of virulent anti-British sentiment in China, which in turn contributed to the relative popularity of Germany. Military operations in China began on August 23, 1914, when Japan, under the terms of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance, declared war on Germany and attacked the German leaseholds in the Chinese province of Shandong.³² A force of over 20,000 Japanese troops landed in Shandong on September 2 and laid siege to the German fortress of Qingdao, which surrendered on November 7, 1914.³³ After the victory at Qingdao, Japan strengthened its hold on Shandong by occupying the city of Jinan, a city more than two hundred miles outside the boundary of

³¹ David Chuenyan Lai, Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada (Vancouver 1988), 17-19 and 59. Lai's study of the home county origins of 5,000 Chinese in Canada in the mid 1880's revealed that all of them had emigrated to Canada from Guangdong Province in southern China, with 82% of them originating from Sanyi (which consisted of the three counties of Nanhai, Panyu and Shunde) and Siyi (which consisted of the four counties of Xinhui, Taishan, Kaiping and Enping). Lai does not provide specific numbers for county origins of Chinese immigrants in 1914, but his study of the home county origins of hospital donors from 1892-1915 reveals a similar pattern, with the overwhelming majority of Chinese migrants in Canada originating from Guangdong Province.

³² BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, 52: Japanese Ambassador Inouye Katsunosuke to Sir Edward Grey, Aug. 23, 1914. The declaration of war came after Germany failed to respond to an ultimatum issued by Tokyo on August 15 which demanded the surrender of Jiaozhou Bay, a German leasehold in Shandong, as well as the withdrawal of all German warships from Chinese and Japanese territorial waters. See also ibid., 32: Japanese Charge d'Affaires at Berlin to Herr von Jagow, Aug. 17, 1914.

³³ John E. Schrecker, Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism: Germany in Shantung (Cambridge 1971), 247.

the German leasehold of Jiaozhou Bay.³⁴ Japanese troops took control of communications and transportation in the region, requisitioned supplies from the Chinese civilian population and occupied the Jiaozhou to Jinanfu railway, all of which represented violations of Chinese neutrality.³⁵

Japanese incursions into China in the autumn of 1914 placed British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey in an awkward diplomatic position. Grey was not enthused about Japan's expansionist drive, as he did not wish to see it establish a strong presence in China. At the same time, however, Grey needed to secure the support of the Japanese navy against the menace of the German Pacific Fleet, which represented a substantial threat to British commercial and Imperial interests in Asia.³⁶ As a result, Grey openly

³⁴ Cheng Sih-gung, *Modern China: A Political Study* (Oxford 1919), 243. China made a sustained diplomatic effort in August 1914 to avoid involvement in the looming conflict. President Yuan Shikai's presidential mandate declaring China's neutrality in the War was issued on August 9, 1914, just six days prior to Japan's ultimatum to Germany. As Japan's intentions in Shandong became increasingly transparent, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Lin'ge attempted to secure the intervention of the United States as a third party mediator in China, but the efforts were rejected by Japan. China also attempted to negotiate a settlement with Germany that would have seen the German leaseholds in Shandong returned to China in exchange for financial compensation, but the efforts were once again blocked by Japan, which refused to recognize the validity of such a transfer. Once it became clear that hostilities in Shandong were inevitable, Yuan Shikai issued a renewed declaration of conditional neutrality by which the Chinese government absolved itself from responsibility for the "maintenance of strict neutrality" in the designated regions of Lungchow, Laichow and Jiaozhou, noting however that it was "still incumbent of belligerent powers to respect" Chinese citizens, property and rights in these regions. Japanese occupation of the Jiaozhou to Jinanfu Railway, which extended well outside the zones of qualified neutrality, offers clear evidence of the lack of regard the Japanese military gave to the renewed declaration of neutrality. Despite a sustained diplomatic effort by Yuan Shikai and Lang Win'ge, China simply lacked the military force necessary to enforce the provisions of its own neutrality. For a complete text of China's declarations of neutrality, see John V.A. MacMurray, ed., *Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, 1894-1919*, Vol. II: The Republican Period, 1912-19 (New York 1921), 1364-67. For information pertaining to China's efforts to negotiate a settlement with Germany regarding Shandong and to secure the intervention of the U.S. government, see Schrecker, *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism*, 246-47, and BFO, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 22, 21-22: Jordan to Grey, Aug. 12, 1914.

³⁵ W. Reginald Wheeler, *China and the World War* (New York 1919), 10.

³⁶ Frederick R. Dickenson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (Cambridge 1999), 92. The German Pacific Fleet was already taking a heavy toll on British shipping by September 1914. See also Madeline Chi, *China Diplomacy 1914-1918* (Cambridge 1970), 18.

supported the Japanese invasion of Shandong, sending a contingent of British troops to assist in the military operations at Qingtao as a show of solidarity with Japan.³⁷

Japanese aggression in China escalated in 1915 with the issuance of the Twenty-One Demands to Peking. The Demands consisted of a variety of concessions, which, if accepted by Chinese President Yuan Shikai, would have reduced China to the status of Japanese protectorate.³⁸ The British Foreign Secretary continued to place a higher value on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance than on China's territorial integrity, and Britain publicly supported Japan's position.³⁹ Grey even pledged British support for drastic Japanese action to force a resolution to the crisis, including the occupation of Peking by Japanese forces.⁴⁰ The British Foreign Secretary did compel Japan to moderate some of the demands that infringed upon existing British interests in China. However, once Grey had

³⁷ Peter Lowe, Great Britain and Japan, 1911-1915: A Study of British Far Eastern Policy (London 1969), 181. Grey did not enter into this arrangement with Japan entirely against his will. While he was concerned about the establishment of Japanese hegemony in China, the British Foreign Secretary was somewhat sympathetic to Japan's 'right' to expand, and after the War, Grey would characterize Japan as an ally that had been "fair, honourable and loyal" during the Great War. See Robert Joseph Gowan, "Great Britain and the Twenty-One Demands of 1915: Co-operation Versus Effacement." *Journal of Modern History* 43:1 (1971), 84, and Viscount Grey, Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916., 2 vols. (London 1925), 2:100.

³⁸ Peter Lowe, Britain in the Far East: A Survey From 1819 to the Present (New York 1981), 104.

³⁹ Gowan, "Great Britain and the Twenty-One Demands of 1915," 87-88. Given Britain's precarious military situation in early 1915, Grey felt that he could "not afford to deny Japan its pound of flesh in China," especially after receiving reports from the British Ambassador in Tokyo that pro-German influences were making inroads into the Japanese military.

⁴⁰ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, 249: Grey to Greene, March 9, 1915. Grey vacillated somewhat on this issue. On March 5, he instructed Greene to inform the Japanese government that Britain could not support a military occupation of Peking, but four days later sent a memo to Greene which stated that he was "prepared to justify Japanese action, or, if required, support it," including an occupation of the Chinese capital. See also, Gowan, "Great Britain and the Twenty-One Demands of 1915," 96.

secured British primacy in the Yangtze Valley, he joined with Japan to pressure Chinese President Yuan Shikai to yield to the Japanese demands in May 1915.⁴¹

However, while the British Foreign Secretary remained steadfast in his support for Japan in 1914 and 1915, he hoped that Britain could avoid being “dragged into bad relations with China as a result of it.”⁴² Grey attempted to retain the goodwill of the Chinese government by presenting Britain’s role in the Sino-Japanese conflict as that of a moderating influence on Japan, but ultimately the paradoxical balance of good relations with both Tokyo and Peking proved impossible to achieve in 1914 and 1915. Britain’s support for Japanese aggression in China created a rift in Sino-British relations and did little to improve Britain’s standing in Chinese public opinion.

The first sign of rising tension between China and Britain surfaced in September 1914 after Britain made clear its intention to participate in joint military actions with Japan in Shandong. Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Lin’ge attempted to block Britain’s military contribution by authorizing the seizure of British munitions in Peking on the basis that use of the munitions would violate China’s neutrality.⁴³ British Minister in Peking Sir John Jordan negotiated an end to the dispute, but tensions escalated again after the Japanese occupation of the Jiaozhou to Jinanfu Railway. The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a protest and declared that “the British Government, the ally of Japan,

⁴¹ Lowe, Britain in the Far East, 105.

⁴² BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, 170: Grey to Conyngham Greene, British Ambassador to Japan, January 22, 1915.

⁴³ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 22, 8-9: Wang Lin’ge to Robert Willis (British Consul-General), Sept. 25, 1914.

most assuredly cannot sit and look on indifferently.”⁴⁴ In a speech in the Chinese State Council, Progressive Party leader Liang Qichao remarked that “Great Britain cannot be excused from violating our neutrality, because the two nations [Britain and Japan] are allied, and their actions must be concerted.”⁴⁵ Liang also commented on the irony that Britain had entered the Great War to protect Belgian neutrality but was now wilfully violating China’s, an hypocrisy that was the source of some embarrassment for the British Foreign Secretary.⁴⁶

Sino-British relations deteriorated further during the negotiations surrounding the Twenty-One Demands in 1915. The diplomatic rift, however, assumed a new dimension at this time, as the British Foreign Office attributed increased Sino-British tension to German influence in Peking. Sino-German relations were cordial prior to the War, and Grey and his officials in China, especially Jordan, believed that Yuan’s refusal to submit to the Twenty-One Demands proved that “German influences” were at work “in Peking to block Japanese negotiations with China.”⁴⁷ British negotiators believed that “Germany exercise[d] an obscuring influence” in Peking and took measures to resolve the crisis in Tokyo instead.⁴⁸ This suspicion continued throughout 1915, and was particularly keen in

⁴⁴ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, 77: Wai-chiao Pu to Chinese Minister in Peking, October 3, 1914.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 107: Extract from “Peking Daily News,” October 3, 1914.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28: Grey to Greene, August 15, 1914. Grey noted that Britain could lay itself “open to reproach” by supporting Japan and condemning Germany for essentially the same violation of international law.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 196: Greene to Grey, February 4, 1915. In 1912 and 1913, Yuan received a substantial amount of financial support from German loans, in return for which Yuan gave railway and industrial concessions to Germany in Wuhan (see Edward Friedman, Backward Toward Revolution: The Chinese Revolutionary Party (Berkeley 1974), 180.)

⁴⁸ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 1, 239: Greene to Grey, March 1, 1915.

September and October as Yuan launched an attempt to restore the Chinese monarchy with himself as Emperor. Jordan reported to Grey that von Hintze had given secret promises to Yuan that Germany would grant immediate recognition to any Imperial restoration.⁴⁹ The Japanese Ambassador to Britain also reported that Germany was behind the restoration scheme in an effort to fully secure German influence in Peking.⁵⁰

In this atmosphere of suspicion, the Russian Ambassador in London reported to the British government that Chinese Foreign Minister was sending cipher and coded correspondence to the Chinese Consul in Vancouver, including telegrams that contained secret messages for enemy agents based in North America.⁵¹ This allegation led British Colonial Secretary Andrew Bonar Law to request a censorship of all coded telegrams to and from the Chinese Consulate in Vancouver.⁵² The Chief Press Censor for Canada transmitted this order to Canadian telegraph companies, along with instructions to keep the surveillance a secret.⁵³ While this order specifically targeted Chinese diplomatic officials in Vancouver, the measure also reflected a deep distrust of the Chinese

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, 76: Jordan to Grey, Oct. 8, 1915.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 87-88: G. Buchanan to Grey, Oct. 26, 1915.

⁵¹ NAC, RG 7, G 21, Vol. 436, File 14071, Part 14, Item 1995: Bonar Law to the Governor General of Canada, August 12, 1915. Throughout the Great War, China was represented by two consular officials in Canada. Yang Shuwen, who had previously served as Chinese consul-general in Manila, was appointed to serve as consul-general in Ottawa on December 6, 1913 (NAC, RG 25, Vol. 1133, File 1913-477: letter from Perry to Sir Joseph Pop, Dec. 6, 1913.) Lin Shiyuan, who had previously served as the Secretary of the Vancouver consulate, was promoted to consul in Vancouver on October 1, 1912 (NAC, RG 25, Vol. 1127, File 1144: Memo from the Chinese Legation, Oct. 1, 1912.) The Vancouver consul was responsible for the interests of the Chinese in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Yukon, while the consul-general was responsible for the rest of Canada (NAC, RG 25, Vol. 1133, File 1913-477: letter from the Chinese Legation to Sir Edward Grey, April 15, 1913.)

⁵² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-1: Hamilton to Chambers, Aug. 16, 1915.

⁵³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-1: Chambers to G.D. Perry (Manager of the Great North Western Telegraph Company), Aug. 31, 1915.

government as a whole. Canadian Deputy Chief Press Censor C.F. Hamilton suggested to Imperial Authorities that the suspected spies should be expelled from Canada, but was informed that such a measure would be “useless” as it was likely that the Chinese “government [was] an accomplice, and the next man would play the same game.”⁵⁴

The man responsible for telegraphic surveillance in Canada was Chief Press Censor Col. Ernest Chambers. Chambers was appointed to the position by the Secretary of State on June 10, 1915.⁵⁵ His primary responsibility was to monitor publications in Canada to ensure that they conformed to Canadian censorship regulations, but he was granted additional powers soon after his appointment that expanded his authority. In September 1915, the government passed Order in Council PC 2073, which gave the Chief Press Censor the authority to order the surveillance of telephone conversations and telegraphic correspondence.⁵⁶ In this capacity, Chambers played a very important role in the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada.

The surveillance of the Chinese consular officials continued throughout the War, a measure that reflected the persistent suspicion of German influence in Peking. This suspicion endured despite an improvement in Sino-British relations in 1917 after China joined the War on the side of the Entente Powers. The British government persuaded Chinese Premier Duan Qirui to break diplomatic ties with Germany in March 1917 and promised to place “ample financial resources in the hands of the Central government of

⁵⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-1: C.F. Hamilton to Chambers, Aug. 16, 1915.

⁵⁵ NAC, RG 24, Vol. 2847, File 3281: Final Report of the Chief Press Censor for Canada on Completion of Demobilization, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War, 66.

China" as a reward for a declaration of war.⁵⁷ This was a tempting offer for the Chinese Premier, who required foreign financial assistance to crush revolutionary movements based in South China.⁵⁸ Premier Duan faced resistance from Chinese President Li Yuanhong and the Chinese Parliament, but was able to coerce Parliament into declaring war on Germany on August 14, 1917.⁵⁹

This declaration of war, however, did little to alleviate British suspicion of German influence in Peking. Soon after China's declaration of war on Germany, the Entente Powers demanded that the Peking government take a number of strong measures to counter potential German threats in China. The French and British pressured Peking to place all German ships in Chinese custody under Allied military control, to close the Deutsche Asiatische Bank, and to dismiss all German nationals employed by the Chinese government.⁶⁰ The Chinese government agreed to dismiss all Germans employed in the country's railway system and to place all German ships under Chinese police control, but refused to take more drastic action against German nationals in China. This hesitancy led to accusations by the Entente that China did not "co-operate properly" with the War effort.⁶¹ Similarly, the fact that German diplomats were allowed to continue their work in China after the declaration of war convinced Jordan that "pro-German influences were

⁵⁷ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 22, 262-263: Alston to Balfour, March 13, 1917.

⁵⁸ Spence, The Search for Modern China, 290. The Chinese Premier also hoped that Chinese participation in the War would secure the return of Shantung to China at the post-War settlements.

⁵⁹ Chi, China Diplomacy, 123.

⁶⁰ Lafarague, China and the World War, 100.

⁶¹ Ibid., 156.

at work in the Cabinet," and that "China was assisting the enemy rather than the Allies."⁶² This pattern continued in late 1917 when Britain formulated a plan to deport all German and Austrian nationals from China for internment in Australia. The Chinese government refused to support this plan, which led Jordan to charge that "China preferred to assist the enemy instead of deporting them."⁶³ By August 1918, Britain retained little faith in the Peking government; Jordan reported in August 1918 that "we now have two Governments functioning in China, and so far as the interests of foreigners...are concerned, there is very little to choose between them."⁶⁴

The correspondence of Canada's Chief Press Censor yields evidence that this persistent distrust of Peking had an impact on the surveillance of the Chinese consular officials in Canada. After China severed diplomatic relations with Germany in March 1917, Chambers questioned the necessity of continuing the surveillance of the consular officials, given the positive "relationship existing between the government of China and the Allied powers."⁶⁵ The Under-Secretary of State responded that London considered it necessary to continue the surveillance as China was not yet officially at war with Germany, and "only allied consular officials [were] treated with any leniency" regarding censorship of coded correspondence.⁶⁶ Chambers again questioned the necessity of the

⁶² BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 22, 415: Jordan to Balfour, April 9, 1918.

⁶³ Ibid., 415: Jordan to Balfour, April 9, 1918.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 434: Jordan to Balfour, Aug. 13, 1918. The two governments referred to by Jordan were the Peking government, headed by Duan Qirui, and the Military government of Sun Yat-sen, established in Canton in the summer of 1917.

⁶⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-2: Chambers to Under-Secretary of State Sir Joseph Pope, April 11, 1917.

⁶⁶ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-2: Pope to Chambers, May 10, 1917. Clarification of this issue came to Pope from unspecified 'imperial authorities.'

surveillance one year after China's declaration of war on Germany.⁶⁷ The Secretary of State responded that it was still necessary to censor the coded correspondence of the Chinese consular officials as it was "not possible to trust in their integrity sufficiently" and that the "Chinese Consular officers in Canada...could not be depended upon."⁶⁸

British Imperial Security and the Surveillance of the Chinese in Canada

The primary focus of Britain's concern over pro-German sentiment in China was the perceived threat that Sino-German cooperation posed to British control of India. Sir John Jordan investigated this potential threat in 1915 and his findings convinced the British government that a conspiracy to undermine British rule in India, headed by German diplomats in China, was in full motion. Suspicion of China's complicity in this plot, however, was not limited to pro-German officials in Peking: British authorities also suspected that Germany was receiving the cooperation of Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen, and his overseas political affiliate in Canada, the Chinese Nationalist League (CNL). As a result of this suspicion, the British government extended the surveillance to include the activities of the Chinese Nationalist League in Canada in 1916.

⁶⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-2: Chambers to Pope, Sept. 18, 1918.

⁶⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-2: Secretary of State to Chambers, Oct. 25, 1918; NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Deputy Postmaster General R. M. Coulter, Oct. 27, 1918. This was an exception to the standard rules for consular censorship, which stated that "the correspondence of British, Allied and neutral consular officers with persons whose correspondence is privileged (e.g. embassies, foreign offices and other government departments) is itself exempted from censorship" (NAC, RG 7, G 21, Vol. 470, File 14071, Part 48, Item 323). As much of the correspondence from the Vancouver consulate was addressed to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, it should have been privileged as correspondence intended for an allied foreign office.

Jordan's investigations in China reflected the British government's increased concern over Indian security after Indian revolutionaries launched a failed uprising in December 1914. The uprising was organized and launched by the Ghadar (Mutiny) Party, an Indian revolutionary organization based in North America.⁶⁹ The Ghadar Party recruited hundreds of Indian immigrants in Canada and the United States and encouraged them to return home to India to take part in the anticipated uprising.⁷⁰ However, the rebellion was poorly organized, and British police arrested most of the volunteers that rushed back to India in late 1914 upon their arrival.⁷¹ Those that did manage to land in India and evade British authorities found little leadership or logistical support for the mutiny.⁷² British police learned of the planned uprising and averted it, arresting the leaders of the rebellion and disarming sympathetic divisions of the Indian Army. The Indian revolutionaries committed sporadic acts of violence, but without leaders and sufficient arms, the revolutionaries were an ineffective force, and the British were able to contain the rebellion with little difficulty.⁷³

The attempted uprising in India, however, did catch Germany's attention. From the outset of the Great War, the leaders of the Ghadar Party had sought financial and military support from Germany, but very little German assistance made its way to the

⁶⁹ Hugh Johnston, "The Surveillance of Indian Nationalists in North America, 1908-1918," *BC Studies* 78 (1988), 3.

⁷⁰ Hugh Johnston, The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar (New Delhi 1979), 125.

⁷¹ Don Dignan, The Indian Revolutionary Problem in British Diplomacy, 1914-1919 (New Delhi 1983), 45.

⁷² Johnston, The Voyage of the Komagata Maru, 113. The mutiny was scheduled for Feb. 21, 1915.

⁷³ Dignan, The Indian Revolutionary Problem in British Diplomacy, 46-47.

organization in 1914.⁷⁴ The stalemate on the Western Front in 1915, however, compelled the German High Command to seek alternative theatres from which to strike a decisive blow against the Entente. India was one such theatre, and Germany became an enthusiastic patron of Indian insurrection, budgeting about 500 million marks to support the revolutionary movement.⁷⁵ Germany also attempted to supply Indian insurrectionists with weapons, but efforts to ship arms from the United States (in March 1915) and from Manila (in June 1915) to India both failed.⁷⁶ By the summer of 1915, Germany began to look to China as the best logistical option from which to acquire weapons to arm Indian revolutionaries.

The increase in German support for Indian revolutionaries in 1915 alarmed the British government, a concern which was magnified after Sir John Jordan compiled his report on the extent of German activity in China and issued it to the British Foreign Office in August 1915.⁷⁷ Jordan singled out Shanghai as “the centre of a widespread organization for fomenting sedition and raising an armed rebellion in India,” an

⁷⁴ Johnston, The Voyage of the Komagata Maru, 134.

⁷⁵ Dignan, The Indian Revolutionary Problem in British Diplomacy, 50.

⁷⁶ The March scheme called for the shipment of enough arms for 10,000 men to leave San Diego aboard the schooner *Annie Larsen*, which was to rendezvous four hundred miles off the coast of Mexico with a second ship (the *Maverick*) at which time the arms would be transferred to the *Maverick* and sent to India. The rendezvous failed, and the *Maverick* proceeded to Hawaii to await a second rendezvous in the early summer, which also failed. British intelligence was by this time aware of the mission of the ships and both were impounded at the request of British diplomatic officials, the *Anne Larsen* upon its arrival in Honolulu in June and the *Maverick* upon its arrival in Batavia in July. The attempt to ship arms out of Manila was made by two German-Americans, who planned to smuggle arms aboard a chartered schooner and rendezvous with German agents in Borneo. The plan was uncovered by American customs agents in the Philippines and stopped. See Dignan, The Indian Revolutionary Problem in British Diplomacy, 60-65.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 104.

organization headed by the German consul in the city.⁷⁸ The report detailed various attempts to smuggle arms from China to India, including an attempt by two Chinese nationals to smuggle 129 pistols and 12,000 rounds of ammunition into Calcutta. Jordan also outlined German efforts to recruit Chinese Muslims to launch a holy war against the British in India, and identified the cities of Hankou and Tianjin as areas of concern where German agents were attempting to recruit Indian workers to the cause of Indian insurrection.⁷⁹

Concern over Chinese support for Indian insurrection extended to the Chinese in the diaspora as well and British and Canadian officials (most notably Robert Nathan and Malcolm Reid) conducted investigations into the extent of the threat in Canada. Reid was the Dominion Immigration Inspector for British Columbia and had maintained a close watch on Indian nationalists along the Pacific Coast since the assassination of his predecessor in October 1914.⁸⁰ Robert Nathan was a retired India Office official with twenty-six years experience in India who acted as an undercover operative for the India

⁷⁸ BFO, British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 22, 121: BFO memorandum communicated to the Japanese Ambassador, Dec. 28, 1915. Jordan alleged that the German consul in Shanghai commanded a network of German Agents, "disaffected British Indian subjects," and Chinese revolutionaries with pan-Asian sympathies.

⁷⁹ Dignan, The Indian Revolutionary Problem in British Diplomacy, 104. British operatives also gained possession of a German Intelligence Report in February 1916 that confirmed the accuracy of Jordan's assessment of the situation in China (*Ibid.*, 51).

⁸⁰ Reid enjoyed a rather eclectic array of titles and responsibilities. In addition to service as Dominion Immigration Inspector for British Columbia, Reid (as of 1916) served as an agent for Dominion Chief of Police Percy Sherwood, for the Press Censorship Office, and was an official contact for Robert Nathan of the India Office. Deputy Superintendent for Immigration E. Blake Robertson relieved Reid of responsibility for Vancouver and Victoria in 1914, but Reid continued to operate out of Vancouver. He continued the surveillance work of his predecessor William C. Hopkinson, who was assassinated by a Sikh on October 21, 1914. Reid did not replace Hopkinson in an official capacity, but Vancouver immigration officers were under instructions to "pass along any information that came their way" regarding Indian nationalists to the British government, and Reid continued to collect information regarding Indian insurrection. See Johnston, "The Surveillance of Indian Nationalists in North America," 21-23, and Johnston, Voyage of the Komagata Maru, 129-130.

Office in North America.⁸¹ Nathan was working in Canada by 1916 and occupied a position of some influence in the surveillance of the Chinese Nationalist League, as members of Canada's surveillance network (such as Reid, Chief Press Censor Chambers and Dominion Commissioner of Police Sir Percy Sherwood) sought his approval and opinion on a number of occasions.⁸²

The exact date at which Reid commenced his investigations into the Chinese Nationalist League is unclear, but in January 1916 he requested that a surveillance be kept on the organization's telegraphic correspondence.⁸³ By April 1916, Reid was able to report that he was "fully satisfied" that a connection existed between Indian and Chinese revolutionary groups in Canada.⁸⁴ Reid commented that there had been "considerable talk along the Pacific Coast of an amalgamation of the Oriental races such as the Chinese, Japanese and Hindus for the good of the yellow races."⁸⁵ Later that year, surveillance officials seized a telegram from Chu S. Gunn, President of the CNL in New York, which further confirmed the pan-Asian sympathies of the organization:

So in another five years we may hope to make China a power. We shall not stop at that. 'Asia for the Asiatics' is our larger purpose, at least Asia to China from India. We regard India as our sister country, and to those of us

⁸¹ Johnston, "The Surveillance of Indian Nationalists in North America," 21.

⁸² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 527, File 168A-2: Chambers to Reid, Aug. 8, 1916; Sherwood to Chambers, Aug. 23, 1916; File 168A-3: Chambers to Reid, April 28, 1917; Reid to Chambers, May 28, 1917.

⁸³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A-1: Chambers to Perry, Manager of the Great Northwestern Telegraphic Company, Jan. 19, 1916.

⁸⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Reid to Percy Sherwood, Commissioner of Dominion Police, April 17, 1916.

⁸⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Reid to Sherwood, April 17, 1916.

who are Buddhists, India is the Holy Land.⁸⁶

Reid also claimed to have evidence that the CNL smuggled arms from North America to India, and that the organization was “backed financially by Germans.”⁸⁷ Reid paid little attention to the complexities of Republican Chinese politics, dismissing the Chinese revolutionary movement as a German conspiracy “to keep the east in turmoil.”⁸⁸ While the accuracy of Reid’s understanding of Chinese politics was questionable, it is clear that he suspected a connection between Germany and the CNL in January 1916, a suspicion that remained an important element of the surveillance throughout the War.

The first several months of the surveillance of the CNL yielded little more than mundane correspondence concerning the organization’s operations, broken by the occasional inflammatory comment about the Peking government; it did not uncover any evidence of support for Germany or Indian sedition. By April 1916, Chief Press Censor Chambers began to question the necessity of the surveillance. He commented to Reid that the telegrams were doubtless “important from the Chinese point of view,” but added that he failed to see how “our own Imperial interests [were] affected.”⁸⁹ Chambers also took his complaint to one of Reid’s superiors, Dominion Commissioner of Police Sir Percy Sherwood, arguing that the correspondence of the CNL dealt exclusively with the Chinese revolutionary movement, and that it was not the responsibility of Canada (or

⁸⁶ NAC, RG 6, E, vol. 86, file 246, part 1: Reid to Chambers, Nov. 2, 1916.

⁸⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Reid to Sherwood, April 17, 1916; British Columbia Archives and Records Service (hereafter BCARS), GR 419, Vol. 220, File 1919/15: Transcripts of the Trial of Chen Shu-yen, p. 18.

⁸⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Reid to Sherwood, April 17, 1916.

⁸⁹ RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Chambers to Reid, April 8, 1916.

Britain) to “pull chestnuts out of the fire for the Chinese government.”⁹⁰ Chambers threatened to cease the censorship of the CNL until he received a satisfactory answer from the Home Authorities regarding the necessity of the surveillance.⁹¹

Chambers received an answer in April 1916 when Robert Nathan visited his office in Ottawa.⁹² Nathan informed Chambers that Imperial authorities considered the surveillance to be extremely important and stated that “the Imperial government is preparing to spend considerable money and use some of their most eminent men in tracing up some clues given by these messages.”⁹³ The explanation satisfied Chambers, who continued the surveillance without further question. The majority of intercepted correspondence continued to consist of messages pertaining to politics in China or the Canadian operations of the organization. However, Chambers continued to receive assurances of the “great importance” that Imperial authorities attached to the telegraphic surveillance, and was told by Reid near the conclusion of the Great War that “the censored telegraphs have been of material assistance to us in obtaining authentic information” about the CNL.⁹⁴

Thus, the initiation of the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada was largely an exercise in Imperial security. British and Canadian officials responded to the suspicion

⁹⁰ RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Chambers to Sherwood, April 9, 1916.

⁹¹ RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Chambers to Reid, April 10, 1916.

⁹² RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Chambers to Reid, April 13, 1916. The visit must have occurred sometime between April 10-13, as Chambers commented to Reid that “since I last wrote you on the subject, I have had a visit from a high official from the Home Country, and from what he says I fancy that great importance attaches to these messages.”

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Chambers to Perry, April 13, 1916.

⁹⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 527, File 168A-3: Chambers to Perry, Sept. 7, 1917; NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 527, File 168A-4: Reid to Chambers, Sept. 18, 1918.

that pro-German sentiment in China had manifested itself into support for the German War effort. The response of Canadian surveillance authorities to the initiation of the surveillance, however, reveals a great deal about the manner in which the Canadian government viewed the potential threat (or lack thereof) posed by the country's Chinese population. The Canadian government demonstrated a willingness to act decisively against ethnic groups deemed to represent a threat to Canadian security in the first months of the War. Chambers' resistance to the surveillance of the Chinese from 1914 to 1916, however, suggests that Canadian authorities did not view the Chinese as a potentially subversive foreign element. The alleged threats posed by these groups were largely external and not grave enough to merit the serious attention of Canadian authorities, who viewed the surveillance of the Chinese as a heavy burden on an overworked staff. Nathan's intervention secured the compliance of the Chief Press Censor, but only after he assured Chambers of the importance which Imperial authorities attached to the surveillance.

As I shall argue in Chapter Three, the resistance of the Office of the Chief Press Censor reflected a wider pattern of resistance by the Borden administration to intervene in Chinese politics in Canada. It was not until the threat posed by the Chinese was re-evaluated as an internal rather than external threat that the Canadian government began to view the country's Chinese population with increased concern.

*Chapter 3***Chinese Diaspora Politics and the Extension of
the Surveillance**

As outlined in Chapter Two, the surveillance of the Chinese Nationalist League and the Chinese diplomatic officials in Canada was initiated because Canadian and British officials suspected that both groups were aiding the German War effort. However, the Great War was an issue of secondary importance to these groups between 1914 and 1917.⁹⁵ The primary concern of Chinese political factions in Canada was the struggle to win the loyalty of the country's Chinese population, a contest that mirrored the struggle for power in China. In Canada, the conflict was particularly intense between the CNL, which supported Sun Yat-sen's claim to power, and the Peking diplomatic officials, who represented President Yuan Shikai.

As part of their strategy, the Chinese consular officials appealed to the Canadian government numerous times to suppress the Chinese Nationalist League. The Canadian government's reaction to these appeals was typically one of indifference: it did not view the CNL as a threat to peace and order in Canada, and saw no reason to intervene in Chinese politics. The initiation of the surveillance of the consular officials in August 1915 did little to change that assessment, and for the first two years of the War, Canadian surveillance authorities did not view the Chinese as a security threat to Canada.

Political tension within Victoria's Chinese community, however, escalated into open violence in October 1916 at a meeting of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent

⁹⁵ The Great War became an issue of greater importance to these groups after China entered into negotiations to join the Entente Powers.

Association (CCBA). The riot involved supporters of both factions already under surveillance, and though the event did not cause an immediate re-evaluation of the security threat posed by the Chinese, it did raise the possibility in the minds of some senior Canadian authorities that Chinese political strife represented a potential threat to civil order in Canada. This led the Canadian government to reconsider the threat posed by the country's Chinese, a process which came to fruition in 1917 during Canada's involvement in the shipment of Chinese labour battalions to serve on the Western Front. By the spring of 1917, Canadian authorities viewed the Chinese as a serious enough threat to justify the extension of the surveillance to encompass the country's entire Chinese population, regardless of political affiliation. The escalation of Chinese Canadian political rivalry into open conflict, coupled with the fear that these groups might sabotage the labour shipments, compelled Canadian authorities to re-evaluate the threat posed by the country's Chinese population.

Chinese Political Organizations in Canada Prior to 1914

The political strife between the Chinese Nationalist League and the Chinese consular officials during the Great War represented the continuation of a struggle for the loyalty of the Chinese in diaspora waged by a number of political factions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chinese consular representation was established in Canada in 1909 when the Qing government appointed Gong Xinzhao to serve as the

first Chinese consul-general in Ottawa.⁹⁶ This appointment demonstrated the Qing government's willingness to represent the interests of the Chinese in Canada, a willingness that represented a re-evaluation of traditional Qing emigration policy. From 1672 until 1859, emigration from China was a capital offence, and Peking took little interest in the welfare of the Chinese in the diaspora.⁹⁷ However, the declining power of the Qing Dynasty forced the Chinese government to fundamentally re-evaluate the relationship between the monarchy and the diaspora, and many Qing officials began to view overseas Chinese as an important source of political and economic support for the faltering regime.⁹⁸

To this end, the Qing government presented itself as the protector of Chinese citizens abroad against the exploitation of the host countries. The establishment of world-wide consular representation was a key element in this strategy, a process that began with the appointment of diplomatic representation in Singapore in 1877 and San Francisco in 1878.⁹⁹ Anti-Asian agitation in British Columbia, which culminated in the 1907 Vancouver Chinatown Riot, clearly demonstrated the need to protect the interests of the Chinese in Canada, and the Qing leadership responded with the appointment of the

⁹⁶ Charles J. Woodworth, *Canada and the Orient: A Study in International Relations* (Toronto 1941), 101. The appointment came during immigration negotiations at the International Opium Commission in Shanghai.

⁹⁷ Shih-shan H. Tsai, "Preserving the Dragon Seeds: The Evolution of Ch'ing Emigration Policy," *Asian Profile* 7, No. 6 (December 1979), 498.

⁹⁸ L. Ling-chi Wang, "Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," *Daedalus* 120, No. 2 (1991), 181-82.

⁹⁹ Prasenjit Duara, "Nationalists Among Transnationals: Overseas Chinese and the Idea of China, 1900-1911" in Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini eds., *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York 1997), 43.

consul general in Ottawa in 1909, followed by the establishment of a second consulate in Vancouver later that year.¹⁰⁰

Securing the political and economic loyalty of Chinese overseas was not the only responsibility of the Chinese diplomatic officials. As opposition to Qing rule grew in the late nineteenth century, the Qing government instructed its diplomatic officials to keep a close watch on leaders of anti-Qing movements abroad and to suppress revolutionary activity wherever possible.¹⁰¹ In Canada, this directive brought the Chinese consuls into conflict with the Revolutionary Alliance, which was a potent political force among Canada's Chinese on the eve of the 1911 Revolution.

Sun Yat-sen established the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui) in Tokyo in 1905 with the expressed purpose of overthrowing the Qing Dynasty and establishing a Chinese Republic.¹⁰² Sun transformed the Alliance into a world-wide revolutionary movement between 1905 and 1911 as he established branches in Southeast Asia, Europe and North America. Sun established branches in North America in New York, Chicago

¹⁰⁰ The Qing government responded to appeals from Canada's Chinese for assistance before consular representation was established in Ottawa and Vancouver. In 1896, the Qing statesman Li Hongzhang came to Canada in response to a petition from the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) in Victoria in an attempt to convince the Canadian government to lower the \$50 immigration Head Tax. In 1908, the Imperial Chinese Ministry of Education gave funds to the CCBA to establish a Chinese Public School in Victoria and sent an educational commission to Victoria to inspect it. See Harry Con, Ronald Con, Graham Johnson, and Edgar Wickberg, From China to Canada: A History of Chinese Communities in Canada (Toronto 1982), 73, 101, and Stanley, "Schooling, White Supremacy, and the Foundation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia," 227.

¹⁰¹ Yen Ching-hwang, The Role of the Overseas Chinese in the 1911 Revolution (Singapore 1978), 13.

¹⁰² George T. Yu, Party Politics in Republican China: The Koumintang, 1912-1924 (Berkeley 1966), 44.

and San Francisco in 1909 and 1910 before founding the first Canadian branches in Vancouver and Victoria in 1911.¹⁰³

Besides competition from Qing diplomatic officials, Sun's efforts to win the support of the Chinese in Canada were rivalled by the Empire Reform Association. Established in Victoria in 1899 by exiled Chinese reformer Kang Youwei, the Empire Reform Association claimed to act in the name of the imprisoned emperor Guangxu and advocated "progressive reform" for China "within the framework of a constitutional monarchy."¹⁰⁴ The organization attracted the support of the politically conservative Chinese merchant elite in Canada, who contributed \$7,000 to the Association during Kang's 1899 visit.¹⁰⁵ By 1904, the Association operated twelve branches across Canada with an estimated national membership of seven thousand.¹⁰⁶ The organization lost some of its support with the death of Emperor Guangxu in 1908, but retained a great deal of prestige and support among the Chinese merchant class until the 1911 Revolution.¹⁰⁷

While Sun Yat-sen found rivals in the Empire Reform Association and the Qing consular officials, the revolutionary leader found an ally in North America in the Cheekungtong (CKT). The CKT was a Chinese secret society that established its first branch in Canada in Quesnel Forks in 1876 and opened branches throughout British

¹⁰³ Chun-tu Hsueh, Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution (Stanford 1961), 48. The organization of revolutionary activity and fund-raising in Vancouver and Victoria began in mid-1910 under the supervision of Feng Ziyou.

¹⁰⁴ Con et. al., From China to Canada, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Harold Schiffrin, Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution (Los Angeles 1968), 161.

¹⁰⁶ Con et. al., From China to Canada, 75.

¹⁰⁷ Shih-shan H. Tsai, China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911 (Fayetteville 1983), 135-36.

Columbia in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸ The CKT endorsed Sun's cause and allowed him to use the organization's publication *The Chinese Times* to promote the revolution.¹⁰⁹

The CKT also played a significant role in the success of Sun's fundraising efforts in Canada. The CKT solicited donations from its members to support Sun and mortgaged the organization's buildings in Victoria, Toronto and Montreal to support the cause.¹¹⁰ The support of the CKT played a substantial role in the success of Sun's 1910 fundraising campaign, which raised HK\$63,000 (Hong Kong Dollars) in Canada, more than any other country in the world.¹¹¹ Sun's fundraising success was even more impressive given Canada's relatively small Chinese population of 27,774.¹¹² By way of contrast, the Chinese in Canada contributed more money than the combined overseas Chinese populations of French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies, the colonies that had the largest overseas Chinese populations in the world.¹¹³ Victoria, with a Chinese population

¹⁰⁸ Con et. al., *From China to Canada*, 30, 35. The CKT was a decentralized organization until the 1880's when the Vancouver and Victoria branches assumed a position of authority. The CKT in Canada operated independently from its counterpart in the United States, which was headquartered in San Francisco. See also L. Eve Armentrout Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns: Chinese Politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution* (Honolulu 1990), 26.

¹⁰⁹ Con et. al., *From China to Canada*, 76.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹¹¹ Hsueh, *Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution*, 86. The estimate of HK\$63,000 may be conservative, as other sources cite a higher total. C. Martin Wilbur cites a total of HK\$70,000 as the amount raised in Canada, while Con et. al. cite a potential total of HK\$100,000, based on an estimate by Lee Tung-hai (C. Martin Wilbur, *Sun Yat-sen: Frustrated Patriot* (New York 1976), 42; Con et. al, *The Chinese in Canada*, 103 and 115n5).

¹¹² Roy, *A White Man's Province*, 269.

¹¹³ The contribution of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies was HK\$30,000, and that of the Chinese in French Indo-China was HK\$32,550 (Hsueh, *Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution*, 86.) Due to a lack of census data for 1910-11, an exact total of the overseas Chinese populations of these colonies is impossible to obtain. The closest data available for the Dutch East Indies reveals a Chinese population in the colony of 563,000 in 1905 and 809,000 in 1920 (Charles A. Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese*

of 3,458, contributed more money (HK\$33,000) to Sun than most countries, and Montreal, with a very small Chinese population of 1,200, contributed more money (HK\$11,000) than the San Francisco branch of the CNL (which contributed HK\$10,000), the headquarters of the movement in North America.¹¹⁴ The success of the Tongmenghui in Canada was striking, and Canada's Chinese population contributed more money to Sun's movement than any other country in the world.

Domestic Chinese Politics and the Chinese in Canada, 1911-1917

The struggle for political power in China after the 1911 Revolution had a significant impact on Chinese political organizations in Canada. The factions that sought power in China looked to the overseas Chinese for support, a development that significantly intensified political tension within Canada's Chinese population. This struggle was particularly intense in Canada between the Chinese Nationalist League (the successor to Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui) and the Chinese consular officials. The struggle between these two factions in Canada, which commenced after Sun's exile from China in 1914, was an important element of the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada.

in Crisis (Oxford 1983), 2). Reliable data for French Indo-China is even more difficult to obtain: French colonial authorities estimated a Chinese population of between 100,000 and 233,000 in Indo-China in the early years of the century (Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Sun Yat-sen and the French, 1900-1908* (Berkeley 1979), 6.) Regardless, even a highly conservative estimate of the Chinese population of these colonies yields a figure five to six times higher than Canada in Indo-China, and twenty to twenty-five times higher in the Dutch East Indies.

¹¹⁴ Figures for Canadian cities are from the census data from 1911 rather than 1910 in Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, 84 and 100. The Chinese population of California in 1910 was 36,248, substantially larger than Canada's population of 27,774 (Min Zhou, *Chinatown: The Socio-Economic Potential of an Urban Enclave* (Philadelphia 1992), 44.) See also Hsueh, *Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution*, 86.

This struggle intensified over the course of the Great War and was the catalyst, which caused Canadian authorities to re-evaluate the threat posed by the Chinese in Canada.

The renewal of the struggle for the loyalty of the overseas Chinese was a direct result of the political fallout of the Republican Revolution in China. Sun Yat-sen was declared Provisional President of the new Chinese Republic on December 29, 1911, but recognized immediately that his lack of military power made his hold on power very tenuous.¹¹⁵ Sun was thus compelled to yield the presidency to Yuan Shikai, though he did so on the stipulation that Yuan would honour a new Chinese constitution and hold elections by 1913.¹¹⁶ Yuan accepted these terms, though he refused to move from his seat of power in Peking to govern from Nanjing as Sun had requested as a show of good intentions.

After relinquishing the presidency to Yuan, Sun Yat-sen focused his attention on the task of transforming the Tongmenghui into an open, legitimate political party to contest the elections. After many internal debates, the Tongmenghui merged with a variety of other parties to form the National People's Party (Guomindang).¹¹⁷ The leadership of the new party fell to Song Jiaoren, one of Sun's most talented advisors who

¹¹⁵ Spence, The Search For Modern China, 267.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 278. Yuan was the leader of the Beiyang Army and was called upon by the Qing leadership to quell the revolution in 1911. He instead negotiated a settlement with Sun and the revolutionaries

¹¹⁷ Yu, Party Politics in Republican China, 95-96, 101. The main parties involved in the merger with the Tongmeng hui were the regional Northern Party, the Joint Citizen's Progress Party and the Progressive Republican Society.

played a large role in the formation of the Guomindang and the drafting of the Republican Chinese Constitution.¹¹⁸

Elections were held in China for the newly created Senate and House of Representatives in December 1912 and January 1913 respectively, and the Guomindang fared very well in both. The party won 269 of 596 seats in the House of Representatives and 123 of 274 seats in the Senate.¹¹⁹ These results placed the Guomindang in a position of substantial authority in the young Chinese Republic, and Song Jiaoren stood poised to assume leadership of China as the new Premier. Song now took aim at Chinese President Yuan Shikai and criticized him for his dependence on foreign loans and weak foreign policy.¹²⁰ He also campaigned for the creation of a system of regional autonomy and the election of provincial governors.¹²¹ However, Song's campaign was cut short when an assassin shot and killed him in Shanghai on March 20, 1913. Direct evidence linking Yuan to the murder was sparse, but the leadership of the Guomindang was convinced of the President's culpability, and the result was open conflict between Yuan and the Guomindang. Internal dissension fatally weakened the Guomindang, as members debated the relative wisdom of acting against Yuan by constitutional means or through open rebellion.¹²² A number of Guomindang members defected to Yuan's camp, and the remnants of the party launched an ill-fated military rebellion against Yuan in July 1913

¹¹⁸ John King Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985 (New York 1986), 172.

¹¹⁹ Spence, The Search for Modern China, 280.

¹²⁰ Yu, Party Politics in Republican China, 107. Song was particularly critical of Yuan's failure to check Russian aggression in Mongolia.

¹²¹ Marie-Claire Bergère, Sun Yat-sen (Stanford 1998), 227.

¹²² Ibid., 110.

which the President crushed within two months.¹²³ Yuan consolidated his victory by dissolving the Guomindang on November 4, 1913 and introducing a new constitution that eliminated restraints on the power of the President and placed no limitations on the length of the presidential term of office.¹²⁴ Sun Yat-sen was once again driven into exile.

However, while Yuan had effectively eliminated the Guomindang as a domestic opposition force by January 1914, he could not act in kind against the party's North American affiliate, the Chinese Nationalist League (CNL). The CNL was the successor in Canada to the Tongmenghui, and by 1914, operated 42 branches across Canada.¹²⁵ No official headquarters was established in Canada, though Zhen Shuyen, Director of Party Affairs in Canada and editor of the organization's official organ the *New Republic*, operated out of the Vancouver and Victoria branches.¹²⁶

The CNL was a prominent political force in Canada between 1911 and 1914. The CNL faced no threat from the Peking consular officials in this period, and faced little effective opposition from the Empire Reform Association. The latter reorganized itself into the Constitutionalist Party (Xianzhengdang) after the Revolution, but lost most of its supporters after the 1911 Revolution.¹²⁷ The primary threat to the influence of the CNL in Canada in this period was the Cheekungtung (CKT), which broke its alliance with the

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁴ Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, 255.

¹²⁵ Con et. al., *From China to Canada*, 313. The provincial breakdown of CNL branches in Canada in 1914 was as follows: 28 in British Columbia, 5 in Alberta, 1 in Manitoba, 4 in Ontario, 2 in Quebec, and 1 each in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

CNL after the 1911 Revolution. The CKT claimed that Sun had not adequately rewarded the organization for its contribution to the successful revolution, and the group emerged as one of the CNL's chief political rivals between 1911 and 1918.¹²⁸ This rivalry focused primarily on gaining influence over Chinese Canadian public institutions such as the Consolidated Benevolent Associations in Vancouver and Victoria.¹²⁹

While the CNL sought to gain political influence in Canada's Chinese communities, the primary purpose of the organization remained fundraising in support of Sun Yat-sen. The CNL was vitally important to Sun's revolutionary cause, an importance demonstrated by its success in resisting the sweeping organizational changes initiated by Sun Yat-sen after his exile. The crushing defeat suffered at the hands of Yuan Shikai forced Sun to re-organize his revolutionary movement. Convinced that he had erred in his decision to transform the Guomindang into an open political party, Sun opted to return to the secret society model that had won him success in 1911. He inaugurated a new secret revolutionary organization, the *Zhongguo gemingdang* (Chinese Revolutionary Party), on July 8, 1914, with restrictive membership criteria and strict rules

¹²⁸ Edgar Wickberg, "Chinese and Canadian Influences on Chinese Politics in Vancouver, 1900-1947," *BC Studies* 45 (1980), 44.

¹²⁹ Though Canadian surveillance authorities did not pay as much attention to the CKT during the Great War as they paid to the consular officials and the CNL, there is evidence to indicate that the organization was also subject to surveillance in 1916. Chambers corresponded with the editor of the *Chinese Times*, the organ of the CKT, several times in 1916 and 1917 to admonish the publication for failing to comply with censorship regulations. The publication printed material that Chambers deemed to be pro-German, and Chambers warned that the power of the Press Censorship Office would be "exercised without mercy" unless the publication complied with censorship regulations. Ultimately, no action was taken against the *Chinese Times*, as it continued to publish throughout the War. The pro-German sentiment expressed in the publication, however, was sufficient to convince Canadian surveillance authorities to implement a surveillance on the CKT's correspondence, and telegrams to and from CKT members were intercepted in the summer of 1916. (NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Chambers to Editors of the *Chinese Times*, May 15, 1916 and July 10, 1916; NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Editors of the *Chinese Times*, March 24, 1917; NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 527, File 168A-2: Seized correspondence of CKT members, May 26 and June 6, 1916.)

of submission to Sun as leader.¹³⁰ A promise of “personal and undivided loyalty” to Sun was required of all members, an oath that had to be sealed with a fingerprint.¹³¹

Sun’s comprehensive re-organization of the Guomindang, however, had only a limited impact on the CNL in North America, as many prominent leaders refused to acquiesce to Sun’s organizational reforms. CNL President Lin Sen and Vice-President Feng Ziyou agreed with the need for a secret party to lead the revolutionary movement at the top, but argued that restrictive membership requirements and strict rules of obedience were unnecessary in North America, where the organization operated relatively free from government harassment.¹³² They also argued that adopting a secret society model would prevent the CNL from recruiting new members and undermine the organization’s ability to raise funds. Thus, despite Sun’s directives, the leaders of the CNL in North America refused to submit its members to the more onerous membership rituals, protest that was tolerated because of the organization’s vital role in harnessing the economic support of the Chinese in North America.¹³³

The CNL’s ability to resist the pressure to adopt a secret society model allowed the organization to prosper and grow in North America throughout the Great War. Branches of the CNL opened all across Canada during the War, including branches in small towns such as Drumheller, Alberta, and Revelstoke, B.C.. By 1919, the CNL

¹³⁰ Yu, Party Politics in Republican China, 122.

¹³¹ Ibid., 119.

¹³² Friedman, Backward Toward Revolution, 100.

¹³³ Ibid., 99.

operated fifty-six branches across Canada with an estimated membership of six to eight thousand.¹³⁴ The North American membership of the CNL in 1916 was estimated at 70,000.¹³⁵ The organization fulfilled its mandate to raise funds for Sun Yat-sen; over the course of the War, the CNL raised “hundreds of thousands of dollars” in North America.¹³⁶ The most aggressive CNL fund-raising campaign in Canada began in July 1917 when Zhen Shuyan called for a “military fund for support” of Sun Yat-sen, a drive that resulted in the collection of approximately \$19,500 in just over three months.¹³⁷ The CNL in the United States raised thousands of dollars for Sun as well, and also pressured the American government to withhold financial support and loans for Peking.¹³⁸ Thus, despite a certain degree of dissension, the Chinese Nationalist League remained loyal to Sun Yat-sen throughout the years of the Great War and played a vital role in raising money for Sun’s revolutionary efforts. While Sun faced a great deal of fundraising competition from other revolutionary leaders in Southeast Asia, such as Chen Qiongmeng and Li Liezhun, Sun’s influence in North America remained dominant.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, vol. 526, file 168-1: Reid to Chambers, January 28, 1916; RG 6, E, Vol. 527, File 168A-4: Reid to Chambers, July 16, 1917; *Victoria Times*, February 26, 1919; *Vancouver World*, August 20, 1917.

¹³⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, vol. 86, file 246-1: Reid to Chambers, November 2, 1916.

¹³⁶ NAC, RG 6, E, vol. 86, file 246-2, “Chinese Consul Being Guarded from Enemies” (date unknown).

¹³⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, vol. 526, file 168, part 3, Malcolm Reid to Chambers, July 6, 1917.: CNL Vancouver to CNL Branches across Canada, Sept. 5, 1917; Zhen Shuyan to Liao Zhonghai, Sept. 11, 19, and Oct. 9, 1917. Liao Zhonghai was Sun Yat-sen’s personal secretary in Shanghai and the money was wired from Zhen to Liao in instalments in September and October 1917.

¹³⁸ Friedman, *Backward Toward Revolution*, 99.

¹³⁹ Hseuh, *Huang Hsing and the Chinese Revolution*, 177.

The strong support that Sun received in North America came despite a concerted effort by the Peking consular officials to undermine the CNL.¹⁴⁰ This effort began in Canada in January 1914 when consul-general Yang Shuwen issued a request to Prime Minister Borden to ban the sale of arms and ammunition to all Chinese in Canada, and to prohibit the export of such goods to China.¹⁴¹ Yang claimed that cordial Sino-Canadian relations rested on the suppression of Chinese “rebels” that had taken refuge in Canada and whose revolutionary activity threatened stability in China.¹⁴² Borden gave little serious attention to the appeal, responding only that the consul-general would have to make the request through proper diplomatic channels before it could be considered.¹⁴³

Receiving little satisfaction from the Canadian federal government on the issue of arms smuggling, the Chinese consular officials adopted a more local strategy in their appeals. On November 2, 1914, a Chinese resident of Kelowna, B.C. named Kwong Lee Yeun was arrested for attempting to ship weapons and ammunition to Hong Kong.¹⁴⁴ Vancouver consul Lin Shiyuan contacted Kelowna Chief of Police R.W. Thomas to

¹⁴⁰ The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued instructions on January 16, 1914, to “all representatives of China abroad...to request that meetings of Chinese rebel refugees should be suppressed, rebel leaders deported and the sale of arms and ammo to Chinese prohibited.” (RG 25, Vol. 1142, File 308: Harcourt to Governor General, March 11, 1914.) The Chinese consular officials in Canada represented the government of Yuan Shikai from 1914 until the Chinese President’s death in June 1916. The campaign to suppress the CNL continued after Yuan’s death, however, as the consuls continued to represent the interests of (and take orders from) Peking, which continued its efforts to crush Sun Yat-sen’s movement. See Con et. al., From China to Canada, 105.

¹⁴¹ NAC, BP, MG 26, H, Vol. 183 (hereafter BP) #100264: memo to the Colonial Secretary, February 16, 1914.

¹⁴² BP #100260: Yang Shuwen to Borden, January 19, 1914.

¹⁴³ BP #100294: Pope to Borden, June 23, 1914.

¹⁴⁴ *Kelowna Courier*, December 10, 1914. Spelling of Kwong Lee Yuen intentionally copied from the report in the *Courier*. Kwong attempted to smuggle two hundred Winchester rifles, an automatic Browning pistol and 700 rounds of ammunition.

request a "thorough investigation into this case or any other person who has shipped firearms or ammunition into China."¹⁴⁵ The Vancouver consul asked that any such offenders be dealt with "severely," but his appeal went unanswered. The Kelowna City Solicitor withdrew the case after the Minister of Marine expressed no desire to prosecute.¹⁴⁶

In April 1915, the Vancouver consul targeted the issue of "seditious addresses" and public assemblies in Vancouver. Lin Shiyuan wrote a letter to the Mayor of Vancouver to persuade him that "members and advocates" of revolutionary movements were creating trouble in Chinatown by attempting to rally the "ignorant and impressionable" elements of Chinatown to their cause.¹⁴⁷ As a solution, Lin proposed that the consulate should be allowed to issue permits of approval prior to any Chinese public meeting, a process that would allow him to screen any "mischief makers" before they could create trouble. This effort met with a receptive audience, and Vancouver City Council yielded to the Vancouver consul the right to determine the acceptability of Chinese public assemblies in the city.¹⁴⁸

The Chinese consular officials also took aim at the *New Republic* newspaper, the official organ of the CNL in Canada. In March 1915, Lin Shiyuan attempted to persuade Victoria postmaster Harry Bishop to close "his majesty's mails to this malicious" and "mischievous publication" that attempted to sow "the seeds of sedition and confusion"

¹⁴⁵ University of British Columbia Special Collections (hereafter UBCSC), China Consul Fonds, 1914: Lin Shiyuan to R.W. Thomas, November 2, 1914.

¹⁴⁶ *Kelowna Courier*, December 10, 1914.

¹⁴⁷ UBCSC, China Consul Fonds, 1915: Lin Shiyuan to Mayor of Vancouver, April 29, 1915.

¹⁴⁸ Con et. al., From China to Canada, 119.

among the Chinese population of British Columbia.¹⁴⁹ When Bishop proved unwilling to comply with the request, the Vancouver consul took it directly to the Deputy Postmaster General of Canada, A. Bolduc.¹⁵⁰ To make his request more credible, Lin included letters from prominent members of Victoria's Chinese community, including Joe Gar Chow of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and Lee Dan of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, both of whom strongly condemned the agenda of the *New Republic*.¹⁵¹

Once again, the consul's efforts to initiate immediate action against the *New Republic* failed; Bolduc returned that he did not know of any authority that the Postal Service had "under which action could be taken" against the publication, but did agree to forward the consul's request to the Press Censorship Office.¹⁵² Chief Press Censor Ernest J. Chambers outlined Canadian censorship regulations for the Vancouver consul and asked him to provide evidence that the *New Republic* had violated any of them.¹⁵³ Lin reluctantly admitted that while the *New Republic* "promote[d] the revolutionary cause" in Canada, the newspaper had not contravened Canadian censorship regulations.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ UBCSC, China Consul Fonds, 1915: Lin Shiyuan to Harry Bishop, March 2, 1915.

¹⁵⁰ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Lin to Bolduc, June 24, 1915.

¹⁵¹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Joe Gar Chow to Lin Shiyuan, Feb. 27, 1915 and Lee Dan to Lin Shiyuan, March 1, 1915, both included in the letter from Lin to Bolduc, June 24, 1915. Both the CCBA and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce were staunch supporters of the Peking government throughout the War. The consuls also enjoyed the support of Lee Mongkow, the principal of the Chinese Public School in Victoria, and Sam Kee, one of the wealthiest Chinese merchants in Vancouver. See also Con et. al., *From China to Canada*, 64 and 77.

¹⁵² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Bolduc to Chambers, September 24, 1915.

¹⁵³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Lin, September 27, 1915.

¹⁵⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Lin to Chambers, October 20, 1915.

Thus, the Chinese consular officials' attempts to suppress the activities of the CNL in 1914 and 1915 yielded few significant results. Aside from the Mayor of Vancouver, the government and law enforcement officials contacted by the consuls gave little more than polite acknowledgement to the requests and suggestions as to the appropriate authorities to contact. None of the activities of the CNL in Canada were seen to represent a threat to Canadian security: Canadian officials viewed the rivalry between the CNL and Peking as an issue of interest to the Chinese alone.

This perspective changed in late 1916 and 1917, and the catalyst in this regard was a riot at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) in Victoria. On October 8, 1916, members of the CNL disrupted a CCBA meeting to protest the outcome of the organization's executive elections in September.¹⁵⁵ A melee ensued which resulted in the arrest of ten Chinese on charges of aggravated assault and rioting.¹⁵⁶ The riot was the first serious incident of political violence in Victoria's Chinese community since the outbreak of the Great War.

The event received substantial media coverage in Victoria's newspapers, and the consular officials renewed their attack on the CNL. Unable to have the *New Republic* banned under Canadian censorship regulations, the Chinese consular officials attempted to pressure the Canadian government to act against the CNL and the *New Republic* on the premise that they represented a threat to peace and stability within Canada. Vancouver vice-consul David Lew hired Victoria lawyer H. W. Herschner to represent the Chinese

¹⁵⁵ UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 4, File 6: *Chinese Times*, June 21, 1917.

consulate and offered Herschner a reward of \$250 if he could successfully persuade Canadian authorities to suppress the *New Republic*.¹⁵⁷ Over a period of several months in late 1916 and early 1917, Herschner made a sustained effort to convince Chief Press Censor Chambers and Capt. C. Tweedale, Chief District Intelligence Officer for Victoria, of the subversive and potentially dangerous nature of the *New Republic*. Herschner accused the editors of the newspaper of causing the Victoria riot by publishing a series of "malicious inciting editorials" in the weeks leading up to the CCBA meeting.¹⁵⁸ Herschner provided translations of the editorials, including one which allegedly advocated the murder of CCBA President Low Gee Quai.

Herschner made reference to the Vancouver consul's previous appeals to have the *New Republic* banned, but claimed that the threat posed by the publication had evolved since 1915. Herschner conceded that the *New Republic* had primarily represented a threat to the stability of the Chinese government in the past, but argued that it had now evolved into "a menace against the good government of [Canada]" and a threat to "internal public tranquillity."¹⁵⁹ He argued that the publication incited the "ignorant and rowdy element amongst the Chinese" to acts of violence, a threat which had the potential to "bring about Tong wars in the Province." His condemnation also included an accusation of German

¹⁵⁶ *Victoria Daily Times*, November 21, 1916. The alleged source of the riot was the CNL's dissatisfaction at having failed to secure any senior posts for its members in the CCBA's executive elections.

¹⁵⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Lew to Hastings, enclosed in letter from Thornton Fell to Chambers, Feb. 24, 1917.

¹⁵⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: H. W. Herschner to Capt. Tweedale, Oct. 31, 1916.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

complicity as he suggested that "wherever trouble is created among our foreign population it is due to the work of German agents."

Herschner found a receptive audience in Tweedale, who endorsed the barrister's arguments and advocated immediate action against the *New Republic*. Tweedale argued that the publication should be investigated as an "act of courtesy" to a "friendly neutral power" and gave credence to Herschner's suggestion that the Chinese revolutionary movement was a German conspiracy.¹⁶⁰ Tweedale was particularly concerned that the publication might incite Tong Warfare in B.C.; he commented to Chambers that "as there are in the neighbourhood of some 10,000 Chinese in the province, the trouble might assume proportions of some magnitude." The information was forwarded to Solicitor General Arthur Meighen for his opinion, who further validated the threat posed by the *New Republic*:

I consider these Chinese publications to be very dangerous at the present time; they incite not only to revolution in China, but also to acts in furtherance or towards the inception thereof, within Canada.¹⁶¹

Despite these endorsements, the Chief Press Censor remained unwilling to suppress the *New Republic* without "proof of the publication of undesirable matter."¹⁶² Undaunted, Herschner continued his effort to convince Chambers of the subversive nature of the *New Republic* in December 1916. He claimed that he could not obtain evidence of the nature demanded by Chambers because "the medium of...Chinese character writing" was "always susceptible of a half dozen different meanings," and thus

¹⁶⁰ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Tweedale to Chambers, Nov. 3, 1916.

¹⁶¹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Memo from the Office of the Solicitor General, Nov. 13, 1916.

the *New Republic* would carry out its seditious activity through innuendo without explicitly violating censorship regulations.¹⁶³ Herschner again made reference to the Victoria CCBA riot and raised the spectre of further Chinese political violence in British Columbia:¹⁶⁴

What would you say if these disorders required the whole military force of the Province to restore order? Our enemies would hail with pleasure local disturbances among the foreign element in the Dominion and according to your ruling, we are helpless to invoke very useful orders.

Herschner concluded with renewed accusations of German influence behind the *New Republic* and declared that it was Chambers' "loyal duty" to suppress it.

By February 1917, Chambers was clearly frustrated with Herschner's persistent efforts to persuade him to ban the publication. An exasperated Chief Press Censor commented on the efforts to have the *New Republic* suppressed:¹⁶⁵

It is a remarkable thing that there should be so much persistent hammering at the *New Republic*, and yet my requests for distinct and definite proof bring no replies from those who are attacking the paper in question.

Closure finally came through the intervention of Thornten Fell, legal consul for the editors of the *New Republic*. Fell pleaded the innocence of his clients and proved to provided Chambers with proof that the Vancouver vice-consul had provided Herschner

¹⁶² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Lin, Nov. 17, 1916.

¹⁶³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Herschner to Chambers, Dec. 27, 1916.

¹⁶⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Herschner to Chambers, Jan. 8, 1917.

¹⁶⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Reid, Feb. 12, 1917. A renewed appeal for concrete proof that the publication had contravened censorship law yielded no results. Chambers sent copies of the *New Republic* to consul-general Yang Shuwen, who admitted that he could "hardly find any sentiment or criticism there which would be objectionable to the War Measure" (NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Yang Shuwen, Feb. 17, 1917; Yang Shuwen to Chambers, April 25, 1917.

with incorrect translations of the allegedly inflammatory editorials.¹⁶⁶ Chambers was satisfied with this explanation, which put an end to the efforts to have the *New Republic* banned in connection with the Victoria CCBA riot.¹⁶⁷

On the surface, the unsuccessful campaign to have the *New Republic* banned represented another setback for the Chinese consular officials in Canada. The effort had failed, and the attempt to mislead Canadian authorities with questionable translations of the *New Republic* weakened the credibility of the Vancouver diplomatic officials in the eyes of Canadian authorities. Despite this failure, the strategy adopted by the consuls to present the *New Republic* and the CNL as threats to public order and stability in Canada proved very beneficial to their cause in the long term. While this argument did not spark an immediate re-evaluation of the threat posed by the CNL, it did find a receptive audience among some surveillance officials, and raised for the first time the possibility that the Chinese revolutionary organization posed a threat to Canadian security and public order.

Canada and the Shipment of Chinese Labourers, 1917-18

The event most responsible for the widespread acceptance by Canadian authorities of this internal threat was Canada's involvement in the shipment of Chinese labourers to the Western Front. Between April 1917 and March 1918, nearly 75,000 Chinese

¹⁶⁶ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Thornton Fell to Chambers, Feb. 24, 1917. Fell represented the defendants in the Victoria CCBA riot trials, during which time the translations of the editorials had been discredited. He had also represented Chinese seeking damages arising from anti-Chinese violence in the 1887 Riot in Vancouver. See Con et. al., From China to Canada, 63.

¹⁶⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Fell, March 2, 1917.

labourers were transported across Canada for embarkation to France.¹⁶⁸ These shipments raised significant security concerns for Canadian authorities, who feared that hostile Chinese in Canada might sabotage the shipments. This concern was heightened after Canadian officials intercepted a flood of Chinese correspondence which expressed admiration for Germany and opposition to Chinese participation in the War. By March 1918, Canadian surveillance officials viewed the country's Chinese population in a new and negative light, and took the threat of subversion posed by the Chinese more seriously than ever.

Chinese leaders first proposed the idea of sending Chinese labourers to work in France in June 1915 in an effort to avoid the "dangerous situation of complete isolation."¹⁶⁹ By August 1916, the British and French had secured the right to hire independent contractors to recruit labourers in China. The Entente established processing stations in Shandong, Weihaiwei and Qingdao, and recruiters had little difficulty attracting Chinese men that sought to escape the poverty and uncertainty of their homeland.¹⁷⁰ Shipping the labourers safely to France proved to offer a significant challenge: the British favoured sending the labourers through the Suez Canal and into the Mediterranean, but that option proved to be too dangerous after a German U-boat torpedoed the French ship *Athos* in the fall of 1916, killing 543 Chinese workers.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1, "Chinese Coolies Sent to the Front in France." I have calculated the total number of labourers shipped across Canada to be 74,671, based on the ship manifests available in File 331-1.

¹⁶⁹ Chi, China Diplomacy, 129.

¹⁷⁰ Spence, The Search For Modern China, 290-91.

¹⁷¹ Michael Summerskill, China on the Western Front: Britain's Chinese Work Force in the First World War (London 1982), 2.

British authorities decided that it would be safer to ship them from China to Vancouver, send them across Canada via rail, and then complete the trip across the Atlantic where they would be protected by naval convoys. This plan was approved, and the first shipment of Chinese labourers arrived in Vancouver on the *Empress of Russia* on April 3, 1917.¹⁷²

Before the arrival of the *Empress of Russia*, the Chief Press Censor took measures to ensure the secrecy of the labour shipments. Chambers circulated a memo to Canadian telegraph companies and to editors of Canadian publications which stated that it was "considered highly desirable that the transportation of these men through Canada occur without any publicity whatsoever."¹⁷³ Chambers later justified this blanket ban by stating that it was necessary to:

Prevent tampering with the coolies while en route through Canada by men who were either agents of the enemy or of certain revolutionary organizations in China having branches throughout the Dominion.¹⁷⁴

This focus on 'agents of the enemy' and 'revolutionary organizations' reveals a continued suspicion of the CNL and the Chinese consular officials, both of which were investigated on the suspicion of intention to sabotage the transports.

With regard to the labour shipments, suspicion did not fall on the Chinese government as a whole; the government of China initiated the negotiations to recruit Chinese workers, and Peking expressed a willingness to cooperate with the Canadian and

¹⁷² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol.620, File 331-1: William Duncan Scott to Chambers, March 12, 1917.

¹⁷³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Confidential Circular to Canadian Editors (CPC 48), issued on March 14, 1917.

¹⁷⁴ NAC, RG 24, Vol. 2847, File 3281: Final Report of Chief Press Censor, p.59.

Imperial authorities in an effort to maintain strict silence regarding the shipments.¹⁷⁵ However, Canadian surveillance authorities did pay very close attention to Vancouver vice-consul David Lew. Lew was a trained lawyer and former secretary of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Victoria, and was known to Canadian surveillance authorities as the man who hired H. W. Herschner to attempt to have the *New Republic* suppressed, and who provided the barrister with the misleading translations. Lew was also observed meeting with Viscount Di Villa of Seattle, a suspected of spy with links to the Central Powers.¹⁷⁶ Immigration Inspector Malcolm Reid characterized Lew as a “menace,” the most dangerous of the individuals under surveillance in the Vancouver consulate.¹⁷⁷

With this in mind, Canadian surveillance officials observed with concern a meeting between Lew and the President of the Trades and Labour Council James McVety, at which Lew allegedly spread rumours about the true destination of the Chinese labourers.¹⁷⁸ Canadian officials believed that Lew, presumably working on behalf of Germany, was attempting to gain the cooperation of organized labour to interfere with the labour shipments.¹⁷⁹ This suspicion heightened in June 1917 when William Yates, General Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, delivered a speech denouncing the

¹⁷⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Chambers to W. Banks, Editor of the Globe, May 7, 1917.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.. See also Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War, 242n20.

¹⁷⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A-1: Reid to Chambers, April 23, 1917.

¹⁷⁸ NAC, E, vol. 620, file 331-1: Reid to Chambers, April 7, 1917

¹⁷⁹ NAC, E, vol. 620, file 331-1: Chambers to Acton Burrows, Editor in Chief of Canadian Railway and Marine World Magazine, April 21, 1917. In the letter, Chambers commented that “there are elements among the labouring classes which are understood to be opposed to the sending of these coolies to Europe.”

shipment of the Chinese labourers and accusing the CPR of diverting several hundred of the workers to use as labour on CPR lines in Saskatchewan.¹⁸⁰ Yates also denounced the shipments as illegal on the basis that the labourers had paid no head tax. The Department of Immigration launched an extensive investigation into Yates, but investigators were unable to conclude with confidence that Yates "play[ed] the double game."¹⁸¹

Surveillance authorities also suspected that the CNL would attempt to sabotage the labour shipments.¹⁸² Sun Yat-sen denounced the employment of Chinese workers in France as exploitation at the hands of the Entente. In response to the sinking of the *Athos* by a German U-boat, Sun focused the venom of his attack not on Germany but on the Entente, calling the recruitment of Chinese labourers a "trap [with] which the British and French lured our countrymen and thus sent them to their death."¹⁸³ The most serious incident of CNL interference with the labour shipments occurred in January 1918 when Canadian authorities learned that a Chinese interpreter in Vancouver named Leung Shou Yat was spreading false rumours among the labourers. An investigation revealed that Leung, an active member of the CNL, told incoming Chinese workers that one-tenth of the labourers sent to France had been "drafted as first line fighting men for service in the

¹⁸⁰ "Illegal Use of Chinamen," *British Columbian*, June 14, 1917.

¹⁸¹ NAC, E, vol. 620., file 331-1: Report of Special Operator #208 to Reid, July 13, 1917.

¹⁸² This episode did not represent the first time that the Canadian government concerned itself over the potential sabotage of rail shipments by German agents or German sympathizers in Canada. In 1914, a plan to ship Japanese troops across Canada for service on the Western Front was considered, leading to concern that German saboteurs would strike at the Canadian Pacific Railway. See Martin Kitchen, "The German Invasion of Canada in the First World War," *International History Review* 7 (1985), 251.

¹⁸³ Sun Yat-sen, "The Question of China's Survival" in Donald G. Gillan, Ramong H. Myers and Julie Lee Wei, eds., Prescriptions for Saving China: Selected Writings of Sun Yat-sen (Stanford 1994), 137.

front trenches.”¹⁸⁴ Of even greater concern was the fact that Leung had corresponded with a newspaper in Weihaiwei, which promptly printed his rumours as fact.¹⁸⁵ Authorities were not entirely certain whether Leung’s motives were personal or political, as he claimed to have spread the rumours because he was “dissatisfied with the manner in which the authorities [were] paying his wages.” Nonetheless, Canadian and Imperial authorities were concerned that “enemy agents and pacifists in China” used reports such as Leung’s to undermine recruitment in China, and the case was taken very seriously.¹⁸⁶ The case was forwarded to the War Office, which determined that there was insufficient evidence to take legal action against Leung, but recommended that a “strict censorship of this individual’s correspondence” be maintained to ensure that he did not create further trouble.¹⁸⁷

The main significance of Canada’s involvement in the shipment of Chinese labour to France was that it acted as a catalyst for the extension of suspicion over the country’s Chinese population as a whole. This was related to the concern over the sabotage goals of the political factions in that the scope of the security concerns demanded that authorities keep a closer eye on the rank and file members. However, Canadian authorities expressed for the first time concern over the subversive potential of the country’s Chinese population as a whole, regardless of political affiliation. This

¹⁸⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Reid to Chambers, Jan. 18, 1918. Leung worked in a military hospital in Vancouver where the labourers were checked upon arrival in Vancouver.

¹⁸⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Arthur Sladen to Sir Willoughby Gwatkin, Chief of the General Staff, Jan. 11, 1918.

¹⁸⁶ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Chambers to Major G. C. Carvell, Military Headquarters, Montreal, Jan. 18, 1918.

¹⁸⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: War Office to Chambers, March 8, 1918.

represented an important turning point in the evolution of the Canadian perception of the threat posed by the Chinese.

As per guidelines established before the War, mail to and from neutral countries during wartime was subject to censorship, and as China did not declare war on the Central Powers until August 1917, mail to and from China was subject to this regulation.¹⁸⁸ Intercepted Chinese mail was not a source of widespread concern to Canadian authorities until April 1917, when surveillance officials intercepted a deluge of correspondence that expressed vehement opposition to the Chinese labour shipments. Many of the seized letters expressed distrust regarding the true intentions of the Allies: one Chinese resident of Vancouver wrote to his family in Canton to warn them not to be induced to join the labour battalions:¹⁸⁹

They were under the impression that they would go over to work as labourers but they will be used as soldiers at the battle front. I see them going but surely I shall not see them return. I wish you would warn our village people that if any agents come over to induce our village people to go, that you will warn them not to go.

Another seized letter intended for Canton expressed similar sentiments:¹⁹⁰

A Ship has been sunk some time ago in the Atlantic Ocean with several Chinese on board...by a German submarine...two or three thousand Chinese from Changton Province are coming on the next boat and they are going to France to fight in the trenches...my brother is coming but you (his uncle) should persuade him not to listen to the Allies agents.

¹⁸⁸ Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War, 74. These guidelines were established by the Committee on Imperial Defence.

¹⁸⁹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Seized letter from Ho Wing Yee to On Wo Het, April 11, 1917.

¹⁹⁰ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Seized letter from Chow Jung Shing to Way On Co., date unknown.

A third intercepted letter commented that 10,000 Chinese were already working in “the battlefield in Russia” where they were “undergoing untold sufferings,” and speculated that the labourers en route to Canada would be “transferred to France and no doubt get served the same fate.”¹⁹¹

Another common sentiment expressed in the seized correspondence was respect for the military power of Germany. One Chinese resident of Ladner expressed this sentiment in a letter to Canton:¹⁹²

China had no right to join the Allies as Germany has been so strong that ten small countries have been swept to the ground by her. Pretty soon they will attack the capital of England (that is London) and they will grab China as easy as taking her hand out of her pockets... The Chinese officials received bribes so that they betrayed the country and joined the allies side... Germany is invincible... no country in the world can conquer her.

Another seized letter commented that China would “suffer by joining the Allies” at the hands of Germany, which had already “wiped out” Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Roumania [sic].¹⁹³ Another correspondent turned the venom of his attack against the Chinese labourers themselves, remarking that they “deserve to die.”¹⁹⁴

It is hardly surprising that a great deal of cynicism existed about the true motives of the Allies: while the labourers were not actually used as soldiers, their working

¹⁹¹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Seized letter from Lee Sit Kuan to On Yick, April 11, 1917.

¹⁹² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Seized letter from Mon Lee to Tak Wing Sang, April 11, 1917.

¹⁹³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Seized letter from Sit Sing Bok to Hong Fook Tung, April 11, 1917.

¹⁹⁴ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Seized letter from Sing On Co., New Westminster to Shanghai Ice and Coldstorage Co., April 11, 1917.

conditions were extremely dangerous. Over 2000 Chinese died on the Western Front, and Chinese labourers mutinied against British and French military authorities on several occasions.¹⁹⁵ Between 1916 and 1918, Chinese workers in France mutinied twenty-five times, and as the labourers were subject to military law while under contract, retribution for such insubordination was often severe.¹⁹⁶ However, in the judgment of surveillance authorities, the seized letters revealed clear opposition to the labour shipments and represented an internal threat to Canada's contribution to the War effort. Surveillance authorities characterized the attitude of the Chinese in Canada towards the War as "unaccountably hostile" and "remarkably antagonistic."¹⁹⁷ Chambers commented that the intercepted letters demonstrated "the great importance of preventing the Chinese in transit from coming into connection with Chinese resident in Canada."¹⁹⁸ Chambers noted that "numerous intercepted communication from Chinamen resident in Canada...indicate a remarkable desire to prevent this movement" and that measures had been taken by "Chinamen residing in Canada" to induce the labourers to mutiny.¹⁹⁹ The military was instructed to take "special care...to prevent Chinese coolies communicating in any way with Chinese residents in Canada."²⁰⁰ The Chief Press Censor paid special attention to

¹⁹⁵ Spence, The Search for Modern China, 291.

¹⁹⁶ Summerskill, China on the Western Front, 81-82, 150.

¹⁹⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Chambers to Reid, May 6, 1917; Chambers to Chief of the General Staff Willoughby Gwatkin, May 6, 1917.

¹⁹⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Chambers to Sherwood and Gwatkin, April 19, 1917.

¹⁹⁹ NAC, RG 6, E, vol. 620, File 331-1: Chambers to Lieut. Col. A. W. Richardson, Corps of Guides, Kingston, August 8, 1917; Chambers to Acton Burrows, Editor in Chief of Canadian Railway and Marine World, April 21, 1917.

²⁰⁰ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 620, File 331-1: Adjutant General to Officer Commanding Military District No. 11, April 20, 1917.

the Chinese language press in Canada because "with the movement of coolies, we cannot afford to be taken in flank by hostile Chinese publications."²⁰¹ And on the recommendation of Robert Nathan of the India Office and the Dominion Commissioner of Police Percy Sherwood, a "blanket order" was issued to telegraphic companies to furnish copies of all "Chinese messages, commercial or otherwise, of government interest" to surveillance authorities.²⁰² There was still a focus on leaders and 'prominent Chinamen' in Canada, but the seized domestic correspondence of the Chinese population of Canada revealed, in the view of Canadian surveillance authorities, a population that was vehemently opposed to the War, sympathetic to Germany, and, with reference to the labour shipments, potentially subversive.

²⁰¹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Chambers to Reid, April 8, 1917.

²⁰² NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A-3: Reid to Chambers, Oct. 23, 1917. This order represented the re-enactment of an order issued just prior to the arrival of the first labour battalions to "have the telegraphic correspondence of the Chinese in Canada more closely watched." (NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168-2: Chambers to the Managers of the Telegraphic Companies in Canada, Feb. 28, 1917) This order yielded little material of interest, and Robert Nathan revoked the order in May, but Nathan and Sherwood judged in October that it would be prudent to re-censor "the majority of the Chinese telegraphic messages." (NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A-3: Reid to Chambers, May 28, 1917; NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A-3: Reid to Chambers, Oct. 23, 1917).

Chapter 4

Racism, the 'Red Scare,' and the Ban of the Chinese Nationalist League

The internal surveillance activity of the Canadian government gradually extended over various elements of the country's Chinese population and was comprehensive by the autumn of 1917. While Canadian officials had grown increasingly wary of the subversive potential of the Chinese in Canada, the government refrained from initiating any widespread repressive measures against the Chinese, such as internment or suppression of their political organizations. This situation altered significantly on September 25, 1918, when the Canadian government banned the Chinese Nationalist League.

The suppression of the Chinese Nationalist League represents the most significant act of discrimination against the Chinese in Canada during the Great War. The ban was ordered after investigators concluded that the organization had incited the murder of Tang Hualong, a Chinese government minister travelling in Victoria, B.C.. Although the ban represented a reaction to a specific act of politically motivated violence, several forces that shaped the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada heavily influenced the decision. This chapter will analyze the ban of the CNL in the context of some of these forces, as well as two elements that informed the manner in which Canadian authorities viewed the CNL as they investigated the organization's involvement in the assassination: racism, which influenced the manner in which Canadian authorities interpreted evidence against the CNL, and secondly, the impact of the 'red scare' on the Borden Administration's perception of the threat posed by Canada's immigrant populations.

The Assassination of Tang Hualong

On September 1, 1918, in Victoria, B.C., a barber named Wong Chun assassinated Tang Hualong, a Chinese government minister travelling through Canada en route to China. Wong ambushed the Minister and his entourage and fatally shot Tang twice at close range.²⁰³ After failing to shoot the Minister's Secretary, Wong turned his weapon on himself and committed suicide. Tang was a politician of some prominence; at the time of his assassination, he was the acting Minister of the Interior and Education, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.²⁰⁴ The assassin was a member of the Chinese Nationalist League, and as the Chinese minister was on an official state visit to secure War loans for the Peking government, investigators judged the crime to be politically motivated.²⁰⁵ Senior Canadian officials endorsed the judgement, which had profound ramifications for the CNL in Canada. Less than one month after the murder of Tang Hualong, the Canadian government declared the Chinese Nationalist League an illegal organization under Order in Council PC 2384.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, Sept. 5, 1918. Tang Hualong's entourage consisted of his personal secretary Ho Te Hui, a Chinese student from the University of Washington named Fei Lin, and the Vancouver consul.

²⁰⁴ BCARS, GR 1327, File 166/1918: Coroner's Inquest into the Death of Tang Hualong, Sept. 4, 1918: Testimony of Ho Te-hui, Page 5.

²⁰⁵ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, Sept. 4, 1918.

²⁰⁶ A total of thirteen organizations were banned under PC 2384: The Industrial Workers of the World, The Russian Social Democratic Party, The Russian Revolutionary Group, The Russian Social Revolutionists, The Russian Workers Union, The Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, The Social Democratic Party, The Social Labour Party, The Group of Social Democrats of Bolsheviki, The Group of Social Democrats of Anarchists, The Workers International Industrial Union, The Chinese Nationalist League and the Chinese Labour Association (*Victoria Times*, Oct. 10, 1918.) The Chinese Labour Association (Zhonghua Gongtang) was organized in 1916 and had between 500 and 600 members by 1918.

The language Victoria's newspapers used to describe the event is revealing. Headlines in the *Victoria Daily Colonist* declared "Local Chinatown in a Ferment: Assassination of Tang Hua Lung Creates Great Excitement and Predictions Made of Further Trouble."²⁰⁷ The reporter noted that "an Oriental impassiveness [sic] characteristic of the Chinese" could not "hide the undercurrent of excitement" in Chinatown after the murder, and that despite their effort to "solve the real inwardness of the shooting," the police could not permeate "a seemingly impenetrable veil of mystery and silence" surrounding the event. The same reporter commented that Wong committed the murder "with a fatalism peculiar to the Oriental," and in the aftermath, Chinatown was "seething" and "rife" with speculation of the likelihood of retribution and further violence.

The reporter's description of violence in an ethnic enclave that was fundamentally different and ultimately incomprehensible to outsiders is typical of the manner in which White Canadians viewed Chinese in the first decades of the twentieth century. The perception that Europeans (or Euro-Canadians) and Chinese were separated by an unbridgeable racial gulf had a long tradition in Western culture, and was an important factor in sustaining the suspicion of the Chinese. Traditional stereotypes about Chinese slyness and deceit, and the belief that the Chinese were "wily individuals" allowed Canadian surveillance authorities to continue the surveillance of the Chinese despite the

The Association played a leading role in the increased militancy of Chinese workers near the end of the Great War (see Con et. al., *From China to Canada*, 130).

²⁰⁷ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, Sept. 4, 1918.

overwhelming lack of evidence against them.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, the belief that Chinese politics were mysterious and incomprehensible to outside observers ultimately absolved investigators from the necessity of securing concrete evidence linking the CNL to the assassination of Tang Hualong. Though the overwhelming majority of evidence collected against the CNL was circumstantial at best, it was deemed sufficient to condemn the organization based on the conclusion that the *New Republic* had incited the act by publishing a series of vague metaphors that insinuated that CNL members should murder Tang to punish him for serving Chinese Premier Duan Qirui.²⁰⁹ The fact that the CNL was a Chinese political organization was an important factor in shaping the investigators' interpretation of the evidence against the League; ultimately, it allowed them to perceive deceit and treachery without hard corroborating evidence.

While racial stereotypes heavily influenced the decision to ban the CNL, the swift and decisive response of the Canadian government to the assassination was indicative of the Borden administration's commitment in the autumn of 1918 to crush the perceived threat posed by immigrant populations. Widespread labour unrest in Canada in the wake of the Russian Revolution escalated in the summer of 1918; the proliferation of general strikes across Canada, placed the Canadian government under great pressure to act against socialist organizations, most of which found their strongest support amongst immigrant populations (especially those of Eastern European origin.)²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Chambers to Reid, Feb. 16, 1916.

²⁰⁹ BP #136355: Report of the Public Safety Branch on the Assassination of Tang Hualong and the Chinese Nationalist League, Oct. 16, 1918.

²¹⁰ Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto 1977), 146, 149.

Prime Minister Borden responded by hiring Montreal lawyer C.H. Cahan to investigate the threat posed by Canada's foreign populations. While his investigations focused primarily on the threat posed by immigrant labour groups, the assassination of Tang Hualong drew his attention to the activities of the CNL. Cahan was quickly convinced of the subversive nature of the CNL, and as a result, issued a series of recommendations to Prime Minister Borden intended to crush the threat posed by the organization.²¹¹ Thus, while the suppression of the Chinese Nationalist League represented the culmination of four years of surveillance and was based largely on a racially specific interpretation of evidence, the CNL was also the victim of unfortunate timing, as the assassination of Tang Hualong occurred in the midst of Cahan's investigations into the threat of immigrant populations in Canada. Armed with extraordinary powers to act against 'enemy aliens' and informed by racial stereotypes regarding Chinese deceitfulness, authorities acted against the Chinese Nationalist League quickly and decisively.

Racism, The Surveillance, and the Ban of the CNL

By 1914, a perception of the Chinese 'race' that set the Chinese distinctly apart from Western cultures was firmly entrenched in White Canadian society. With regard to the surveillance, the most important stereotype about the Chinese was their inherent dishonesty, slyness and deceitfulness. Nineteenth century European observers in China

²¹¹ BP # 136360-61: Report on the Assassination of Tang Hualong, enclosed in a letter from C.H. Cahan to Borden, Oct. 22, 1918.

(such as Protestant missionaries) perpetuated the image of the treacherous and ‘wily’ Chinese, an image that was well established in Canada by the late nineteenth century.²¹² Euro-Canadian observers commonly held that the Chinese had no regard for truth and valued the capacity to deceive far more than honesty.²¹³ The most disturbing manifestation of this inherent treachery, in the eyes of White observers, was the secret society, which, in the words of Peter Ward, “seemed an insidious device to evade the law with impunity” and was an institution that garnered much attention in the White media.²¹⁴

The language used by Canadian government officials during the surveillance to describe their Chinese targets demonstrates that their perceptions were influenced by traditional racial stereotypes. The Chief Press Censor used racially loaded language in his correspondence with the editor of the *Chinese Times* in 1916 when he warned him not to “slyly deviate the least particle from the lines of truth and loyalty.”²¹⁵ Chambers further noted that the Chinese were “wily individuals to deal with” and seemed genuinely mystified by what he referred to as the “mysterious oriental mind.”²¹⁶ He commented

²¹² *Ibid.*, 97.

²¹³ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 9. Roy also notes that the Chinese were commonly hired in the 1880’s as house servants “despite complaints that the Chinese were ‘cunning, secretive and treacherous’” (Roy, *A White Man’s Province*, 41).

²¹⁴ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 10. The *Chinese Times*, a Chinese-language newspaper published in Vancouver, commented on at least two occasions from 1914 to 1918 that the White media exaggerated the prevalence of secret society violence (or ‘tong’ warfare) in British Columbia. On February 17, 1915, the *Chinese Times* commented that a “badly reported” Victoria newspaper had mistakenly attributed a murder-suicide in Victoria’s Chinatown to ‘Tong Warfare,’ and similarly reported on April 12, 1916 that the Victoria media had “exaggerated” an assault case by “sticking the term tong war onto the incident” (UBCSC, Chinese Canadian Collection, Box 4, File 3, *Chinese Times* Feb. 17, 1915; Box 4, File 4, *Chinese Times* April 12, 1916).

²¹⁵ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Chambers to the Editors of the *Chinese Times*, July 10, 1916.

²¹⁶ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Chambers to Reid, Feb. 16, 1916; Chambers to Reid, Sept. 4, 1916.

that the “oriental mind is a...peculiar one” and advised that Canadian officials should exercise caution when intervening in Chinese political affairs because the “operations of Chinese politicians are beyond our understanding.”²¹⁷ This comment suggests that Chambers perceived the gap between the Chinese and White Canadians to be racial rather than cultural, one that could not be bridged by observation of the Chinese or immersion into Chinese Canadian society. For Chambers, a complete understanding of Chinese political activity was ‘beyond’ the capacity of White observers; the ‘mysterious’ and ‘peculiar’ oriental mind was too great a barrier to be overcome.

Immigration Inspector Malcolm Reid was less impressed with the ‘mysterious oriental mind’ as he clearly believed himself to be an accomplished authority on Chinese political activity. Nevertheless, Reid subscribed to racial preconceptions about Chinese treachery and slyness. In October 1917, Reid received an intercepted telegram addressed from the CNL branch in Calgary to its counterpart in Vancouver that conveyed the message “Be secret. Don’t proclaim.” Despite the fact that Reid had no idea of the context of the message, these four words were sufficient for him to conclude that the CNL “impresses on its members the necessity of great secrecy in their matters.”²¹⁸ Even more revealing is correspondence between Reid and the Dominion Commissioner of Police Sir Percy Sherwood in April 1916. Sherwood questioned the necessity of the surveillance of the CNL since four months of surveillance had failed to uncover anything

²¹⁷ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Chambers to RH Helmer, Militia HQ in Ottawa, July 10, 1916; NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Chambers to Reid, Feb. 17, 1917.

²¹⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A-3: Reid to Chambers, October 19, 1917.

“to indicate pro-Germanism” in its correspondence.²¹⁹ Reid justified continued surveillance on the basis that:²²⁰

Whilst it is quite true very little has been discovered to show that the Chinese are pro-German, we do not know what the code messages have contained along those lines. Many of the travellers have stated that the Chinese are pro-German and our own special interpreter informs me that undoubtedly their sympathies are with the Germans.

In Reid’s estimation, the fact that several months of surveillance had failed to uncover corroborating evidence did not absolve the CNL from guilt, but rather demonstrated that it had used code to circumvent the surveillance measures. Under such circumstances, the CNL could not refute the charges levied against it.

Racial stereotypes about the Chinese also clearly influenced the manner in which Canadian investigators interpreted evidence regarding the assassination of Tang Hualong. The collection of evidence used to condemn the CNL’s involvement in the crime was hardly impressive; while the assassin Wong Chun was an active CNL member, there was no evidence that explicitly linked the organization to the crime.²²¹ The censorship of the CNL’s correspondence yielded no evidence that the organization sanctioned the act, and in fact evidence seized after the ban cast some doubt on the CNL’s guilt.²²² In addition,

²¹⁹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Sherwood to Chamber, April 10, 1917.

²²⁰ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 526, File 168A: Reid to Sherwood, April 17, 1917.

²²¹ See also Con et. al., From China to Canada, 105.

²²² A letter was seized during a police raid on President Zhen Shuyan’s house in December 1918 which stated that the murder was the “work of a few members of the League” and which stressed that League members, to avoid the wrath of the Canadian government, would have to “obey Canadian law” and “keep quiet and not foolishly make any more troubles” (NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Letter from Way Yet-sun to Zhen Shuyan, Dec. 2, 1918, enclosed in a letter from Reid to Chambers, Feb. 10, 1919.) Similarly, a censored telegram sent from the CNL in Havana to the CNL in New York included a description of a speech given in Havana by Lo Pan Koung, an member of the CNL in Canada, which outlined the reasons for the government ban. The speech claimed that the ban came as a result of pressure from Peking on Ottawa for having failed to provide adequate protection to a visiting dignitary, despite the

Canadian investigators were unable to secure the testimony of any witnesses to confirm the CNL's role in the conspiracy. The nameless Special Operator #220, who investigated the case for the Department of Immigration, claimed to have a witness named Poon Loi who "accidentally" found himself at the meeting where the plot to murder Tang was conceived. Poon Loi was unwilling to testify, and the Special Operator lamented that he did not have access to adequate funds to procure some opium and get Poon "on his pipe" in order to "loosen his tongue."²²³ The Special Operator frankly confessed to his superiors that investigations had not uncovered substantial evidence.²²⁴

If all these organizations are strictly suppressed, and the NPR Co. [sic] ordered dissolved, and the machinery seized, and if the mail is denied to the affiliated newspapers printed across the border, then they will start going for each other and blaming each other, and we would stand a very much better chance of getting first class evidence and getting to the bottom of the plot.

Much in the same way as Reid, the Special Operator was unable to accept a lack of evidence as absolution of the CNL from guilt or suspicion.

Despite the lack of witnesses or other forms of 'first class evidence' proving that the CNL sanctioned the assassination, Cahan reported to Prime Minister Borden that he was "convinced" that the murder was "carried out by a member of The Chinese

Chinese government's requests for "every protection" to be extended to Tang. Lo claimed that the ban came because of the Chinese government's suspicion of the CNL's culpability, and nothing in the extensive telegram suggests that the act was sanctioned by the League as a whole (NAC, RG 7, G 21, Vol. 239, File 348A: Letter from CNL Havana to CNL New York, March 20, 1919).

²²³ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Report of Special Operator #220, enclosed in a letter from Reid to Chambers, Oct. 2, 1918.

²²⁴ Ibid.. "NPR Co." is in all likelihood meant to refer to the NRP (New Republic Publishing) Company.

Nationalist League..., with the full approval of members of that League.”²²⁵ Cahan claimed that the *New Republic* “directly incited the murder” by publishing a number of inflammatory editorials on September 1 which “slyly” suggested that the Chinese Minister should (and would) be “punished” for his traitorous support of Premier Duan Qirui. None of the editorials in the *New Republic* explicitly advocated the murder of Tang Hualong; the ‘suspicious’ editorials consisted of vague metaphors and innuendo. For example, an article entitled “Tang Hua Lung Has Come Again” condemned the Chinese Minister for his visit to the United States and closed with the statement that the writer was going to “watch for further developments.” From this, Cahan concluded that the article’s author “knew of the intended attempt upon the life of the Chinese Minister.” Another article entitled “Remarkable Wonders” questioned the purpose of Tang’s visit to the United States and suggested that his efforts to secure a foreign loan for China would fail. Cahan reported that the author of this article implied “to the Chinese reader that the Chinese Minister should be dealt with so that the money, if any, borrowed in the United States should never reach his hands.” Perhaps the most unusual article was entitled “A Letter From the Target Man to the Bullet, Thanking It” which, in Cahan’s estimation, proved beyond a doubt that all Chinese readers of the article would understand “that a life was to be taken by a bullet.”

The articles from the *New Republic* were sufficient to convince Cahan of the CNL’s culpability in the crime. Cahan informed the Prime Minister that it was “in this facetious manner that assassination is anticipated by the Chinese” and that these

²²⁵ BP #136355-59: Report on the Assassination of Tang Hualong by C.H. Cahan, enclosed in a letter from Cahan to Borden, Oct. 22, 1918. All of the following quotations are from Cahan’s report to Borden; complete translations of the articles are available in Appendix I.

editorials, while opaque to non-Chinese readers, would be perfectly clear to a Chinese audience.²²⁶ Victoria Coroner F. T. Stanier also adopted this perspective early in the investigation of the assassination. At the Coroner's Inquest into Tang's death, Stanier gave a copy of the *New Republic* to a Chinese juror and asked him if the articles could be characterized as "incendiary" or "likely to cause trouble, or to excite your people."²²⁷ Special Operator #220 also employed this racially specific perspective in his investigations of the *New Republic*, which continued to publish in the weeks following the ban of the CNL. The Operator presented Malcolm Reid with copies of the *New Republic* from October 2 with translations of articles that he feared might cause further trouble.²²⁸ One article caused him particular concern:²²⁹

While this article is not directly inciting, it has that object in view, and to anyone who understands the psychology of the ignorant Chinese, its objects [sic] is to foster a spirit of being prepared to give up their life (that is to die) for the cause, such as in murdering anyone to take one's own life, or to die in the attempt.

Resurrecting fears of the outbreak of widespread ethnic political violence that had first surfaced after the Victoria CCBA riots in 1916, the Special Operator advocated "drastic action" to prevent further trouble and prognosticated that if such action was not levied against the CNL, "one day one of the more fanatical of their members will be murdering

²²⁶ BP #136358: Report on the Assassination of Tang Hualong by C.H. Cahan, enclosed in a letter from Cahan to Borden, Oct. 22, 1918.

²²⁷ BCARS, GR 1327, File 166/1918: Coroner's Inquest into the Death of Tang Hualong, Sept. 4, 1918: Testimony of Lee Mong Kow, p. 32.

²²⁸ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Report of Special Operator #220, enclosed in a letter from Reid to Chambers, Oct. 3, 1918. For a translation of the *New Republic* article cited in the report, see Appendix II.

²²⁹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Report of Special Operator #220, enclosed in a letter from Reid to Chambers, Oct. 3, 1918.

some of the local Chinese citizens.”²³⁰ These sentiments echoed those of Malcolm Reid who commented in 1916 that strong measures were necessary when dealing with the Chinese who “take leniency for weakness and show great respect for arbitrary forces.”²³¹

The ‘Red Scare’ and the Ban of the CNL

The Canadian government required little prompting from its investigators to take heavy-handed action against the CNL. On September 25, 1918, the government issued Order in Council PC 2384, *Regulations Respecting Unlawful Associations*, which gave the police sweeping powers to suppress thirteen outlawed organizations, including the CNL. The Order in Council made membership in any of the restricted organizations retroactive to the beginning of the War a crime punishable by a fine of up to \$5000 and a prison term of up to five years.²³² The powers given to the police to enforce the Order in Council were extraordinary, and included the right to raid, without a warrant, “any premises or place owned or suspected to be owned or occupied by an unlawful association.”²³³ Police used these powers to launch a national raid on the CNL, which continued to operate clandestinely in defiance of the ban, in December 1918.²³⁴ CNL buildings in Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto were raided and photographs,

²³⁰ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Reports of Special Operator #220, enclosed in letters from Reid to Chambers, Oct. 2 and 3, 1918.

²³¹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-1: Reid to Sherwood, Feb. 6, 1916.

²³² *Canada Gazette*, October 5, 1918, as quoted in Frances Swyripa and John Herd Thompson, eds., *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the Great War* (Edmonton 1983), 194.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Con et. al., *From China to Canada*, 110.

correspondence and other documents were seized and sent to Ottawa for translation.²³⁵ Chinese consular officials assisted police in their crackdown by sending operatives to infiltrate CNL meetings, a collaboration that helped Canadian authorities enforce the provisions of PC 2384.²³⁶

The suppression of the Chinese Nationalist League was ordered by the Canadian government at a time when its concern over the subversive potential of the country's immigrant populations was at a peak. The severity of PC 2384 reflected this concern, and was issued in an attempt to crush the 'alien Bolshevik conspiracy' believed to be in motion to incite revolution in Canada.²³⁷ While the CNL was not suspected of involvement in the Bolshevik movement, the assassination of Tang Hualong coincided with Cahan's investigations into the threat of alien labour groups and Bolshevism in Canada. The subsequent Order in Council set the machinery of ethnic political suppression in motion, and the Canadian government used it accordingly against the CNL.

The Canadian government's fear of the Bolshevik threat in the latter stages of the Great War was the result of a marked increase in radicalism among alien labour groups in 1917.²³⁸ The year saw a massive increase in strike activity in Canada, with a total of one million work days lost by the end of the year to strikes, more than the three previous years

²³⁵ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, Dec. 14, 1918.

²³⁶ NAC, RG 7, G 21, Vol. 239, File 348A: CNL Havana to CNL New York, March 20, 1919, enclosed in a letter from Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, British Ambassador in Washington, to the Governor General of Canada, April 15, 1919.

²³⁷ Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', 75

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

of the War combined.²³⁹ Immigrant labour organizations were at the forefront of this increased militancy; the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, for example, organized a major strike of construction workers in Winnipeg in 1917, and called for the formation of “soviets” and “soldiers and workers councils” in Canada in early 1918.²⁴⁰

After the ratification of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Germany and Russia in May 1918, the Prime Minister believed that Bolshevism would “shortly undertake a major North American thrust.”²⁴¹ Labour militancy continued to escalate in the early summer of 1918, and the Prime Minister reacted by hiring C.H. Cahan in June to launch an extensive investigation into the threat posed by Bolshevism and Canada’s alien populations.²⁴² Cahan issued his findings to the Borden administration in September 1918, which identified Canada’s immigrant population as the source of the Bolshevik threat to the country.²⁴³

To counter the threat, Cahan recommended the outright suppression of a number of political parties, that the “right of search” for police and government investigators be widely extended, and that the Canadian government adopt a more “stringent...security policy” to effectively counter the Bolshevik threat.²⁴⁴ Borden concurred that Cahan’s findings merited “immediate and vigorous action,” and Cahan’s recommendations

²³⁹ McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries, 123.

²⁴⁰ Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 72; McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries, 142.

²⁴¹ Keshen, Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War, 86.

²⁴² Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 74-75.

²⁴³ Greg Kealey, “The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter Subversion in Canada, 1914-1921,” *Intelligence and National Security* 7:3 (1992), 185.

²⁴⁴ McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries, 151. For a complete list of the organizations banned, see 84n227.

became the basis of Order in Council PC 2384, as well as PC 2381, which suppressed a number of publications in “enemy languages.”²⁴⁵ In addition, the Public Safety Branch of the Department of Justice was established on October 2, 1918 (with Cahan named as Director of Public Safety) “for the preservation of public order and safety during the continuance of the War.”²⁴⁶

The primary goal of the Public Safety Branch was the effective enforcement of the recently passed Orders in Council, and Cahan’s focus remained the threat of Bolshevism and immigrant labour organizations, but he paid some attention to the CNL, and attempted to use the assassination of Tang Hualong to justify the need to expand the Public Safety Branch and hire more investigators.²⁴⁷ In an extensive report to Prime Minister Borden in which he outlined the reasons for the condemnation of the CNL, Cahan concluded with a set of recommendations he deemed necessary to enforce the ban of the organization, including the following:²⁴⁸

That the Chief Commissioner of Police be authorized to make special expenditures to such extent as the Director of Public Safety may deem reasonably necessary, for the purpose of fully investigating the activities of the Chinese Nationalist League and its subsidiary Societies and adherents in Victoria, Vancouver and elsewhere throughout Canada.

²⁴⁵ BP #56683: Borden to Cahan, Sept 14, 1918. PC 2381 banned any publication printed in the following languages: German, Austrian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Roumanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Finnish, Esthonian, Syrian, Croatian, Ruthenian and Livonian. The Order in Council made no mention of Chinese language publications and hence had no impact on the *New Republic*. See Swyripa and Thompson, *Loyalties in Conflict*, 190.

²⁴⁶ Kealey, “The Surveillance State,” 188.

²⁴⁷ Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 75; Kealey, “The Surveillance State,” 190.

²⁴⁸ BP #136360-61: Cahan’s Report on the Chinese Nationalist League, included in a letter from Cahan to Borden, Oct. 22, 1918.

Cahan also recommended initiating proceedings to confiscate the property and assets “of the Chinese Nationalist League wherever found in Canada, and for the prosecution of its active members.” The latter part of this recommendation was realized during the police raids in December 1918, though the government focused on prominent CNL leaders rather than rank and file members, and the police raids only resulted in the arrest and prosecution of 42 people.²⁴⁹

Thus, while the CNL had little in common with Ukrainian and Russian socialist parties, its proscription must be considered within the context of the Borden administration’s efforts to suppress alien labour radicalism in the late stages of the Great War. The inquiry into the assassination of Tang Hualong occurred at a time when the government was dedicated to countering the threat posed by subversive immigrant populations, which in turn facilitated its severe actions against the CNL.

Suspicion of German Complicity and the Ban of the CNL

A third factor that must be considered in an analysis of the ban of the Chinese Nationalist League was the Canadian government’s persistent suspicion that the organization was linked to Germany. This suspicion had been present right from the outset of Malcolm Reid’s investigations into the CNL, but events in China and Canada in 1917 heightened this suspicion and gave it a renewed potency.

The suspicion of British and Canadian authorities in 1916 that the CNL was receiving German financial assistance was premature. From 1914 to 1916, Sun Yat-sen’s most important international patron was Japan, as Japanese leaders, especially Chief of

²⁴⁹ Con et. al., From China to Canada, 110.

Staff Tanaka Giichi, hoped to destabilize Yuan Shikai's regime by supporting Sun's revolutionary movement.²⁵⁰ Sun could not deliver a return on Japan's investment, however, and the Japanese opted to support a receptive Duan Qirui after Yuan Shikai's death in June 1916. Forced to seek a new international patron, Sun was pleased to receive an offer from German diplomats in Shanghai in March 1917 of two million dollars to help finance the establishment of his 'military government' in Canton, from which he would overthrow Duan Qirui's regime and stave off a Chinese declaration of War against Germany.²⁵¹

Sun was unable to accomplish this goal, as China declared war against Germany one month after Sun established his 'military government' in Canton. He did, however, launch an extensive propaganda campaign denouncing China's entry into the War. Sun criticized Britain and the Entente Powers for "wield[ing] might and disregard[ing] international law" in their dealings with China prior to the War.²⁵² He also attacked Britain's predatory imperial policies in India, and opposed a Sino-British alliance, which he claimed would result in the "complete extinction of the influence of the yellow race and the permanent subjugation of Asia by the Europeans."²⁵³ He also wrote a letter to

²⁵⁰ Albert A. Altman and Harold Z. Schiffrin, "Sun Yat-sen and the Japanese, 1914-16," *Modern Asian Studies* 6:4 (1972), 399

²⁵¹ Josef Fass, "Sun Yat-sen and the World War One," *Archiv Orientalni* 35 (1967), p. 115.

²⁵² Sun Yat-sen, "The Question of China's Survival," 136. In contrast, Sun argued that Germany was the "least ambitious of the foreign powers in China," and cited the statistic that the Entente Powers controlled seventy-five times more territory in China than the Central Powers (*Ibid.*, 138).

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 186. There is some question as to whether or not Sun wrote "The Question of China's Survival." Bergère (*Sun Yat-sen*, 271) suggests that it was written by Sun's associate Zhu Zhixin, but agrees that it was "probably" written "in consultation with Sun."

British Prime Minister David Lloyd George prior to China's declaration of War imploring him to cease his attempts to lure China into the War against Germany.²⁵⁴

This anti-British rhetoric, coupled with Sun's open opposition to China's participation in the War, appeared to validate the British and Canadian suspicion regarding the pro-German sympathies of Sun and the CNL.²⁵⁵ This suspicion was heightened by the CNL's refusal to take part in demonstrations and rallies in Vancouver organized by the Vancouver consul to show Chinese solidarity with Canada and support for the War effort.²⁵⁶ Chinese consular officials capitalized on this lack of enthusiasm, who made a renewed effort to convince the Canadian government of the subversive nature of the CNL. The focus of the renewed campaign was China's status as a wartime ally with Canada, and the corresponding opposition to the War that Sun Yat-sen and the CNL demonstrated. On August 26, 1918, Yang Shuwen, Chinese consul-general in Ottawa, appealed directly to Prime Minister Borden in an effort to persuade him to immediately suppress the CNL because its operations hampered "the activities of the

²⁵⁴ Fass, "Sun Yat-sen and the World War One," 113.

²⁵⁵ The extent to which Sun Yat-sen was actually sympathetic to Germany is highly questionable. Josef Fass characterized the understanding reached between Germany and Sun as an "occasional coincidence of goals, with absolutely different motives" (Fass, "Sun Yat-sen and the World War One," 118. Albert Altman and Harold Schiffrin suggest that Sun's ability to gain German patronage demonstrated his capacity to "exploit foreigners" (and foreign governments) for his own political gain (Altman and Schiffrin, "Sun Yat-sen and the Japanese, 1914-1916," 400.) A similar analysis is offered by Marie-Claire Bergère, who argues that Sun made the bargain with Germany for financial gain only, with no intention to honour the "exorbitant promises that he made in order to obtain money" (Bergère, Sun Yat-sen, 273.) William Kirby contends that Germany's patronage of Sun came not out of common interests, but simply out of the fact that Germany was the only country desperate enough in 1917 to respond to his appeals for support, as Japan and the United States had both ignored similar appeals for aid in 1917 (William Kirby, Germany and Republican China (Stanford 1984), 30). Sun did little to actively support the German War effort; his campaign against Peking's declaration of War was motivated largely by a fear that the Northern Government would use war loans to finance a campaign against his Canton government, rather than by common interest with Germany, and in fact Sun's Canton parliament declared war against Germany on September 13, 1917.

²⁵⁶ Con et. al., From China to Canada, 119.

Chinese government...as an ally."²⁵⁷ Yang noted that the CNL opposed the War effort and shipped weapons to China to arm revolutionaries.

For the purposes of the Consular officials, the timing of Yang's request could not have been better, as the appeal was made only five days before the assassination of Tang Hualong in Victoria. Investigators linked the motive of the murder to the CNL's opposition to the War, as a number of *New Republic* editorials condemned Tang for visiting the United States to secure War Loans for Peking.²⁵⁸ The appeal clearly had some impact on the Prime Minister, as Percy Sherwood cited the correspondence between Yang and Borden as one of the factors that compelled the Canadian government act against the CNL, "whose avowed purpose is to overthrow the Government because of the fact that it had caused China to throw in her lot with the Allies."²⁵⁹

Given the Canadian government's long record of inactivity on the issue, it is unlikely that the renewed appeals of the Chinese consul-general alone would have been sufficient to persuade the Canadian government to act against the Chinese Nationalist League. The credibility of the Chinese consular officials in Canada remained low throughout the War, and the accusations of pro-German sentiment in the CNL, though perhaps more credible after 1917, were hardly new, and merely fed on a perception that Canadian surveillance officials already had regarding the organization. Coupled with the fear of subversive ethnic populations in September 1918, the accusations of the Chinese

²⁵⁷ BP #136343-44: Yang Shuwen to Borden, Aug. 26, 1918.

²⁵⁸ BP #136358: Report of C.H. Cahan on the Chinese Nationalist League, included in a letter from Cahan to Borden, Oct. 22, 1918.

²⁵⁹ NAC, RG 6, E, Vol. 86, File 246-2: Sherwood to Chambers, Sept. 27, 1918.

consul-general gained a new potency, and appeared validated by the assassination of Tang Hualong. The evidence, though sparse, was considered sufficient to condemn the organization (after it had been interpreted in a racially specific manner), and the weight of ethnic and political suppression, though designed to counter a perceived threat that had little to do with the CNL, was wielded against the Chinese Nationalist League. The role of the Chinese consul-general, though perhaps secondary to the other forces that worked to persuade the Borden Administration of the threat posed by the CNL, was important enough to merit mention by the Canadian government in its decision, and with the issuance of PC 2384, the Peking government had won an important victory in its efforts to suppress the threat of overseas Chinese revolutionaries.

*Chapter 5*Conclusion

The ban of the Chinese Nationalist League in September 1918 represented the culmination of a long process by which the Canadian government came to view the country's Chinese population as a potentially dangerous and subversive threat during the Great War. Evidence of the extent to which this process evolved can be seen in a pair of letters to Prime Minister Robert Borden from Chinese consul-general Yang Shuwen, the first in January 1914 and the second in August 1918.²⁶⁰ Both letters made similar appeals to the Prime Minister and attempted to persuade the Canadian government to suppress the activities of Chinese revolutionaries in Canada. Borden replied to the first with polite acknowledgement but an unwillingness to comply with the request; his response to the second was the suppression of the Chinese Nationalist League.

The above examples are somewhat crude in that the Canadian government's decision to suppress the CNL in 1918 was not motivated solely by the wishes of Peking. However, the vast difference in the reaction of the Canadian government to the alleged threat of Chinese revolutionaries in Canada in 1914 and 1918 effectively demonstrates the drastic extent to which the government's perception of this threat changed over the course of the Great War. The surveillance of the Chinese Nationalist League from 1916 to 1918 nourished suspicion of the organization on the basis that it was pro-German, that it represented a threat to Imperial security, that its activities represented a threat to public

²⁶⁰ BP #100260: Yang Shuwen to Borden, January 19, 1914; BP #136343-44: Yang Shuwen to Borden, August 26, 1918.

order, and that the organization's opposition to the War effort made it a threat to national security. The fact that the surveillance had uncovered little evidence to support these suspicions was irrelevant, as it merely indicated that the 'wily Chinese' had found a way to avoid detection. The consequences of this attitude became clear during the investigations into the organization's guilt in connection with the assassination of Tang Hualong, as the CNL was judged by a racially specific set of criteria that absolved investigators from the necessity of securing irrefutable evidence against it.

The extent of the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada during the Great War demonstrates the government's conviction that their potential threat was not confined to the Chinese Nationalist League. The surveillance of the Peking consular officials was initiated for very specific reasons of British Imperial security, but the extension of the surveillance over the domestic mail and telegraphic correspondence of all Chinese in the autumn of 1917, regardless of political affiliation, revealed a pervasive distrust of the country's Chinese population as a whole. The measure was taken in response to Canada's involvement in the shipment of Chinese labour to the Western Front because the Canadian government feared that opposition to the labour shipments would result in sabotage. While earlier concerns about the subversive potential of the Chinese in Canada were focused on an external threat (Indian security), the threat posed by the Chinese was by 1917 internal.

In comparison to the treatment of other ethnic populations perceived to represent an internal security threat to Canada, the surveillance of the Chinese and the suppression of the Chinese Nationalist League hardly stand out as acts of draconian severity. Thousands of German and Ukrainian immigrants were interned in the early months of the

War, and while the CNL was banned, the Canadian government did not punish CNL members to the full extent allowed under PC 2384. None of the forty-two individuals arrested in connection with the Chinese Nationalist League received a sentence more severe than one year of probation, and the ban of the organization was repealed after eight months.²⁶¹ The significance of the surveillance, and resulting ban of the CNL, rests not in the severity of the government's treatment of the Chinese in Canada, but rather in the fact that it represents a unique and important case study in a number of different contexts.

In the context of British Imperial history, the surveillance of the Chinese Nationalist League and the Peking consular officials demonstrates the extent to which Britain was concerned about the threat of Sino-German complicity to Imperial security in India. Britain's request that the surveillance of the consular officials continue even after China sided with Britain and declared war on Germany, reflects a deep distrust of the Chinese government and persistent suspicion of German influence in Peking. The surveillance of the CNL, and the participation of Robert Nathan in the investigations surrounding the connection between the organization and Indian revolutionaries, demonstrates the gravity with which the British government took the threat to Indian security posed by the co-operation of Chinese and Indian revolutionary groups. These issues of Imperial security were responsible for the initiation of the surveillance and played an important role in sustaining the surveillance throughout the Great War.

In the context of the history of the Chinese in Canada, the surveillance of the Chinese represents an important chapter in the history of their political struggles. The efforts made by the Peking consular officials to have the CNL suppressed echoed similar

²⁶¹ Con et. al., From China to Canada, 110.

efforts made by Qing officials prior to the 1911 Revolution. The ban of the CNL represented a willingness by the Canadian government to intervene in overseas Chinese politics, an intervention that it had hitherto shown no interest in making. Though the motives of the Canadian government were not the same as those of the consular officials lobbying for the organization's suppression, the government's decision to include the CNL on the list of organizations outlawed under PC 2384 nonetheless served Peking's interests, and secured an important victory for Peking in its drive to eliminate the threat posed by Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary activities.

Similarly, the surveillance of the Chinese in Canada also represents a unique and important episode in the history of discrimination against the Chinese at the hands of the White Canadian majority. Governmental discrimination that targeted the Chinese before and after the Great War typically came as a result of widespread White agitation against the perceived economic and demographic threat posed by Chinese immigration. These issues were not a factor during the Great War, as public agitation against the Chinese was virtually non-existent between 1914 and 1918, and Chinese immigration came to a virtual halt. These threats were replaced by a perceived threat to national security and public order, and suspicion of the subversive potential of the Chinese, informed and sustained by a pervasive set of racist stereotypes regarding the Chinese, resulted in the surveillance of the entire Chinese population of Canada and in the ban of the CNL, impacting an estimated national membership of 8000. The Chinese were not entirely unique in this regard, and acts of discrimination initiated against them must be considered in the context of the government's concern over immigrant populations in general. However, the

surveillance and ban of the CNL demonstrate that discrimination against the Chinese did not disappear during the Great War. A comprehensive analysis of anti-Chinese discrimination in the pre-exclusion period, one that fully incorporates the years of the Great War, must go beyond public agitation and racism as the sole catalysts for discrimination. While these issues were important, they must not be privileged at the expense of other issues such as overseas Chinese politics, British Imperial security and wartime ethnic suppression, issues which were of profound importance during the Great War.

In response to the ban of the Chinese Nationalist League, a Chinese student wrote a letter to the editor of the Vancouver newspaper *The Critic* in defence of the organization.²⁶² The student defended the loyalty of the CNL to the Canadian War effort, and claimed that the Canadian authorities had reacted too harshly in their condemnation of the CNL. He commented that, even if a crime had been committed by a member of the organization, it was unreasonable to hold all members responsible, and suggested that a crime committed by a member of the Canadian Liberal or Conservative Party would certainly not result in the comprehensive ban of either political party. Though impressed by the eloquence with which the student expressed his argument, Canadian officials remained unmoved. The analogy drawn by the student may have been valid, but his analysis lacked one salient point: the Chinese Nationalist League was not judged by the same set of criteria that would have been extended to an Anglo-Canadian political party under similar circumstances. In 1918, the evolution of the Canadian government's

²⁶² RG 6, E, Vol. 527, File 168A-3: Letter to the Louis Taylor, Editor of *The Critic*, included in a letter from Chambers to Taylor, Nov. 4, 1918.

perception of the threat posed by the Chinese Nationalist League, and the subversive potential of the Chinese in Canada in general, was complete. After four years of suspicion and surveillance, in an atmosphere of heightened concern over the dangerous nature of the country's immigrant populations in general, the Canadian government took swift and decisive action.

Appendix I

Translation of Articles from the September 1, 1918 Edition of the *New Republic*²⁶³

Article 1: “Tang Hui Lung (Tang Hualong) has Come Again.”

Last Month Tang Hui Lung (Tang Hualong) arrived at Victoria, immediately going to the States. Outsiders are not aware of the object of his going there. On the 29th he arrived in Victoria from the States. We learned that he was going to take the boat for China. Some people had the opinion that his visit to the States was caused by reason, while we do not know why he was in the States. We believe his visit to the States, where he found freedom and liberty and the officials abiding the laws, also where the buildings and streets were clean and in good order – from the impression gained by his visit, he left the States with the feeling that he would not help or encourage the “rebels” or bring any assistance, or bring disaster to the country. Whether this is true or not we have wiped out eyes and watch for further developments.”

*Article 2: Title of Article Unknown.*²⁶⁴

Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui) has brought disaster to the State. All our compatriots should chastise him. If there is any who knows that Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui) is doing harm to the country and does not give voice to punish or chastise him, he is committing a crime.

He who does not punish Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui), and he also who comes to America to borrow money from him, his crime is the same.

Then who is this man coming to America to borrow money? I would like to see this individual (Tang Hui Lung [Tang Hualong]), and am going to ask him the reason why he is so cruel as to help the robber and to harm the country.

Article 3: “A Letter From the Target Man to the Bullet, Thanking It.”

My Dear Bullet:

Being unfortunately born into this world, full of trouble, I just regard my existence as a convenience for any one to walk over me, all the time I desire to be a dog of peaceful

²⁶³ Translations taken from BP #136356-358: Report on the Assassination of Tang Hualong by C.H. Cahan, enclosed in a letter from Cahan to Borden, Oct. 22, 1918. I have copied all Chinese names as they appear in Cahan’s report, but have included Pinyin romanization of the names in parenthesis beside them.

²⁶⁴ Cahan included these passages as “references to the Premier of China...and to the late Chinese Minister” on page six of the edition.

times, to live is full of trouble and to die is not very easy. You (the bullet) being so kind, have found a place for me in death, to send me to everlasting happy world. Your work has done lots of good for the people who are pessimistic and who are sorry for the condition of their country. One shot from you and all the trouble and sorrow has been buried in this earth. This is the service of yours so the people of modern times do not call you as a bullet, they call you, a dose from you, a Soup of Lotus, or a health giving pill. (Why do they call you this?) Because you are just as sweet as honey, and bring health for us, now we are enjoying ourselves in Heaven, we dare not forget the good work you have done for us, because you have recommended us to Heaven and this is our few words to show our appreciation. When I write this I feel thankful to you.”

Article 4: “Remarkable Wonders.”

1. People’s opinion is that Tang Hui Lung (Tang Hualong) came to the States with the intention of negotiating a foreign loan for Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui), Premier of Chinese government.
2. Whether or not this is true or not we cannot say, but when we observe the action or movement of Tang Hui Lung (Tang Hualong) we cannot help but have suspicion of him.
3. If Tang’s coming is actually with the intention of negotiating the loan for Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui), then what is this loan used for? Is this for war expenditure against Germany? We think it is only for harming our South. (South China).
4. Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui) is a big robber in our country; any person in the country who does not desire to chastise him, is a criminal; and what do we think of these people that help him to negotiate a loan? If Tang Hui Lung’s (Tang Hualong’s) coming was not to negotiate a loan, then he would be all right. If he did come over for a loan, then his crime is 100 times worse than Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui), and then Tang was also a robber.
5. In case Tang Hui Lung’s (Tang Hualong’s) coming is actually for the purpose of helping the robber, can the desired money borrowed reach his hand? We are not certain of it.
6. Because many Chinamen who reside in the Continent of America are patriots. If any man tried to negotiate a loan for the robber gang to rebel against the State, few Chinese people will not oppose him; and furthermore as the U.S.A. is a republic or a democratic country, and as the Americans know very well every movement done by the robber Tuan Chi Sui (Duan Qirui), and as being against the Republic of China, then how can they consent to lend money to give assistance to the robber?

Oh, Tang Hui Lung (Tang Hualong) cannot be only unable to have his desire fulfilled, but he will get a bad name for helping the robber, or the name of criminal will be attached to him.

Appendix II**Translation of an Article from the October 2, 1918 Edition of the *New Republic***

Article 1: "Ah Ha, the Monarchist are up to their Devilry [sic] Again."

You Monarchist Party seems to be having a good time, and to be very pleased. You think that you have got rid of the thron [sic] which has been at the soles of your feet, taken out the stye [sic] which has been covering up your eye. You think you chance has come to cable Peking to get rid of the Parliment [sic] again, to foster confucianism, to start a Monarchy, but don't be so sure, you who have usurped the "Chinese Benevolent Association" by claiming it to be private property. The order from the Authorities has not arrived, WHETHER IT WILL COME OR NOT NO ONE KNOWS, AND IF IT DOES COME IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF A NAME. IT WILL NOT KILL THE SPIRIT NOR STOP THE WORK, ON THE CONTRARY THE DETERMINATION WILL BE STRONGER, AND THE SPIRIT CAN NOT BE KILLED. You Monarchists may have to cry, you certainly will not down us. Hitherto we have always been within the law, walked in civilised steps, have been much respected by all white people. In a few days you Monarchist will see; we have not broken any laws, and you need no [sic] think that you are going to succeed in getting us to submit. You Monarchist machinations will be frustrated.

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