

**Turning Over a New Leaf: The British Government, the Cultural Revolution, and the
Ethnic Chinese Community in Britain, 1967–1968**

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Abstract

This article seeks to explain the transnational development of Maoism in the attempt to legitimise the Cultural Revolution and the 1967 Hong Kong Riots to Britain's ethnic Chinese populace. Based primarily on a survey of ethnic Chinese in Britain undertaken by the Hong Kong government in 1967, both the British and Hong Kong governments were forced to respond to the transnational expansion of Maoism, transmitted by the People's Republic of China and embraced by certain members of Britain's Chinese community who faced inequality and discrimination under British rule. This Maoist agitation in turn forced Britain to commit to the welfare of its Chinese community and foster the idea of a Hong Kong identity that was distinctive from Maoism.

Keywords: British Chinese, Cultural Revolution, Maoism, transnationalism, Hong Kong

The British Chinese community is one of the oldest Chinese communities of Western Europe, dating as far back as the early nineteenth century. The vast majority of ethnic Chinese who made Britain their home originated from Hong Kong and were often understood to be apolitical, devoted overwhelmingly to the pursuit of money. However, the late 1960s created agitation and unrest for Britain's ethnic Chinese population due to events transpiring in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Britain's crown colony of Hong Kong. In May 1966, Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution with the goal to renew Chinese communism and create a continuous revolution. Millions were persecuted over ten years of the Cultural Revolution, which had a deep cultural impact on overseas ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese. The impact on Britain was made particularly visible when a small segment of the British New Left embraced Maoism in the early 1960s and when pro-communists in the British colony of Hong Kong staged widespread demonstrations against colonial rule during the leftist 1967 Hong Kong Riots (hereinafter the "1967 Riots"). The unrest in Hong Kong spread to Britain's Chinese community, where a Maoist movement emerged in sympathy with the Hong Kong leftists. Maoism proved to be a dynamic political philosophy that was adaptable to the national, political, and cultural interests of different ethnic groups living in Britain, including recent immigrants of Chinese origin.

This article seeks to elaborate on the British and Hong Kong governments' response to the transnational spread of Maoism in Britain's ethnic Chinese community as a result of the 1967 Riots and the Cultural Revolution. Based on the results of a survey of ethnic Chinese in Britain undertaken by the Hong Kong government, I argue that the 1967 Riots had a profound impact upon Britain's ethnic Chinese community. Until late 1967, pro-Beijing Maoist organisations and the PRC's embassy in Portland Place, London, had been more successful in influencing some the ethnic Chinese in Britain through the transmission and distribution of Maoist propaganda. In an attempt to head off further unrest, in 1968 the British and Hong Kong governments reorganised the Liaison Office in London and launched a more proactive programme that helped turn the tide

in the propaganda war against Maoism. The first section of the article contextualises the 1967 Riots as a transnational event that not only influenced Britain's ethnic Chinese, but also provided a framework for both the British and Hong Kong governments in countering Maoist propaganda efforts. The second section discusses the Hong Kong government's survey of Britain's ethnic Chinese populace regarding the reasons for Maoism's success within the community and ways to win over their political approval. This unique survey discovered that certain ethnic Chinese who lived in Britain became radicalised due to the prejudice of the host society, but a more important factor was revealed to be the effectiveness of the Maoist propaganda in impacting and influencing British Chinese. The final section of the paper examines how the British and Hong Kong governments responded to and countered pro-Red Guard sentiments by committing to the welfare of Britain's ethnic Chinese and fostering the idea of a unique Hong Kong identity that was distinct from Chinese communism. In the end, the British and Hong Kong governments were able to neutralise the Maoist influence upon Britain's ethnic Chinese populace.

Studies of Chinese migration tend to take a sharply critical approach to understanding racial discourse in twentieth-century Britain, focusing principally on the social and economic integration of ethnic Chinese from late-eighteenth to twentieth-century British society (Ramdin, 1999; Parker, 2005; Luk, 2008). The first permanent Chinese settlement in Britain occurred with the recruitment of Chinese seafarers by the East India Company due to the need to replace British sailors throughout the French Revolutionary Wars (1791–1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815). These Chinese were predominately Cantonese and settled in the port cities of London, Liverpool, and Cardiff. By 1880, the first Chinatowns were established in London's Limehouse Causeway and Liverpool's Pitt Street with the increase in migration of ethnic Chinese from the British colonies of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. However, the Chinese community in Britain would remain small, with their population a little over three thousand (Luk, 2008: 46–47). Although the number of Chinese would increase in the 1910s and 1920s due to Britain's recruitment of Chinese labourers throughout the First World War, there numbers would sharply decline in the 1930s to less than six thousand due to a combination of economic woes caused by the Great Depression, restrictive immigration legislation, and integration into the British population (Seed, 2006: 65–66). In the immediate post-war period, Britain's need for skilled labourers from the Commonwealth was met with a significant expansion of the Chinese population in Britain (Parker, 2005: 62–63). By 1967, it was estimated by the Hong Kong government that the ethnic Chinese population living across Britain's major cities was roughly 50,000–65,000. Over 80 percent arrived directly from Hong Kong, with most employed in the restaurant business (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 15). Many of the Hong Kong Chinese migrants in Britain did not intend to stay in Britain, but merely to work and raise enough funds for their families back home in Hong Kong. It should be noted that unlike Britain's former colonies in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong had a large number of "stateless aliens," mostly people who arrived after 1949 from nearby Guangdong province that had sought refuge in the British colony. Thus, Britain's ethnic Chinese were not a homogeneous group and, therefore, this article's use of the term ethnic Chinese refers to migrants from both Hong Kong and the Chinese refugees who fled mainland China to Hong Kong in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War.

Throughout this period the Chinese in Britain frequently experienced racist pressures by local Britons. Perceived as cheap labourers, particularly among British seamen, the Chinese community were viewed as an economic threat that often drew a hostile response, expressed in racist terms. The establishment of Britain's first Chinatown in Limehouse, London, in the 1880s gave rise to the antipathy and anxiety of the so-called "Yellow Peril" and the stereotype that the Chinese were a corrupt people whose vices included seducing young women, smoking opium, and gambling. The immense popularity of Sax Rohmer's novel *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913) and the subsequent film adaptations throughout the twentieth century did very little to alleviate the discrimination ethnic Chinese faced in British society (Seed, 2006).

Scholars have acknowledged the significance of Hong Kong as not only a centre of Chinese migration to Britain, but an important transnational economic network of family remittance (Ng, 1968; Watson, 1975; Shang, 1984). While these are comprehensive in understanding the socioeconomic position of ethnic Chinese in Britain, this paper examines the impact Cold War dynamics and imperial decline had upon Britain's ethnic Chinese populace. In doing so, it demonstrates that political events impacting the PRC and Hong Kong were transnational and had an impact upon the ethnic Chinese in Britain. Specifically, this paper looks at the role that propaganda related to the Cultural Revolution and the 1967 Riots had upon Britain's Chinese community.

Benton's article (2005), later reproduced in *The Chinese in Britain, 1800–Present: Economy, Transnationalism, Identity* (2008), elaborates on the transnational role and impact Maoism had upon Britain's ethnic Chinese community during and prior to the Cultural Revolution. Both works note that the 1967 Riots were the impetus for the radicalisation of certain members of Britain's ethnic Chinese community and acknowledge the legacy of the communist East River Column (Dongjiang zongdui 东江纵队), which fought during the Second World War and left a long tail of support in Hong Kong. Likewise, Benton acknowledges discrimination and poverty faced in Britain made for fertile ground for pro-Red Guard sentiment among certain British Chinese (Benton, 2005: 334–335). However, in light of newly available archival sources from the Hong Kong Public Records Office, Benton and Gomez's work needs to be critically approached and revised in order to further elaborate on the effectiveness of Maoist propaganda upon the ethnic Chinese in Britain. Equally it is important to gain further insight in the British and Hong Kong government's response to quell the Red Guard agitation in Britain's ethnic Chinese community.

The Impact of the 1967 Riots

Until the late 1960s, the Hong Kong government contributed very little to the colony's social welfare and resisted the introduction of political and social reforms. This was due in part to fear of retaliation from the PRC, but also to fear of disrupting Hong Kong's laissez-faire economy. Furthermore, the colonial authorities lacked the political mechanisms capable of integrating the population and mediating social conflicts. This caused many people, specifically those from the New Territories, to view the government as a distant menace to be blamed for the importation of cheap rice and driving farmers from the land (Benton and Gomez, 2008: 248; Cheung, 2009: 4–5). This mistrust of the Hong Kong government was also evidenced among the ethnic Chinese who found employment in Britain. The Hong Kong government was represented by an office in London (the Hong Kong Government Office, or HKGO) that was established at the end of the Second World War to help aid in the colony's post-war rehabilitation. By 1955, this role changed when the Colonial Secretariat transferred the role of promoting trade and industry to the HKGO as it was considered more appropriate for the Hong Kong government to handle such responsibility. Until the aftermath of the 1967 Riots, officials of the HKGO rarely impinged on the lives of Britain's ethnic Chinese and instead promoted a policy of self-help (TNA, FCO 40/247, August 7, 1969).

Prior to the Cultural Revolution, the relationship between Britain and the PRC has been defined as a “continuous process of contestation and cooperation” (Mark, 2017: 4). Britain took the initiative in 1950 to recognise the newly founded PRC in the hopes of developing trade and retaining Hong Kong as a British colony. Despite the early British recognition, Anglo-Chinese relations remained strained due to Britain's refusal to denounce the Nationalist government in Taiwan and simultaneously recognise the PRC as the legitimate China to the United Nations (Tang, 1992: 76–81; Mark, 2017: 189). Negotiations came to an abrupt end due to the Korean War (1950–1953) and would not resume until the Geneva Convention of 1954 when Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and Premier Zhou Enlai agreed to exchange *chargés d'affaires*. Prior to

this agreement, the nations merely recognised each other through representatives to Britain's legation in Beijing, established in 1861, and by the New China News Agency (Xinhua tongxunshe 新华通讯社) in London, established in 1947 (Mark, 2017: 55). For the next decade, Britain and the PRC would remain merely at semi-diplomatic relations due to the status of Taiwan and the United Nations seat. However, the United States escalation of the war in Vietnam in 1965 inflamed Anglo-Chinese relations. During the Vietnam War, Prime Minister Harold Wilson carefully maintained a balance between the Anglo-American alliance and averting a third world war. While Wilson did not commit British combat troops to South Vietnam, he publicly supported the American war effort in Southeast Asia. This public display of support infuriated the Chinese. In turn, Beijing's propaganda intensified its attacks not only on Britain, but also on Hong Kong, for it was labelled a base for American aggression against Vietnam due to the amount of visiting American warships on shore leave (Hughes, 2009: 58–63; Mark, 2017: 80–87). While the Vietnam War had done much to inflame Anglo-Chinese relations, the launch of the PRC's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 brought about an all-time low in diplomatic relations between Britain and the PRC.

The anti-imperial and anti-capitalist nature of the Cultural Revolution and its stated goal to radically transform Chinese society (Wu, 2014: 1–2) made it a matter of time until the revolution impacted British-ruled Hong Kong. Following a labour strike on May 7, 1967, Beijing's state newspaper People's Daily (Renmin Ribao 人民日报) encouraged Hong Kong Leftists to mobilise all pro-communist and PRC owned businesses to take part in the riots against the Hong Kong government (Man and Lun, 2014: 256). Excessive violence reigned in Hong Kong for the next seven months as the leftists and Hong Kong police clashed in the streets and attempted to win the propaganda battle for the hearts and minds of the people. With the British authorities committed to a firm stand against the leftists, Premier Zhou Enlai ordered the leftists to gradually wind down and brought about an end of the riots in December 1967 (Ma, 2003: 162–163).

Propaganda became the key form of warfare between the leftists and the Hong Kong government throughout the 1967 Riots, and Governor David Trench determined as early as May 1967 that a policy of firm action was needed against the communist press if Hong Kong was to remain in British hands (TNA, FCO 21/191, May 15, 1967). The leftist press continuously produced material that not only denounced British imperial rule, but also tried to legitimise the Cultural Revolution to the people of Hong Kong. Furthermore, Mao's Little Red Book, images of Mao, and revolutionary songs were freely distributed by the leftists (Cheung, 2009: 45–50). It was estimated by Hong Kong's Special Branch that the leading left-wing newspapers, including Wen Wei Po (文汇报), Ta Kung Pao (大公报), and the New Evening Post, had a daily circulation of 352,000 in July 1967 (TNA, FCO 40/114, October 26, 1967). While initially hesitate, London eventually approved the Hong Kong government request to ban the leftist press from publishing and ordered right-wing newspapers to distribute pro-colonial material as additional form of countermeasure (TNA, FCO 40/11, August 31, 1967).

As will be discussed later on, the left-wing newspapers also played an important role in Britain as they provided the only Chinese language-based media to inform Britain's ethnic Chinese community on news of Hong Kong (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 26). This not only provided a pro-communist viewpoint, but further reveals the British and Hong Kong government's negligence and neglect towards the ethnic Chinese, setting the precedent for Red Guard chauvinism in Britain's Chinatowns in support of Hong Kong's leftist demonstrations and pro-Maoist sentiments. Yet the lessons learned from riots were exported to Britain, and the British and Hong Kong governments were forced to turn over a new leaf and reform their policy towards Britain's ethnic Chinese community in order to stem pro-Red Guard sentiments and provide media outlets representing a colonial viewpoint. Thus, Britain's ethnic Chinese populace were not only connected to Hong Kong in terms of homeland ties and family remittance, but also by events

that transpired in the British colony and how that information was presented. Thus, the wave of social and political unrest of Hong Kong in 1967 was a transnational event that had deep impact on Britain's ethnic Chinese community.

Maoism in Britain's Ethnic Chinese Community

The array of literature surrounding Maoism and the Cultural Revolution's impact upon Britain has tended to focus on the British Left and local Britons' fascination with the PRC as being economically and culturally driven. Economically, the British Left promoted trade relations with the PRC as a solution for Britain's economic woes. Culturally, the British Left's solidarity with the PRC was motivated by its sympathy for the Chinese people who had suffered for a century under imperialism, foreign invasions, and natural calamities. This resulted in the formation of several British-based Maoist organisations such as the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), whose members were mostly white students (Widgery, 1976; Smith and Worley, 2014, 2017). Tom Buchanan elaborated on the phenomenon of Maoism in Britain during the Cultural Revolution and convincingly demonstrated that the British Left often took a naïve and guilty view of the PRC and the revolution, which led intellectuals of the Left to form the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU) (Buchanan, 2012: 189–199). While there is an extensive historiography surrounding the British Left, this article details the impact Maoism and the Leftist Riots had upon Britain's ethnic Chinese populace throughout the period of the Cultural Revolution.

During the 1967 Riots, members of the Kung Ho Association, a pro-left Chinese association based in London, took to the streets to protest against British imperialism in Hong Kong. They carried a portrait of Mao Zedong while chanting revolutionary songs and quotations from the Cultural Revolution. Since the outbreak of the 1967 Riots, the Kung Ho Association's headquarters in London had become an important centre for the distribution of left-wing Hong Kong newspapers, including *Wen Wei Po*, *Ta Kung Pao*, and the *New Evening Post*, to Britain's ethnic Chinese community. These left-wing Hong Kong newspapers were quite popular and did much to inform the ethnic Chinese about the 1967 Riots, albeit from leftist point of view, due in part to a lack of right-wing publications on the matter. Indeed, it was not until August of 1967 that the British and Hong Kong government made any efforts to inform the Chinese community of the events that transpired in Hong Kong during the leftist riots (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 22–23, 79). Pro-left Chinese associations, such as the members of the Chinese Mutual Aid Worker's Club, performed Cultural Revolution model operas across cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and Edinburgh. Furthermore, young leftist Chinese workers collected money for the All-Circle Struggle Committee (Gang ying pohai douzheng weiyuanhui 港英迫害斗争委员会), the primary Leftist organisation in Hong Kong, in order to support the fight against the British colonial government and spread Beijing's propaganda (Benton and Gomez, 2008: 249–250). These demonstrations were minor when compared to the 1967 Riots and it should be noted that most ethnic Chinese in Britain remained neutral or at the most sympathetic to the leftist cause in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, the British government wondered how and why elements of the Chinese community, who had escaped the chaos of communist China, demonstrated in support of the Hong Kong leftists. A more pressing concern was the discontent expressed by Britain's Chinese community towards the Hong Kong government and the overall social environment of the colony. The British government tasked the Hong Kong government to survey how and why certain members of Britain's Chinese community had become pro-communist and to find a solution to this problem. The results of the survey indicated a combination of factors involving the poor treatment of ethnic Chinese faced in Britain, criticism towards the Hong Kong government, and the ability of the Communists to win over certain members of the Chinese population.

In the month that the 1967 Riots concluded, Colonial Secretary W. V. Dickinson instructed Administrative Officer David Lai to come to Britain and determine how and why communism had influenced the ethnic Chinese community. Lai, who was well known for his review of illegal gambling in Hong Kong (Bray, 2001: 187), was also tasked to examine the organisation of the Chinese Liaison Office in London which was established under the HKGO in 1962 with the purpose to assist the people of Hong Kong to integrate into British society. Lai left Hong Kong on December 13, 1967 and operated from an office in London until April 16, 1968. In order to complete his mission and to gain a better understanding of the situations faced by ethnic Chinese in Britain, Lai organised several meetings with the heads of the Liaison Office, Ministry of Defence, Special Branch, and various local government authorities such as the regional police forces. Lai surveyed ethnic Chinese, mainly restaurant owners and workers across Britain's major cities such as London, Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, and Cambridge to assess their level of sympathy for Chinese communism. Finally, he met and discussed with the people of Hong Kong the impact the 1967 Riots had upon them, their family, and their future aspirations (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 3–6). His study revealed to the British and Hong Kong governments the need to commit time and resources to the issues faced by the ethnic Chinese community.

Lai's report identified the poor relationship between the Liaison Office and the ethnic Chinese community as key factor as to why Maoism was able to take root in Britain's Chinese community. Since its establishment, the Liaison Office was single-handedly operated by Liaison Officer H. T. Woo on a part-time basis. Victor Chann joined the office only in 1965 as a full-time assistant (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 7). These two positions had the colossal tasks of assisting and corresponding with those who contacted the Liaison Office, paying occasional visits to employment centres outside London, and replying to letters from ethnic Chinese who enquired about matters such as passport renewal and extension of work permits (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 70–71). It is clear the Liaison Office was by no means a completely satisfactory vessel to render services due to the shortage of staff and its fixed location in London. The major concern with the Liaison Office was that it operated on a basis to assist those who asked, which meant the office did not play an active role with ethnic Chinese and as such remained virtually unknown to the Chinese communities across Britain. Up to 1966, the common complaint to the Liaison Office was delays in granting permission for wives and children to join their husbands in Britain (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 10), yet it is clear the British government did not seek to address the many social needs ethnic Chinese faced in Britain.

Like many other ethnic minority communities, the ethnic Chinese in Britain experienced discrimination by both the state and in everyday life, which worsened for ethnic Chinese in the 1960s when the government passed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962. This act removed the automatic right of citizenship for Commonwealth citizens and regulated the flow of migrants from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean (Home Office, 1969: 3). The act had a significant impact on the Hong Kong Chinese who had lost the right of abode in Britain. Under the new law, they could only enter Britain with an employment voucher for a specific job obtained for them by their future employer. This resulted in the further concentration of ethnic Chinese labourers in the catering business through systems of chain migration, word of mouth, and family connections (Parker, 1999: 65–66). Furthermore, Lai's report found numerous forms of discrimination ethnic Chinese faced in 1967, which included exploitation in gambling clubs, with the average daily loss per person at roughly £200–300; bullying and racist name-calling towards ethnic Chinese students by both their peers and teachers; violence towards Hong Kong Chinese men who married "Englishwomen"; and the language barrier many ethnic Chinese faced in Britain (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 30–32).

The language barrier was an especially difficult issue as most ethnic Chinese who migrated had Cantonese as their first language, with many never having learned English at all.

Many felt helpless, as they were unable to effectively communicate in English and get access to essential services (Ng, 1968: 89; Watson, 1975: 124–125; Parker, 1995: 120–121; Benton and Gomez, 2008: 329–331). The language barriers between ethnic Chinese and local Britons often led to violent confrontations. For example, in 1963 a fight occurred between six Chinese staff and several British customers of a Chinese restaurant in St. Helens, Lancashire, due to poor communication and the latter refusing to pay. This resulted in the death of one British youth and the arrest of six Chinese staff members (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 25–33).

It should be noted that the anti-Chinese racialism had long contributed to the popularity of communist ideology amongst Britain's Chinese community. In Liverpool and London during and after the First World War, ethnic Chinese seafarers entered left-wing politics and established trade unions to cope with the antagonism of British sailors and to fight for better welfare (Ng, 1968: 52–55; Shang, 1984: 10). As Benton and Gomez note, these early Chinese trade unions “played an important role in shaping the Chinese community, nurturing its political consciousness, and sharpening its focus on China, the diaspora, and Chinese migrant labour worldwide” (Benton and Gomez, 2008: 263). While trade unions declined after the Second World War due to post-war Chinese migrants' entry into the catering industry, radical trade union leaders formed new Chinese associations that took a pro-leftist stance. Two such associations emerged from the original Liverpool-based Chinese trade unions and that included the Kung Ho Association and the Tai Ping Club. The Kung Ho Association was established in London in 1947 under Samuel Chinque (Sam Chen) a proud communist and former leader of Liverpool Chinese Seamen's Union. The Tai Ping Club was formed in Liverpool in 1948 with membership predominantly from the village of Tai Po in the Hong Kong New Territories. Both groups were organised to aid Chinese workers in their dealing with discrimination from British society and to improve their welfare. Furthermore, both groups proclaimed their support of Beijing after 1949 and openly criticised the Hong Kong government for their treatment of the ethnic Chinese populace (Ng, 1968: 55–56; Shang, 1984: 37; Benton and Gomez, 2008: 246). While these two associations did not hide their support of the PRC, both proved to be more readily and willing to aid members of Britain's Chinese community who had faced discrimination. This in turn revealed that the pro-leftist organisations were more willing and readily available to aid the ethnic Chinese than either the British or Hong Kong governments. Finally, Lai's survey found that while many ethnic Chinese did not firmly support communism, there was a deep sense of patriotism due to recent developments in China. One Chinese credited the Chinese Community Party (CCP) for the better treatment of Chinese in Britain: “if China had not become a powerful nation Bold Street in Liverpool would probably still be out of bounds to Chinese” (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 19–20). Thus, further credit was given to the CCP for the better treatment of post-war Chinese migrants to Britain.

Overall, it was clear that the British and Hong Kong governments were uninvolved in the well-being of Britain's Chinese community prior to 1967. The Liaison Office was undoubtedly too understaffed and underfunded to aid those who even knew about the office. The annual budget of the office was £5,000, which included a monthly honorarium of £20 for Administrative Officer Woo. The level of financial commitment reflected Britain's casual approach to the Liaison Office (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 11–14). Finally, the British and Hong Kong governments had done little to inform Britain's Chinese community on events in Hong Kong. Instead, the only Chinese language media available was of a left-wing viewpoint, which in turn reinforced an unfavourable view of both the British and Hong Kong governments (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 25–27).

It has been well known that the PRC attempted to export the Maoist ideology and the values of the Cultural Revolution across Asia, Africa, and Latin America to varying degrees. The Chinese embassy throughout these regions played a leading role in propagating pro-Red Guard sentiments (Cheng, 2006). The Hong Kong government found the methods used by the communists to influence the British Chinese population included film shows, distribution of

propaganda publications, establishment of small social clubs throughout the major cities, and the appointment of contacts to facilitate communication and implementation of plans. The Chinese embassy in London had a hand in the distribution of Maoist material, staging demonstrations in support of Mao Zedong Thought, brawled with the police, and had some level of network among certain members of the ethnic Chinese community throughout 1967 (Mark, 2017: 125–134; HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 20–23). However, Lai reported there was no evidence to support the claim by some Chinese restaurateurs that communication between the embassy of the PRC and the British Chinese community was unified around a central committee, which in turn established numerous sub-committees throughout Britain in order to indoctrinate ethnic Chinese into the Maoist ideology (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 24–25).

Soon, it was made apparent that the Chinese embassy took every measure possible to help solve the problems faced by ethnic Chinese and was far more effective than the Liaison Office. One such case that demonstrated the effectiveness of the Chinese embassy was its handling in acquiring the repatriation payments for a Hong Kong sailor who was dismissed from a Norwegian ship in 1966. In this case, the sailor approached the Liaison Office for aid, but the approach was unsuccessful. The sailor then requested to be taken to the Chinese embassy. The embassy was quick to contact the shipping company and the Norwegian consulate and successfully accommodated the dismissed sailor in a hotel and was refunded his air ticket to Hong Kong by the Norwegian government (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 20–21). This example clearly demonstrated that the Chinese embassy was far more effective than the Liaison Office in settling issues faced by ethnic Chinese. More importantly, such successful cases provided the ethnic Chinese in Britain a positive image of the PRC and created a belief that the Chinese government was far more concerned with the well-being of the Chinese community than the British or Hong Kong governments. Although this case may not have been enough to convince certain ethnic Chinese community to become pro-Maoists, it might have revealed to some that the PRC was not as malevolent as was once believed.

An important cultural medium used by both sides of the Cold War was that of film. Propaganda had always been central to the operation of the CCP. The PRC was well-known for using films to promote mass campaigns to legitimise the state and the policies of leaders to sway both domestic and international opinion. Film became an important propaganda tool that had a lasting impact on the Red Guard generation of the PRC. Prior to 1966, most films produced in the PRC were based either on the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War or the suffering of Chinese society prior to 1949 (Yang, 2016: 49–58). However, Chinese propaganda and films shifted their focus in 1966 to the Cultural Revolution, which emphasised tearing down the “Four Olds” of Chinese culture (old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas) in order to radically transform China’s society. The most famous Cultural Revolution films, such as *The Legend of the Red Lantern* (Hong deng ji 红灯记) and *The Red Detachment of Women* (Hongse niangzi jun 红色娘子军), based on the model operas (yangbanxi 样板戏), were largely attributed to Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing (Laikwan, 2017: 9–18). In Britain, the Chinese embassy played Cultural Revolution films on a weekly basis, which were most welcomed by the ethnic Chinese in Britain, be they communist sympathisers or not. The reason for this was that most ethnic Chinese had little to no civic centres or activities for leisure that were given in the Chinese language. The Hong Kong government quickly found out that the Chinese embassy had for years been distributing, free of charge, films of a propaganda nature to those in Britain willing to attend the weekly film showing in most major British cities (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 21–22). These films had free admission, though a voluntary donation was accepted. Both the British and Hong Kong governments believed that the donation from attendees was enough to cover the cost of operations and that the Chinese embassy was able to supply film reels free of charge (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 21–22). It was clear that the Cultural Revolution films were played to Britain’s ethnic Chinese population with the clear intention of spreading Maoist and Cultural Revolution propaganda and

to justify the rule of the PRC. While many ethnic Chinese did not become ardent supporters of Maoism, the Chinese embassy screenings remained popular due to the Cantonese language spoken in the films.

Lai's report discovered that propaganda publications were one of the most important mediums through which communist influence was exerted on the Chinese population of Britain, specifically over the 1967 Riots. It was revealed that the daily circulation of left-wing Hong Kong newspapers was estimated to be roughly 4,500 copies, nearly three times the daily circulation of right-wing Hong Kong newspapers in Britain's Chinese community. In London, members of the association travelled to Chinese restaurants, particularly those in the West End, to sell recent editions of *Ta Kung Pao*, *Wen Wei Po*, and the *Evening News*. Furthermore, these newspapers were supplemented by information bulletins published and distributed for free by the Chinese embassy in London. These bulletins were compiled on the basis of radio announcements and newspapers in Beijing and contained reprints of Hong Kong-based left-wing news (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 22–23). In a similar fashion to the state-press in the PRC, the left-wing newspapers in Britain followed a specific guideline for launching political campaigns through editorials and leading articles in order to influence the ethnic Chinese populace (Brady, 2008: 1). This signifies the strength of the Chinese press and its financial capabilities to be able to have such wide audience subscription not only in Hong Kong, but also in Britain.

Finally, another important institution the Maoists used to spread their ideology to the ethnic Chinese was the many Chinese clubs and recreational facilities across Britain's major cities. In his book, *The Chinese in London*, Ng argues that the Chinese associations throughout London and the rest of Britain were apolitical, with the exception of one pro-communist club, and were primarily concerned with mutual aid, cultural, and recreational activities (Ng, 1968: 47–49). This statement, however, does not take into consideration that since 1949 both Beijing and Taipei began competing for the loyalty of Chinese abroad. Despite the fall of the mainland to the CCP, the Guomindang government of Taiwan continued to support pro-Taiwan associations in Britain, including the Overseas Chinese Association (Yingguo huaqiao xiehui 英国华侨协会) and the Sun Yat-sen Society in the United Kingdom (Yingguo Zhongshan xiehui 英国中山协会). While Beijing only considered ethnic Chinese who did not assume foreign nationality as Overseas Chinese, many pro-communist associations leaned towards the PRC. The Kung Ho Association, based in London, was openly supportive of the CCP regime after 1949. The Workers' Club adopted a pro-Maoist stance in the 1960s and displayed Maoist propaganda over its headquarters in Liverpool and Manchester. In addition, leftist organisations such as the Tai Ping Club, founded in London in 1948, and Liverpool's Wah-shing Club explicitly supported Beijing throughout the 1967 Riots. Furthermore, these two organisations banned gambling and screened Chinese propaganda films to their community members and staged demonstrations against British imperialism in Hong Kong (Benton and Gomez, 2008: 243–246). David Lai's report for the Hong Kong government found these Chinese associations remained popular among ethnic Chinese workers and students who were mostly not Maoists or pro-communists as these were locations for the Chinese to meet community members who spoke the same language and to learn the latest news about Hong Kong and the PRC (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 23–24). While the level of support the PRC and the Chinese embassy provided to these leftist associations remains unknown, it was nonetheless comparable to the ability of the PRC to support, direct, and mobilise pro-Red Guard sentiments through communist-controlled organisations such as leftist bookshops, banks, and cinemas throughout the 1967 Riots (Tsang, 2007: 176). On a final note, throughout his stay in London, Lai was able to gain access to the Kung Ho Association under the guise of being a Hong Kong student and was allowed entry due to his Chinese ethnicity. Lai found the association filled with reading materials on the PRC and the Cultural Revolution and noted that half of the premise was used for table-tennis and the other half used for reading and dining, offering food at prices significantly lower than the average London Chinese restaurant. Lai reported that while he felt the Kung Ho

Association was not well run, the group's political affiliation and financial support from the PRC was clear from the amount of propaganda material held and distributed from its headquarters to the surrounding Chinese community (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 23–24).

These examples clearly demonstrate that the PRC maintained a transnational network with the ethnic Chinese in Britain through the Chinese embassy in order to legitimise the PRC regime and the Cultural Revolution. The Cold War powers struggled to propagate and legitimise their ideology on the global stage through cultural, economic, military, and political means in order to gain support from nations and peoples alike. The PRC was heavily involved in exporting Maoism and the Cultural Revolution ideology throughout the world, specifically in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, in defiance of both the Americans and the Soviets (Cheng, 2006). Britain was an important target for the export of Cultural Revolution values due to its ethnic Chinese population and also due to the historical nature of British imperialism towards China and its control over Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government report found that the Chinese propaganda attempted to legitimise the Cultural Revolution and denounce British imperialism. From 1945 onward, the Cold War produced a violent imposition on the world that produced wars and displacements and created new and imagined identities designed to connect or distance the Chinese from the competing ideologies of capitalism and communism. Across the globe, borders were redrawn from anti-colonial and anti-communist projects that superseded transnational ties for the strategic transmission of Cold War ideologies (Eschen, 2013: 452–453). Therefore, it was inevitable that a conflict in Hong Kong would have an impact on the ethnic Chinese population living in Britain in 1967, and it was inevitable that the British government would react to counter the Maoist influence on the ethnic Chinese community.

The British Response to Maoist Agitation

David Lai's report revealed that both the British and Hong Kong governments needed to radically change their policy toward governing ethnic Chinese living and working in Britain. The first recommendation was to address the major issues the Liaison Office faced: it desperately needed not only funds, but a reorganisation to better establish extensive and thorough contact with the Chinese community. The Liaison Office needed to counter the influence of the Chinese embassy, which, according to the report, showed a greater readiness to aid Chinese migrants in Britain, especially among the Hong Kong Chinese youth (HKPRO, NT 1/2120/62c). Moreover, the report identified that the British and Hong Kong governments needed to show that they were committed to the well-being of the Chinese communities and project a positive image of the British. The Liaison Office was recommended to increase its staff to include a full-time officer, who needed to be ethnic Chinese and bilingual in both English and Cantonese languages. This position was given the title of Director of Chinese Affairs and reported to the Colonial Secretariat. It was recommended that five full-time supporting staff members be hired, including four liaison officers and one social welfare officer. Furthermore, regional Liaison Offices would need to be established outside London, specifically in Liverpool and Edinburgh. These two cities were chosen because Liverpool was home to the second largest ethnic Chinese populace, aside from London, and Edinburgh was deemed a city nearly free from all Maoist influence and that Chinese community there would be more likely to give strong support to a regional office and in turn show support to the Hong Kong government (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 55–57). The additional offices in turn significantly increased the annual budget of operating the Liaison Office from £5,000 in 1967 to roughly £48,000 in 1968 (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 8–9). Finally, the Liaison Office was to cultivate leadership in the Chinese communities and facilitate the work of the office with an Advisory Committee comprising leading Chinese chosen from the main city centres. The committee was to meet at least twice a year to discuss matters concerning the Chinese community and establish an amenity fund to aid those in desperate need (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 57). Accordingly, the Liaison Office was to be expanded in order to better establish and address the concerns of Britain's ethnic Chinese community and to stem the opportunity for those to be

influenced by the Chinese embassy. However, this strategy came at the risk of influencing Britain's Chinatowns too much and in turn offending the Chinese embassy and sparking a reaction. The 1967 Riots had only just concluded a few months prior to the Hong Kong government's recommendation, yet it was deemed a necessary action to unify the British Chinese communities (HKPRO, CR 9/5215/56).

Another important task for the Hong Kong government and the Liaison Office was to wage an undeclared propaganda struggle against the Chinese embassy. The Hong Kong government was to regularly send Britain popular Cantonese films and news reels about Hong Kong to be shown to the Chinese community. These films were to be available free of charge and were to be organised by a Film Committee, under the Liaison Office, which aided in creating leadership among the Chinese community. This was in clear opposition of the Chinese embassy, which, as mentioned before did regular screenings of Maoist and Cultural Revolution films. As well, the Liaison Office ensured the films screened by the Film Committee delivered entertainment as well as propaganda to convince the viewers of the benefits of capitalism and the chaos brought on by the Cultural Revolution (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 57–58). The distribution of Hong Kong films also helped develop a Hong Kong identity, which will be examined later on. Furthermore, news media outlets had to be reformed in order to counter the communist propaganda and better inform and connect to the British Chinese community. To accomplish this task, the Information Section of the Liaison Office was to be strengthened with two information officers who were bilingual in both written and spoken English and Cantonese. This new office was instructed to counter the Chinese embassy-supported press in 1968 which led to the publication of the Hong Kong News Digest, a conservative paper mailed to Hong Kong Chinese throughout Britain and Europe, designed to inform from the colonial viewpoint on matters surrounding Hong Kong. The paper was distributed free of charge across Britain as both the British and Hong Kong governments deemed it necessary to provide free newspapers to counter the communist press, which were much more widely accessible to ethnic Chinese. Moreover, the British and Hong Kong governments subsidised non-communist Chinese newspapers in Britain to direct and increase sales of the right-press. The Overseas Chinese Daily (Wah Kiu Yat Po 华人日报), a pro-British Hong Kong press, was given special attention as the British government appointed sub-agents in all major British city centres to promote the sale of the newspaper. The Hong Kong government subsidised the Overseas Chinese Daily HK\$0.10 for each copy and lowered freight charges (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 59–62). Additionally, Lai recommended a list of contacts who had been cleared and approved by the Ministry of Defence. It appears Lai's contacts were meant to be recruited or at the least meant to keep in touch with Britain's Special Branch. This list included thirty-six ethnic Chinese, originally from either Hong Kong or China who were mostly restaurant owners across Britain's major cities. Interestingly, all thirty-six men had long-standing connections and were well respected amongst the Chinese community and had neutral-right to anti-communist political inclinations (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 84–91). Therefore, Lai organised officials from both the British and Hong Kong governments together to address the needs of the ethnic Chinese community and eliminate Maoist sympathisers.

Despite the many changes made by the British and Hong Kong governments, for some Chinese migrants, the habits of independence and avoidance of authority were too ingrained. However, for the vast majority of ethnic Chinese, the change in strategy by the British to the commitment to Chinese migrant welfare stymied the influence of communism through effective counterpropaganda and the promotion of a Hong Kong identity. It was already deemed by the Hong Kong government in 1968 that the so-called "Battle of Portland Place," a clash between Chinese embassy staff members and British police, had reduced the popularity of the Chinese embassy amongst Britain's Chinese community as there was a significant decline in attendance for the PRC's National Day celebration on October 1, 1967 (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 19). The increase in funding and support across Britain by the Liaison Office was also believed to have

contributed to the decline in support for the Chinese embassy. Over the next few years, the Liaison Office had met most of the objectives set up in David Lai's report to the Hong Kong government. Officials from the office promoted the interests of the Hong Kong Chinese to Whitehall, provided recordings of English-language lessons, and aided in services including immigration, work permits, renewal of passports, and mediating disputes (HKPRO, CR 9/5215/56). In so doing, the Liaison Office was able to establish contact and show support to the Chinese community and minimise the possibility of Britain's ethnic Chinese from being influenced by the Chinese embassy.

In the aftermath of the 1967 Riots, the Hong Kong government banned all communist films from being screened and severely limited the printing capabilities of the leftist press (Zhou, 2002: 185–188). In Britain, the effort of the British government was to block the communist films as best as possible in the hopes of eliminating the propaganda films. In their efforts, both the Hong Kong government and the Liaison Office secured film venues for its supporters and in 1970 showed 262 films with an average audience of 40 in restaurants and 400 in hired halls. Furthermore, the conservative paper *Hong Kong News Digest* was distributed to 19,000 subscribers in Britain's Chinatowns and several hundred copies were mailed to ethnic Chinese in mainland Europe and to seafarers. As well, the Liaison Office widely distributed news pamphlets answering Chinese migrant questions and fed the colonial viewpoint on the development of Hong Kong (HKPRO, CR 9/5215/56).

Although the British cannot claim to have won all the hearts and minds of the Hong Kong Chinese, it can be said the British did more than just counter the Maoist propaganda, but also helped perpetuate the Hong Kong identity. The birth of Hong Kong identity has often been dated to the year prior to David Lai's report, in the wake of the 1967 Riots. The films and newspapers the British released to its ethnic Chinese community not only renewed public confidence in the British and Hong Kong governments, but also celebrated Hong Kong's free market, stability, and security as positives of British rule and capitalism. These were contrasted to what the Cultural Revolution had brought to Hong Kong: chaos and instability. While Lai's report found that many ethnic Chinese, including the young and old, were dissatisfied and frustrated with the Hong Kong government, they nonetheless treasured their home of Hong Kong and the better living conditions provided by British society (HKPRO, HAD 2/90/62: 19–34). To the Chinese community, one of the most important initiatives by the British and Hong Kong governments was its support for Chinese schools in Britain by providing textbooks and lessons in Cantonese (Home Office, 1985: 7–11). While this project too was meant to influence Hong Kong Chinese to serve the British interest, in a minor way, it alleviated some of the racial discrimination ethnic Chinese faced and fostered the Hong Kong identity. In so doing, the British and Hong Kong governments catered to the Chinese community's specific Cantonese language, in a way the Chinese embassy would have never done, and aided in the preservation of the Cantonese identity, which in turn fostered the Hong Kong identity.

Conclusion

This article adds to the historiography surrounding the transnational nature of Maoism and the Cultural Revolution which had a significant impact on the ethnic Chinese community living in Britain in the late 1960s. With the 1967 Riots breaking out in Hong Kong, certain ethnic Chinese in Britain became radicalised and even came to embrace Mao Zedong Thought. The Hong Kong government quickly set out to find out how and why the ethnic Chinese of Britain might support Maoism when many had previously escaped persecution by the PRC and fled to the safety of British Hong Kong. The survey of Britain's Chinese community was unique in that it identified a combination of anti-Chinese prejudice in Britain and effectiveness of Maoist propaganda that

caused certain ethnic Chinese to show support or at the least sympathy towards the communists. Unfortunately, neither the British nor Hong Kong governments did much to resolve the racist discrimination many ethnic Chinese faced. But they did reform the Liaison Office to better support this community and provided an effective counterpropaganda campaign to challenge the Maoist propaganda. The report discovered that the Liaison Office was underfunded, largely unknown to the Chinese community, and not nearly as effective in handling matters as the Chinese embassy in London. Furthermore, the propaganda distributed from the Chinese embassy, including film and newspapers, had been extensive and largely unchallenged by either the British or Hong Kong governments. It was from the survey of ethnic Chinese living throughout Britain that the Hong Kong government was able to adapt a strategy to counter the spread of Maoism in the Chinese community. The Liaison Office was finally better funded and staffed in order to help and advocate for the needs of ethnic Chinese. Moreover, both the British and Hong Kong governments funded extensive propaganda material to share the news on Hong Kong from a colonial viewpoint and to better distribute right-wing newspapers as an antidote to the left-wing and pro-Communist newspapers. Yet, above all, it was Britain's effort to foster the Hong Kong identity, built on the benefits of capitalism and security over the chaos of the PRC and the Cultural Revolution, that provided the best challenge to Maoism in Britain's Chinese population. Through their efforts, the British were able to stem the radicalisation and commit to the needs of its ethnic Chinese community.

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