China has been the fastest-growing major economy in the world for three decades. It is also home to some of the largest, most incendiary, and most underreported labor struggles of our time.

“As these vivid case studies illustrate, China's enormous factory proletariat is wide awake and fighting back on all fronts.”

—Mike Davis, author of Planet of Slums

China on Strike... is a story brilliantly told from migrant workers' own perspectives.”

—Hsiao-Hung Pai, author of Scattered Sand

“Eye-opening and compelling narratives of China's new generation of worker-militants and strike leaders make China on Strike a must-read.”

–Paul Mason, economics editor for Channel 4 News

“The struggles of these workers shed light on the future of the labor movement not only in China, but worldwide. This is a must-read book for readers concerned with labor activism and international solidarity!”

–Pun Ngai, author of Migrant Labor in China

“Workers in China are making history. This is the time to read China on Strike, a book about ordinary workers and worker-activists and how they fight for a better world tomorrow.”

—Minqi Li, author of China and the 21st Century Crisis

Edited by Hao Ren, Zhongjin Li, and Eli Friedman

Narratives of Workers' Resistance

Preface to the English Edition

Given China’s current system, it is better to cut off the boss’s production.

—electronics worker in Shenzhen

China on Strike: Narratives of Workers’ Resistance is the outcome of an incredible collective effort by many people scattered across many countries. Not only is this book the most detailed account of the process and outcomes of worker resistance in China available in English, it is also an example of first-rate public sociology. It is hardly debatable that China represents the future of global capitalism, but the stories collected in this volume suggest that it is also the future of the labor movement. In light of this, we have put together this English translation in the hopes of gaining greater international exposure for worker struggles in China.

The book does not detail the entirety of worker struggles in China, but rather is concerned with migrant workers in Guangdong Province’s Pearl River Delta. “Migrant” in the Chinese context refers to the 270 million people who have left the countryside to work in the city. Because of the restrictive household registration system (the hukou) they are second-class citizens in urban areas, excluded from a variety of social services. Migrants now constitute the large majority of the workforce in many industries—including manufacturing, construction, and low-end service jobs—but they by no means represent the entirety of the working class.
China on Strike

Similarly, the Pearl River Delta is only one region in a vast country (see maps below). This area has attracted more manufacturers than anywhere else in China, and has been the most dynamic regional economy over the past thirty years. It has also attracted the most migrant workers and served as ground zero for expanding worker resistance. While it would be wrong to assume that Guangdong represents the future of China, worker struggles there are certainly more frequent and more intense than elsewhere. It is for these reasons that the editors have focused their activism and scholarship on this region.

Map 1: People’s Republic of China

It is important for the reader to appreciate the process by which this book came to fruition. Although the book is the outcome of a collaborative effort, Hao Ren, the original Chinese edition editor, was largely responsible for shepherding it through to publication. After graduating from college, Hao Ren began working at an NGO in Guangdong Province in 2009, eventually leaving to take up work
in a factory. She made contact with a number of Marxist-oriented university students who had also gone to work in factories, some for idealistic reasons, others simply because they needed the wages. This informally constituted network of activists began conducting interviews with workers in their spare time, with the specific aim of trying to establish a more systematic understanding of the causes, processes, and outcomes of strikes. In carefully considering the role of various types of actors—workers, managers, the union, NGOs, lawyers, and the state—these activists were also interested in compiling relevant practical knowledge that was then disseminated in industrial zones as a series of magazines. Without this network of people embedded in factories, it would have never been possible to get such detailed information. Strikes are still considered quite politically sensitive in China, and so it is almost always necessary to establish a high level of trust before people will openly discuss their experiences.

Map 2: The Pearl River Delta
In 2009, through the International Center for Joint Labor Research at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, a group of students volunteered for a “Labor Materials Translation Group.” Through steadily changing membership, this group has translated books, academic and popular articles, workers’ blogs, films, legislation and ordinances, transcripts of meetings and lectures, education materials, and more from English to Chinese, and Chinese to English. The translation of this book was a collective, volunteer effort by numerous people on several continents who were associated with this translation group. Ellen David Friedman, a lecturer at Sun Yat-sen University, initiated the translation effort and helped recruit translators. Zhongjin Li was primarily responsible for overseeing the translation, and Kevin Lin, “ZSL,” Sean Li, Thomas Peng, and Ralf Ruckus also made major contributions. There are instances in the original manuscript with obvious inconsistencies or unclarified information. In those cases, we added notes but aimed to stick as close as possible to the original text.

This volume is a shining example of public sociology. Certainly the stories we have included are based on careful research and observation by university students in China, but from the very outset, the participants in this project were primarily concerned with practical rather than just academic consequences. The researchers were embedded in the communities and workplaces that they were studying, often times working shoulder to shoulder with their gongyou (worker friends). Having been inspired by radical theory in the classroom, they sought to see for themselves what life was like in the workshop of the world. In other words, the researchers hoped to not only study but also inspire worker struggles. The accounts in this volume therefore serve as a sort of instruction manual for other workers considering direct action as a means to counter capital’s rule. Workers who read these materials can learn about how to formulate demands and select representatives, the various strategies bosses use to co-opt representatives, what to look for as signs that the boss might flee with unpaid debts, and even how to distinguish different categories of police. Thus, not only did this research bring students into the factory
to produce new sociological knowledge, the outcomes of this research are of immediate practical value.

We, however, would like to suggest that the practical relevance is not limited to Chinese workers, but rather could serve as inspiration to activists globally. This begins by correcting a misperception about labor politics in China. Chinese workers are frequently depicted in the media and even in academic studies as complete victims, unable to conjure any resistance to the overbearing power of transnational capital and a deeply authoritarian Communist Party. In the West, we are told that it is our responsibility to act beneficently toward these pitiable souls by consuming ethically. Collective action and labor movements are simply not possible in a globalized world, so we should settle for individualized and marketized forms of sympathy.

Without diminishing the scale of labor rights violations in China or elsewhere in the global South, the stories in this volume suggest three things. First, labor resistance in China has grown as explosively as the country’s GDP. Try as it might, capital cannot expand without constantly reproducing its historical antagonist, the working class. Second, despite the overwhelmingly long odds, direct confrontation at the point of production is more effective than nearly any other channel available to Chinese workers. Even if the power asymmetry between state and capital on the one side and workers on the other remains terrifying, victories—partial though they may be—are possible. And the evidence is clear that the effects of worker activism in China (including substantive collective bargaining and democratic elections following strikes, and new laws meant to address the root causes of strikes) have far exceeded the marginal improvements that have come about as a result of ethical consumerism. Finally, collective action is politically and socially the only sound basis for the development of a labor movement in China. One worker compared striking to the example set by Foxconn workers in 2010: “He emphasized the indispensability of collective discussions for any action that would help participants feel confident and empowered—rather than pessimistically committing suicide.”
But the value of this book should not be limited to insights about how we should perceive the Chinese working class. Rather, we hope that the struggles of Chinese workers can help inspire similar forms of resistance elsewhere. Indeed, nominally “socialist” China presents in hyperbolic form many of the problems that those of us in the capitalist world experience: low wages, no benefits, lawlessness in the workplace, anti-union employers and governments, a broken system of political representation. As workers in mature capitalist countries see that they exert decreasing power through their unions or governments, while confronting ever more ruthless employers, what options are left? In more and more places around the world, it seems as if direct confrontation in the workplace and the community is the only option.

We do not want to seem Pollyannaish or to romanticize “unmediated antagonism.” Indeed, partial victories or utter defeats are a common outcome for striking workers in China. Capital’s geographic mobility remains a huge strategic advantage over labor, and this is something that a strike in a single workplace cannot overcome. Chinese workers remain unable to form durable organizations and are therefore prevented from acting politically at the class level. Even if workers have sometimes been successful in particular strikes, Chinese migrant workers still face a rigidly unequal citizenship regime, great precarity in all spheres of life, and an exclusionary and repressive political system. But if political power will be necessary to successfully counter these trends, as it certainly will be, then worker mobilization must serve as the foundation. There is every reason to believe that this will be as true outside of China as it is inside.

Zhongjin Li and Eli Friedman
December 2015
Preface

With the resurgence of capitalism in recent decades, labor movements in China have been increasingly active. So far, in addition to the struggle of workers in state-owned enterprises against restructuring reforms, protests organized by workers from the private factories in China’s coastal regions have also dramatically increased in terms of scale, frequency, and duration.

The intensification of industrial actions undoubtedly has threatened the power of capital, and thus protests, especially in the form of strikes, have attracted much public attention within China. Since the level of official censorship varies at times, the media, NGOs, and academia have all become involved in reporting, studying, and even assisting the strikes. However, most studies merely express sympathy for workers, or propose suggestions to the state for sustaining “harmony” within the capital-labor relation. There has also been some degree of opportunism, with intellectuals attempting to inflate personal reputations. As a result, the discourse on this issue has been dominated by people with almost no real connection to workers, one result of which is that workers’ own voices are often drowned out. Not surprisingly, we rarely read reports about labor struggles from workers’ perspectives, not to mention records of the strike organizing process, documents, or analyses of lessons from the strikes.

The editor of this book, therefore, recorded a few narratives of these protests through face-to-face interviews conducted in 2010–12. These accounts focus on the causes, processes, consequences, and impact of these strikes, mainly in workers’ own words. Most of the interviews are edited only for clarity.

This book is composed of three parts. Part I documents cases of workers’ struggle against lockouts and factory closures, part II focuses
on the struggle against wage reductions, and part III is devoted to the struggle for higher wages. It may seem to readers that this structure is “unbalanced” in that there are only two and three chapters, respectively, in parts I and III while part II includes ten. Nevertheless, the unbalanced structure corresponds to what we have witnessed: among various strikes taking place almost every day during the last twenty years, the most prevalent reason for collective protest is wage reduction.

We did not originally plan to compile these interviews for publication. Moreover, due to certain constraints, we were not able to scientifically “select” our interviewees. Readers may find many limitations in the book; for example, some representative cases were not included, and the structure of the book is still, more or less, rough. However, we hope this collection can intrigue or inspire readers in general and worker readers in particular. We also hope that more people will participate in the project, by speaking out or writing about worker protests they experienced or observed, or contributing to gathering more interviews in their own ways.

The work would not have been possible without the support of our friends who helped us make contact with workers, take notes during interviews, and edit a large amount of materials. We would like to thank them all. Working in factories to make a living, we often had limited time and resources to conduct our surveys; the work to continue the endeavor of recording and sharing workers’ narratives at present and in the future is in dire need of volunteers who can help us find sources, transcribe recordings, participate in interviews, and help write the stories of the workers.

There will be more published oral histories of Chinese workers. Any kind of support or cooperation would be appreciated. For more information, please contact ghqting@gmail.com.

Hao Ren
September 4, 2011
Introduction

The Survival and Collective Struggles of Workers in China’s Coastal Private Enterprises since the 1990s

Qin Ling

July 1, 2011

The restoration of capitalism in China didn’t happen overnight. Market reform began in rural areas and gradually proceeded with the “household responsibility system.” Most rural families received their own plots by the early 1980s. Grain output increased due to a number of factors, including the increased enthusiasm of peasants, the expansion of water conservancy construction, and the widespread use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and biological technologies. Peasants’ earnings grew due to increases in the price of agricultural products. However, newly self-sufficient peasants didn’t have a good life immediately. Though gains in income allowed them to meet their basic needs of food and clothing, peasants still needed other means to cover family expenses. At the beginning of the 1980s, the development of TVEs (township and village enterprises) provided new sources of income. But by the beginning of the 1990s, the development potential of agriculture had come to an end, and increasing taxes and dues imposed an increasingly severe burden on peasants. In the new market economy,

1. Editors’ note: a system in which rural households became the primary unit of economic production rather than the communes that had existed previously.
2. Editors’ note: for receiving their own plots of land.
the first generation of migrant workers emerged out of the great surplus of rural laborers flowing into the cities.

In 1979, the central government decided to create SEZs (special economic zones) in places such as Shenzhen to attract entrepreneurial investment. Such places gradually became the preferred destinations for the first generation of migrant workers from rural areas. These were the real “peasant workers.” Some of them became workers on factory assembly lines, some on construction sites, and some in service industries. Most of them remained engaged in agriculture; working in cities was just a means for them to make extra money. So there was nothing they could not bear, including the high intensity of factory work, job insecurity, and low wages. They were not incorporated into the cities and had to return to the countryside when they were ready to marry. Female workers would stay home for a few years until their children went to school and then would go back to work to support their families. Some of them tried to start their own businesses with accumulated funds after working outside for a few years; some had to return home to work the fields after they were considered too old to be hired by factories. In general, there were deep ties between the first generation of migrant workers in coastal cities and their rural hometowns.

Documents about the struggles of coastal migrant workers before the 1990s, if they ever existed, are quite hard to find. Let’s put this aside temporarily. This chapter focuses on the survival and struggles of migrant workers in the coastal cities after 1990. The stated facts are based primarily on my experiences and observations of labor NGOs and secondarily on a series of interviews with industrial workers in the Pearl River Delta. The formation of the working class in private enterprises of the coastal cities, and their survival and struggles, are highly correlated to the economic situation of different periods, industrial development, and government policies. This introduction summarizes four stages.

3. Editors’ note: “Peasant workers” (nongmingong) is a Chinese phrase that refers to people who maintain rural residency (or hukou) while working outside of their place of residency, and primarily in large urban areas.
Introduction 3


1992: Deng Xiaoping’s southern tour speech boosted the development of China’s capitalist economy. His statement “development is the hard truth” motivated the bureaucratic class and the new propertied class to invest in capitalist development. Foreign-funded enterprises poured into China and domestic private enterprises also began developing. More and more people flooded into cities to work as contradictions in the rural areas were emerging.

1.1 The Conditions of Workers

The conditions of workers in coastal areas were poor, as manifested chiefly in these regards:

1. The production environment was harsh: there were frequent industrial injuries, occupational diseases, and serious workplace accidents such as fires. Losses caused by fires in foreign-funded enterprises and in TVEs accounted for more than half of all the losses caused by fire in Guangdong Province after 1990. From January to August 1994, there were 869 fires in Guangdong Province, leaving 133 people dead and 153 injured. On November 19, 1993, 84 workers died in a fire at Zhili Toy Factory. On December 13, 1993, 61 died in a fire at Gaofu Textile Mill in Fujian Province. On June 16, 1994, 93 died in a fire at Qianshan Textile Mill in Zhuhai City. On January 1, 1996, the fire at Shengli Christmas Accessories Factory in Shenzhen left 19 dead and 37 injured. These were just a tiny fraction of the reports in the official media. The essential reason for so many serious occupational disasters was the disregard for workers’

4. Editors’ note: This was a highly symbolic tour in which Deng visited Shenzhen in early 1992 and affirmed the state’s commitment to marketization and the “opening up” policy.
6. Reports about these major accidents can be found online by searching keywords.
lives by mercenary factory managers. Also, because the state was single-mindedly focused on attracting investment, necessary regulations remained almost nonexistent.

2. The wages were low, calculated mainly by piece rate or on a monthly basis, and wage arrears were not uncommon. I once stayed in an industrial town in the Yangtze River Delta for some time and saw that workers in the sweater industry were paid only once a year, and only 200 or 300 yuan were “lent” to workers monthly for living expenses. The remainder of their salaries would only be paid at the end of the year. This problem was even worse in the construction industry.

3. Workers had extensive overtime with little rest and high labor intensity, the management style was harsh, and workers were beaten and scolded severely. The Labor Law, which became effective on January 1, 1995, was a mere scrap of paper, with virtually no enforcement at all. 7

1.2 Hidden Resistance

Constrained by economic development and the state apparatus’s hope to control workers as much as possible, during this period a lot of restrictions were imposed on migrant workers. Among them, the most pronounced restriction was the Temporary Residence Permit Regulation System whose purpose was to clear out and expel the “three NOs” (sanwurenynuan, meaning no ID cards, no temporary residence cards, and no work approval cards). Making use of this regulation system, police and related security organs extracted huge amounts of money from migrant workers, causing innumerable tragedies legally and extra-legally, through selling certifications, detentions, fines, and forced labor. Because there was no freedom of movement for migrant workers and they lived in constant fear of being repatriated, once they got a job, they would persistently stick with it even if the pay was bad—as long as the income was

better than farming in their hometowns. A migrant worker explained his experience in Shenzhen in 1992 as follows: “In comparison with the maximum monthly income of 30 or 40 yuan working as a farmer in my hometown, a monthly income of 120 or 130 yuan as a migrant worker is much better.”

Because of the reasons mentioned above, the struggles of the working class against the production regime often took the form of fierce individualized conflicts between workers and management. Managers often scolded and insulted workers, and outside of the workplace or factory, workers threatened or retaliated against relevant management staff. This became a generalized social phenomenon. “A lot of administrative staff and bosses mistreated us, some even broke our hands and feet, but they always got repaid in the end. Once, I met a totally immoral boss who treated us like we weren’t human. In the end, he was stabbed as he rightly deserved. . . . He would have been slashed to death if he hadn’t successfully escaped. . . . The workers let him off in the end because they were timid after all,” explained a migrant worker who came to Shenzhen in 1992. Another migrant worker said, “Previously the management staff were evil devils that easily got mad at workers. When they were off work and walked along in the shadows, they were blindfolded and had things thrown on their heads and were beaten hard.”

Because of these conditions, worker resistance was rather hidden and indirect. There were quite a lot of stories about how strikes were initiated by “hometown associations” or “gangs.” On the one hand, these informal organizations indeed had played some role in organizing collective resistance; on the other hand, a lack of self-awareness of class power and confidence was also evident. Even if a strike was successful, it was not based completely on the workers themselves, but on some external factors (like the intervention of the gangs).

1.3 Collective Struggles
During this period, collective struggles took place mainly at foreign-funded enterprises that paid higher salaries and benefits. The forms of resistance varied. An article published in 2000 by the Labor

1.3 Collective Struggles
During this period, collective struggles took place mainly at foreign-funded enterprises that paid higher salaries and benefits. The forms of resistance varied. An article published in 2000 by the Labor
Bureau of Longgang District of Shenzhen City summarized various types of worker resistance during that time as follows: “The first situation was collective strikes and petitions which were the main form. The second situation was petitioners bypassing local authorities. The third situation was storming the government offices collectively. The fourth situation was marching and demonstrating with slogans and posters. The fifth situation, which was quite common, was collective shutdowns and petitioning caused by court-mandated factory inspections and closures.”

The primary causes of strikes were low wages, withholding or being cheated of wages, mandatory overtime work, savage management, and so on. Statistics show that “in 1992, out of 3,607 worker complaints in foreign-funded enterprises received by Bao’an District, Shenzhen City, 1,114 were about low wages.”

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**A Brief Introduction to the Strike Movement in Foreign-Funded Enterprises in the Pearl River Delta, March to May 1993**

From March 31 to April 5, 1993, a strike in Canon’s subsidiary in Zhuhai City took place and sparked a series of additional strikes. Within seventy-five days, from March 9 to May 23, twelve strikes followed in Zhuhai City, with 7,263 strike participants.

This strike movement mainly took place in foreign-funded enterprises and especially those from Japan and Taiwan. Out of ten enterprises that had seen a total of twelve strikes, four were Japanese, two Taiwanese, one from Hong Kong and one from Macau, while the other two companies were Taiwanese subcontractors. Six strikes involved all the workers in the respective factory. All the strikers demanded

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wage increases and improvements in living conditions. Some asked for significant salary increases; in three companies strikers demanded a 50 percent increase.

It was said that Canon’s workers already enjoyed the highest salary and best welfare benefits of all the foreign-funded enterprises in Zhuhai City. Taking monthly salary as an example, the lowest level for its workers was 620 yuan, with the management staff at 884 yuan, and the highest at 1,300 yuan. So why did such a large-scale strike take place in such a “good” factory?

According to investigations at the time, there were several possible reasons:

1. The inflation rate was much higher than the salary increases. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) of Zhuhai City in the first quarter of 1993 was as high as 22 percent, and workers were quite dissatisfied because pay raises were generally less than 10 percent.

2. The work environment was bad and mandatory overtime was excessive. Private companies like the Qianshan Shoe Factory of Yue Yuen Industrial Holdings often required its workers to work overtime. There were four hours of overtime every day in the first half of May. Workers had to work from 7 a.m. to 1 or 2 a.m. in the morning, exhausted, and without any food in the evening. This treatment triggered 460 workers to strike. Some companies’ workshops did not have ventilation systems, resulting in noxious gases that jeopardized the workers’ health.

3. The living conditions of workers in some foreign-funded companies were miserable. Despite the requirements of the Zhuhai municipal government that enterprises provide workers with proper living facilities before starting operation, a lot of foreign-funded companies did not provide housing for their staff and workers. Facing high rents outside, workers had to cram together in poor living quarters. A damp and filthy room might house more than ten people, crowded together like sardines with two people sharing a single bed. Each tenant might have to pay 50 to 100 yuan as rent, while the housing allowances
from the company might only be 20 to 30 yuan. Some workers complained about the bad food offered in the company’s canteen and the difficulty in accessing water.

The result was that the government intervened to mediate these conflicts, and demanded the following: that all workers resume work and negotiate later; that the factories change their improper practices, and that workers abandon their “unreasonable” wage demands (i.e. those that were higher than the local minimum wage); that companies adjust or increase subsidies for housing, food, and transportation. These interventions rapidly ended the strike movement in these foreign-funded companies.

The cases mentioned above were comparatively successful, positive struggles. However, spontaneous revolts out of desperation were actually more common.

2. 2003–2007

2.1 Background

China’s economy grew rapidly with its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and integration into global capitalism. Foreign investment poured into China seeking cheap labor. The hukou (household registration) system created an impediment to economic development. The Regulation of Custody and Repatriation, which had restricted the free flow of labor, was abolished after the Sun Zhigang case in 2003. From then on, rural migrant workers have had somewhat more stability in the city, and higher expectations of working and

10. Editors’ note: The government serves as the regulator and arbitrator for all enterprises, especially when the employer and employee cannot reach an agreement on their own.

11. The hukou system links provision of social service to place, which practically speaking means that many migrant workers are excluded from such services when they are in the city.

12. Editors’ note: Sun Zhigang was a migrant in Guangdong who was beaten to death in custody after being detained for not having his ID card with him.
living in the cities. At the same time, starting in 2004, there developed a “shortage of migrant workers” (which means that the supply of low-wage job positions was increasing relative to demand), allowing workers to have more job opportunities and to take action if their rights and interests had been violated.

The basic situation of workers improved somewhat as more resistance emerged. Compared with the 1990s, labor intensity in some industries was reduced to a certain extent, especially in large-scale electronics factories. Generally speaking, workers had fewer than three hours of overtime per day, still far more than the thirty-six hour monthly maximum overtime stipulated in the Labor Law.\textsuperscript{13} The prevalence of industrial injuries and occupational diseases was somewhat reduced. The scolding and beating of workers by management, which was common in the 1990s, also greatly declined.

From 2001 to 2007, the Chinese economy grew rapidly as measured by double-digit growth in GDP (Table 1). However, in the same period, workers’ income increased very slowly (Table 2). Taking Shenzhen for example, the minimum wage inside the SEZ increased by only 36 yuan from 2001 to 2004. Outside the SEZ wages increased only 40 yuan during the same period, while the average growth rate of China’s GDP was roughly 9.4 percent. The workers who were creating the economic miracle had to ceaselessly work overtime just to sustain their basic livelihood. If there is some space for them to struggle, they will create another kind of miracle.

\textsuperscript{13} According to Article 41 in the Labor Law, “The employing unit may extend working hours due to the requirements of its production or business after consultation with the trade union and laborers, but the extended working hours for a day shall generally not exceed one hour; if such extension is called for due to special reasons, the extended hours shall not exceed three hours a day under the condition that the health of laborers is guaranteed. However, the total extension in a month shall not exceed thirty-six hours.”
Table 1. Annual GDP growth rate in China, 2001 to 2008\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Growth Rate of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Minimum wage standards in Shenzhen City, 2001 to 2008\textsuperscript{15}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Monthly Wage in yuan Inside the SEZ</th>
<th>Outside the SEZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the pressure of continuing worker resistance, as well as the good economic situation, the government was forced to set higher wage standards. This attempt to pacify workers gave rise to a seemingly huge increase of wages from 2005 to 2008. But these figures do not necessarily indicate that the material condition of workers greatly improved. Anyone with work experience in coastal areas could easily tell us that the prices

\textsuperscript{14} Editors’ note: These tables are not cited in the original. World Bank data show somewhat higher growth rates, but the general pattern of increasing growth through 2007 is the same.

\textsuperscript{15} Shenzhen Minimum Wage Standards Act, various years.
of commodities went up even faster than wages. Immediately before the
minimum wage standard was raised every year, the cost of housing, food,
and various articles had already gone up, usually more significantly than
the minimum wage standard. Many medium and small-sized factories
even paid workers less than the local minimum wage. Workers’ struggles
did not come to an end with the raising of the nominal wage, but led to
another round of resistance.

During this period, workers’ pent-up anger came out in torrents.
There was a concentrated surge of strikes from 2004 to 2006, clustered
in large foreign-funded electronic factories with relatively good wagt-
es and welfare benefits. The reasons were: 1) Such factories were more
profitable; compared to those small-scale and low-profit industries, they
had more capacity to give wage increases and improvements in living
conditions for workers; 2) Workers in such factories were more confi-
dent in fighting for improvements because they had inside information
about the profitability of these factories; 3) Workers had a strong sense
of the unfairness of the situation; their relatively good wage was almost
nothing compared with the huge profits earned by the factory owners.

The main features of strikes during this period were that they were
female-worker dominated, were unorganized and spontaneous, and
that they used methods such as roadblocks, demonstrations, blocking
government offices, and collective petitions. Such strikes often took
place in large-scale enterprises. Roadblocks and demonstrations were
seen in a strike involving 16,000 workers in the Japanese Uniden Elec-
tronics factory in 2004. 16 Three thousand workers in Shenzhen’s Hai-
yan factory went on strike and blocked the road in October 2004. Five
thousand workers from Changying factory went on strike because of
labor disputes and stormed the Nantou checkpoint 17 in April 2004. 18

17. Editors’ note: This checkpoint separates the SEZ from the rest of Shenzhen. In
the early days of reform, there was not free movement between these two areas, so
the checkpoint functioned as a semi-border.
18. “Xixiang Street Labor Administration Office Coordinates Labor Relation Ac-
cording to Law, Addresses Both the Symptoms and Root Causes, and Constructs
Almost at the same time, strikes took place in four shoe factories of the Taiwanese Xing’ang Group in Dongguan City, including Weichuangli Company, Feihuang Company, Aimeili Company, Baoxin Company, and Emerson Company.19 Workers in different factories kept encouraging and supporting each other through coordinated actions. Unfortunately, most information about the strikes was censored. However, the consciousness and actions of workers were quietly changing.

With limited experience and few precedents, workers’ acts of resistance were very spontaneous and fierce. The government was quite tough when dealing with workers’ collective struggles, and—due to lack of experience with such abrupt, fierce, and large-scale strikes—resorted to direct repression. All strikes of a certain scale would confront large police forces. The forces included armed police, public security guards, antiriot troops, security scouts, militiamen, and even traffic wardens. They served not only to frighten the workers psychologically but also physically. In the cases of roadblocks and demonstrations, workers were often beaten by policemen. Sometimes the leaders or other activist workers were even arrested.

2.2 Key Features of Strikes in This Period20

Causes of the Strikes
From 2003 to 2008, many strikes broke out. Some were triggered by workers’ dissatisfaction with wages or because overtime pay was lower than the local minimum wage. Some were caused by workers’ demands for economic compensation, including repayment of unpaid wages due to bankruptcy, factory relocation, or runaway bosses. And others were
caused by work scheduling problems or terrible food. Clearly, there were diverse causes of the strikes and some even started over minor incidents. For instance, a strike in a Taiwanese factory was initiated because a worker found an insect in her food. Yet these seemingly random events were the inevitable result of the factories’ wage erosion offensive and the accumulated resentment of workers.

**Workers’ Representatives during the Strikes**

Strike leaders were sometimes basic-level managers and technical workers, which improved the chance of winning since workers could be better organized. But leaders of this kind were more easily bribed by the bosses and willing to accept underhanded secret dealings. Some strikes were initiated secretly by workers who had worked in the factory for a long time and were generally regarded with respect. Factory management usually required that workers choose representatives to negotiate after a strike started. As there were many cases of retaliation against workers’ representatives, the workers were uneasy about selecting representatives, which sometimes resulted in factories appointing representatives. Unsurprisingly, this often sidelined key strike organizers during negotiations. After selecting representatives, some other problems emerged: The representatives had difficulty clearly articulating demands. This phenomenon demonstrated the premature quality of these strikes—they were unorganized and unplanned. Additionally, workers lacked awareness of collective struggle. Even though some of them had experienced strikes before, their consciousness and actions were still undeveloped and they lacked confidence.

**Actions of Different Groups during Strikes**

Women workers were in the majority of such factories and occupied key positions in production. Older workers with heavier family burdens were comparatively less productive and didn’t dare to lead out of fear of losing their jobs. Foremen and technicians seldom participated in strikes and their role was usually to persuade (actively or passively) workers to resume work. In the cases mentioned above, the foremen
played a comparatively passive role. Except for the team leader (discussed in chapter 14) who was later promoted to supervisor, most foremen neither actively participated in the strike, nor forcefully demanded the resumption of work. When asked to deal with the restoration of production, they just went through the motions.

The Spread of Information during the Strikes
The use of mobile phones and the Internet facilitated communication among workers. In one case discussed in part III, information about the strikes was first spread through hometown networks. In influential strikes, photos and BBS21 messages sent by workers were common. In some cases, handbills and leaflets were made by strike leaders to encourage other workers and to disseminate strike information. Unfortunately, these materials were often just “testimony” and for making “accusations.” There was almost no conscious documentation of the strike process, not to mention summarizing the experiences and lessons learned.

Propagation of Strike Experiences
Cases of collective resistance with comparatively good results could serve as models for later strikes in nearby factories. Such examples gave other workers greater confidence and guidance. In 2003, one strike participant said in an interview, “Right before our strike, there had been strikes in two nearby factories, and the roadblock was the most common tactic.” She also summarized her experiences as follows: Male workers were readily arrested if they offended the cops during a strike. But cops did not dare put their hands on female workers (if they did, there would be accusations of “sexual harassment” immediately from some women). Some other interviewees added, “It’s more likely for the boss to meet our demands during the busy season when there are many orders waiting to be completed.” Regrettably, such experiences were not shared as widely as possible with other workers. It is difficult to consolidate struggles isolated in one factory, at one time, into oppor-

21. Editors’ note: This refers to “bulletin board system,” a method of Internet-based communication that was popular in China at the time.
opportunities for more united action. There is no credible evidence showing any deliberate cross-factory unified action.

**The Unity and Mutual Aid of Workers among Strikes**

If worker representatives were detained in a strike, other workers would usually voluntarily stand up to protect them, so long as they were respected as leaders. Additionally, female workers would voluntarily protect leaders and their male colleagues when management attempted to find out who the activists were, even in strikes whose participants were mainly female. Female workers protected the representatives from being arrested in the strike in Youli Electronics factory in December 2004—and this was not an exception. In many strikes, workers would donate funds to cover representatives’ transportation, room and board, and legal fees when they were filing formal petitions. This indicates some measure of self-sacrifice and labor solidarity. When talking about the series of strikes motivated by the implementation of the 2008 Labor Contract Law, a worker mentioned that at that time workers from many factories who blocked the road were often arrested and detained. Worker representatives later went to the government with petitions of support and donations from other workers.

### 3. 2008–2009

#### 3.1 State Policies, Laws and Regulations, and Workers’ Resistance

Workers’ spontaneous, undisciplined, “irrational” resistance before 2008 usually took a somewhat violent form—expressing workers’ anger and attracting societal attention—so that their problems could be solved more quickly and properly. Commonly used methods included roadblocks and petitions, which greatly displeased the government and capitalists. These actions impacted both “production discipline” and “social order,” and made it difficult for capitalists to maintain an environment conducive for exploiting workers. Thus, the government
China on Strike

began to implement a series of laws, including the Labor Contract Law and the Labor Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Law. The government’s purpose was to incorporate workers’ resistance into the state apparatus, establish legal channels acceptable to the capitalist class, and avoid economic losses caused by disruption in production.

The implementation of the Labor Contract Law really caught the attention of capitalists, mainstream intellectuals, and the media. It provoked an uproar from the capitalists, who argued that the Labor Contract Law would cause an increase in labor cost. At the same time they prepared themselves for the impact of the law. For example, Huawei required its workers to resign and then compete for reemployment,22 so they could avoid signing non-fixed-term labor contracts23 with existing workers. Walmart callously fired workers.24 Other factories established new labor contracts with their workers in order to void their seniority, which caused a wave of strikes. One interviewee mentioned that a series of strikes took place in Longgang, a town in Shenzhen, where the interviewee worked: “At the end of 2007, strikes broke out almost every day. And the participants came from all kinds of industries and jobs. They did not go to work, gathering around the gate or wandering in the square. The strikes were all in large factories with at least two hundred or three hundred workers. Such factories as Yunchang, Dahua, and Jingchang employed thousands of workers. At that time, the new Labor Contract Law had just been implemented. Workers lost their seniority after the bosses terminated their existing labor contracts, so workers went on strike.”

23. Editors’ note: “Non-fixed-term contracts” refer to contracts without an expiration date. Removing non-fixed-term employees is much easier and less expensive for employers.
The implementation of the Labor Contract Law prompted China’s capitalist class to publicly assert their interests. When the government subsequently called for public comments on a draft of the Guangdong Province Regulations on the Democratic Management of Enterprises, both Hong Kong capitalists with mainland investments and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China openly opposed the regulations. Though Chinese domestic capitalists argued for their own interests under the disguise of the ambiguous term “other stakeholders,” it showed that they were upholding their class interests in an increasingly conscious and organized manner. Meanwhile, workers were protecting their interests defensively and in a less organized manner—because workers did not have their own organizations or media through which they could openly express their class interests.

Besides channeling workers’ movements through the new laws, the government was also attempting to limit workers’ “destructive” actions. For instance, actions such as roadblocks and collective petitions were pronounced to be illegal. At the end of 2009, the Shenzhen municipal government issued a “Notice on Dealing with Abnormal Petition Behaviors in Accordance with the Law,” which defined fourteen behaviors as “abnormal petition behaviors.” At the same time, workers who went on strike by blocking roads were arrested, with the “leading troublemakers” detained. As a result, workers’ collective resistance gradually grew more self-contained, seeking to be in accordance with the law as much as possible. This was indicated by a decreasing frequency of roadblocks, sit-downs, and demonstrations. More resistance took the form of strikes within factories or industrial sabotage.

25. Deng Yuwen, “Ideas Were Solicited for Guangdong Enterprise Democratic Management Regulation; Is It Almost Impossible to Allow One Third Employees to Propose Wage Negotiation?” Nanfang Ribao (South Daily), August 27, 2010. In the article, it was pointed out that other stakeholders (editor’s emphasis) also raised many ideas and suggestions, mainly represented by “Six Concerns,” according to which they demanded revisions of the new law.

26. “Notice on Dealing with Abnormal Petition Behaviors in Accordance with the Law” was co-issued by Shenzhen Municipal Court, the People’s Procuratorate, the Justice Bureau, and the Police Department in November 2009.
3.2 The Economic Crisis and Workers’ Resistance

The global economic crisis, beginning in the second half of 2008, impacted China gradually yet deeply. As street protests erupted in major capitalist countries in the West, workers in China voted with their feet—they were forced to return home due to job loss. When profitability deteriorated and overtime was cut, some workers left their factories because of reduced wages, while some factories took the initiative of cutting jobs. According to my investigation in a Shenzhen industrial park in 2009, many factories laid off 50 percent or more of their workforce. At the same time, factories raised their hiring requirements—they demanded better education, higher skills, more experience, and even better personal appearance.27

During the crisis, bosses were expecting the arrival of a “cold winter” for their enterprises, and thus asked the government to postpone the implementation of related laws and to provide them with preferential policies. For example, Lee Yuen Fat, chairman of the Hong Kong Diecasting and Foundry Association, wrote an open letter about the government’s policies during the financial crisis, demanding that government help both capital and labor through the “cold winter.”28 His policy suggestions included raising the export tax rebate to its 2005 level, freezing the minimum wage in the coming year, and postponing the implementation of the new Labor Contract Law. Although the domestic capitalist class had not openly voiced its needs in an organized way, the pro-capitalist state—having shared interests with capital—was well aware of the necessity of “easing their burden.” According to a talk by Jiang Ling, vice mayor of the city of Dongguan, on November 6, the Dongguan government suggested the Central and Guangdong governments should reduce the pressure of the Labor Contract Law and slow the increase of the minimum wage, in order to aid medium- and small-

scale enterprises through the “cold winter.” Meanwhile, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security promised to postpone raising the minimum wage standard for all enterprises. In 2009, minimum wage standards were kept constant throughout China.

Worker resistance during this period was mainly provoked by factory closures, bankruptcies or relocations, or runaway bosses. Because governments in many places partially covered workers’ unpaid wages, the social impact of workers’ collective action was significantly reduced. For example, according to the Regulations on Back Pay Protection in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (issued in Shenzhen in 1996, implemented in 1997, and further amended in 2008), the government collects “back pay protection deposits” from enterprises so that when the enterprises go bankrupt and the bosses flee, the government can cover workers’ back pay. Thus workers’ resistance of this type usually ended when they received their back pay.

In response to the crisis, the central government poured trillions of yuan into the economy in 2008 to stimulate investment and domestic demand. Local governments also attempted to finance large-scale infrastructure construction. All this investment created jobs for workers who had already returned home. Owing to these factors, workers’ collective resistance declined to some degree.

3.3 Characteristics of Workers’ Collective Struggle at This Stage

Struggles during the economic crisis displayed the following characteristics:

1. Strikes were primarily defensive fights over economic needs. During the economic crisis, bosses were organized to collectively discuss ways to deal with the crisis. Their hope was to transfer the

30. Editors’ note: In China, municipal governments set minimum wage standards.
31. Editors’ note: As above, we have decided to delete a short section (more than 900 words) describing a strike. It repeats in condensed form the material from “Interview with a worker on Strike in a Shenzhen Factory” in part II.
cost of the crisis to the workers as much as possible. Workers were on the defensive. Thus, they would not take action unless they were confronted with various pressures from work and wage reductions.

2. Workers’ demands were mainly focused on punitive policies that led to wage reductions, such as punishments and excessive mandatory days off. They demanded that factories pay back wages and overtime compensation. In bankrupt factories where bosses had run away, the main strike tactic was for workers to block roads or the gates of factories in order to pressure the local government to pay compensation.

3. Bosses were more organized, united, and aware of their class interests. During this time, their degree of organization improved significantly. Furthermore, their attitude toward workers was hypocritical. During strikes, the boss often acted kindly to the workers, and would blame the management who directly caused conflicts (for example, whichever manager had designed the wage system) while promising to meet workers’ demands. This kind of insincerity could cause workers to let down their guard, thus masking the fundamental antagonism between labor and capital.

4. With the development of the Internet and cell phones, workers have more ways to publicize their demands. Nonetheless, at this stage, workers relied more on media reports, partially because workers believe in the “fairness” and “impartiality” of the media, and partially because of the fact that strikes reported in the media were more likely to achieve positive results for workers. To my knowledge, workers tried to make contact with the media in the majority of strikes.

4. 2010 to the Present

According to a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics, industrial production started to recover in 2009 and profitability increased after a big decline. In early 2010, the mainstream media

32. Director of National Statistics Bureau, Ma Jiantang, “National Economy
in coastal cities sensationalized the “labor shortage” issue. On top of that, jobs had been created after the central government implemented a four-trillion-yuan (around $585 billion) stimulus package mainly devoted to infrastructure projects. Workers generally had higher expectations for remuneration. Nevertheless, the improved remuneration did not arrive as expected, which triggered a rising tide of strikes nationwide. Among them, heavy attention was devoted to the Nanhai Honda strike from May 17 to June 1 in 2010, as well as subsequent strikes for higher wages in the automobile industry.

An investigation released by the All China Federation of Unions branch in Huadu District of Guangzhou showed that the auto production district experienced a series of strikes for higher wages in late February to mid-March: Workers at Yorozu Bao Mit Auto went on strike on February 27; workers at Alpha Corporation, Hexi Machinery, and Xichuan and Tacle automotive seat factories learned from the strikes at Yorozu Bao Mit and organized their own strikes on March 11; the next day, workers at Mahle, Rhythm, and GSK-NANJO Auto Parts went on strike one after another. The report also revealed the root cause of these strikes: “Wages had been stagnant for almost eight years despite the rising profitability and expansion of the plants. Considering the recent soaring living expenses for urban residents, many workers suffered from a decline in their real wages.” In addition, excessive mandatory overtime and underpayment of wages in violation of labor law were also important causes of the strikes.33

Increased strike activity was not restricted to the Pearl River Delta but also appeared in other industrial parks all over China. “From 2005 to 2009, workers in the Dalian Development Zone had average annual wage increases of 5.7%, or about 45 yuan per year.” From late May to late August, around seventy thousand workers from more than seven-
ty factories in Dalian Development Area went on strike. As a result, workers received an average wage hike of 300 yuan per person.\(^3^4\)

In January 2010, two thousand workers in United Win Technology Limited in Suzhou (Yangtze River Delta) launched a strike in response to a rumored cancellation of the year-end bonus. The underlying cause was an extremely low wage and high intensity of work over a long period of time, as well as bonuses and benefits frequently being withheld. Another important cause underlying this strike was the hexyl hydride (also called n-hexane) poisoning in 2009. In February, around a thousand workers in the Lacquer Craft factory in Dongguan went on strike. One month later, workers at the Dabang Footwear factory in Dongguan tried the same thing, as did the workers at the Canon factory in Shenzhen. In fact, the number of workers and factories involved in the rising tide of strikes during the first half of 2010 was so large as to make it difficult, if not impossible, to catalogue them all.

The strikes in this period shared a few key characteristics:

1. Workers were on the offensive. Compared to the previous strikes, which mainly sought to defend against wage arrears and reductions, the strikes in this period raised offensive demands, primarily related to wage increases.

2. Workers were united and dedicated during the tortuous and difficult process of the half-month strike at Honda. It was a great step forward for workers to demand restructuring\(^3^5\) of the trade union. The success in achieving wage increases encouraged and directly inspired other strikes in the same industry nationwide, such as the ones at Foshan Fengfu Auto Parts, Foshan Transmission, Siu Lam Honda, Wuhan Auto Parts, Nansha Denso, Tianjin Toyota, Alei Siti Auto Parts, NHK-UNI Spring, Atsumitec.

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35. Editors’ note: “Restructuring” implies holding new elections for firm-level union representatives. But this takes place within the official union structure—it does not imply formation of an independent union.
and Omron. The high profitability of the automobile industry allowed management to make concessions, albeit limited ones. As a result, strikes resulted in wage increases in all cases.

3. The official union generally took a tough stance toward workers, especially in the notorious incident of beating workers during the Honda strike. On May 22, company management fired the strike representatives, which infuriated workers and the strike soon extended to the entire plant. On May 31 when workers learned that the “union stewards” shamelessly beat their co-workers, they got so angry that most of them who had already returned to work immediately left the plant again. Some local unions took lessons from these responses and changed their attitudes. In the later Nansha Denso strike, the local union—the self-proclaimed “representative of workers”—paid lip service to opposing police intervention against the strikers and offered to negotiate. The strike ended six days later. From another point of view, unions realized that in order to better control workers, they needed to establish authority among their constituents. Therefore they started making efforts to act “kindly.”

4. The attitude of management was also tough. Again taking the Nansha Denso strike as an example, workers put forward their demands as early as during the spring festival (Chinese New Year), but they never received any response from management. As one cadre in the union branch in Nansha District said, “The local union had collected three demands from workers: 1) to increase wages by 100 yuan; 2) to install a heating system in the dorms; 3) to double the wage rate for overtime work at night. However, after the demands were submitted to management, there was no positive feedback except that they would provide a free dinner for the overtime workers at night.” When the strike broke out on June 21, workers actually did not put forward their demands in advance. But the union cadre claimed, “the boss was so active that he declared that if workers returned to work immediately, no one would be blamed, air conditioners
would be installed right away, and wages would be raised by 450 yuan or so. Yet, he also demanded that workers decide and return to work within ten minutes; otherwise, he would implement tough measures, such as calling the police.” But the boss’s pressure didn’t work. The union cadre was concerned that if the boss were too tough it would escalate the dispute, making the workers more determined to strike. Therefore they made efforts to mediate between management and the workers, and also attempted to figure out who the strike leaders were. Zeng Qinghong, vice president of Guangzhou Automobile Industry Group Corporation, also came to assist. Zeng had recently mediated the Honda strike. Perhaps because of their class position, bosses tended to act like “bad guys.” Or maybe they thought that workers would give up as long as they intimidated them as usual. Or maybe bosses had a tacit agreement with the capitalist state about the division of labor: one plays “good cop” and the other “bad cop.” Regardless, the militancy, persistence, and solidarity workers demonstrated in this strike went well beyond the expectations of their bosses.

5. During the process two new actors emerged: Zeng Qinghong and Chang Kai. Zeng was sitting on the board of directors of Honda and also had previously worked as an executive deputy general manager. As mentioned above, he was also the vice president of Guangzhou Automobile Industry Group Corporation.36 As a result, he played a neutral and moderate role of authority during the strike wave. He utilized his dual positions as management as well as deputy to the People’s Congress to gain trust from workers in order to mediate the industrial conflicts. Workers also had some expectations of him simply because, as some of them described, “He is the deputy to the People’s Congress and the big boss, so he ought to keep his word.”

36. Nanhai Honda is a completely Japanese-invested firm. But the assembly plant it supplies is a joint venture between Honda and the state-owned Guangzhou Automobile Industry Group Corporation.
During the negotiations, he persuaded workers to reduce their demands. He repeatedly told worker representatives that the average wage in the machinery processing industry in Foshan City was only 1,810 yuan. Therefore increasing their wages to 2,100 yuan already represented the highest level in the industry within the region, so workers should not demand more.  

Professor Chang Kai is a renowned expert on labor relations. He worked as a legal advisor for workers in the Honda strike. He strived to influence workers to accept the following two ideas: 1) The wage increase is not the top priority. “It is certainly good to have a wage increase. But raising wages some tens or even hundreds of yuan isn’t the most important thing. The key is that management acknowledges workers’ status and rights.” 2) Strikers should return to work during the bargaining process. “Chang Kai told the worker representatives that according to international conventions, workers absolutely should not strike when collective bargaining is in process. This kind of strike is not permitted by law.”

On the one hand, Professor Chang Kai expressed his sympathy and understanding for striking workers. As he said, “Either initiating a strike or participating in a strike should definitely not be a hasty move for workers, but rather should only be decided on after repeated consideration.” On the other hand, he suggested the government should play a neutral role between management and workers. “Government should behave equitably and neutrally as the third party, by carefully investigating and analyzing the cause of the strike, mediating between management and workers, as well as facilitating and presiding over the settlement of the

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
disputes between the two parties through collective bargaining."  
6. Along with the increase in struggles and accumulated experience, the working class has become more and more confident. In general, workers’ education has significantly improved. Thanks to the widespread use of social media, worker struggles have adopted increasingly flexible forms. The strikes in the first half of 2010 witnessed a variety of attempts to use the Internet, including speaking via QQ chat software, exchanging information and ideas in online forums, and uploading all kinds of strike photos and live videos in order to give the strikes more public exposure. However, workers have not been aware that the media, government, and elite professionals are, by their very nature, assistants of the ruling class.

5. Conclusion

What sorts of treatment and practical resistance have various generations of workers experienced while creating enormous wealth? How can these workers be united to strive together for the liberation of the working class? This article has sketched the work experiences and struggles of Chinese workers over the last two decades. Due to space limitations, as well the constraints of my own experience and knowledge, I am not able to explore and document many issues. I would appreciate if you could help, for example, by conducting worker interviews, interviews with NGO staff, or even working in factories. Other contributions, such as assisting in transcribing interview recordings and organizing archival materials, would also be welcome. It is my hope that more and more allies would commit themselves to the task of worker revolution, with everyone contributing in their own way.

41. Ibid.