

# The New Working Class Renews the Repertoire of Social Conflict

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**ABSTRACT:** The strikes that shook the factories of the Pearl River Delta in 2010 revealed the emergence of a new generation of workers of peasant origin. Better educated and more demanding than their parents, they used new communication techniques to launch a movement that borrowed from the protest repertoire developed over the last decade. Despite this, it cannot really be said that a social movement has emerged.

**KEY WORDS:** social movement, strike, *dagong zai*, protest repertoire, collective bargaining, unions

In the spring of 2010, strikes that broke out in the Honda factory in Foshan and the Toyota factory in Nanhai, and the growing number of suicides at the Foxconn factory in Shenzhen, attracted the attention of the international press.

These were not the first strikes to take place in factories situated in the Pearl River Delta, however. Since the arrival of foreign companies that transformed the region into the "world's workshop," a number of labour disputes have taken place. These are a fairly rare occurrence in the People's Republic, all the more so since the right to strike, which had been legalised at the request of Mao Zedong, was removed from the 1982 Constitution. Despite this, as early as 2004-2005, a wave of strikes occurred in factories in Shenzhen, and most observers agree that these disputes played an important role in the local government's decision to increase the minimum wage.<sup>(1)</sup> Similarly, on the eve of the 2008 financial crisis, many labour disputes occurred in factories making goods for export, and these were settled by fairly discreet concessions on the part of management.

Things were very different last year. The 17 suicides that took place between January and August 2010 in a Foxconn factory in Shenzhen employing 400,000 workers made the front page of Guangdong newspapers and the international press, which heaped opprobrium on the Taiwanese managers of the plant that makes the famous iPhones. Following the scandal arising from these events, the management announced three salary increases within a month, with the pay of assembly line workers almost doubling to reach 2,000 *yuan* a month.<sup>(2)</sup> Similarly, the wave of strikes that shook Japanese and Taiwanese factories in the Pearl River Delta last spring also attracted the attention of the world's press. Unrest that began at a Honda factory in Foshan spread to another Honda factory in Zhongshan and then to a Toyota factory in Nanhai and to many factories working for the automobile industry. These movements resonated throughout the region as well as throughout the country and the world. The Internet propagated the grievances of the workers, expressions of support for their struggle multiplied, the international press published innumerable articles on the subject, and the Prime Minister himself reproached Japanese bosses for paying salaries that were too low.<sup>(3)</sup> Could it be that a workers' movement had appeared in China? A year after the events, the answer is ambivalent.

## A new working class?

Belonging to a new generation of workers (most of them aged between 18 and 30), the *dagong mei* (打工妹) and the *dagong zai* (打工仔) born after 1980 (known in China as the *baling hou* 八零后) are different from their elders. Those earlier workers (mostly young women) could not find jobs in the country and were forced to leave their native Hunan or Sichuan to escape poverty and support their parents or send a young brother to school, and the monetary rewards they received from factory work were so disproportionate to anything they could have hoped for back in their villages that they were satisfied with very little.

The same is not true of today's young workers. Born into much smaller families than their parents as a result of the one-child policy, they benefited from the attention of their entire family during childhood. This means they received a secondary education, and most have a high-school diploma. For example, of the workers born after 1980, 67.2 percent have a high school diploma, that is to say, 18.2 percent more than the preceding generation.<sup>(4)</sup> Although born in the countryside, they are familiar with "modern life" through television, and like many of their peers they are Internet fanatics. Many of them went to vocational schools (中专 - *Zhongzhuan*) during their studies and they are not satisfied with the unskilled assembly-line work that is their lot<sup>(5)</sup> – all the more so since this type of work is very badly paid (around 800 *yuan* a month in the Delta before last year's labour movement). Contact with the realities of factory life is, for most of them, a great disappointment: long days (ten hours a day, six days a week, to which is added overtime that is not always paid at the legal rate), salaries that are very low compared to ever-increasing living costs, life in a hostel with seven to ten to a room, the absence of leisure

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1. Chris King-chi Chan, Pun Ngai, "The Making of a New Working Class? A study of Collective Actions of Migrant Workers in South China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 198, 2009, pp. 287-303, p. 303.
2. He Huifeng, "Ramifications of pay rises will be playing out for long time to come," *SCMP*, 26 June 2010.
3. Andrew Browne, Norihiko Shirouzu, "Beijing Pressures Japanese on Wages," *Wall Street Journal*, 30 August 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704342504575459582891999498>.
4. Labour Movement Report, no. 19, *China Labour Movement*, p. 7.
5. See Zhang Yi, researcher at ASSC, "Increasingly more young migrant workers do not want to work in labor-intensive factories that pay low wages and produce low value-added goods," in "10 Million Workers needed for Coastal Region, experts say," *Renmin ribao*, 6 January 2011.

activities, etc. This situation is all the more difficult to bear since these young workers have different aspirations from their parents and hope to rise in the hierarchy. Whilst 93 percent of their elders are married, only 59.9 percent of these young people have done so.<sup>(6)</sup> Moreover, since 74.1 percent of them went directly from school to factory, a path followed by only 35.4 percent of their elders, they do not consider themselves peasants in the same way; they have no experience of tilling the land and feel ill at ease in the village. According to official statistics, workers born after 1980 represent around 60 percent of all migrant workers or *nongmingong* (农民工).<sup>(7)</sup>

They have different attitudes as well as different lifestyles. They often have mobile phones and are able to access the Internet, and whilst their parents had very little contact with their townspeople when they left to work in other regions, these young people keep in touch with their friends through QQ and other social networks. As they have friends in many of the industrial regions of the People's Republic, they are immediately aware of differences in working conditions and pay in the various factories, and they do not hesitate to leave their jobs to go elsewhere when they learn of better conditions. We are therefore dealing with a more educated and adventurous working class with no affective attachment to its employer. The turnover rate in the workforce is therefore extremely high.

This tendency to leave a job when conditions are unsatisfactory is reinforced by demographic development. Indeed, it has been calculated that by 2015, the working population will begin to decline, in particular the number of 15-to-24-year-olds who make up the core of the workforce in factories producing goods for export. Naturally, manpower will remain plentiful, but it is likely that this relative reduction will allow workers to defend their interests better against management. Already, the entrepreneurs of the Pearl River Delta, faced with difficulties of recruitment after the 2011 Chinese New Year, have begun offering perks to newcomers in the employment market.<sup>(8)</sup>

## New militant workers

In these companies, most workers live in hostels belonging to the factory, where they are often grouped by place of origin. Here, young workers have an opportunity to discuss their working conditions and pay and to express their indignation at the petty attitude of bosses and the injustices that occur. Housing conditions such as these provide excellent breeding-grounds for collective movements of discontent.<sup>(9)</sup> In addition, the addiction of young workers to modern methods of communication allows them to exchange information on the situation in other factories and to be aware of protest methods developing in them. All this has allowed them to emerge from the isolation that characterised their parents' situation. These conditions explain the emergence of new activists and new forms of action. The wave of strikes that took place last spring in foreign companies in various regions of China is a consequence of the emergence of this new working class, which possesses new characteristics:

### • Movement outside of official unions

In the Honda factory in Foshan where the unrest began on 17 May 2010, the workers who started the protest did not consult their trade unions, which they knew well to be a mouthpiece of the Party and always on the side of management. Indeed, the Party and local government cadres are keen to attract foreign investment, since promotions are linked to increases in the domestic product of the region they govern. When the

women workers went to the factory to present their demands on 31 May, they were clubbed by municipal union thugs (wearing yellow helmets, ironically). A worker described it thus:

*At this critical moment, our great trade union did nothing for us. Instead they just wanted us to go back to the production line! Is this what a union should be doing? You take 5 yuan from our monthly wages for union dues, but look what you've done for us!*<sup>(10)</sup>

The workers elected representatives to negotiate wage increases with the bosses. At Honda, for example, in the Foshan factory where spare parts for automobiles are made, they elected 16 representatives (including many young women), who succeeded in obtaining a raise of 35 percent.

In state factories, striking workers were also seen confronting members of official unions. At a cotton garment factory in Pingdingshan, Henan Province, a fairly traditional state company, workers who went on strike to demand wage increases became embroiled in violent clashes with union members who had come to subdue them.<sup>(11)</sup>

### • Taking the official discourse literally

Similarly, the Foshan strikers and the organisers of the movements that shook China last year took care not to exceed the limits imposed by the authorities. They refrained, for example, from creating autonomous unions, since they knew the fate that awaited those who tried to do so. In their open letter, the strikers' representatives expressed themselves thus: "And lastly, [we demand] the restructuring of the union branch of the company manufacturing Honda vehicle parts."<sup>(12)</sup> On the contrary, therefore, they were demanding the "reconstruction of the unions," and referenced official discourse on the need to defend one's rights. Similarly, taking the Communist Party discourse quite literally, they used it to defend their interests:

*Honda is a Japanese company and Japan is a capitalist country. But China is supposed to be a socialist country! The Japanese companies investing in China must follow the rules of China. Implement socialism! Do not give us capitalism!*<sup>(13)</sup>

## A new protest repertoire

The repertoire chosen by the workers who led the spring strike movements shows that they are very much in touch with the latest developments in protest movements launched by other social categories in recent years. For example, at Foshan, they called on people to join a "collective walk" (集体散步 - *jiti sanbu*), an order evidently inspired by the protest

6. Report of the All-China Federation of Unions on young peasant workers quoted in *Zhongguo gongren yundong guancha baogao* (China labor movement report), May 2011, [www.clb.org.hk/chinese/node/1302470](http://www.clb.org.hk/chinese/node/1302470), p. 7.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

8. Denise Tsang, "Perks and freebies not enough to retain staff," *SCMP*, 2 October 2011.

9. Chris King-chi Chan, Pun Ngai, "The Making of a New Working Class? A study of Collective Actions of Migrant Workers in South China," *art. cit.*

10. <http://bbs.ttx.cn/fm16/thread-318679-1-1.html>.

11. "Zhongguo gongyun yaoqiu chengli duli gonghui gaibian guoyun guiji" (The Chinese workers' movement demands the creation of independent unions and changes in the way the state acts), *Yazhou zhouban*, 13 June 2010.

12. "Open letter to the public and all the workers of the Company manufacturing Honda automobile parts," in "Special Report on the Honda Foshan Strike," *Globalization Monitor*, 15 June 2010, p. 5.

13. *Ibid.* p. 9.

movement by members of the Xiamen middle classes against the PX chemical factory in 2007, and by Shanghai residents against the extension of the Maglev, the high-speed magnetic train, in 2008. At the time, to avoid being accused of organizing illegal demonstrations (in China, all requests to organise protests in accordance with the law are systematically refused), the protesters called on the inhabitants to “walk” near the municipal council offices in Xiamen, and near the Maglev site in Shanghai. In other cases, workers called for a “sleep-in” (集体睡觉 - *jiti shuìjiào*) on the assembly lines, a new form of go-slow against which foremen could do very little.<sup>(14)</sup> Others learnt “collective tourism” (集体旅游 - *jiti lǚyóu*), a form of action adopted by angry peasants in Hebei in 2006. On 10 May 2010, a group of women workers from a factory belonging to the Baobai Group in Baoding all wore T-shirts of the same colour and went “sightseeing” in Peking to protest against pressures put on them to resign.<sup>(15)</sup>

The choice of this new repertoire shows that strikers had for many years been observing the protest methods of discontented people all over the country. They knew quite well that the Party never stops repeating that “stability is paramount” and that any request to organise a protest meets with refusal from Public Security and often brings trouble to the person making the request. They therefore use “the weapons of the weak” – weapons that have already proved their worth in other circumstances – and remain within the boundaries of official discourse, as James C. Scott has observed, to put forward their demands. This self-imposed restriction can, of course, originate with the players themselves, but it is also the result of observing past labour movements. Of course, the description of these movements is not found in a press that is supposed to obey the injunctions of the Party; it is because they regularly surf the Internet that the new activists have become aware of these types of action.

## The role of new technologies

One of the characteristics of last year’s wave of strikes was that it was contagious. It was a contagion that affected not only the Pearl River Delta, but also spread to other regions with a concentration of factories working on goods for export. For example, whilst May and June brought a total of 27 strikes in Guangdong, 73 broke out in the industrial zone of Dalian. The movements occurred mainly in Japanese-owned companies and spread via Internet and SMS.

The strike on 17 May at Honda was called through the sending of text messages. It was also through SMS that certain workers persuaded their co-workers not to go back to work until their demands were met. At the same time, workers launched discussions on sites such as [www.workers.cn](http://www.workers.cn) where they exchanged information on strikes. The movement then spread to other factories in the group. Workers at the lock factory in Zhongshan, for example, followed events on the Net and used this means of communication to publicise their struggle: “We videotaped the strike with our cell phones and decided to post the video online to let other people know how unfairly we were treated.”<sup>(16)</sup> They also described the brutality of thugs in the pay of bosses, which led to strikes by other workers in other factories belonging to other groups.

Exchanges via Internet, *weibo* (the Chinese Twitter), and SMS make up for the absence of organisational resources. Modern communication techniques allow information to circulate between players, and the victory of the Delta strikes has led many workers in other regions to launch social

movements as well. The use of such techniques makes contagion easier.<sup>(17)</sup> The Nanhai workers, for example, who called a strike in the factory where they make locks for Honda, created a QQ account called “Union is Strength” through which they circulated information on the strike. This account was consulted by journalists, lawyers, and rights defenders and made a major contribution to publicising their action and putting pressure on both management and government.

The remarkable victory of the 2,000 Foshan workers led other workers to strike at Honda, Toyota, and other companies. The movements developed by sector and by region. From 17 May until the month of July 2010, there were 20 strikes in the automobile spare parts factories of the Pearl River Delta.

However, the Internet also enabled this movement to reach other regions such as the industrial zone of Dalian in Liaoning, at the other end of the country. It is important to note that out of 73 strikes occurring between May and August 2010, 48 involved Japanese companies.<sup>(18)</sup> Although waves of strikes have occurred several times in this zone (mainly in 1994 and in 2004–2005), last year’s was the biggest since its creation. The strikes lasted between half a day and 14 days, and on average workers obtained salary increases of 34.5 percent (around 300 *yuan*). It is clear that workers decided to down tools because they learnt of the victory of workers in Nanhai and Foshan on *weibo*, the Net, or by mobile phone. The elected representatives of the Foshan workers indicated their awareness in their open letter:

*We must maintain a high degree of unity and not let the representatives of Capital divide us. This factory's profits are the fruits of our bitter toil... This struggle is not just about the interests of our 1,800 workers. We also care about the rights and interests of all Chinese workers.*

This wave of strikes may be considered part of the new generation of social movements.<sup>(19)</sup>

## Methods influenced by the rights defence movement

The use of the Net to denounce abuses is characteristic of the rights defence movement that arose in 2003. But last year’s strike movement also borrowed other elements from this movement. From the very outset of their action, for example, the activists appealed to Chinese and foreign media, and the former indeed covered events at the beginning.

14. Yang Lin, “A new knot in work-capital relationships,” *Liaowang*, no. 25, 2010, pp. 20–27; and Wu Qingjun, Xu Xiaojun, “The characteristics and specificities of collective incidents between work and capital in China,” *Xueshu yanjiu*, no. 8, 2010, pp. 59–65.

15. Since the workers held shares in their factory, they couldn’t be sacked, but the directors put all sorts of pressure on them to get them to leave. See *Minsheng guanqia*, <http://www.msguanqia.com/Article/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=3649>.

16. David Barboza, Keith Bradsher, “In China, Labor Movement Enabled by Technology,” *The New York Times*, 30 June 2010.

17. Wu Qingjun, Xu Xiaoming, “The characteristics and specificities of collective incidents between work and capital in China,” *art. cit.*

18. “Wage increases quiet worker protest - for the time being,” *China Labour Bulletin*, 10 September 2010: <http://www.clb.org.hk/en/node/100918>.

19. “Dalian gongchao bo ji 73 jia qiye gongzi zuizhong zengshang 34.5 percent” (Following the wave of strikes in 73 companies in Dalian, a salary increase of 34.5 percent was finally granted), *China Labour Bulletin*, 20 September /2010, <http://www.cb.com.cn/1634427/20100920/152039.html>.

On the other hand, they sought to impose respect for the law. Many activists studied labour law on the Internet and used it to back up demands that payment for overtime should be respected, for example.

Like their counterparts in the rights defence movement, the Honda strikers also turned to researchers and university professors. Li Xiaojuan, a 19-year-old worker who was one of the 16 representatives elected to negotiate with the Honda management, telephoned Chang Kai, Director of the Centre for Research on Labour Relations at the People's University of Beijing to ask him for help negotiating with the bosses. The following day, Chang Kai flew to Foshan and agreed to advise them free of charge. After six hours of negotiations, they obtained a salary increase of 35 percent.<sup>(20)</sup>

## A social movement?

The wave of strikes that hit China last year undoubtedly represents a milestone in the history of labour relations in the People's Republic. The fact that these events made the front page of newspapers the world over does not, however, constitute sufficient grounds for announcing the birth of a labour movement in the People's Republic. Indeed, if one applies Charles Tilly's criteria, by which a social movement is "a sustained challenge to state authorities in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders, by means of repeated public displays of the numbers, commitment, unity, and worthiness<sup>(21)</sup> of that population,"<sup>(22)</sup> last year's strikes did not fulfil all these conditions. Although, as we have seen, the strikes effectively challenged the holders of power in the factories, and the organisers did not hesitate to show several times over that a significant proportion of the population living under the domination of these power-holders was determined to fight for its demands, it is unclear whether they would have been able to extend a *sustained challenge* to these power-holders. Indeed, for Tilly, a campaign extends beyond a single event.<sup>(23)</sup>

Despite the effectiveness of the mobilisation, and the tactical and strategic intelligence of the movement, it would seem that not much remains today of the movement that caught the imagination of the Chinese and unionists the world over last spring. The protests that spread rapidly to most of the country were short-lived, and a year later it does not appear that they resulted in the establishment of a permanent power struggle between workers and bosses. The organisers of last year's strikes became ordinary workers again or left their factories, and no organisation capable of defending the workers or of expressing their demands seems to have been created. Despite a certain propensity for self-criticism after the events, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions has not altered its position. There are no autonomous organisations and there have been no changes in behaviour by official organisations. We are very far from the birth of a social movement.

## The power of a spectre

Nevertheless, the history of opposition in China shows that ideas and collective behaviours can sometimes influence government policies even though they are not structured into organisations capable of representing a *sustained challenge* to those in power. In addition to Tilly's criteria, we can define a social movement by the effect it has on the policies of the power holders. In this case, it is more than likely that the fear of a challenge taking the form of the emergence of an interest group or union has led the authorities to anticipate the demands of potential protesters. If we analyse what

has happened in the field of relationships between labour and capital over the last year, we realise that a certain number of attitudes have changed and that this cannot be explained other than by last year's movement.

We have seen that the right to strike has been denied by the law in China since 1982, and that as a result, the waves of strikes that have shaken the country over the last decade have led to severe repression. Generally speaking, the CCP does not tolerate collective protests and does not hesitate to take tough measures to "restore harmony." The arrests and deployment of police that followed calls for a "jasmine revolution" in China showed that the authorities were ready to mobilise considerable resources to crush the least sign of opposition. The hefty increase in the proportion of the budget allocated to "maintaining stability" (维稳 – *weiwēn*) is another example of this.<sup>(24)</sup> Nevertheless, police did not intervene during the social conflicts that broke out in the Delta factories last year. Better still, officials spoke in favour of the strikers. The former vice-president of the Guangdong Federation of Unions, Kong Xianghong, for example, judged that striking was not an illegal act but that it is "a means for workers to express their demands." He also criticised the attitude of the union whose members beat strikers during the strike at the Honda Nanhai factory.<sup>(25)</sup>

The changes are not limited to the declarations of one Guangdong union leader. Last year, for example, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao stated that salaries should be increased.<sup>(26)</sup> This does not perhaps signify a real change of direction, but how are we to understand the announcement by the authorities in 27 provinces that they would increase the minimum wage<sup>(27)</sup> at the beginning of this year when the situation seemed calm? One might put forward the hypothesis that the Communist Party is using anticipation to arm itself against the emergence of an organised social movement. This is suggested by the organisation of collective negotiations at the Nanhai Honda factory at the end of 2010, negotiations that resulted in the announcement of substantial increases in wages for 2011 (560 *yuan* + 50 *yuan*).<sup>(28)</sup> Of course, we do not have any declarations that would allow us to confirm this hypothesis, but the fact that no increase on this scale was decided in previous years seems to show that the Spring 2010 movements played a part. One might well conclude that the threat of a strike represents a form of *sustainable challenge* for the power holders.

Similarly, in July 2010, at the 15th meeting of its executive committee, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions adopted a decision according to which "*the development of trade unions in companies in accordance with*

20. Minnie Chan, "Young strikers impress with pioneering tactics," *SCMP*, 16 June 2010, [http://www.scmp.com/portal/site/SCMP/menuitem.2af62ecb329d3d7733492d9253a0a0a0a0/?vgnextoid=03b1e1cde3c39210VgnVCM100000360a0a0a0a0aRCRD&ss=China&s=News](http://www.scmp.com/portal/site/SCMP/menuitem.2af62ecb329d3d7733492d9253a0a0a0/?vgnextoid=03b1e1cde3c39210VgnVCM100000360a0a0a0aRCRD&ss=China&s=News).

21. "Worthiness: Sober demeanor, neat clothing, presence of clergy, dignitaries, and mothers with children," Charles Tilly, *Social Movements: 1768-2004*, London, Paradigm Publishers, 2004, p. 3.

22. Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly, *From Contention to Democracy*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, p. XIII.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

24. "China internal security spending jumps past army budget": <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/05/china-unrest-idUSTOE72400920110305>.

25. Ma Jiyi, "A controllable strike represents the justice needed for harmony: Conversation with the vice-president of the Guangdong Federation of Unions, Kong Xianghong," *Zhongguo qiyejia*, p. 97. Li Yongfeng, Jia Siyu, Chen Shichao, in *Yazhou zhouchao*, 20 June 2010, pp. 22-23.

26. "Wen urges higher pay for workers," *SCMP*, 27 June 2010, <http://www.scmp.com/portal/site/SCMP/menuitem.2af62ecb329d3d7733492d9253a0a0a0/?vgnextoid=2d68e23cb2579210VgnVCM100000360a0a0a0aRCRD&ss=China&s=News>.

27. Shi Ruide and staff reporters, *Wage Rises Across China Aim to Tackle Wealth Gap*, 18 February 2011, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20110218000090&cid=1502>.

28. *Nanfeng dushi bao*, 2 March 2011, quoted in "White collar workers lose out as factory wages rise in the Pearl River Delta," *China Labour Bulletin*, 9 March 2011, <http://www.clb.org.hk/en/node/100998>.

*the law should be encouraged, as should collective bargaining over salaries in accordance with the law.*"<sup>(29)</sup> Similarly, following the strike at Honda, workers were able to directly elect the head of the trade union, the members of the committee of the union, and the vice-president of the union.<sup>(30)</sup> Admittedly, this is an exceptional case, and workers elsewhere are not allowed to choose their representatives. It does show, however, that the organisation, which, it will be remembered, had sent out its strong men to crush the strikers, was forced to change its attitude.

## Conclusion

A year after the strikes that shook the factories of the "world's workshop," tensions seem to have lessened. The concessions granted last year by the management and the government in response to the spontaneous actions of the workers have not led to the introduction of a collective bargaining system in factories. Minimum wages have been increased, but this is simply a question of making up for lost ground, since they had remained unchanged for almost a decade. The government has repeated its wish to improve the situation of workers of peasant origin, and intervenes more willingly in cases where management does not pay wages that are due.

Unlike what happened in nineteenth-century Europe or during the 1980s in South Korea, however, new trade unions capable of representing work-

ers' demands have not been created. Despite several changes, the declarations of those at the head of official unions that from now on they would defend the interests of those they represent has proved a damp squib. It cannot therefore be said that a workers' movement has emerged.

It should be observed, however, that the protest repertoire is now common to all forms of resistance, whether on the part of workers, peasants, or the middle-classes. Similarities in repertoire can be seen between the workers' resistance and the rights defence movement. The use of the Internet to publicise abuses and to appeal to lawyers, the media, and finally to researchers and university professors, are common elements in the protest repertoires of these movements. Despite the absence of an organised movement, this unity of repertoire constitutes a specific characteristic of the socio-political situation in China, the influence of which cannot yet be determined. However, when unity of discourse, action, and mobilisation can be found in all social classes, we are in the presence of a significant phenomenon and may well ask ourselves if it will not ultimately have an influence on political debate and on the discourse of those in power. For there will come a time when the authorities will have to take account of this form of expression that is becoming increasingly widespread throughout society.

■ Translated by Elizabeth Guill

29. *Zhongguo gongren yundong guan cha baogao*, op. cit., p. 26.

30. *Ibid.* p. 26.