

**LI HANJUN AND THE EARLY COMMUNIST
MOVEMENT IN CHINA**

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Summary of

Li Hanjun and the Early Communist Movement in China

This thesis explores the role Li Hanjun played in the initial stage of the Communist movement in China. It describes Li's early life, including his family background, his upbringing, his schooling and the environment he grew up in. It analyses some of Li's early writings to demonstrate his philosophical predispositions and political orientation, as well as his character and temperament. It examines Li's understanding of Marxism and his endeavours to disseminate it and to introduce various socialist theories into China. It describes his contacts with socialists of other countries and his cooperation with Korean socialists and Soviet agents in China, which helped open up the Communist movement in East Asia. The research focuses on Li Hanjun's activities in establishing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the opinions he expressed at the Party's founding congress. It also deals with his ideas and actions in directing labour movements in China. Li Hanjun was a dissident within the CCP and later left the Party. This study clarifies the divergence of views between him and other Party leaders, and shows that his rejection of the Bolshevik doctrines of centralism and dictatorship and of unconditional receipt of financial aid and orders from the Communist International (Comintern) were the main causes of the conflicts and his expulsion. The thesis discusses Li's vision of socialism, and shows that his ideal socialist society was not one in which a centralist government and the dictatorship of a Communist élite should control and intervene in everything but a collectivity of associations of free and autonomous working people organised in cooperatives. The thesis ends with a critical assessment of Li as a historical figure. It recovers historical facts that have sunk into oblivion, and thus differs from comparable studies published both in China and abroad. It fills important gaps in the history of the early Communist movement in China.

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration with others.

This thesis is about 80,000 words long, and has not been submitted before for a degree either in Cardiff University or elsewhere.

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I have long wanted to write a monograph on Li Hanjun. As early as 1980 I started collecting materials, but for various reasons, I did not set about the job until 2003, when I become a PhD student under Professor Gregor Benton of the School of History and Archaeology at Cardiff University.

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Abbreviations

CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEC	Central Executives Committee
Comintern	Communist International
CLUS	China Labour Union Secretariat
Dal'buro	Far Eastern Bureau of the RCP(b)
Dalta	Far Eastern Telegraph Agency
<i>DCNSAC</i>	<i>Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China</i>
EASC	East Asian Secretariat of the Communist International
ECCI	Executives Committee of the Communist International
<i>EHS</i>	<i>'Erda' he 'Sanda' – Zhongguo gongchandang dier disanci daibiaodahui ziliao xuanbian</i> [The 2 nd and 3 rd Congresses of the CCP - Selected Materials on the 2 nd and 3 rd Congresses of the CCP]
FO	The British Foreign Office's Archives, kept in the National Archives in Kew
<i>GCD</i>	<i>Gongchandang</i> [The Communist]
<i>GLZWX</i>	<i>Gongchanguoji liangongbu yu Zhongguogeming wenxianziliao xuanji</i> [Selected Materials on the Comintern, All-Union CP(b) and the Chinese Revolution] (1917-1925)
Han.	<i>Hankou dang'an</i> [Hankou Archives], kept in the Archives of KMT History in Taipei
<i>JW</i>	<i>Juewu</i> [Awakening], a supplement to <i>Minguo ribao</i> [The Republican Daily News]
KMT	Guomindang (Nationalist Party)
KSP	Korean Socialist Party
<i>LCW</i>	Lenin, V. I., <i>Collected Works</i> , in 45 vols, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964-1976

<i>MECW</i>	Marx and Engels, <i>Collected Works</i> , in 50 vols, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975-2004
Narkomindel	People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs
PRC	People's Republic of China
Profintern	Red International of Labour Unions
<i>QGYZQY</i>	<i>Qingnian Gongchanguoji yu Zhongguo qingnian yundong</i> [The Youth Communist International and the Chinese Youth Movement]
RCP(b)	Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)
Revoburo	Revolutionary Bureau
Rosta	Russian Telegraph Agency
RSDLP	Russian Social Democratic Labour Party
<i>SGZY</i>	<i>Shanghai gemingshi ziliao yu yanjiu</i> [Materials and Studies on Shanghai Revolutionary History]
SY	Chinese Socialist Youth League
<i>VKNRDK</i>	<i>VKP(b), Komintern i Nazionalno Revolucionnoe Dvijenie v Kitae, Dokumenti</i> [All Union Communist Party (b), the Comintern and National Revolutionary Movement in China, Documents]
<i>WSJC</i>	<i>Weiwushiguan jiangyi chugao</i> [Materialist Concept of History, Teaching Materials (First Draft)], in 2 vols
<i>XQN</i>	<i>Xin qingnian</i> [New Youth]
<i>XQPL</i>	<i>Xingqi pinglun</i> [Sunday Review]
<i>YDQH</i>	<i>'Yida' qianhou: Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui ziliao xuanbian</i> [The Period of the Founding of the CCP: Selected Source Materials on the Period of the First National Congress of the CCP]
<i>ZDBX</i>	<i>Zhonggong dangshi baogao xuanbian</i> [Selected Reports on the History of the CCP]
<i>ZGDD</i>	<i>Zhongguo gongchandang diyici quanguo daibiaodahui</i> [The First National Congress of the CCP], Teaching materials from the Central Academy of Music
<i>ZZWX</i>	<i>Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji</i> [Selected Documents of the Central Committee of the CCP]

Introduction

In researching the origins of the Communist movement in China, the role played by Li Hanjun cannot be neglected. Li Hanjun (1890-1927) was a key figure among the founders of the CCP and among the first Chinese intellectuals to join the Communist movement in East Asia. He played an important role in establishing the CCP's initial organisation in Shanghai, and together with Chen Duxiu took charge of setting up local Communist groups. He also drafted the CCP's first programme. As the Party's Acting Secretary, he bore responsibility for preparing its founding congress, which was held in his home. He helped lay the foundations of the CCP in terms of both theory and organisation. It is no exaggeration to say that without a full clarification of Li Hanjun's ideas and activities in this period, the early history of the CCP will continue to be riven with gaps and omissions.

Nevertheless, Li Hanjun's role in the early Communist movement in China has been largely neglected, and much of what he said and did has sunk into oblivion. Worse still, since he was the first person in the CCP to voice disagreements with some Bolshevik principles and held views different from those of the Comintern and the CCP's Central Executives Committee (CEC), he was pictured as a negative figure in CCP history by most historians in the PRC up until the end of the 1970s.

This changed somewhat after the end of the 'Cultural Revolution', and especially in 1979, when Shen Yanbing, a writer who joined the CCP in 1921, wrote about Li Hanjun in his autobiography. Afterwards, some PRC historians set about studying Li objectively as far as it was possible to do so, and several essays on him have been published in China. Chen Shaokang and Tian Ziyu pioneered this trend and produced important studies.¹ Most articles merely give a brief account of his life or of one or more disjointed episodes in it; studies on special topics are lacking, and many of those that have appeared concern issues such as why Li left the CCP and his contribution to disseminating Marxism. Few are based on a wide range of first-hand materials or engage in in-depth analysis. In recent years, two biographies that appeared in China no

¹ Their papers included: Chen Shaokang et al., 'Li Hanjun zhuanlüe' (A brief biography of Li Hanjun), *Wuhan shifan xueyuan xuebao* [Journal of Wuhan Normal Institute], no. 6, 1982; Chen Shaokang and Tian Ziyu, 'Li Hanjun yu *Xingqi pinglun*' (Li Hanjun and *Sunday Review*), *Shehui kexue* [Social Sciences], no. 3, 1984.

doubt contribute to a better understanding of Li Hanjun. Nevertheless, there are defects in the two works. Luo Zhongquan, former head of the local museum in Qianjiang, Li's hometown, provides a detailed description of Li's childhood, but much of it is based on hearsay.² Another biography, by Tian Ziyu, of Hubei University, is more academic and wide-ranging.³ However, it lacks a thoroughgoing analysis of Li's thinking and personality, omits some important episodes in Li's life and makes several mistakes.

Until now, no monograph on Li Hanjun has been published outside China, whereas several other founders of the CCP, such as Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Mao Zedong, Li Da, Shen Xuanlu, Qu Qiubai, Deng Zhongxia, Yun Daiying and Shi Cuntong, have been studied in detail by scholars writing in English, Japanese, Russian, French, German and other languages. Although the subjects of these biographies were closely associated with Li Hanjun during the period of the founding of the CCP, several writers have completely ignored him, or mentioned him merely in passing.⁴ However, several works about the origins of the Chinese Communist movement attach weight to Li Hanjun's work in disseminating Marxism, establishing the CCP, and directing the labour movement, and also discuss some of his views and activities, albeit briefly.⁵

This lack of studies on Li Hanjun should hardly be surprising. In conducting research on Li, one encounters several potential difficulties: He died young (of the

² Luo Zhongquan, *Zhonggong yida daibiao – Li Hanjun* [A Delegate to the First Congress of the CCP – Li Hanjun], Sichuan renmin chubanshe, Chengdu, 2000.

³ Tian Ziyu, *Li Hanjun*, Hebei renmin chubanshe, Shijiazhuang, 1997. The revised edition, titled *Li Hanjun, Zhongguo gongchandang chuangshiren* [Li Hanjun, the Founder of the CCP] (Wuhan chubanshe, Wuhan, 2004) is better.

⁴ Li Hanjun's name does not even appear in M. Meisner's *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1967), Lee Feigon's *Chen Duxiu, Founder of the Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983), S. R. Schram's *Mao Tse-tung* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1966), and D. Y. K. Kwan's *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement, A Study of Deng Zhongxia* (University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1997). Li Hanjun's name were mentioned in B. I. Schwartz's *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958); N. Knight's *Li Da and Marxist Philosophy in China* (Westview Press, Colorado and Oxford, 1996) and R. K. Schoppa, *Blood Road: the Mystery of Shen Dingyi in Revolutionary China* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995) respectively.

⁵ These works include A. Dirlik's *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1989), M. Y. L. Luk's *The Origins of Chinese Bolshevism, An Ideology in the Making, 1920-1928* (Oxford University Press, Hong Kong, 1990); Hans J. van de Ven's *From friend to Comrade, the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991); Kim Sooyoung's *The Comintern and the Far Eastern Communist Movement in Shanghai, 1919-1922: The Meaning of Internationalism* (Unpubl. PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, 1996); Ishikawa Yoshihiro's *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi* [The History of the Establishment of the CCP] (Iwanami shoten, Tokyo, 2001); Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996).

delegates to the CCP's First Congress, he was the first to be killed) and left almost no personal recollections. No collections of his writings or reminiscences about him have been published so far.⁶ As it is impossible to make a systematic and thorough study of Li Hanjun on the basis of fragmentary material, since 1980 I have devoted myself to gathering information about him.

For some thirty years, I have systematically collected as many of Li Hanjun's articles, speeches, teaching material and translations as I could find in journals and books in various libraries, museums and memorial houses, and also from some individuals. For example, at the end of 1981, one of Li Hanjun's students, Zhao Chunshan, presented me with two volumes of Li's teaching materials that he had preserved for nearly sixty years. In the meantime, I have also tried to bring together information about Li's activities scattered across various periodicals, books and documents. Some pieces of information in rarely available journals published in China and abroad were provided by scholars in the early 1980s.⁷ Since some of journals published about ninety years ago belong among materials classed as rare and valuable literature, and no longer accessible to me, therefore, it has not always been possible for me to give the page references for such sources.

In order to obtain more information on Li Hanjun, between 1980 and 1985 the scholar Liu Jianyi and I interviewed more than sixty people then in their eighties or nineties who had known Li personally or indirectly. We also wrote to people living outside Beijing. Most of those we interviewed or wrote to had joined the CCP in the early 1920s, and some were Li's comrades, friends, students and relatives. Several old people talked about Li Hanjun several times during our repeated visits, and some wrote several letters to answer our questions. On the basis of the tape-recordings and notes we made during the interviews as well as the letters we received, I first made notes about what had been said and written and then made revisions to put the events in chronological order and to delete repetitions. Most of my editing was approved by the people who had provided oral or written evidence. Some old people were prompted by our interviews and inquiries to write their own memoirs of Li Hanjun. Some of these

⁶ Because of this, Yeh Wen-hsin's discussion of Li Hanjun in her *Provincial Passages* is based largely on *Dalang taosha: Zhonggong 'yida' renwu zhuan* [Waves washing away the beach sand: Individual biographies of the First Congress of the CCP] (Qin Yingjun and Zhang Zhanbin eds., Hongqi chubanshe, Beijing, 1991), which is not a serious scholarly work.

⁷ For example, Liu Mingkui, a Chinese expert on Chinese labour movement, offered me the content of *Huagong xingshi bao* [The Wakening Chinese Worker Times] published in Chita, Russia in 1921.

written and oral recollections were published in the 1980s. However, some of these reminiscences were revised by the editors of the journals in which they appeared. Here, I use the original versions of them. In addition to the titles used in journals and the publishing date, I give the titles provided by the authors themselves and the date of the first interview or the date when the informant signed his or her name on the edited version. Besides this, I cite recollections (published and unpublished) recorded and edited by other scholars. Many reminiscences of the founding period of the CCP are included in *'Yida' qianhou: Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui ziliao xuanbian* (The Period of the Founding of the CCP: Selected Source Materials on the Period of the First National Congress of the CCP)⁸ and *Zhonggong chuangshiren fangtan lu* (Interviews with Founders of the CCP)⁹, some of which touch upon Li Hanjun.

Memoirs and reminiscences can provide vivid accounts of historical figures and incidents. They are especially valuable when other forms of information are lacking. However, they cannot necessarily be viewed as reliable. I have identified a number of faults and even fabrications in reminiscences about Li Hanjun.¹⁰ So recollections can be used only to supplement other records and require textual research and careful comparison with other accounts.

Archival documents are more reliable and accurate than other sources. Recently, more archival documents concerning the CCP's early history have become available to researchers. For example, *VKP(b), Komintern i Nazionalno Revoluzionnoe Dvijenie v Kitae, Dokumenti, 1920-1925* (The All Union Communist Party(b), the Comintern and the National Revolutionary Movement in China, Document, 1920-1925) was published in Moscow in 1994.¹¹ This book has been translated into Chinese twice.¹² After

⁸ This book in three volumes was published by Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1980-1984.

⁹ Wang Laidi interviewed those founders of the CCP and edited this book (Mirror Books, New York, 2008).

¹⁰ For example, Fu Guangpei said that more than twenty intellectuals in Wuhan joined the CCP on Li Hanjun's recommendation; yet most were never members of the CCP.

¹¹ This book (henceforth abbreviated to *VKNRDK*) edited by M. L. Titarenko and others is the first volume of a serial of Russian archival documents *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitaya, dokumenti, 1920-1949* [The All-Union Communist Party (b), the Comintern and China, Documents, 1920-1949], compiled by the Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow.

¹² *Liangong, Gongchangguoji yu Zhongguo (1920-1925)* [The All-Union Communist Party (b), Comintern and China, 1920-1925], vol. 1, translated by Li Yuzhen, Dadong tushu gongsi, Taipei, 1997; *Liangongbu, Gongchan guoji yu Zhongguo guomin geming yundong, 1920-1925* [The All Union Communist Party(b), the Comintern and the National Revolutionary Movement in China, 1920-1925], translated and edited by the First Department of the Party History Research Institute of the CCP's CEC, as the first volume of *Gongchangguoji liangongbu yu Zhongguogeming dang'anziliao congshu* [A

comparing the two versions and checking them against the Russian version, I found each Chinese translation has its strengths and weaknesses (and even its errors and omissions). So I refer both. In the footnotes, I give only the document number. Several documents in this sourcebook and in other Russian materials record Li Hanjun's activities and Comintern representatives' comments on him.

In recent years, I have worked in archives in Shanghai, Wuhan, Nanjing and Taipei. I found useful information about Li Hanjun in 'Shanghai Municipal Police Daily Report' kept in Shanghai Municipal Archives. The Hubei Provincial Archives in Wuhan preserve some letters by Li and his wife, but they are not important. I tried to find information about Li in the Chinese Second Historical Archives in Nanjing, which has files of the Republic of China, but found less than I expected to find. In the Archives of KMT History in Taipei, I found several important documents. For example, from a form filled in by Li Hanjun in 1927, I obtained vital information about Li's political career. However, my time in Taiwan was limited, so there was much I was unable to consult.

Like many other historians who are not members of the CCP, I was unable to access files kept in the CCP's Central Archives in Beijing. However, the Central Archives presented me with some documents concerning Li Hanjun, chiefly correspondence between the Chinese Socialist Youth League (SY, which later became the Chinese Communist Youth League, CY) and CCP's CECs and their local committees in Hubei. Most of these documents are included in *Hubei geming lishi wenjian huiji* (Collected Documents of Hubei Revolutionary History) (volumes for 1922-1924 and 1925-1926), jointly compiled by the CCP's Central Archives and Hubei Provincial Archives and printed in Wuhan in 1984 for restricted circulation.

In 1989, I came to the UK as a visiting scholar. I then searched for relevant documents in the Public Record Office (known as the National Archives after April 2003) in Kew. I found several files relating to the Chinese Communist movement and labour movement as well as to Bolshevik agents' activities in China in the archives of the Foreign Office and some other Offices. Files consulted include: FO 228 /3211, *Secret Abstracts, China Command's Intelligence Diaries (1917-1924)*; FO 228/3140, *Labour and New Chinese Movements*; FO 405, *China Confidential Prints (1848-1957)* which contains 'Report respecting Bolshevism and Chinese Communism and

Series of Archival Materials on the Comintern, All-Union CP(b) and the Chinese Revolution], Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, Beijing, 1997.

Anarchism in the Far East'; FO 228/3214, *Shanghai Intelligence, Bureau Minutes of Meetings (1918-1920)*; FO 228/3291, *Shanghai Intelligence Reports (1921)*; FO 228/3282, *Hankow [Hankou]: Political and Intelligence Reports (1918-1927)*. Several documents record Li Hanjun's activities in Shanghai between 1919 and 1920. Some of this sort of information cannot be found in other sources, and some can be verified by Russian and Japanese documents, especially pieces from the Archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Some Japanese schools at which Li Hanjun enrolled, including Gyosei Middle School, the Eighth Higher School and Tokyo Imperial University, provided me with copies of files concerning Li Hanjun, such as his registration form in *Gakuseki bo* (School Roll) of Gyosei School, *Dai-hachi koutou gakkou ichiran* (A General Survey of the Eighth Higher School) and Li's *Zai gaku shousho* (Certificate of Studying) at Tokyo Imperial University. These documents helped me form a clearer view of Li's life as a student in Japan. Unfortunately, several universities in China, such as Wuhan University and Beijing Normal University, where Li worked as a professor, have not preserved original documents relating to him.

As the first Comintern plenipotentiary to China, H. Sneevliet (alias Maring) wrote notes, reports and correspondence that touched in places on Li Hanjun. *The Sneevliet Archive* (kept in the Netherlands) has been sorted out, compiled and published by T. Saich under the title *The Origins of the First United Front in China, The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)*,¹³ and by Li Yuzhen and Du Weihua under the title *Malin yu diyici guogong hezuo* (Maring and the First KMT-CCP Cooperation).¹⁴ These sourcebooks contain valuable first-hand materials that I have used.

Through painstaking investigations and searches, I unearthed many of Li Hanjun's writings and information about his activities. In this study, I use Li's writings, recollections of him, information in newspapers and documents in archives, thus putting my research on a solid foundation.

However, this dissertation does not aim at a comprehensive description of Li Hanjun's life and deals mainly with his ideas and activities concerning the Communist movement in China. More so than biographies of Li published in the past, it adopts an interpretative and analytical approach.

¹³ It was published by E. J. Brill in Leiden, 1991.

¹⁴ It was published by Guangming ribao chubanshe in Beijing, 1989.

Li Hanjun is a controversial figure. Because of his dissenting views, he was first pushed out of the core leadership of the CCP and later left the Party he had worked so hard to help establish. Before and after his death, he was given many labels, including right opportunist, reformist, Chinese Menshevik, economist (*jingji pai*), legal Marxist, parliamentarist, fellow traveller and fence-sitter. To clarify whether these charges are reasonable, I attempt to explain and interpret Li's dissenting opinions and to reveal the circumstances under which he expressed them. This work will reflect his ideas and deeds as objectively as possible.

In the paper, I briefly survey the specific historical context and social circumstances in which Li Hanjun found himself. Generally speaking, domestic troubles and foreign aggression inclined Li and other Chinese intellectuals to resort to 'all-embracing solutions' and 'thorough transformation' to reconstruct China, and to sympathise with the Bolsheviks' bold and resolute methods of revolution. This may help explain why many Chinese intellectuals were attracted to the October Revolution and became involved in the Communist movement in the early 1920s.

The origins of the CCP cannot be considered apart from the international Communist movement. It is necessary to view this subject on a broad canvas. I therefore make a brief survey of the international setting, especially the role of Soviet Russia and the Comintern's efforts to kindle and sponsor the Communist movement in China as well as in other East Asian countries. This survey reveals Li Hanjun's link with early operations leading to and accompanying the establishment of the CCP. Most historians in the PRC and abroad have neglected such facts. -Marxian intellectual experiences and orientations. When they looked a

M. Meisner writes:

The early Chinese Marxists were not formed in the same mould. They came to Communism for different reasons and by different roads, and their interpretations of Marxism were influenced profoundly by their differing pre t the Chinese situation through the prism of the same doctrine, they saw different pictures.¹⁵

No doubt similar circumstances and causes influenced those Chinese intellectuals who formed the first generation of Communists. Yet in spite of some similarities, Li Hanjun was in many ways distinct from his comrades. In this work, I compare him with other founders of the CCP like Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Li Da in particular to clarify

¹⁵ Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, p. xv.

their similarities and differences, and try to explore the reasons for and sources of the differences.

People's actions always have an inner dimension, consisting of their thought processes, and for this reason 'All history is the history of thought.'¹⁶ As an individual, Li Hanjun had his own unique experience and distinctive ways of thinking. So, an important part of this study is to probe below the surface of Li's thinking and to investigate the sequence of his intellectual development.

The work contains seven chapters:

Chapter 1 examines Li Hanjun's early life and the environment in which he grew up, especially his family background, his upbringing and his schooling. Some of his early experiences are useful for understanding the culture that nurtured him, how his personality formed, what sort of ideas he was exposed to, and why he became a Marxist.

Chapter 2 describes the situation in China when Li Hanjun returned from Japan and shows how he and other intellectuals in the 'the darkest hours of chaos' intended to reconstruct the country. It also delineates Li's activities in the May Fourth Movement. By analysing some of his early writings, I explore the elements of traditional Chinese thinking that he inherited, in order to reveal his philosophical predispositions, political orientation and personal traits.

Chapter 3 concerns Li Hanjun's understanding of Marxism and his efforts at disseminating Marxism in China. He translated several Marxist works, and wrote many articles expounding Marxist theory. He demanded systematic study of Marxist theory and tried to introduce Marxism in an all-round way. In addition to propagating Marxism by pen, Li also propagated it in lectures at several universities as a professor and encouraged his students to apply Marxist theory to social practice. However, an analysis of his writings and talks shows that he never took a dogmatic attitude towards any doctrine.

Chapter 4 focuses on Li Hanjun's role in the birth of the CCP. It starts by looking at the international origins of the Communist movement in China, and the Bolsheviks' early operations to establish Communist organisations in that country. It offers an explanation of why Li was regarded as a 'Chinese Bolshevik' in 1919 and describes his participation in an attempt to build a 'Bolshevik-style organisation' in early 1920,

¹⁶ R. G. Collingwood, 'Human Nature and Human History' in *The Philosophy of History*, Patrick Gardiner (ed), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1974, p. 26.

and his efforts to set up the CCP's central and local organisations and to draft its programme. He was a member of the 'Revoburo', a Comintern sub-bureau set up by the Bolshevik emissary G. Voitinsky, and a leader of the sponsoring group of the CCP, as well as the Party's Acting General Secretary during the lead-up to its founding congress. In this chapter, I clarify Li's opinions as expressed at the First Congress and explain why some of his suggestions were rejected.

Chapter 5 delineates Li Hanjun's conduct of the Chinese labour movement and the theories and tactics he employed in doing so. I show that Li began writing essays to support and guide workers' strikes and solidarity starting in 1919, and was in charge of Party work among labourers in the CCP before its founding congress and was editor-in-chief of *Laodong jie* (The World of Labour), the first Communist organ devoted to reaching Chinese workers. He also played a direct role in organising trade unions and directing strikes.

Chapter 6 explores the reasons for Li Hanjun's withdrawal from the CCP. On this issue, different historians have advanced different viewpoints and explanations. For example, M. Luk writes: 'Li Hanjun was expelled in June 1922 for his resistance to the party's move towards actual political activities.'¹⁷ My chapter gives the correct date of Li's withdrawal from the CCP and explains why he left it on the basis of a careful scrutiny of archival documents. In this chapter, I also seek to clarify the divergence of views between Li and the CCP's CEC, and the personal conflicts between him and some Party leaders, which were main factors contributing to his expulsion.

Chapter 7 discusses Li Hanjun's views on socialism. Like other Chinese Communists, he was convinced that China should take a socialist road. Yet he stressed that it should adopt a socialist programme that suited China's circumstances. Unlike most Chinese Communists who believed Soviet Russia was the only socialist model to follow and therefore advocated state socialism and dictatorship of a Communist élite, Li appreciated cooperative production and working people's self-government. A pluralist by instinct, he sought nourishment from other types of socialism.

The concluding chapter sums up my main points and findings, and gives a brief account of the tragic way in which Li Hanjun's life ended. It also discusses his personal character, his ways of thinking and his ultimate aims and concerns. It ends by

¹⁷ Luk, p. 220.

returning to the issue, already adumbrated here and there earlier in the conclusion, of how best to assess Li Hanjun as an historical figure.

A person is the product of his or her environment and a microcosmic representation of his or her era. I hope that through this study, people will gain a deeper and richer understanding of why some Chinese radical intellectuals became Marxists; what led them espouse to the Communist cause; how the CCP was established; and precisely what happened in a number of social and political movements in the 1920s. In a word, I hope my study will throw light on the intellectual trends and *Zeitgeist* of the era in which Li Hanjun lived.

I would like to make clear here that this dissertation uses the Oxford Referencing System in the footnotes and bibliography. It transcribes Chinese names in *Hanyu Pinyin*, except in the case of a small number of names familiar in other transcriptions. The latter include Sun Yat-sen, Yi Kwangsu, Kuomintang (KMT) and Yangtse River.

1 A Promising Youth

Since human beings are products of circumstances and upbringing, Li Hanjun can best be understood by exploring the environment in which he lived and the age in which his mind was formed. Accordingly, in this chapter I look at Li's early life, family background and schooling; and I deal briefly with the social, political and economic conditions and developments of his age and their impact on him. In addition to these circumstances, the influence of the Chu culture on the formation of his personality is a factor which cannot be ignored.

1.1 Formative Environment

Li Hanjun was born in Yuanjiaqiao village in Qianjiang County, Hubei Province in April 1890.¹ His father, Li Jinshan, a peasant's son, studied assiduously and earned the title of *xiucaï*² at the age of 36, whereupon he gave up the idea of pursuing an official career and became a teacher in the *sishu* (old-style private school) that he set up in the village where his family was living and later transferred to the county town. He was a diligent and altruistic teacher who treated his pupils equally regardless of their family background and their ability or inability to pay tuition fees.³ Li Hanjun's mother, whose family name was Wang, also came from a peasant family, and did farm

¹ Li Hanjun's elder brother Li Shucheng once wrote that Li Hanjun was born in the third month of the lunar calendar of the Guangxu 16th year. See 'Guanyu Li Hanjun – Li Shucheng zhi Jueming de yifeng xin' (On Li Hanjun – Li Shucheng's letter to Jueming), 12 September 1964, *Gemingshi ziliao* [Materials of Revolutionary History], no. 2, September 1981, p.197; According to Li Shucheng's wife Xue Wenshu, Li Hanjun was born in the year of the Tiger (Xue Wenshu's Letter to Chen Shaokang, 2 February 1991). Both the Guangxu 16th year and the Tiger year refer to 1890. But, Li Hanjun's archives in Gyosei Middle School and Tokyo Imperial University indicate that he was born in the Meiji 25th year and the Guangxu 18th year (1892). Even so, in the 'Detailed List of Chinese Students at Schools in Japan', I found in the records of *Qingmo gesheng guan/zi fei liu-Ri xuesheng xingming biao* [Name List of the Students in Japan Who Came from Different Provinces of China in the Late Qing Period] (Beijing, 1909, p. 344) that Li Renjie was nineteen when he started his fifth year of study at Gyosei Middle School in 1909.

² *XiUCAI* was a title given to men who passed the imperial examination at county level in imperial times.

³ Gan Pengyun, 'Qianjiang Li fujun mubiao' (The inscription on Qianjiang Li Jinshan's tomb tablet) December 1920, in *Qianlu leigao* [Papers of Qian Study], Chongya tang, Beijing, 1931, vol. 11, p. 467.

work. She was known as a sympathetic woman, generous to poor villagers. Li's family lived a hard life till 1912.⁴

Li Hanjun was Li Jinshan's third and youngest son. The eldest brother died young, so his second brother, Li Shucheng, who was eight years older than he, became his only brother. Li Shucheng, alias Li Xiaoyuan, gained the title of *xiuca* when he was only sixteen years old, and was recommended by Hubei's Educational Inspector to an old-style academy, Jingxin shuyuan in Wuchang. Li Shucheng remained on close terms with Li Hanjun and greatly influenced his personal development.

According to an ancestral rule of the Li family, the characters *shu* (book), *sheng* (voice), *zhen* (revitalising), *guo* (country), *chang* (prosperous) were to be used in naming the most recent five generations. All these characters convey the sense of studying hard to energise China and make it prosperous. Li Hanjun belonged to the *shu* generation, and his original name was Shushi (means 'book and poem'). When he grew up he received the formal name (*zi*) Renjie. Later, he styled himself Hanjun as an alternative name (*hao*). Both Renjie and Hanjun mean 'person of outstanding talent'. Li Hanjun can be said to have deserved both names. His natural talents were manifest when he was just a boy, and several people noted his acute intelligence.⁵

From the age of five, Li Hanjun began learning to read and write with his father. His lessons included the basic classics, such as *Sanzi jing* (The Three-Character Classic), *You xue* (A enlightenment book for children), *Qianjia shi* (An anthology of popular ancient Chinese poems), *Lunyu* (The Analects of Confucius) and *Tang shi* (Poems of the Tang Dynasty). After class, he did farm work alongside other members of his family. He was said to have a retentive memory and a quick understanding. He often used to question his father, but sometimes he did not receive satisfactory answers. Before long, he was sent by his father to a modern-style primary school in Qianjiang. The curriculum included arithmetic, natural science, geography and history as well as Chinese language and the classics. Li was eager to learn the new subjects and showed

⁴ Some information on Li's family was given by Li Hanjun's son, Li Shenghuang, in his *Autobiography* (no date and unpublished). Li Shenghuang's daughter, Li Jie, in her email of 15 July 2010 told me that her father had written the autobiography during the 'Cultural Revolution' (1966-1976).

⁵ People such as Wu Luzhen, Shen Yanbing, Liu Renjing, Fu Guangpei, Li Yanxi, Bao Huiseng and Akutagawa Ryunosuke have commented favourably on Li Hanjun's intelligence and cleverness.

a special interest in history, particularly historical figures and events from the area around his hometown.⁶

Qianjiang is located in the central part of the Jiangnan plain between the Yangtze River and the Han River. It has fertile land and has been characterised by a highly developed culture since ancient times. Over 2,000 years ago, it belonged to Chu, a large kingdom in south China. Although Chu, as a kingdom, was destroyed by Qin in 223 BC, the name Chu continued to apply to the region covering Hubei and Hunan. Since this area has many rivers, streams, marshes and forests, and its people normally live a life of relative abundance.

Moreover, it had a special culture. According to the philosopher Feng Youlan, the people of Chu had a special temperament that delighted in life, and believed fervently in witches and spirits. At one time or another some among the people there tended to rise up in revolt. The area was also known for its many recluses, who opposed not only the government but all political and social institutions. Moreover, a sceptical attitude of mind was bred in Chu, as Qu Yuan (a Chu politician and poet) showed in his poem *Tian wen* (Questions about heaven).⁷ In sum, the people of Chu were said to respect natural forces rather than political authorities. Growing up in such an environment, Chu culture certainly helped shape Li Hanjun's mind and mould his special character. Taoism originated in the Chu region and was a major element in Chu culture, so it is unsurprising that Li developed an affinity with the philosophical ideas of Laozi and Zhuangzi, as I shall explain later.⁸

In modern as in ancient times, there were numerous rebellions in the Chu area. Between the 1850s and the 1860s, when Taiping troops battled with the Qing in Hubei (including Qianjiang), numerous peasants and other labourers in Hubei rose in revolt

⁶ In writing this paragraph, I refer to Luo Zhongquan, *Li Hanjun tongnian shaonian shiqi* [Li Hanjun's Early Youth], October 1998 (unpublished). Luo Zhongquan was the former director the Qianjiang Museum. When I interviewed with him on 13 October 2005, he told me that he started investigating the deeds of Li Hanjun and his family in Qianjiang in 1958.

⁷ Feng Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, translated by Derk Bodde, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1952, vol. 1, p. 176.

⁸ 'Chu culture' here refers to the special customs, ideas and art that formed in the Chu region and continue to influence its people. Cf. Li Xueqin, 'Zailun Chu wenhua de liuchuan' (More comments on Chu culture's origin and development), in *Chu wenhua mizong* [Tracing the Chu Culture], Henan kaogu xuehui (ed), Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, Zhengzhou, 1986, p. 2, p. 10; Lü Xichen, *Daojia, Daojiao yu Zhongguo gudai zhengzhi* [Taoist School, the Taoist Religion and the Chinese Politics in Ancient Times], Hunan renmin chubanshe, Changsha, 2002, p. 202. Laozi and Zhuangzi were central to Chu culture. There is a term 'the learning of Lao-Zhuang and Jing-Chu'. Li Dazhao mentioned this in his 'Dong-Xi wenming genben zhi yidian' (The fundamental differences between the civilisations of the East and of the West), 1 July 1918, in *Li Dazhao wenji* [Writings of Li Dazhao], Beijing shiwei dangshi yanjiushi (ed), Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1984, vol. 1, p. 569.

and joined the Taiping troops. In 1889, rebel secret societies (*huidang*) were active in Qianjiang and neighbouring counties.⁹ Li Jinshan sometimes told his sons stories about the Taipings that revealed his respect and sympathy for them.¹⁰ Although Li Jinshan hated the corruption and incompetence of the Manchus, there is no evidence that he cherished revolutionary ideas. The hopes Li Jinshan placed on his sons were of studying hard in order to become qualified personnel for ‘making the country rich and building up its military power’ (*fuguo qiangbing*).¹¹ ‘Making the country rich and building up its military power’ was a widespread goal among Chinese intellectuals and officials at the time.

During the late Qing Dynasty, China was deep in crisis. Having seen itself as the Celestial Empire, it was defeated first by Britain and then by Britain and France in the two Opium Wars and was then forced to open several ports to foreigners. This brought unprecedented changes in its wake. However, the Qing Court believed that the Europeans owed their victory mainly to their strong navies and superior firepower. Following China’s defeat, a ‘Self-Strengthening Movement’ was launched, and several modern factories, mainly involved in war production but also for civil production, were set up and run, mostly by officials. But the decadent and moribund regime did nothing to reform the political system or abandon backward traditions, so it was unable to halt further foreign encroachment in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

In 1895, China was defeated by Japan. This triggered China’s partition by foreign powers, which scrambled to carve out ‘spheres of influence’ for themselves. Japan’s victory fuelled arguments for a more pragmatic approach to borrowing from the outside world. Kang Youwei wrote:

Japan is a small island, disadvantaged in terms of natural resources. Yet in recent years, its leadership has effected reforms and instituted political change. Within ten years, many old patterns have been abolished and the groundwork laid to initiate new programs.¹²

Taking the Meiji Restoration as their model, a group of intellectuals headed by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao launched a programme of Constitutional Reform and

⁹ Cf. Pi Mingxiu (ed), *Hubei lishi renwu cidian* [Dictionary of Historical Figures in Hubei], Appendix ‘Hubei diqu gujin dashi shulüe’ (The Chronicle of Events in Hubei region in ancient and modern times), Hubei renmin chubanshe, Wuhan, 1984, pp. 663-665, p. 667.

¹⁰ Cf. Luo Zhongquan, *Zhonggong yida daibiao - Li Hanjun*, pp. 3-4.

¹¹ Gan Pengyun, vol. 11, p. 468.

¹² P. Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers, 1895-1905*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1992, p. 19.

modernisation in 1898. Though endorsed by Emperor Guangxu, the Reform movement was suppressed by conservative officials headed by Empress Dowager Cixi.

To confront the foreigners, the Boxer movement, an uprising originally mobilised by secret societies and religious sects, developed and spread in North China, culminating in an uprising in 1900. Empress Dowager Cixi at first intended to suppress the Boxers, but later, to save her throne, she briefly tried to use the popular unrest against the foreigners. To combat the anti-foreign movement, an expeditionary force organised by the Allied Powers occupied Beijing in August 1900. In September of the following year, a peace treaty – the Boxer Protocol – was signed between the Qing Government and eleven foreign powers. The Qing Court yielded to the foreign powers and was condemned by Chinese patriots as ‘a court ruled by foreigners’.¹³

Repeated defeats at the hands of foreign powers and domestic pressures convinced the Qing to change course and introduce reforms. The ‘New Policies’ included a series of decrees aimed at educational, economic, military and political reforms.

In Li Hanjun’s Hubei, a series of reforms had preceded the New Policies. Zhang Zhidong was appointed Viceroy of Huguang (Hubei and Hunan) in 1889.¹⁴ As one of the most capable officials of the late Qing Dynasty and a latter-day leader of the Self-Strengthening Movement familiar with ‘foreign affairs’ (*yangwu*), Zhang was well aware that China had to realise its reform by applying ‘Western means’.

Located between north and south, Hubei occupies a strategic position in China. Fully aware of its importance, Zhang Zhidong began to make use of Western knowledge and technology to modernise education and the army and promote modern industry. He started his programme of reform in 1890, when Li Hanjun was born. Within ten years, Hubei had acquired numerous new factories, workplaces, mills and mines.¹⁵ However, Zhang’s priority was education. He believed that ‘gathering talent is the first essential of self-strengthening’ and ‘if we wish to control the changing times,

¹³ Chen Tianhua, ‘Meng huitou’ (Turn your head abruptly), in *Xinhai geming* [The Revolution of 1911], Zhongguo shixuehui (ed), Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 1957, vol. 2, pp. 151-152.

¹⁴ Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) obtained the title of *jinshi* after passing the highest level examination held by the Emperor in 1863 and gained a post in the *Hanlin* Academy. From 1882, he successfully worked as an important local high official, serving variously as Governor and Viceroy of several provinces. After 1907 Zhang was stationed in Beijing as Grand Secretary and Minister of the Grand Council till his death.

¹⁵ Zhang Haipeng (ed), *Zhongguo jindai shigao ditu ji* [Collected Maps of Modern Chinese History] (Zhongguo titu chubanshe, Beijing, 1984, p. 47) shows that many modern enterprises run by local governments were concentrated in Hubei.

we must [first] establish schools.’¹⁶ Zhang first set up several schools to train qualified personnel for mining, industry, agriculture, commerce and military and foreign affairs. He adopted a Western-style curriculum and employed some foreign teachers.

In his famous *Quanxue pian* (Exhortation to learning), published in 1898, Zhang Zhidong advocated establishing modern schools on a large scale, extensively translating foreign books and sending students abroad. He expounded the need to combine Western (new) studies and Chinese (old) learning and emphasised: ‘The old is to form the basis and the new is for practical purposes.’¹⁷ His aim was to strengthen the state by modernising its underpinnings while at the same time striving to maintain China’s essential principles and traditions (*ti*).

In 1901, Zhang Zhidong and another Viceroy, Liu Kunyi, proposed a system of general education to be sustained by a network of new schools. They also urged the abolition of the old examination system and proposed sending students abroad. The first step would be to set up modern primary schools in all provinces and counties and to require that each pupil studied modern science. In 1902 the Qing promulgated a ‘Regulation of Primary Schools’ and had earlier approved sending students abroad.

By October 1902, when Zhang Zhidong left Wuchang for Nanjing as Viceroy of Liangjiang, several ordinary primary and middle schools had been set up in Wuchang as an example for other districts. As a result of Zhang’s efforts, Hubei became a model of modern education that attracted the attention of the whole country.

1.2 *Early Years in Wuchang*

The year 1902 was a turning point for the Li brothers. In that year, Li Hanjun, then twelve years old, entered a higher primary school in Wuchang. At the time, there were only five modern-style higher primary schools in Wuchang admitting boys from the ages of eleven to fourteen. The subjects Li Hanjun might have learned included arithmetic, natural sciences, history, geography, drawing, physical education and the

¹⁶ W. Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1971, pp. 104-105.

¹⁷ Chang Chi-tung (Zhang Zhidong), *China’s Only Hope*, S. I. Woodbridge and F. H. Revell (transl), New York, 1900, p. 101.

Chinese classics.¹⁸ These schools provided students with free food, dormitory and uniforms. The students had to sing the ‘School Song’ written by Zhang Zhidong, which stressed that setting up modern schools would help the Empire become stronger and praised Qu Yuan for remonstrating with the King of Chu.¹⁹

In the same year, Li Shucheng was among a group of thirty-one students in Wuchang sent by Zhang Zhidong to study at Kōbun College in Tokyo, for training as teachers. Not long after, recommended by two members of Xingzhonghui (The Society for Regenerating China), Li Shucheng visited Sun Yat-sen in Tokyo and Yokohama and threw himself into the revolutionary struggle against Manchu rule and for a republic.²⁰ Together with another member of Xingzhonghui, Cheng Jiacheng, he enlightened Huang Xing and Liu Kuiyi, who later became the leaders of Huaxinghui (the China Revival Society), about revolutionary ideas.²¹

In the end of 1902, Li Shucheng and several other Hubei students in Japan organised the Association of Hubei Fellow Students. In January 1903 the Association started publishing a monthly journal *Hubei xueshengjie* (Hubei Student World), which was a forerunner of several journals published by students in Japan from various provinces. In it, Li Shucheng published a famous article ‘Students’ Struggle’, in which he wrote that China, having been carved up by foreign powers, faced national subjugation and genocide. To save itself from calamity, China would have to rely on its students. In his view, the new student stratum occupied a unique position between the corrupt unchangeable officials at the top and the uncultured common people at the bottom, so they had a duty to by-pass the officials and to lead people to strive for the

¹⁸ Cf. ‘Qinding xiaoxuetang zhangcheng’ (Primary school regulations, made by imperial order), in Taga Shugoro (ed), *Kindai Chugoku kyoiku shi shiryō* [Materials on Modern Chinese Educational History: Qing Section], Nihon Gakujutsu shinko kai, Tokyo, 1972, pp. 166-177; Ayers, p. 220.

¹⁹ Cf. Ma Shengyun and Ma Lan (eds), *Li Siguang nianpu* [Chronology of Li Siguang], Dizhi chubanshe, Beijing, 1999, p. 10; Feng Youlan, *Feng Youlan zishu* [Feng Youlan’s Account of His Life], Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, Beijing, 2004, p. 8. Both Li Siguang and Feng Youlan studied in modern primary schools in Wuchang between 1902 and 1904.

²⁰ *Sun Zhongshan jiwai ji bubian* [Supplement to *Collected Works of Sun Yat-sen*], Hao Shengchao (ed), Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 1994, p. 20; Feng Ziyu, *Geming yishi* [An Anecdotal History of the Revolution], Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, Taipei, 1953, vol. 1, p. 133.

²¹ Song Jiaoren, ‘Cheng Jiacheng geming dashilüe’ (Short account of the revolutionary activities of Cheng Jiacheng), in *Song Jiaoren ji* [The Writings of Song Jiaoren], Chen Xulu (ed), Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1981, vol. 2, p. 436.

nation's independence and people's civil rights.²² In Lee Feigon's opinion, such idea influenced Chen Duxiu.²³

Hubei xueshengjie had a circulation of 7,000 for several months and was distributed across several cities in China. After its prohibition by the Chinese authorities, it was read by even more people in China and abroad.²⁴ Later, it changed its name to *Han sheng* (Han Nation's Voice), and declared it would urge the people of Hubei to start the struggle to overthrow the Qing.

In a pamphlet, 'Appeal to Friends in Hubei Province by Li Shucheng of Qianjiang' printed in Tokyo in 1903, Li Shucheng declared that his motto was 'Every man shares responsibility for the fate of the world.' He criticized those who did not worry about the possibility of national subjugation and genocide and the miserable life of the populace and who 'cared only about their families and themselves.' He also wrote: 'If a man cannot leave a heroic and just spirit in the world after his death, he would be of less worth than grass or trees.' He encouraged youths to 'make determined efforts and flinch from no difficulty or danger in order to devote themselves to China.'²⁵ This Appeal circulated widely in Hubei.

Before his graduation, Li Shucheng joined the 'Resist-Russia Volunteer Corps' (later changed to 'Student Army'), which prepared to fight against Russia's occupation of Manchuria. The volunteers determined to shed their own blood for China's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The Qing dared not resist Russia and brought pressure on the 'Student Army', so the latter changed its name yet again to 'Association for National Military Education' and sent agents back to China to rouse the students to action.²⁶ As the Chinese Minister to Japan pointed out, the Association was using the slogan 'resist Russia' as a cover for revolutionary operations.²⁷ Students in Wuchang and other parts of China responded to the appeals by holding gatherings and delivering speeches. The patriotic actions soon developed into a nationwide

²² Li Shucheng, 'Xuesheng zhi jingzheng' (Students' struggle), *Hubei xueshengjie* [Hubei Student World], no. 2, February, 1903, pp. 1-12.

²³ Lee Feigon, p. 40.

²⁴ Harrell, p. 105; Huang Fu-ch'ing, *Chinese Students in Japan in the Late Ch'ing Period*, K. P. K. Whitaker (transl), The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, 1982, pp.156-157.

²⁵ Li Shucheng, *Qianjiang Li Shucheng yu E zhong youren shu* [Appeal to Friends in Hubei Province by Li Shucheng of Qianjiang], a pamphlet kept in the Memorial House of the Wuchang Uprising of 1911.

²⁶ Cf. Yang Tianshi and Wang Xuezhuan (eds), *Ju-E yundong (1901-1905)* [The Resist-Russia Movement, 1901-1905], Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1979, pp. 84-103.

²⁷ Harrell, p. 141.

movement of which the Qing became a target on account of its failure to resist foreign aggression.

As Li Shucheng's only brother, Li Hanjun probably knew what Li Shucheng was doing, and read *Hubei xueshengjie* and the 'Appeal to Friends in Hubei Province' by Li Shucheng. His elder brother's strong sense of mission and spirit of self-sacrifice helped shape his attitudes and outlook. The idea that an intellectual should concern himself with the fate of his country, shoulder responsibility for the people, and sacrifice his own personal interests and even his life for the common good derived ultimately from the moral principles of Confucianism. Although Li Hanjun had not read much Confucian literature and later came to detest Confucian doctrines, he was inevitably affected, both directly and indirectly, by Confucian ideas.

In the summer of 1903, Li Shucheng left Tokyo for Wuchang, where he and several graduates from Japan and other Wuchang intellectuals used to discuss how to carry out revolution. They believed that a rising to overthrow the Qing would need the support of soldiers in the modern army instead of secret societies and the overseas Chinese, and that the best way was to mobilise young students to join the army.²⁸ This strategy was probably first advanced by Wu Luzhen, who led the group.

Wu Luzhen was a pioneer of the Chinese democratic revolution. He left Hubei for Japan in 1898 for military study. In 1900, together with Fu Cixiang, Liu Chengyu and other students from Hubei, he organised *Lizhihui* (Promote Determination Society), the first Chinese student organisation in Japan. Wu was also among the first group of Chinese students in Japan to join Xingzhonghui. He soon returned to China to participate in an uprising, a joint action by revolutionaries headed by Sun Yat-sen and constitutional monarchists under Kang Youwei. The rising quickly collapsed with the arrest and decapitation of several of its leaders, including Fu Cixiang.²⁹ Wu then fled to Japan to resume his studies. When the Clubhouse of Chinese Students Studying Abroad opened at Kanda in Tokyo at the beginning of 1902, Wu Luzhen delivered a speech likening the Clubhouse to the Independence Hall of Philadelphia of America.³⁰

²⁸ Cf. Liu Jianyi and Li Danyang, 'Wuchang huayuanshan jiguan chutan' (A preliminary research into a revolutionary organisation at Garden Hill in Wuchang), in *Jinian Xinhai geming 70 zhounian qingnian xueshu tolunhui lunwen xuan* [Selected Theses of the Youth Symposium for the 70th Anniversary of the Revolution of 1911], Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1983, vol. 1.

²⁹ Fu Cixiang was born in Qianjiang, like Li Shucheng and Li Hanjun. Fu Cixiang's son, Fu Guangpei, was a student of Li Jinshan, and later worked as Li Shucheng's private secretary.

³⁰ Feng Ziyou, *Zhonghua minguo kaiguo qian gemingshi* [A History of the Revolution Prior to the Founding of the Republic of China], Zhongguo wenhua fuwushe, Shanghai, 1946, vol. 1, p. 56.

After graduating from the Japan Military Cadets' School, Zhang Zhidong put him in charge of barracks and military schools in Hubei.

Under Wu Luzhen's direction, these radical intellectuals in Wuchang engaged in various revolutionary actions. Li Shucheng's task was to recommend military recruits to Wu. One young man who joined the army in this way was Liu Jing'an, a student of Li Shucheng's father in Qianjiang and later founder of two revolutionary organisations in Hubei – Kexue buxi suo (Science Night School) and Rizhihui (Society for Increasing Knowledge Day by Day).³¹ The two organisations laid the basis for the later victorious rising in Wuchang. In the winter of 1903, Li Shucheng accompanied Wu Luzhen to Changsha, where they helped Huang Xing, then organising Huaxinghui, prepare a rising in Hunan. The Hubei authorities realised these intellectuals had revolutionary tendencies, and decided to send some of them to Europe for study, in an attempt to forestall disorder in Hubei. Accordingly, Li Shucheng managed to go to Japan again for military study.

Before Li Shucheng's departure, Li Hanjun expressed a desire to study in Japan, since he was unhappy with what he had learned at school in Wuchang. As Li Shucheng's revolutionary intimate, Wu Luzhen got to know Li's younger brother, Li Hanjun, who made a good impression with his intelligence and general brightness upon Wu. Wu encouraged Li Hanjun in his goal and provided him with travel expenses and tuition fees.³² In the spring of 1904, Li Hanjun and Li Shucheng set out together for Japan.

Although still young, Li Hanjun had got to know several revolutionaries through his brother Li Shucheng.³³ Revolutionaries like Wu Luzhen, Fu Cixiang and Liu Jing'an were his heroes. Later he mentioned in an article that many *xiuca* of the late

³¹ Cf. He Juefei (ed), *Xinhai Wuchang shouyi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of the People Who Took Part in the Uprising of 1911 in Wuchang], Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 1-7. Because of his revolutionary activities, Liu was arrested by the Qing authorities and died in prison in 1911.

³² Li Shucheng, 'Wo dui Wu Luzhen de pianduan huiyi' (My fragmentary memories of Wu Luzhen) in *Xinhai geming huiyilu* [Collected Reminiscences of the Revolution of 1911], Quanguo zhengxie wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui (ed), Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1963, vol. 5, p. 451. According to Xu Xiaoyu, the grand-daughter of Wu Luzhen, when Li Shucheng told Wu Luzhen that his younger brother intended to follow him to study in Japan, Wu asked Li Shucheng to bring Li Hanjun in and talked with him personally. Xu Xiaoyu, 'Du "Li Hanjun – Makesi zhuyi laoshi" yougan' (Thoughts on 'Li Hanjun – a Marxist Teacher'), 30 October 2006, viewed on 2 March 2007, <<http://www.usmingyue.com>>.

³³ For examples, Li Lianfang and Zhang Jixu were Li Shucheng's revolutionary comrades in 1903. In 1923, Li Hanjun mentioned that Li Lianfang and Zhang Jixu had been his friends for over twenty years. See 'Wuchang shida fengchao zhi zhenxiang' (The real facts of the unrest of Wuchang Normal University), sequel, *Jiangsheng rikan* [Voice of Yangtze River Daily], 23 October 1923; Li Hanjun, 'Letter to reporter', *Jiangsheng rikan*, 10 November 1923.

Qing had joined the army to make revolution and he regarded them as models for the students in the May Fourth period.³⁴

Going abroad at such an early age enabled Li Hanjun to cast aside the trammels of old tradition. As he later admitted in a letter to friends, he, like other Chinese, had been inhibited by the oppressive atmosphere; yet because he went abroad while still a boy, he probably suffered less than others. However, he still could not completely shake off the yoke of tradition even in a foreign country.³⁵ Longing for knowledge, skills and new ideas, Li left for Japan, where studied for more than ten years.

1.3 *Studying in Japan*

Japan's transformation began in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration. Thereafter, Japan made rapid progress in building up its 'nation power'. The Japanese Government attached great importance to developing education. In 1869 a Bureau of Translation was established to translate and compile textbooks from foreign sources, and within a short time a large number of modern schools at different levels had sprung up throughout Japan.³⁶ Numerous Japanese went to study in Europe and America, and many Westerners were hired to teach at Japanese schools and universities. Japan was therefore regarded as a bridge between Western and Eastern cultures. After its victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, Japan became a competitor with the West in the Pacific and the most powerful country in Asia.³⁷ Li Hanjun later remarked that Japan's material civilisation surpassed China's after the Meiji Restoration, and some Japanese scholars were on a par with their European counterparts.³⁸ Under the circumstances, Japan became a country Chinese could learn from.

Chinese students began going to Japan officially in 1896, later than those sent to America. Yet China and Japan were geographically close, had a similar script, and

³⁴ Ri Jin ketsu, 'Chugoku musan kaikyū oyobi sono undo no tokushitsu' (The distinguishing features of the Chinese proletariat and their movements), *Kaizō* [Reconstruction], vol. 8, no. 8, 6 July 1926, p. 25. This article was translated into Chinese by Li Mingliang under the title 'Zhongguo wuchan jieji jiqi yundong de tezheng' (unpublished).

³⁵ Li Renjie, 'Gaizao yao quanbu gaizao' (Transformation should be complete), *Jianshe* [Construction], vol.1, no. 6, January 1920, p. 1139.

³⁶ Cf. H. L. Keenleyside and A. F. Thomas, *History of Japanese Education and Present Educational System*, Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1937, p. 81.

³⁷ After the Sino-Japanese War, China's two hundred million taels of silver of indemnity for the War also helped Japan develop its modern education and industry.

³⁸ Li Renjie, *Jianshe*, p. 1159.

were relatively compatible culturally and socially, so the Qing Government decided to send large numbers of Chinese youths to study in Japan or encourage them to go there.³⁹ Economic reasons also played a role: it was cheaper to study in Japan than in Western countries. The number of Chinese students in Japan soon boomed: there were up to 10,000 by 1905-1906.⁴⁰

Li Hanjun arrived in Japan in May 1904.⁴¹ He then entered Kei i School to study Japanese.⁴² This school was set up by Meiji University in September 1904 ‘to provide preparatory courses for students from China and Korea in the teachings of the ancient sages of East Asia as longitude (*kei*) and the systematic learning of Western countries as latitude (*i*).’ Courses lasted for between ten months and two years.⁴³ On 10 April 1905, Li was admitted to Gyosei Middle School in Tokyo without having to take an examination. He was registered as ‘Li Ding’. His guardian was Oikawa Tsunekichi, a lecturer at the Japanese Railway School.⁴⁴

Gyosei School (L’École de l’Étoile du Matin) was set up by French and American Catholic missionaries in 1888; Gyosei Middle School was established in 1899 and its first principal was Alphonse Heinrich. Gyosei means ‘Morning Star’ and the School’s emblem pictures a star over two bay twigs. It aimed to use the Catholic spirit of love to imbue students with religious sentiment and educate them to save mankind from sin. It also aimed to develop its students in an all-round way and make them honest, diligent, and seekers after truth.⁴⁵

Normally, missionary school teachers were better than those foreign instructors hired by the Japanese education authorities, so Japanese pupils keen to learn foreign

³⁹ The Chinese Minister to Japan, Yang Shu wrote to tell the Qing Government: ‘China and Japan belong to the same continent. Their political structures and the nature of their peoples are most alike. The main outline of reform in China should follow that of Japan.’ Quoted from Huang Fu-ch’ing, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Saneto Keishu, *Chugoku ryugakusei shi dan* [Stories of the Overseas Chinese Students], Daiichi shobo, Tokyo, 1981, p. 150; Shu Xincheng, *Zhongguo liuxue shi* [History of Chinese Studying abroad], Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, Shanghai, 1989, p. 70.

⁴¹ *Qingmo gesheng guan/zi fei liu-Ri xuesheng xingming biao*, p. 344.

⁴² According to Gyosei School’s *Gakuseki bo* [School Roll of Gyosei School] no. 22, Li studied in a school named ‘Kei i’ (mean ‘longitude and latitude’ in Japanese) before enrolling in Gyosei School. I have searched several monographs and records on education in China in late Qing, but could not find a school named ‘Jing wei’ (Chinese for Kei i), so I assume it was in Japan.

⁴³ Shiteng Huixiu (Saneto Keishu), *Zhongguoren liuxue Riben shi* [A History of Chinese Studying in Japan], Tan Ruqian and Lin Qixiu (transl), Sanlian shudian, Beijing, 1983, p. 50; Li Xisuo, *Zhongguo liuxuesheng shi lungao* [Theses on the History of the Overseas Chinese Students], Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 2007, p. 247.

⁴⁴ *Gakuseki bo*, no. 22. However, *Qingmo gesheng guan/zi fei liu-Ri xuesheng xingming biao* (p. 344) records that Li entered Gyosei School in September 1904.

⁴⁵ Gyosei gakkou (ed), *Gakkou youran* [A Survey of Gyosei School], Tokyo, 2004; Gyosei Middle and Higher Schools’ Home Page, 2007. In 1925 Li Hanjun suggested naming a new school in Hubei ‘Quanren’ (people developed in an all-round way).

languages and acquire Western learning flocked to join them. The religious teaching was optional and took place outside school hours.⁴⁶ Gyosei Middle School offered twelve courses each year; subjects included mathematics, physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, geometry, history, and PE. Besides Japanese, students learned French and English.⁴⁷

Gyosei Middle School was a boarding school and followed a highly disciplined regime. All students wore uniforms. ‘A List of Names of the Students Who Graduated from Gyosei Middle School’ shows that all except Li who graduated in 1910 were Japanese. Li Hanjun had to adapt to new circumstances and learn new things, no easy task for a teenager who knew little Japanese. However, he managed to overcome the difficulties and before long excelled in several subjects. In his third year, he won a prize for excellence.⁴⁸

Li’s five years at Gyosei Middle School laid a solid foundation for his further study. On 29 March 1910, he graduated with good results. Just before graduation, his name on the School Roll changed from Li Ding to Li Renjie and his date of birth from Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Guangxu year (1892).⁴⁹ ‘Renjie’ was his *zi*. Why his date of birth was changed? Perhaps he changed his age for gaining admittance to the Japanese higher school. In 1910, Li’s actual age was twenty years old. However, according to the Japanese system, the ages for the first-year higher school students should normally be seventeen-eighteen, and first-year university students should normally be twenty.⁵⁰ Perhaps, the change of Li’s age was made by the School authorities or at least with their consent for his sake.

While Li Hanjun was at the middle school, the Chinese revolutionary movement entered a new era. With the support of radical students in Japan, Sun Yat-sen’s Xingzhonghui and Huang Xing’s Huaxinghui united in the Tongmenghui (the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance Society), which was founded in Tokyo in August 1905. Tokyo thus became a centre for the Chinese revolution. As a student at the Japanese Military Academy, Li Shucheng helped bring about this merger of Chinese revolutionary forces

⁴⁶ Cf. Keenleyside and Thomas, pp. 257-59.

⁴⁷ Gyosei Corporation (ed), *Gyosei gakuen no 100 nen* [The Centenary of Gyosei School], Tokyo, 1988, lists no curricula for 1905-1910.

⁴⁸ *Zyushousha genbo, ichi* [Original Records of Students Who Received Awards], vol. 1, kept in Gyosei Middle School. There were four grades of prize. Li was awarded the 2nd grade.

⁴⁹ *Gakuseki bo*, no. 22.

⁵⁰ Cf. Huang Fu-ch’ing, pp. 257-258.

in Japan, and became a founding member of the Tongmenghui.⁵¹ Huang Xing charged him with organising a secret organisation, Zhangfu tuan (the League of Great Men), among members of the Tongmenghui attending military schools in Japan.⁵² Although his elder brother Li Shucheng was active in the revolutionary movement, there is no evidence that Li Hanjun participated. Nevertheless, he got to know some of his brother's comrades and heard about their ideas and activities.

On 10 October 1911, revolutionary troops belonging to the modern army in Wuchang rose in revolt. Li Shucheng, then in Beijing, rushed to Wuchang to serve as the Revolutionary Army Commander Huang Xing's chief of staff. The Revolutionary Army in Wuhan failed to hold out, but their action triggered risings in several other provinces. The revolutionary movement overthrew the Qing and led to the founding of the Republic in Nanjing in January 1912, when Sun Yat-sen was appointed Provisional President.

During this period, Li Hanjun may well have been in China, whither he probably returned after graduating from Gyosei Middle School. He turned up in Nanjing in the beginning of 1912. His name (given as Li Renjie) appeared on a list of famous figures of the new Republic, alongside those of Huang Xing (Minister of War), Tang Hualong, Li Shucheng and Lan Tianwei, who initiated the memorial meeting for Wu Luzhen.⁵³ For Li Hanjun, attending Wu Luzhen's memorial meeting had personal significance, since Wu had sponsored his study in Japan. It was also a chance for him to show his respect for those who had sacrificed their lives for the Revolution.

As a veteran revolutionary, Li Shucheng became chief military secretary to Sun Yat-sen and advisor to the War Ministry. This gave Li Hanjun a special tie to the new

⁵¹ In the early summer of 1905, some Chinese students in Europe, who had been Li Shucheng's comrades in Wuchang, wrote to Li Shucheng and Geng Bozhao, asking them to prepare for the advent of Sun Yat-sen and to organise the Tongmenghui in Japan. Li told Huang Xing about this. See Hubei sheng zhengxie (ed), *Xinhai shouyi huiyilu* [A Collection of Reminiscences of the First Uprising of the Revolution of 1911], Hubei renmin chubanshe, Wuhan, 1957, vol. 3, p. 228. Li Shucheng attended a meeting to prepare for the establishment of the Tongmenghui and joined it under the name Li Tang, given by Sun Yat-sen when Li met him in the autumn of 1902. Wu Yigu (ed), *Wuhan daxue xiaoshi, 1893-1993* [A History of Wuhan University, 1893-1993], Wuhan daxue chubanshe, Wuhan, 1993, p. 48.

⁵² Li Shucheng, 'Ganbu jianli biao' (Li Shucheng's Curriculum Vitae), 14 March 1950 (kept in the Ministry of Agriculture, P. R. China. Li was the minister of the Ministry between 1949-54).

⁵³ *Shi bao* [The Eastern Times], 27 February 1912; Mao Zhuqing (ed), *Huang Xing nianpu* [Chronological Life of Huang Xing], Hunan renmin chubanshe, Changsha, 1980, pp. 134-135. When the Wuchang Uprising broke out, Wu, then commander of the Sixth Division of Beiyang troops in Baoding, prepared to launch a mutiny in Northern China with some troops lead by Lan Tianwei, Zhang Shaozeng and Yan Xishan, and to attack Beijing and overthrow the Qing. Unfortunately, he was killed on 7 November 1911 by the captain of his guard, who had been bribed by an agent of Yuan Shikai. His murder sabotaged the military insurrection in the north, which might have prevented Yuan from usurping supreme state power later.

Republic and Sun's revolutionary democrats. During the first months of 1912, Li Hanjun was inspired by the new atmosphere in China and the measures taken by the new Government. But his hopes for a new China were dashed when Yuan Shikai, an ex-official of the Qing, replaced Sun as provisional president in March 1912.

In an attempt to check Yuan's abuse of power and to exert influence in the Republic, Sun Yat-sen and his followers transformed the Tongmenghui a democratic political party in 3 March 1912. Not long after that, Song Jiaoren, in alliance with several other small parties, established the Guomindang (Nationalist Party, KMT in short) on 25 August 1912, in an attempt to dominate Parliament and organise a KMT cabinet. Li Hanjun later wrote that he joined 'this Party' in Nanjing in 1912.⁵⁴ It is not certain which Party Li meant, – Tongmenghui or KMT. Since Li seems to have embarked for Japan in August, it was probably the reorganised Tongmenghui that he joined. However, as a member of the Tongmenghui he would automatically have become a member of the KMT.

Despite joining a political party, Li Hanjun did not seem inclined to take part in political activities at that time and wanted instead to continue his studies in Japan. In September 1912, he was admitted to the Eighth Higher School in Nagoya.⁵⁵ This school, established in 1908, was one of just a few public higher schools that had gained imperial universities recognition. Students wishing to enter it had to take a competitive examination.⁵⁶ Japanese higher schools served as preparatory courses for the imperial universities. Li Hanjun studied engineering and sciences.⁵⁷ At the time, most Chinese students in Japan studied teaching, liberal arts and military studies; only a handful pursued science and technology majors.⁵⁸ Li's choice was in compliance with the expectations of his father, who wanted him to study engineering to strengthen China.⁵⁹ The Chinese government encouraged Chinese in Japan to study engineering,

⁵⁴ *Hubei sheng gaizu weiyuanhui zhiyuan dengjibiao* [Registration Form of the Members of Hubei Province's Reorganising Commission], 10 September 1927, An entry filled in by Li Hanjun, kept in the KMT's Party History Archives in Taipei, Archive no. Han. 12993.2.

⁵⁵ Cf. The Eighth Higher School (comp), *Dai-hachi koutou gakkou ichiran* [A General Survey of the Eighth Higher School], Nagoya, 1912, p. 147; Kōain (ed), *Nihon ryugaku Chuka minkoku jin shirabe* [An Investigation List of the Students from the Republic of China Who Studied in Japan], no. 9, Tokyo, October 1940, p. 156.

⁵⁶ According to Keenleyside and Thomas's *History of Japanese Education and Present Educational System* (pp. 208-209), the pressure on middle school students when they took their final examination was immense: they had to be among the top four per cent to be accepted by a higher school with Imperial University recognition.

⁵⁷ Kōain (ed), no. 9, p. 156.

⁵⁸ Harrel, p. 69.

⁵⁹ Gan Pengyun, p. 468.

natural sciences and agriculture by providing them with tuition fees and living expenses. Li too received a scholarship.

The science curriculum also included humanities, such as psychology, law, economics, and foreign languages.⁶⁰ These courses widened Li Hanjun's knowledge and benefited him in his later career. He applied his knowledge of biology to social issues, and even wrote an article titled 'A History of the Establishment of Biology and Sociology'.⁶¹ He also used his knowledge of law to campaign on labour legislation in China.

At higher school, Li studied hard and achieved high grades. He was always within the top ten.⁶² According to Li Yanxi, a Hubeinese who also studied in Japan, Li Hanjun studied hard and was frequently appointed grade monitor.⁶³ On 27 June 1915, he graduated from the Eighth Higher School with good results.⁶⁴

Back in Japan, Li Hanjun still worried about the fate of his motherland. The Republic of China under Yuan Shikai quickly entered into crisis. In March 1913, the KMT had won a majority in Parliament and Song Jiaoren set out for Beijing to lead the new cabinet, but he was assassinated, probably by an agent of Yuan. To expand his forces and cope with the KMT, Yuan borrowed a huge sum from a consortium of foreign banks and dismissed the KMT military governors. He now controlled most of the central and local governments and most of the army. The Republic of China had ceased to exist in all but name. In 1913, Sun Yat-sen and Huang Xing launched the 'Second Revolution'. After its failure, they and many of their followers took refuge in Japan. Li Shucheng, after organising an abortive uprising in Nanjing, also fled to Japan.⁶⁵

In Tokyo, Sun Yat-sen started organising the Chinese Revolutionary Party in September 1913, with a more radical programme than the KMT's. However, many old

⁶⁰ Keenleyside and Thomas, p. 212.

⁶¹ Hanjun, 'Shengwuxue yu shehuixue de chengli shi' (A history of the establishment of biology and sociology), *Shengwuxue zazhi* [Journal of Biology], Wuchang Normal University, vol. 6, no. 1, December 1924, pp. 15-20.

⁶² *Dai-hachi koutou gakkou ichiran* (1913-15) recorded that Li Hanjun got high grades in examinations; Hanjun, 'Wo de kaoshi biye guan' (My view on graduating by examination), *Xingqi pinglun* [Sunday Review] (henceforth abbreviated to *XQPL*), no. 44, 4 April 1920, p. 4.

⁶³ Li Yanxi, 'Letter to Li Danyang', 20 December 1980.

⁶⁴ *Dai-Hachi Koutou Gakkou Ichiran* (1915).

⁶⁵ The date of their arrival in Japan is given in *Zhuancang dang'an* [Special Collection of Archives], no. 134000000 303A, kept in the Academia Historica in Taipei. In July 1913, Yuan Shikai issued a circular calling for the capture of Huang Xing, Chen Qimei, Huang Fu and Li Shucheng. See *Zhuancang dang'an*, no. 134000000287A.

comrades of the Tongmenghui, including Huang Xing and Li Shucheng, refused to join the Party because they were required to provide thumbprints as part of an oath of loyalty to Sun. In late June 1914, on the eve of the formal establishment of the Chinese Revolutionary Party, Huang Xing, Li Shucheng and several others left for the USA.⁶⁶ Li Hanjun also did not join the Chinese Revolutionary Party. Perhaps it was because he disapproved of Sun Yat-sen's personal dictatorship within the Party, or simply because he intended to concentrate for the time being on his studies.

On 1 July 1915, Li Hanjun enrolled at the Engineering School of Tokyo Imperial University.⁶⁷ This University was set up in 1877 as the first public institution offering a Western-style higher education. Its standards were said to be the highest in Japan and even Asia. Outstanding graduates from several public higher schools were normally eligible to enrol without taking the entrance examination. However, this was not the case when the number of candidates exceeded capacity.⁶⁸ Li Hanjun passed the entrance examinations despite the competition. At the time, it was rare for Chinese students to study engineering courses at this institution.

During his first years at university, Li Hanjun was keen to study science and technology. He disliked mechanical memorising. He later wrote, 'The subject I liked best was mathematics. Yet, in studying mathematics, I used to remember mere definitions, hypotheses, basic principles and major formulae. And from the above I derived sub-formulae by deductive inference when needed.'⁶⁹ This approach cost Li time in completing his school assignments. Worse still, it sometimes delayed his handing in examination papers and prevented him from obtaining better marks in certain subjects. Nevertheless, an aversion to ready-made formulae and a commitment to seeking out root issues formed into a habit. Li maintained this habit, formed in Japan, throughout his life, regardless of the consequences.

In Japan, many Chinese students often found themselves at a disadvantage. Lu Xun recalled how during his years of study at Sendai Medical School a group of his Japanese classmates sent a letter of protest when he received a pass grade (60 marks),

⁶⁶ Zhuancang dang'an, no. 134000000 303A (2).

⁶⁷ The date of Li's enrolment can be seen in his *Zai gaku shousho* [Li Renjie's Certificate of Studying at Tokyo Imperial University].

⁶⁸ At the time, only five imperial universities were officially approved and governed by the Specialised School Ordinance (until 1919). Cf. Huang Fu-ch'ing, pp. 258-259.

⁶⁹ Hanjun, 'Wo de kaoshi biye guan', *XQPL*, p. 4.

because they believed that it was impossible for a Chinese to achieve high marks.⁷⁰ Such discrimination was not unusual. Li Hanjun also experienced prejudice at the hands of some of his Japanese teachers. When the hostel in which he was lodging caught fire, burning his textbooks and notebooks, he failed to obtain high marks in the exams, which affected his grades in later years.⁷¹ However, despite the unfair treatment, he passed all his exams.⁷²

Unlike Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, whose interests were more political than academic during their short, irregular periods of study in Japan, Li Hanjun was apparently absorbed in his academic study, since there is no evidence that he published political articles while in Japan. But it does not mean that he did not participate in other extracurricular activities. For example, he joined a society of students from seven counties of the central part of Hubei (Yingzhong qishu tongxianghui) that served as a mutual-aid club, helping students who fell on hard times. According to Li Yanxi, Li Hanjun was polite but hardly sociable.⁷³ The Society he belonged to was not political.

Like other Chinese students in Japan, Li Hanjun knew that his study was for the good of China, so he kept abreast of the latest developments at home. Yet the situation in China disappointed him, and he believed that a revolutionary transformation was needed, as I will explain in the next chapter.

1.4 *The Baptism into New Thinking*

The development of industry and education resulted in the introduction of new Western thinking into Japan. Such ideas came as a shock, both to Japanese and to the Chinese in Japan. The Chinese were particularly enthusiastic about Rousseau, Darwin, Spencer, Montesquieu and Mill, whose works had been translated from Japanese into Chinese or introduced in Chinese journals published in Japan. Ideas like ‘Democracy’, ‘Freedom’, ‘Progress’, ‘Struggle for existence’ and ‘Survival of the fittest’ began to

⁷⁰ Lu Xun, ‘Tengye xiansheng’ (Mr Fujino), *Lu Xun quanji* [Collected Works of Lu Xun], Renminwenxue chubanshe, Beijing, 1973, vol. 2, p. 415.

⁷¹ Hanjun, ‘Wo de kaoshi biye guan’, *XQPL*, p. 4.

⁷² The average scores Li Hanjun obtained across three years were 69.8, 69.1 and 67.8; his graduation thesis got 65. See *Tokyo teikoku daigaku kouka daigaku doboku kougakka daisannenkyu sigyou seiseki* [The Examination Result Report of the 3rd Year Students of the Civil Engineering Department of the Engineering School, Tokyo Imperial University], July 1918.

⁷³ Li Yanxi, ‘letter to Li Danyang’, 20 December 1980.

dominate their thinking.⁷⁴ Many Chinese in Japan encountered socialist ideas at more or less the same time as they encountered notions such as democracy and liberty. This was because socialism, which originated in Europe, had already been introduced into Japan in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Japanese word for socialism, *shakaishugi*, first appeared in 1870. However, most Japanese intellectuals showed only a mild interest in socialism until the beginning of the twentieth century.

At the turn of the century, some important socialist societies and parties were established in Japan. In 1898, the Society for Studying Socialism was founded; in May 1901, a Social Democratic Party was organised, but banned the same day. In 1906, when Saionji Kinmochi became prime minister, he introduced a policy that allowed more freedom of propaganda and organisation and tolerated socialist organisations. The Socialist Party of Japan was established in that year. Soon socialist organisations sprang up in many places, and groups for reading, discussing and researching socialism formed in nearly all universities. These organisations published translations of socialist works and sold literature in English.⁷⁵ The divergent schools of socialist thought they disseminated ranged from Christian to democratic socialist and from Marxist to syndicalist and anarchist. The years between 1901 and 1906 have been described as the ‘heroic age of Japanese socialism’.⁷⁶

In 1904, when Li Hanjun arrived in Japan, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*, jointly translated by Kōtoku Shūsui and Sakai Toshihiko, was published in *Heimin shinbun* (Common People’s Newspaper). The following year a section of Engels’ *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* appeared in Japanese. Marxist works in English, including *Capital* and *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, were advertised in *Heimin shinbun*.

Socialist ideas also had an impact on Chinese in Japan. Some attempted to introduce socialist ideas to Chinese by translating socialist works from Japanese – even the Chinese word for socialism (*shehuizhuyi*) was derived from the Japanese *shakaishugi*. Such translations soon became a main channel for Chinese to understand socialism, including Marxism. In this respect, the journals of the students in Japan played an important role.

⁷⁴ Shiteng Huixiu, pp. 218-219.

⁷⁵ J. D. Crump, *The Origins of Socialist Thought in Japan*, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1983, pp. 142-43. Katayama Sen once remarked that socialist agitation was comparatively untrammelled in Japan during this time.

⁷⁶ M. Bernal, *Chinese Socialism to 1907*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 1976, p. 80.

At the beginning of 1901, the second issue of *Yishu huibian* (Translation Journal) published Ariga Nagao's extracts from *Contemporary Political History*, an early reference in Chinese to both Marx and Lassalle, identified as founders of the First International. In introducing this work, the translator defined socialism as follows: 'Deploring the inequalities between the rich and the poor in which the labourers exist under the oppressive system of the capitalists, certain Western scholars have evolved a theory advocating equal distribution of wealth and a guaranteed livelihood for all people. They call it socialism. By 'social' is meant planning for the whole society and not just for one individual or a single family.'⁷⁷ In the same journal, Ma Junwu wrote: 'Marx was a person who explained history in materialist terms and who declared that class struggle is the key to historical development.' Ma went on, all citizens with the desire for progress would welcome socialism.⁷⁸ In October 1903, the Editorial Society of *Zhejiang chao* (Zhejiang Tide) published a translation of *Shakaishugi shinzui* (The Quintessence of Socialism) written by the celebrated Japanese socialist Kōtoku Shūsui. In it, the author explained the main points of Marxist socialism and contended: 'Only by realising socialism can material civilisation be enriched, and truth, justice and humanity achieved.' He added that to carry out a socialist revolution was 'the order of science, demand of history and principle of evolution.' This appealed to Chinese intellectuals, who were taught to seek virtue and morality and to build a perfect society in line with *tian dao* (the way of heaven). In 1907, Chinese students in Japan who believed in anarchism published a partial translation of *The Communist Manifesto* and Chapter 2 of Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in their journal *Tianyi bao* (Heavenly Justice). Both works were retranslated from Japanese.

Between 1902 and 1907, a Clubhouse for the Chinese Students Studying Abroad in Kanda, Tokyo was used by Chinese students as a headquarters to compile, translate, publish and distribute journals and books and to hold parties and meetings.⁷⁹ While in Tokyo, Li Hanjun probably attended the Clubhouse and bought books and journals there.

Socialism also became a topic of interest for Chinese reformers and revolutionaries in Japan. Liang Qichao, a leader of the Reform Movement of 1898 who had taken refuge in Japan, wrote several articles about socialism. Liang saw that

⁷⁷ *Yishu huibian* [Translation journal], no. 2, 28 January 1901.

⁷⁸ *Yishu huibian*, no. 11, 15 February 1903.

⁷⁹ Shiteng Huixiu, pp. 172-174.

socialism as an ideology was beginning to replace free competition and private monopolies, and pointed out that ‘Marx is one of the foremost originators of socialism’. Despite reservations, Liang made a prediction: ‘It is clear that socialism will reach all parts of the world in the twentieth century.’⁸⁰

Some members of the Tongmenghui, such as Zhang Ji, Liu Shipai, Zhang Taiyan and Jing Meijiu, organised the Society for Lecturing on and Studying Socialism in Japan, and often attended lectures given by Japanese socialists.⁸¹ Tongmenghui’s organ *Min bao* (People’s journal) also championed socialism. Sun Yat-sen made public his Three Principles of the People (*Sanmin zhuyi*) in the preface to the inaugural issue of *Min bao* and declared: ‘The twentieth century is the age in which we must emphasize the Principle of People’s Livelihood’ (*Minsheng zhuyi*), and stressed that political and social revolution should be carried out simultaneously in China.⁸² According to Sun’s later explanation, the ‘Principle of People’s Livelihood’ was a synonym for socialism.⁸³

When Sun Yet-sen was in London, he read several books on socialist theory. L. Sharman conjectured that Sun had read works by Henry George and Karl Marx in libraries.⁸⁴ Actually, no records show what books and journals Sun Yet-sen read while in the UK, yet in an application form filled in by Sun Yet-sen on 13 March 1905 for admission to the Reading Room of the British Museum, he declared that the ‘purpose for which admission is required’ was ‘Economics & Co.’⁸⁵ Sun probably read Marx’s works in the British Museum or at least knew about Marx’s visits to the Museum Reading Room. Later, Sun talked about Marx and Marxism several times. Although he did not agree with some of Marx’s theories, such as class struggle, historical materialism and theory of surplus value, he admired Marx’s heavy load of research in

⁸⁰ *Xinmin congbao* [New Citizen Journal], no. 17, 10 February 1902; no. 18, 15 September 1902.

⁸¹ Cf. Zheng Kuangmin, ‘Shehui zhuyi jiangxihui yu Riben sixiang de guanxi’ (The relationship between the Society for Lecturing on and Studying Socialism and Japanese thought), *Shehui kexue yanjiu* [Social Science Research], no. 3 (2008), pp. 141-146.

⁸² Sun Zhongshan, ‘*Min bao* fakanci’ (Preface to the inaugural issue of *People’s Journal*), 20 October 1905, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji* [Collected Works of Sun Yat-sen], Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, vol. 1 (1981), pp. 288-289.

⁸³ Sun Wen, *Sanmin zhuyi* [Three Principles of the People], 1924, Zhongyang wenwu gongyingshe, Taipei, 1987, p. 215.

⁸⁴ L. Sharman, *Sun Yat-sen, His Life and Its Meaning: A Critical Biography*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1934, p. 58.

⁸⁵ This application form and several other documents relating to Sun Yat-sen are kept in the Central Archives of the British Museum.

the British Museum formulating his idea of ‘scientific socialism’.⁸⁶ What Sun mainly advocated was Henry George’s proposal for a single tax, which originated in Britain.

In May 1905, Sun, appearing as the head of the Chinese Revolutionary Socialist Party, visited the Secretariat of the Second International in Brussels. He told its leaders that although Chinese socialists intended to introduce European modes of production and use machines, they wanted to avoid the associated disadvantages, i.e., to build a new society in the future without any transition period. The medieval mode of production would pass directly to the stage of socialist production without passing through the misery of the exploitation of workers by capitalists. ‘In several years’, claimed Sun, ‘we will have realised our wildest dreams because all our guilds are socialist. Then when you are still straining to realise your plans, we shall be living in pure collectivism.’⁸⁷ Sun’s understanding of socialism, although limited and naïve, spurred his disciples on to study and propagate its doctrines.

Several important Tongmenghui cadres in Japan were very interested in socialism and often brought up the topic and discussed it. Zhu Zhixin, in the second issue of *Min bao*, published his ‘Biographical Sketch of German Revolutionaries’, in which he gave a brief account of Marx’s and Engels’ lives and their main works. Feng Ziyou’s ‘The Principle of People’s Livelihood and the Future of China’s Political Revolution’ in the fourth issue, started with a description of the world socialist movement and argued that it would be best to have socialist revolution simultaneously with political revolution. Feng also said that ‘all rights affecting the public interest should be nationalised.’⁸⁸ Liao Zhongkai translated parts of W. D. P. Bliss’s *Handbook of Socialism* and Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*. Song Jiaoren’s diary of 1906 recorded that when he and other Tongmenghui members met with Miyazaki Torazo and other Japanese, they often discussed socialism.⁸⁹ Miyazaki Torazo and his sons had good relations first with Li Shucheng and later with Li Hanjun.

Li Shucheng supported the Three Principles of the People. When he and Huang Xing travelled in the USA between 1914 and 1916, they studied the political, economic and social situation there. Because of Huang Xing’s bad health, Li Shucheng

⁸⁶ Sun Wen, *Sanmin zhuyi*, p. 224.

⁸⁷ An article reporting this discussion appeared in the socialist newspaper *Vooruit* in Flemish and its French equivalent *Le Peuple*. The English translation is quoted from Bernal, p. 66.

⁸⁸ Ziyou, ‘Minsheng zhuyi yu Zhongguo zhengzhi geming zhi qiantu’ (The Principle of People’s Livelihood and the future of China’s political revolution), *Min bao* [People’s journal], no. 4, 1905.

⁸⁹ Cf. Bernal, pp. 107-108.

conducted most of the investigations. He discovered a big gap between the rich and the poor and racial discrimination under capitalism. Li and Huang determined that after their return to China they would try to use state power to prevent similar unfairness and to get the government to set up kindergartens, schools, hospitals, and old people's homes.⁹⁰ Li Shucheng's experiences in the USA convinced him of the evils of capitalism and the need for an alternative. The ideal society he wanted to establish was *datong* (Great Harmony), advocated by Confucians in ancient times and by Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen in modern times, which bore a superficial resemblance to modern welfare socialism. It is likely that Li Shucheng told his younger brother of the social injustice he had witnessed in America and discussed with him how to build a just society. Sun Yat-sen and his followers' ideas that China needed social revolution and even socialism might have had an influence on Li Hanjun.

Li Hanjun's personal experience in Japan helped draw him towards socialist ideas. Although he studied civil engineering, he simultaneously maintained a strong interest in social sciences. For him, to build a modern country would require not just new technology but new ideas. Chinese enrolled at Japanese universities were directly exposed to Western theories. The variety of ideologies from liberalism to statism to socialism was discussed on and off campus. Western books in their original languages and in Japanese were available in the libraries and the bookshops; in Tokyo alone there were more than one thousand bookshops.⁹¹ Japanese university libraries had numerous books on socialism, including otherwise banned literature.⁹² Besides books on science and technology, Li read up on social issues and socialism.

Li Hanjun also paid close attention to Japanese democratic and socialist movements. Although Japanese socialism entered a 'winter period' after 1911, socialist ideas remained attractive to many. The First World War led to a boom in the Japanese economy and high inflation. The gap between the rich and the poor widened, and workers went on strike in an attempt to gain shorter working hours and higher pay. Public frustration with the Government mounted as *genro* (unelected elder statesmen)

⁹⁰ Li Shucheng, 'Xinhai qianhou Huang Keqiang xiansheng de geming huodong' (Mr Huang Keqiang's revolutionary activities around the Revolution of 1911), in *Xinhai geming huiyilu*, vol. 1 (1961), p. 214.

⁹¹ Huang Fu-ch'ing, p. 91.

⁹² Yu Shude, 'Jieshao Li Dazhao, Zhou Enlai dengren de yixie qingkuang' (About Li Dazhao and Zhou Enlai), in Wang Laidi (ed), p. 181.

and military men tried to influence the cabinet and gain control of society.⁹³ The clamour for ‘emancipation’, ‘transformation’, universal suffrage for men and recognition of the trade unions boosted the socialist movement. Li Hanjun witnessed these developments and was deeply influenced by them.

In a later article, Li Hanjun attributed Japan’s advanced society to the development of modern industry and new global trends. It also owed much to the work of progressive intellectuals.⁹⁴ Li knew some of these ‘progressive intellectuals’ personally, especially those who advocated the abolition of class difference and the recognition of labour organisations.⁹⁵ Who these Japanese were is not clear. However, Miyazaki Ryūsuke, one of Li’s schoolmates at Tokyo Imperial University, was among them.⁹⁶ Miyazaki Ryūsuke once wrote: ‘Li Renjie and I had been intimate friends since First Higher School in Japan. He was very interested in Japan’s new movements and understood them well.’⁹⁷ Miyazaki Ryūsuke entered higher school in 1913, at a time when he and his father Miyazaki Torazo received many Chinese revolutionaries who had fled to Japan after the ‘Second Revolution’. He probably got to know Li Hanjun through Li Shucheng. After Miyazaki Ryūsuke’s admission to Tokyo Imperial University in 1916, the friendship between the two young men developed. Perhaps through him Li Hanjun met other progressive Japanese intellectuals, including socialists.

When news of the October Revolution of 1917 reached Japan, it was interpreted as a ‘victory for popular democratic forces over bureaucratic government’.⁹⁸ Not long afterwards, socialist and Communist movements advanced rapidly in many parts of the world, including Japan. This had a big impact on Li Hanjun.

⁹³ Ushisaburo Kobayashi, *The Basic Industries and Social History of Japan, 1914-1918*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1930, p. 261.

⁹⁴ Hanjun, ‘Hunpu de shehuizhuyizhe di tebie de laodong yundong yijian’ (Special views on the labour movements held by a vague socialist), *XQPL*, no. 50, 16 May 1920, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Xianjin (Li Hanjun’s pen name, which means ‘advanced’), ‘Ribei de xin yundong’ (New movements in Japan), *XQPL*, no. 11, 17 August 1919, p. 4. Li also mentioned this in some other articles.

⁹⁶ Miyazaki Ryūsuke (1892-1971) was a son of Miyazaki Torazou, who had followed Sun Yat-sen for many years and became a Japanese member of the Tongmenghui. As a student at Tokyo Imperial University, Miyazaki Ryūsuke might have known Li Hanjun through his father before he entered the University from the First High School in 1916.

⁹⁷ Miyazaki Ryūsuke, ‘Shisō no mingoku kara’ (From the Republic [of China] in new dress), *Kaihou* [Emancipation], vol. 1, no. 7, December 1919. Its Chinese translation (by Feng Aizhu) is in *Shanghai gemingshi ziliao yu yanjiu* [Materials and Studies on Shanghai Revolutionary History] (henceforth abbreviated to *SGZY*), no. 3, September, 2003, p. 574.

⁹⁸ Quoted from G. L. Bernstein, *Japanese Marxist, A Portrait of Kawakami Hajime, 1879-1946*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1976, p. 98.

In May 1918, the Japanese Government, alleging a ‘threat’ from Russia, signed a Joint Military Defence Pact with China. The Pact stipulated that Japanese troops could enter and maintain garrisons in Manchuria and Mongolia; that Japanese officers could command and train Chinese troops; and that Chinese should appoint Japanese as political, financial and military advisors. This pact kindled the flames of the anti-Japanese movement. Many Chinese in Japan quit their studies and returned to China in protest.⁹⁹ According to Shao Lizi, Li Hanjun was among those who returned before the summer of 1918.¹⁰⁰ Yet Li did not actually return at this time, although he too was indignant about the Japanese actions.

Li Hanjun graduated from Tokyo University on 19 July 1918.¹⁰¹ Again unlike other Chinese students, he remained in Japan for several months after graduating. Why, and what did he do in this period? Several days after his graduation, ‘Rice Riots’ broke out all over Japan and a wave of strikes followed. The Japanese Government tried suppression but was forced to make concessions. As a result, the ‘winter period’ for socialists in Japan ended. A large number of trade unions and radical organisations emerged or regrouped, and many new newspapers and magazines started up.¹⁰² The discussion about socialism and Marxism reignited. The socialist movement in Japan reached a new high.

In December 1918, just before Li Hanjun left for China, Miyazaki Ryūsuke joined Akamatsu Katsumaro, Ishiwatai Haluwo and Sano Manabu of Tokyo University in founding *Shinjin kai* (New Human Society), which was active in the movement for the emancipation of the proletariat and was seen as ‘a centre for training leaders of the Japanese labour movement’.¹⁰³ It produced several journals, including *Demokurasi* (Democracy), *Senku* (La Pioniro [in Esperanto], i.e. The Pioneer) and *Kaihou*

⁹⁹ Cf. Xue Xiantian et al. (eds), *Zhong Su guojia guanxishi ziliao huibian, 1917-1924* [Selected Materials on the History of Sino-Soviet State Relations], Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1993, pp. 34-46.

¹⁰⁰ Shao Lizi, ‘Dang chengli qianhou de yixie qingkuang’ (Some circumstances around the time of the establishment of the CCP), in ‘*Yida’ qianhou: Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui ziliao xuanbian* [The Period of the Founding of the CCP: Selected Source Materials on the Period of the First National Congress of the CCP] (henceforth *YDQH*), vol. 2, Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1980, p. 61.

¹⁰¹ See Li Renjie’s score report (kept in Tokyo University), and *Zai gaku shousho and Tōdai doboku dōsōkai kaiin meibo* [Register of members of the Alumni Association of the Civil Engineering Department, Tokyo University], Tokyo, 1981-1982.

¹⁰² Cf. R. Sims, *Japanese Political History since the Meiji Renovation, 1868-2000*, Hurst & Co., London, 2001, p. 124.

¹⁰³ Huang Zijin, *Jiye Zuozao dui jindai Zhongguo de renshi yu pingjia* [Yoshino Sakuzo’s Understanding and Appraisal of Modern China], Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi suo, Taipei, 1995, p. 54.

(Emancipation). Not long before the formation of *Shinjin kai*, Yoshino Sakuzuo and other scholars at Tokyo Imperial University and other schools, including Fukuda Tokuzō and Aso Hisashi, organised *Reimei kai* (Dawn Society).

The founders of *Shinjin kai* were Professor Yoshino's followers. Tokyo Imperial University thus became a stronghold of democratic and socialist movements. Li Hanjun was familiar with these left-wing Japanese societies at Tokyo Imperial University and knew several prominent Japanese socialists outside the University, probably including Sakai Toshihiko, Takatsu Masamichi and Yamazaki Kesaya.¹⁰⁴ Sakai was a veteran Marxist who translated the *Communist Manifesto* into Japanese. Takatsu was a founder member of Gyomin kai (the Society of the People of the Dawn) at Wasada University. Yamazaki was another veteran socialist who later became editor-in-chief of *Shakaishugi kenkyo* (Study of Socialism), which started up in April 1919. Li's intimacy with these people is evidence of his socialist inclinations.

It has been claimed that Li Hanjun while at University attended lectures by the Japanese economist Kawakami Hajime and had close personal contacts with him; and that it was under Kawakami's influence that he adopted Marxism.¹⁰⁵ However, there are no grounds for this assertion. Kawakami was at Kyoto Imperial University, not at Tokyo Imperial University; moreover, there is no trace of Marxist influences in Kawakami's works before late 1918. Nevertheless, Li might have read some works by Kawakami, such as *Binbō monogatari* (Tale of Poverty), which first appeared in 1916 and had an enormous impact on the younger generation. However, it was not Marxist, since Kawakami approached poverty from a moralist and humanist viewpoint. Kawakami started publishing his own private journal *Shakai mondai kenkyu* (Research in Social Problems) in January 1919, marking the start of his serious study of Marxism.¹⁰⁶ We cannot rule out the possibility that Li read Marxist works by other authors and developed an interest in Marxist theory while in Japan, but it is impossible

¹⁰⁴ In a report by the head of Japanese Police to the Asian Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Office (23 April 1921), Li Hanjun was said, with Shi Cuntong, to be in close contact with Sakai Toshihiko, Takatsu Masamichi and Yamazaki Kesaya. 'Zhonggong chuangli shiqi Shi Cuntong zai Riben de dang'an ziliao' (Archival materials on Shi Cuntong in Japan during the period of the establishment of the CCP), Ishikawa Yoshihiro (ed), Liu Chuanzeng (transl), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [Materials for the Study of the CCP History], no. 10, October 1996, p. 3. Since Li was not in Japan in 1921, it is possible that Shi was introduced to these Japanese socialists by Li Hanjun who had known them before.

¹⁰⁵ Luo Zhongquan, *Zhonggong Yida daibiao – Li Hanjun*, p. 7; Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, p. 231.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Bernstein, *Japanese Marxist, A Portrait of Kawakami Hajime*.

to assert categorically that Li Hanjun embraced Marxism at the time.¹⁰⁷ As we shall see, he continued to demonstrate an interest in other non-Marxist forms of socialism even after his return to China.

* * * * *

In this chapter, I have concentrated on the familial, social, moral and educational environments in which Li Hanjun grew up. His familial nurturing, Li Shucheng's moral inspiration, Chu culture and Hubei's relatively advanced educational system all contributed to the formation of his personality and orientation. As I show in the following chapters, his deep concern for China, his attachment to Taoist ideas of freedom, and his sceptical and rebellious spirit all bore the mark of his environment and upbringing.

Li Hanjun was the only founding member of the CCP to have received a long-term education abroad. The knowledge he acquired in Japan, especially of foreign languages and the scientific mode of thinking, benefited him greatly in his later career. His experience in Japan broadened his horizons and provided him with an international perspective that inclined him towards open-mindedness and pluralism. But his long stay abroad also had its disadvantages: Li was not entirely familiar with what went on in China during his absence, and his Chinese writing was not as graceful as that of many intellectuals of his generation who had received a better foundation in classical learning. However, his knowledge of socialist thought and of the Japanese socialist movement became one of his main gains from his time in Japan, and a strength later.

In the winter of 1918, Li Hanjun left Japan for China. Having graduated from a top Japanese university, he had considerable potential. However, he had no intention of using it to pursue personal gain and fame: he had no interest in career advancement in the usual sense. His aspiration was to build China with the knowledge and skills he had learned abroad and to transform it with the new ideas to which he had been exposed.

¹⁰⁷ Tian Ziyu gives a vague description of Li's conversion to Marxism. However, in his *Li Hanjun*, he writes: 'Li Hanjun gave up mathematics he had liked most, and chose Marxism' (p. 5).

2 Seeking Ways to Reconstruct China

For Li Hanjun, the period between the end of 1918 and early 1920 was crucial. Civil wars, foreign encroachment, corrupt politics and a ruined economy drove him to seek ways to reconstruct China. The New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement provided him with new ideas, new strength, and the opportunity to try to participate in bringing about such a transformation.

This chapter looks at Li Hanjun's intellectual development by examining his activities and analysing articles he wrote during this period. It particularly concentrates on an early article titled 'Transformation should be complete'. This article covers a wide range of subjects and reflects Li's views on several philosophical, political and social issues. It clearly reveals his philosophical inclination and political orientation, including his personal traits and predispositions. These help explain why Li became a Communist.

2.1 'The Darkest Hours of Chaos' in China

Li Hanjun returned to China at the end of 1918, when the First World War (in which China marginally participated) came to an end. The victory of the Allies, regarded as the triumph of universal justice (*gongli*) over naked power (*qiangquan*) and of democracy over autocracy, delighted many Chinese. However, China's domestic situation continued to deteriorate in the late 1910s.

In 1915 Yuan Shikai restored the monarchy by enthroning himself as a new emperor, which aroused vehement protests and risings across China. Not long after this short-lived autocratic monarchy, Yuan died in 1916. With the 'strong man's dictatorship ended, China was torn apart by the Beiyang warlords, so called because most had been disciples of Yuan when he was Beiyang Minister in the late Qing. The Prime Minister, Duan Qirui, formerly a close associate of Yuan, challenged President Li Yuanhong's authority. Under the guise of mediating their dispute, General Zhang Xun, a monarchist, went to Beijing with his troops and campaigned to restore the Qing imperial system. After defeating this plan for a monarchist restoration, Duan

monopolised the Beijing regime and decided to engineer the formation of a Provisional National Assembly dominated by his own supporters. On the pretext of joining the First World War, Duan acquired large loans from Japan. In return, Japan grabbed further special rights and concessions in China. In 1918, the Duan Government signed a Joint Military Defence Pact that allowed Japanese troops to enter China's northern territory and Japanese advisors to control China militarily, financially and politically.

Sun Yat-sen, objecting to Duan's acts and to the dissolution of the 'old' Parliament, decided to resort to force to save the Republic's institutions. In July 1917, he and more than one hundred Parliamentary representatives left Shanghai with a naval escort for Guangzhou, where Sun convened a 'special parliament' and established a rival military government, a federation of six of the southern provinces. The so-called Movement to Protect the Constitution (*hufa*) launched a military campaign against the Beiyang warlords and the Beijing Government under Duan. A civil war ensued between south and north.

Further conflicts among warlords of the Zhi (Hebei), Wan (Anhui), Feng (Liaoning) cliques and other minor warlords followed. This bogged China down in civil strife and anarchy. The 'central government' in Beijing existed in name only. Local military governors' actions hastened the breakdown of authority. The economy was on the brink of ruin. Ordinary Chinese people's lives were even worse and less safe than under the Manchus and Yuan Shikai.

As a founder of the Republic, Li Shucheng remarked that since 1916 a 'host of fierce and ambitious warlords have contended for supremacy, throwing the country into turmoil and the people into misery.'¹ This period, in the words of the British Consul, M. Hewlett, was 'the darkest hours of chaos' in China.² Several other foreigners observed signs of unrest among the Chinese people. A French missionary, A. Bonnard, wrote that Chinese peasants became 'desperate' and 'ready to deliver themselves up to any party which promises them a better fate'; and soldiers felt 'discontent' and 'would easily be swept into any revolutionary movement'; some students, 'angered by the national disorder', shouted: 'China is being done to death!'³ Under such circumstances, according to G. E. Sokolsky, 'the most drastic instrument

¹ 'Li Shucheng's postscript to a letter by Huang Xing, 12 July 1922', *Jindaishi ziliao* [Historical Materials on Modern History], no. 3, 1983, p. 52.

² R. Pelissier, *The Awakening of China, 1793-1949*, edited and translated by M. Kieffer, Secker & Warburg, London, 1967, p. 262.

³ A. Bounard, *In China, 1920-1921*, George Ruoutledge & Sons, London, 1926, p. 126, p. 280.

of change inside China is revolution, which cannot be avoided'; that made China 'the tinder box of Asia'.⁴

Several Chinese intellectuals who later became Communists voiced their rancour. Chen Duxiu wrote: 'Darkness hems us in from all sides in these days of international powers, political horrors, the crime of private wealth, the darkness of war, the inequality of classes.'⁵ The young Mao Zedong expressed: 'At present, the condition of our nation is terrible, the bitterness of human existence is intolerable, and society is in its darkest state.'⁶ The historian Ip Hung-Yok observed that 'the radicals' bitter antipathy for the *status quo* ... facilitated their receptivity to the Bolshevik message.'⁷ The domestic political, economic and social crises as well as the foreign menace encouraged the development of radical sentiments, and even of revolutionary ideas.

Given this situation, Li Hanjun was unable to put his professional talents to much use. The most pressing matter was not to build buildings but to build a new China. So instead of working as a civil engineer, he sought new ideas and ways to transform China and ensure its survival. As he later admitted, the environmental crisis caused him and many other Chinese intellectuals to embark upon a revolutionary career.

The period following the Revolution of 1911 was characterised by an ideological and moral vacuum in which the old social order began to waver and the accepted system of values was undermined. As J. Hyppolite pointed out, the transitions that precede revolutions are 'periods of spiritual anguish'.⁸ In this critical period, Chinese intellectuals were encouraged to reflect on their status and destiny and to criticise social conditions. As a result, China became intellectually creative and diverse between the late 1910s and the early 1920s.

2.2 Throwing Himself into the 'Chinese Enlightenment'

⁴ G. E. Sokolsky, *The Tinder Box of Asia*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1933, pp. 3-4. Sokolsky is a Polish Jew of American citizen, who arrived in China in 1918 as a correspondent for several journals in English and Russian published there.

⁵ Chen Duxiu, 'Women yinggai zenyang?' (What should we do?), *Xin qingnian* [New Youth] (henceforth *XQN*), vol. 6, no. 4, 15 April 1919.

⁶ Mao Zedong, 'Minzhong de da lianhe' (The great union of the masses), 1919, in *Mo Takuto shu* [Collected Writings of Mao Zedong], Hokubosha, Tokyo, 1972, vol. 1, p. 57.

⁷ Ip Hung-Yok, 'The Origins of Chinese Communism – A New Interpretation', *Modern China*, no. 1, January 1994, p. 35.

⁸ Quoted from A. Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual*, O. Wojtasiewicz (transl), Introduction by E. Fromm, McGraw-Hill Book, New York, 1970, p. 6.

Given that there had been two attempts to restore the monarchy, some intellectuals concluded that if the thinking of the Chinese people and its politicians remained unchanged, the democratic revolution would not be consolidated. In 1915, Chen Duxiu founded a monthly magazine, *Qingnian* (La Jeunesse, Youth), later *Xin qingnian* (New Youth). Its aim was 'to introduce Western theories and to transform society'.⁹ Its publication marked the beginning of the New Culture Movement, whose slogans were 'democracy and science'. Chen and his followers believed that China's old culture, especially Confucianism, hindered China's progress, and that a 'Chinese Enlightenment' was needed to open up the minds of Chinese people. Hu Shi described the movement as 'the Chinese Renaissance'.¹⁰ Discussions and conflicts of opinion opened up, and its supporters strove to reconstruct Chinese thinking.

Li Hanjun welcomed this Chinese 'Enlightenment' and read *Xin qingnian*, *Xin chao* (New Tide), *Xin Shenghuo* (New Life) and other progressive journals with great interest. For him, Chen Duxiu's ideas were hardly new. As early as 1903, his brother Li Shucheng had praised the European ideas of freedom and democracy in 'Students' Struggle' and advocated promoting the theories of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Darwin and Spencer to eliminate conservative thinking and worship of the classics.¹¹ In Japan, democracy, freedom and liberation were the themes of several left-wing Japanese and Chinese journals that Li Hanjun liked to read. Having gone through the baptism of the 'Enlightenment' in Japan, he was fully aware the significance of the Enlightenment in China.

The New Culture Movement started with a revolution in literature and thought moved on to a new stage in 1919, after the Versailles Peace Conference. At this Conference, China failed to get Japan's Twenty-one Demands of 1915 annulled and was forced to give Japan the former German concessions in Shandong. As a result, many Chinese became disillusioned with the Western democracies. On 4 May 1919, around three thousand university students in Beijing marched through the streets and demonstrated against pro-Japanese officials and the decision taken at the Versailles

⁹ Duxiu, 'Da Kong Zhaoming' (Reply to Kong Zhaoming), 1 December 1916, in *Chen Duxiu wenzhang xuanbian* [Selected Writings of Chen Duxiu], Sanlian, Beijing, 1984, vol. 1, p. 165.

¹⁰ Hu Shi later published a book entitled *The Chinese Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934). *Xin chao* [New Tide], a journal under the sponsorship of Hu and others, also had a French title 'Renaissance'.

¹¹ *Hubei Xueshengjie*, no. 2, February 1903.

Peace Conference in favour of Japan. Soon, a wave of demonstrations, strikes and boycotts of Japanese goods swept the country.

The May Fourth Incident evoked the most energetic response in Shanghai, where journalists and educators took the lead. On May 11, the Shanghai Students Union was established. Strikes by shopkeepers and workers followed, starting on June 5. These strikes, in the view of Chow Tse-tsung, marked a new turn in the May Fourth Movement – ‘a thoroughgoing mass movement aimed at the transformation of the Chinese economy and society.’¹² During the May Fourth period, several nation-wide associations, including the National Students’ Union, the Federation of National Organisations of China, the All-China Industrial Federation and the China Trade Union, were established in Shanghai. Most had their headquarters in the French Concession. Shanghai thus became a centre of the patriotic movement.

Shanghai was China’s largest city and its industrial, financial and commercial centre. It had several foreign settlements. The French Concession was located south of the International Settlement, and beyond the control of the Chinese authorities. Chinese residents enjoyed more freedom than in the International Settlement, which was controlled by the British, so the French Concession was an ideal shelter for revolutionaries and other dissenting elements.¹³

After his return from Japan, Li Hanjun settled in his brother’s house in the French Concession. Li Shucheng was then commanding a troop to fight against the Northern warlords, and he was also a member of the Military Commission of the Military Government established by Sun Yat-sen in Guangzhou. He was often not at his home in Shanghai, and left the house for Li Hanjun and other family members to use – first on Yuyang Lane on Avenue Joffre and later on Sanyi Lane on Bai’er Road (Rue Eugene Bard).¹⁴

It is not clear whether Li Hanjun directly took part in the May Fourth demonstrations in Shanghai, but there is evidence that he kept abreast of the Movement. According to a British intelligence report of October 1919, Li (written as

¹² Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, p. 152.

¹³ The British authorities in Shanghai reported on 31 December 1921 that Chen Duxiu ‘seemed to prefer the French Settlement to the International Settlement, possibly in the mistaken belief that greater liberty is enjoyed under the administration of a republican government than would be possible in a Settlement where the British in control.’ FO 228/3291.

¹⁴ Sanyi Lane and Yuyang Lane were very close, and Bai’er Road was northeast of the sports club on Yuyang Lane. Cf. Zhou Zhenhe (com), *Shanghai lishi ditu ji* [Collected Maps of the Old Shanghai], Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 1999, pp. 101-102.

Lee Jen Jehy) was ‘rather a mysterious person, as he is on friendly terms with many different parties.’¹⁵ There is good evidence that Li established contact with the National Students’ Union and the Shanghai Students’ Union and once invited student leaders to his home in September 1919.¹⁶

Not far from Li’s house, on Rue Molière, was Sun Yat-sen’s home. Deprived of his authority as Grand Marshal in Guangzhou by Southern warlords such as Tang Jiyao and Lu Rongting, Sun announced his withdrawal from active participation in the Guangzhou regime in May 1918 and moved to Shanghai’s French concession on June 26.¹⁷ Sun pursued a life of ‘studious retreat’ from 1918 to 1920. However, ‘a frequent visitor to Sun Yat-sen’, according to British intelligence, was Li Renjie (i.e. Li Hanjun), whose ‘principal friend seems to be Sun Yat-sen.’¹⁸

Li Hanjun’s access to Sun was probably due to the relationship his brother Li Shucheng had established within the Tongmenghui and in the new Republic, as well as Li Hanjun’s membership of Sun’s party in 1912. At least one of Li Hanjun’s talks with Sun Yat-sen was recorded – by Miyazaki Ryūsuke, Li’s close friend. On 23 September 1919, Li accompanied Miyazaki to Sun’s house on Rue Molière. Li asked Sun about the Chinese revolution: ‘In your opinion, has the Chinese revolution succeeded or not?’ Sun replied: ‘Our previous policy was totally wrong.’ He also pointed out: ‘The most pressing matter of the moment is to enlighten people’s minds.’¹⁹ Li appreciated the progress Sun had made through introspection and self-examination, and was willing to join him in the struggle to change China.

Many of Sun’s adherents followed him to Shanghai and settled in the French concession; some played an important role in the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai.²⁰ Li Hanjun got to know several prominent Nationalists such as Dai Jitao,

¹⁵ FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157, 7 April 1920.

¹⁶ Miyazaki Ryūsuke’s ‘Shisō no mingoku kara’ (*SGZY*, p. 576) records that when he was in Shanghai, Li Hanjun called Mr Liu of the National Students’ Union, Mr Sun and Mr Cheng of the Shanghai Students’ Union to his home for a talk. This indicates that Li knew them before this meeting. The ‘Mr Liu’ in Miyazaki Ryūsuke’s article might be Liu Zhenqun, then working for the National Students’ Union. ‘Mr Sun’ was probably Sun Jingya, assigned by the Chinese Revolutionary Party to work in student circles. He was the leader of the Chinese Students’ Association for Nation Salvation established in 1917 and controlled the Shanghai Students’ Union from behind the scenes. ‘Mr Cheng’ was Cheng Tianfang, a key leader of both the Shanghai Students’ Union and the National Students’ Union.

¹⁷ *Shanghai Municipal Police Daily Report*, 27 June 1918.

¹⁸ FO 405/233, Enclosure 1 in no. 107, 26 September, 1921; FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157.

¹⁹ This conversation was recorded by Miyazaki Ryūsuke in his ‘Shisō no min-goku kara’, *SGZY*, p. 575.

²⁰ Cf. Liu Yongming, *Guomindangren yu Wusi yundong* [The KMTers and the May Fourth Movement], Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1990.

Zhu Zhixin, Shao Lizi and Xu Zonghan.²¹ A Sun follower and a celebrated Hubei revolutionary, Zhan Dabei (after the setback in the *hufa* struggle in Guangdong) was living on Yuyang Lane in the French Concession, near Li's house.²² Li and he became close friends. In the spring of 1919, another Hubei revolutionary, Dong Biwu, arrived in Shanghai to appeal to Sun Yat-sen and the media there for support on behalf of the Army for Pacifying the West of Hubei Province (*E-xi jingguo jun*).²³ He and Zhang Guo'en were later elected as the representatives of Hubei's Shanhou Gonghui, a council for dealing with problems arising from the war in Hubei, and so lived temporarily in Shanghai.²⁴ The Council was located in Avenue Joffre, close to the homes of Li Hanjun and Zhan Dabei. As Zhan Dabei's former comrades-in-arms in the Revolution of 1911 in Wuhan, Dong and Zhang soon got to know Li Hanjun. Having common aspirations and interests, these four Hubeinese frequently met together over the spring and summer of 1919.

According to Dong Biwu, Li Hanjun, Zhan Dabei, Zhang Guo'en and Dong himself met almost daily; they read together and exchanged views. Dong remembered that they mainly read *Xin qingnian* and *Xinchao* and magazines Li had brought from Japan, such as *Reimei* (Dawn), *Kaizō* (Reconstruction) and *Shinchou* (New Tide).²⁵

²¹ Xu was Huang Xing's wife. Li's family maintained a close relationship with Huang's family even after Huang's death. The children of the two families often played and studied together. Xue Wenshu, 'Wo dui Hanjun de diandi huiyi' (My fragmentary memories of Hanjun). It is Xue's oral accounts, interviewed by Li Shengfang and Li Danyang between 1980 and 1983, and was first published in *Changchun wenshi ziliao* [Selected Materials on Chuangchun's Culture and History], no. 5, 1988 and later in *Hubei wenshi ziliao* [Selected Materials on Hubei's Culture and History], no. 4, 1989.

²² Zhan Dabei (1887-1927) was from Hubei's Qichun County. He began advocating revolutionary ideas when a student at secondary school. In 1910, he joined the Literary Society (Wenxue she), a revolutionary organisation under Tongmenghui control, and became editor-in-chief of *Dajiang bao* (Yangtze Daily). He was arrested for advocating revolution in the paper. When the Wuchang Uprising took place, he headed the Hankou Branch of the Revolutionary Military Government. In 1913, he was elected to the Assembly and joined the Chinese Revolutionary Party in Japan in the following year. Later he was sent to China to raise a force against Yuan Shikai. In 1917, he joined Sun Yat-sen in the *hufa* struggle. Cf. H. L. Boorman and R. C. Howard (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, Columbia University Press, New York & London, 1967, vol. 1, pp. 9-11.

²³ Dong Biwu (1886-1975) was born in Huang'an county, Hubei. At the age of 17, he became a *xiuca*. He took part in the Wuchang Uprising and then joined the Tongmenghui and was twice arrested. He joined the Chinese Revolutionary Party in Japan in 1914 and studied Law there. In 1917, he returned to China and took part in *hufa* struggle in western Hubei. He later became a vice-president of the People's Republic of China.

²⁴ Zhang Guo'en (1880-1940) was also born in Huang'an. He joined anti-Qing revolutionary organisations – Rizhihui and Gongjinhui (The Progressive Association) – in the 1900s and took part in the Wuchang Uprising. After the failure of the Second Revolution, he fled to Japan, where he joined the Chinese Revolutionary Party in 1914.

²⁵ Dong Biwu, 'Yi youren Zhan Dabei' (In memory of my friend Zhan Dabei), written in 1928, *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* [The CCP Historical Materials], no. 7, 1983, p. 5. There was no Japanese journal then with the title *Reimei*. This probably refers to *Reimei kai kou-en syuu* and *Reimei roku*, publications of the Society of Dawn. *Shinchou* probably referred to *Shin shichō* (New Trend of Thought),

Inspired by the new ideas in these progressive journals, Dong concludes that they realised that '[t]here was something wrong with modern society'. He added: 'Traditional concepts, morals and methods should be changed. But as to the manner of change and the nature of the aims to be achieved, we were not so sure.'²⁶ They were disappointed with the repeated failure of struggles led by Sun Yat-sen and believed that Sun's method of relying on warlords was bound to fail. They inclined towards a more radical and effective approach and sought a new theory and new force capable of leading the revolution to victory.²⁷

During the May Fourth period, various currents of thought and different 'isms' sprang up. Socialism had a strong appeal. Socialist ideas introduced to China included anarchism, communism, syndicalism, guild socialism and cooperativism. Chinese radicals welcomed these new ideas and tried to understand them, but they were confused. 'It was Li Hanjun,' wrote Dong Biwu, 'who discovered the solution to the puzzle and pointed out that it's better to learn from the Russians and put Marxism into practice.' Dong recalled that Li had told Dong and others about the Russian Revolution, introduced them to the basic principles of Marxism and recommended Marxist works to them. Because of this, Dong later continued to regard Li as his 'teacher of Marxism', although Li was younger than Dong and the other two.²⁸

Dong's recollections indicate that Li Hanjun started reading Marxist works around the spring and summer of 1919, and by the time Dong left Shanghai in August of the same year Li had already arrived at the conclusion that Marxism was the best theory on offer.²⁹ Through reading and discussion, Li and his Hubei friends' conviction grew that Bolshevik Revolution guided by Marxism was an example of a successful movement of the sort that might resolve China's crisis. They therefore believed that

founded by Akutagawa Ryunosuke and some other students of Tokyo University in 1916. The Japanese left-wing journals Li recommended to them perhaps included organs of the New Human Society like *Demokulasi* (Democracy) and *Senku* (la Pioniro). Cf. Taisho News jiten hensan Inkai (ed), *Taisho news jiten* [A Dictionary of News during the Taisho Years], vol. 4 (1919-20), Mainichi komyunikeshonzu, Tokyo, 1987.

²⁶ Dong Biwu, *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, p. 5.

²⁷ 'Dong Biwu tan Zhongguo gongchandang diyici quanguo daibiao dahui he Hubei gongchanzhuyi xiaozu' (Dong Biwu's talk about the first congress of the CCP and the Hubei Communist Group), 4 August 1971, interviewed and edited by Chang Jianguo, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 369; Dong Biwu, *Zhan Dabei xiansheng shilüe* [A Biographical Sketch of Mr Zhan Dabei], written in 1928 (a pamphlet kept in Hubei Provincial Museum), p. 13; 'Pan Yiru zizhuan' (An autobiography by Pan Yiru), in *Xinhai shouyi huiyilu*, vol. 3, 1958, p. 49.

²⁸ 'Dong Biwu tan', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 369-370.

²⁹ 'Tian Haiyan ji Dong lao tanhua' (Dong Biwu's talk), recorded by Tian Haiyan in 1961 (unpublished, provided by Tian Haiyan's son, Tian Ziyu).

the top priority was to disseminate socialist principles. They decided to start by creating journals and schools.

In the late summer of 1919, at about the same time as Dong Biwu and Zhang Guo'en returned to Wuhan to try to put their plan into effect, the first batch of Li Hanjun's articles and translations appeared in progressive journals in Shanghai. Zhan Dabei worked with him and someone known as Yangzhi on translating articles by Japanese socialists, including 'From Sham Democracy to True Democracy' by Fukuda Tokuzō, 'Trends in World Thought' by Yamakawa Kikue, and 'The Ethics of Directing the Labour Movement' by Sano Manabu.³⁰ These translations were published in *Juewu* (Awakening), a supplement to *Minguo ribao* (The Republican Daily News). In addition to *Juewu* and *Minguo ribao*, Li Hanjun also contributed to *Xingqi pinglun* (Sunday Review) and *Jianshe* (Construction). The above journals were all founded by Sun Yat-sen's close associates and were vehicles for the views of the Chinese Revolutionary Party, which reorganised in October 1919 as the Chinese Nationalist Party (still KMT in short).

For the KMT, the years 1918 to 1920 were a time of ideological strengthening. Sun Yat-sen was engaged in formulating his political philosophy. He intended to crystallise his theoretical programme for the Republic of China. Aware of the importance of journals in guiding the thinking of his party members and in educating the Chinese people, he decided to create new organs in order 'to add momentum to the New Culture Movement and to infuse the people with new ideas.'³¹ Under Sun's tutelage and with his Party's financial support, *Xingqi pinglun* was founded on 8 June 1919; *Jianshe* appeared two months later; *Juewu* started publication on 16 June of the same year. These publications emerging from the high tide of May Fourth became important organs for disseminating new ideas. KMT theorists like Hu Hanmin, Dai Jitao, Liao Zhongkai, Zhu Zhixin, Ma Junwu, Zhang Ji, Lin Yungai, Ye Chucang and Shao Lizi edited or contributed to them. Sun Yat-sen did not only write for them, but also held the post of the general manager of *Jianshe* magazine's office.

³⁰ Yamakawa Kikue and his husband Yamakawa Hitoshi together with Sano Manabu later became the first Japanese Communists. Fukuda Tokuzō was a founder of the Dawn Society and a leading Japanese propagator of Marxist economics into Japan. In addition to 'Hanjun', other co-translators were given as 'Dabei', 'Jingang' and 'Yangzhi'. Both 'Dabei' and 'Jingang' are terms in Buddhism, and sometimes they were jointly used. This suggests that 'Jingang' is a pen name of Zhan Dabei. From this, it can be inferred that Zhan was probably studying Buddhism at the time. It is unclear who 'Yangzhi' was.

³¹ *Guofu quanji* [Collected Works of Sun Yat-sen], edited and published by Zhongyang wenwu gongying she, Taipei, 1957, vol. 3, p. 453.

Most of these theorists were interested in socialism and some were among the first Chinese to study Marxism. *Jianshe*'s editor-in-chief Hu Hanmin studied Marx's materialist conception of history and tried to apply it to ancient China.³² Dai Jitao studied Marx's economic theory and praised Marx as someone who had synthesised a variety of socialisms and created a scientific base for socialism. He wrote that Russian Bolsheviks believed in 'pure and orthodox Marxism'.³³ Although most of these nationalist theories did not accept the Marxist notion of class struggle, surplus-value and dictatorship of the proletariat, they nevertheless felt that some of Marx's theories could serve their programme of national and social reconstruction. Some were even attracted to the Leninist theory of imperialism and national liberation, as well as Lenin's insistence on an authoritarian, highly disciplined élite and the Bolsheviks' revolutionary spirit.³⁴

M. Y. L. Luk observed that many Chinese intellectuals showed an emotional commitment to the October Revolution and 'the year 1919 witnessed a spectacular spur of interest in socialism and Marxism in the Chinese intellectual circle.' However, 'their political philosophies reflected the influences of anarchism, liberal democracy, and socialism in a general sense, rather than Marxism or Bolshevism.'³⁵ To a certain extent, these nationalist theorists in 1919 could be said to belong to this category. Li Hanjun was on close terms with such people and plunged into the cause of transforming China.

In the late summer of 1919, Li Hanjun joined the editorial board of *Xinqi pinglun*, then under the joint editorship of Dai Jitao and Shen Xuanlu.³⁶ Dai (1891-1949) studied law in Japan and after returning to China started editing an anti-Qing paper in 1910; later, to escape arrest, he fled to Penang, where he joined the Tongmenghui. Following the Wuchang Uprising, he returned to China and became Sun Yat-sen's

³² See Hu Hanmin, 'Zhongguo zhexue shi zhi weiwu de yanjiu' (A materialist study of the history of Chinese philosophy), *Jianshe*, vol. 1, nos. 3 and 4, October and November 1919.

³³ *Dai Jitao ji* [Dai Jitao's Writings], Tang Wenquan and Sang Bing (eds), Huazhong shifandaxue chubanshe, Wuhan, 1990, p. 1022, p. 1136; Cf. Ma Peiyong, 'Dai Jitao zaoqi zhengzhi sixiang lunlüe' (A brief comment on Dai Jitao's early thought), *Henan daxue xuebao* [Journal of Henan University], no. 4, July 1992, p. 56.

³⁴ Cf. Lü Fangshang, *Geming zhi zaiqi, Zhongguo guomindang gaizu qian dui xin sichao de huiying, 1914-1924* [Rekindle the Revolution, the KMT's Response to New Thought before the Reorganisation, 1914-1924], Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, Taipei, 1989; Tao Jiye, 'Minzhu geming pai yu Makesi xueshuo zai Zhongguo de chuanbo' (The democratic revolutionaries and the dissemination of Marxist theories in China), *Jinan xuebao* [Journal of Jinan University] vol. 19, no. 3, July 1997, pp. 67-75.

³⁵ Luk, pp. 20-21.

³⁶ According to Bao Huiseng, Li knew Dai when they were studying in Japan, and so Li was invited to write for *Xinqi pinglun*. See Bao's 'Huainian Li Hanjun xiansheng' (In memory of Mr. Li Hanjun), 30 August 1958, *Dangshi ziliao congkan* [The CCP Historical Materials Series], no. 1, 1980, p. 136.

personal secretary in late 1913, a position he held for the rest of Sun's life. He followed Sun to Shanghai in 1918. Shen Xuanlu (1892-1928) collected funds for munitions and supplies during the Revolution of 1911. After the foundation of the Republic, he became a leading member of the Zhejiang Provincial Assembly and later became its chairman. In 1913, he went to live in exile in Japan and studied there until the death of Yuan Shikai. After his house arrest by the military and civil governors of Zhejiang, he fled to Shanghai in 1917. In Shanghai, both Dai and Shen, with the aim of thoroughly awakening the Chinese, founded *Xingqi pinglun*, with Sun Disan. They edited it from an office at Xinmin Street that ran into Avenue Edward VII, along the boundary between the French Concession and the International Settlement.³⁷

The inaugural issue of *Xingqi pinglun* declared its aim as 'to carry forward the spirit of the May Fourth and June Fifth movements and to create a human movement.' The editors claimed that they would 'make a thorough scrutiny of the essence of human being, state and society.' The journal focused on labour issues and socialist theories as well as nationalism. With Li's participation, the journal's socialist leanings became clearer than before. According to Yang Zhihua, Shen Xuanlu's female protégé, who came to work for *Xingqi pinglun* at the end of 1919, Li Hanjun was at the time the 'leading intellectual' of the *Xingqi pinglun* group.³⁸

Xingqi pinglun was well received by its readers. It circulated in many cities and its circulation increased from 1,000 to more than 30,000 copies. Before long, its influence among Chinese intellectuals matched that of *Xin qingnian* and *Meizhou pinglun* (Weekly Review) edited by Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and Hu Shi in Beijing. *Xingqi pinglun* and *Meizhou pinglun* were praised as 'the two brightest stars in the press'.³⁹ *Xingqi pinglun* made a notable impact on intellectuals' thinking. Many early Communists, including Qu Qiubai, Cai Hesen, Zhou Enlai, Li Lisan, Liu Renjing and Yun Daiying, pointed out the important role *Xingqi pinglun* had played in propagating new ideas or admitted the influence it had had on them personally. In 1946, Zhou Enlai told an American journalist that he had been greatly influenced by *Xingqi pinglun*, *Xin qingnian* and *Meizhou pinglun*.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Zhou Zhenhe (ed), pp. 101-102.

³⁸ 'Yang Zhihua de huiyi' (Yang Zhihua's recollections), interviewed by Wang Laidi in September 1956, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 25.

³⁹ *Jiaoyu chao* [Tide of Education], no. 5, November 1919.

⁴⁰ 'Zhou Enlai tong Li Boman tan geren jingli' (Zhou Enlai's talk about his experience of life with Burman Lee), September 1946, *Liaowang* [Lookout Weekly], no. 2, 1984, p. 27.

Using *Xingqi pinglun* and other KMT journals as his platform, Li Hanjun published numerous essays and translations. Of these, ‘Transformation Should Be Complete’ merits special attention.

2.3 ‘Transformation Should Be Complete’

This article was published in *Jianshe* in early 1920. An editor’s note indicates that it was originally written as a letter by Li Hanjun to his friends on 6 October 1919. Its recipients, according to Tian Ziyu’s research, were Dong Biwu and Zhang Guo’en, then in Wuhan.⁴¹ In it Li wrote not only about the discussions and communications between him and his Hubei friends but also about issues he had personally pondered and discussions among colleagues at the offices of *Xingqi pinglun*. This article was not Li’s first, but it covered a wide range of issues, including philosophical, political and social problems, that reflected Li’s outlook on life and the world. It is therefore worth examining in detail.

On the Relationship between Individual and Society, Li Hanjun’s first topic is people and their relationship to society. Probing ‘the essence of human beings, the state and society’ was also a declared aim of the first issue of *Xingqi pinglun*. Li maintained that humans should pay attention to *wo* (the self) and attempt to satisfy the inner desires of *wo*, for ‘meeting spiritual and physical desires is a human being’s innate impulse’ and satisfying ‘human nature’ is ‘an essential element of mankind’s evolution.’ Any striving that ignored *wo* and individual satisfaction would have no substantive content and ‘be dangerous’. With *wo* in mind, a human being must then seek to develop *wo*’s exteriority, i.e., satisfy his or her external desires.

Li pointed out: ‘There had been strife and conflicts between humans as a result of sticking to *wo*’. However, fighting is not intrinsic to human nature but stems from external forces and environmental pressure. This *wo* is ‘false’ and ‘superficial’ rather than ‘authentic’ and ‘natural’. He mentioned the struggle for existence and elimination through natural selection in the process of evolution, i.e. social Darwinism, and the theory of mutual aid, i.e. Kropotkin’s Anarcho-Communism. Li believed, with Kropotkin, that even animals love and protect their own kind, because that is their common nature and principle of survival, so humans would do so all the more.

⁴¹ Tian Ziyu, *Li Hanjun*, p. 10.

In Li's opinion, all individuals share common human nature, so my *wo* can be identified with others' *wo*. 'Only when one's own *wo* meets other people's *wo*,' he argued, 'can a *da wo* (universal selfhood) be engendered.' The *da wo* is the Buddhists' *wu wo* (non-self), though in fact it is true *wo*, derived from true human nature. Li pointed out that the world is nothing more than 'a collective of *wo*', and 'the ideal world is one where the *wo* of all mankind is blended'. To realise the outer *wo* is to realise the ideal world. However, ideals always evolve, and humankind can never satisfy its outside world, so people must strive continuously to pursue their ideals. This, in his view, advances human progress.

Li Hanjun implied that the starting point must be individual happiness. This emphasis on personal happiness and the meaning of individual existence stemmed from Western humanism. Li wrote that several European thinkers and philosophers had studied human nature and the self – hence the Renaissance, which enabled Europeans to break away from the Church's control and become free citizens. Needless to say, the actual course of history is not so simple, but these comments help to clarify the source of his ideas on individual freedom.

Western concepts of individualism and liberalism strongly appealed to Chinese intellectuals. 'The independence of personality' and 'the liberation of individuality' became watchwords of May Fourth era.⁷⁶ Philosophers like A. Schopenhauer, F. W. Nietzsche, H. Bergson, S. Kierkegaard and F. Paulsen, who strongly emphasise man's personal will, self-development and achievements, also had an impact on radical Chinese intellectuals.⁴² Generally speaking, Asian people lack a developed sense of self. Chinese ethics inhibited individualism and some philosophers in ancient times stressed the 'unity of the cosmos and human beings' (*tian ren heyi*). Confucianism stressed that an individual is born into certain relationships and has certain duties, for instance, to the ruler and one's parents. Under such bonds, an individual completely loses his individuality and can never be himself. The Neo-Confucian ethical exhortation 'to extinguish human desire in order to preserve heavenly reason' further inhibited personal desire. As Chen Duxiu once pointed out: '... the feudal clan system

⁴² Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Lu Xun and Mao Zedong admired or introduced some or all of these theories in their writings. Cf. Gao Like, *Wusi de sixiang shijie* [The Ideological Environment in the May Fourth Era], Xuelin chubanshe, Shanghai, 2003; Ye Ziming, 'Renben zhuyi sichao yu Wusi xin wenxue' (The trend of thought of humanism and the new literature in May Fourth era), in *Wusi yundong yu Zhongguo wenhua jianshe* [The May Fourth Movement and the Culture Reconstruction in China], Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan (ed), Shehui kexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 808-834.

has four defects: the destruction of the individual's independence and dignity, the repression of the individual's will, the denial of legal equality, and the nurturing of a dependent character that destroys the individual's productive force.⁴³ So *wo* here had a special significance: it was part of a general rejection of Confucian ethics and the traditional social system.

Li Hanjun fully affirmed the positive role of individualism and liberalism in history. He later wrote that the feudal system was built on principles of protection and contribution. In the struggle against it, the bourgeoisie proclaimed human individuality as the highest value, and that every person should have the right to control his or her life and to own property in order to pursue happiness. Independence and self-esteem became the highest moral principles. To attain individualism and liberalism, the rising bourgeoisie had to wage a revolution.⁴⁴

While Chinese intellectuals drew positive elements from Western individualism in their attacks on tradition and established institutions, most did not preach extreme egoism. Rather, they advocated a 'sound' or 'balanced' individualism halfway between individual and society. Individual development and social responsibility were not in conflict: in serving society a person can also satisfy his or her desires and achieve self-realisation, thus contributing to general well-being.

Li Hanjun wanted individuals to function in harmony with humankind. Similar inclinations can be found in the writings of other intellectuals who later became Communists. For example, Chen Duxiu said: 'Without individuals, there would be no society, so we should respect the individual will and personal happiness.' However, he believed that since an individual in society is like a cell in a body, people sometimes have to experience personal pain for the happiness of mankind.⁴⁵ Li Dazhao once wrote that *wo* is part of absolute reality and as such eternal; it is the universe and the universe is *wo*. He intended to reconcile Asian people's ideas of *da wo* and *wu wo* with

⁴³ *Duxiu wencun* [Collected Essays of Chen Duxiu], Yadong tushuguan, Shanghai, 1933, vol. 1, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Hanjun, *WSJC* [Materialist Conception of History, Teaching Materials (First Draft)], (henceforth abbreviated to *WSJC* in footnotes) printed teaching materials from Wuchang Normal University, Wuchang zhengxin yinwuguan, Wuchang, vol. 1, pp. 76-77, p. 146, p. 125. No date of publication. Since Wuchang High Normal School became Wuchang Normal University in September 1923 and was renamed Wuchang University in September 1924, so this book was probably printed around 1923-24. Li also wrote on similar lines in 'Jimian erqi de yiyi' (The significance of commemorating the Incident of February Seventh), published under the pen name 'Jinghu' in *Jiangsheng rikan*, 11 February 1924.

⁴⁵ Chen Duxiu, 'Rensheng zhenyi' (The real meaning of human life), *XQN*, vol. 4, no. 2, 15 February 1918, p. 92.

Western people's respect for individuality.⁴⁶ Shen Xuanlu often talked about 'my self' and 'my world', but he also said: 'It's not that I toss away all else and pay attention only to myself. ... I care for and depend on others. There is mutual dependence and caring.' Shen concluded that 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' is the 'way of living'.⁴⁷

Stressing the value of the individual while at the same time pursuing the interests of people collectively was crucial in turning these intellectuals towards communism; it was also partly a result of the influx of various schools of socialism into China. Because of their deep concern for the happiness of individuals and collectives, they felt that it was imperative for the Chinese to remove the fetters that hampered individuals' independence and dignity and repressed individual will, in order to eliminate individual suffering and liberate people's minds.

To abolish the old value system and change reality was also a topic of this article by Li Hanjun. He told his friends: 'In a place beset with overgrown brambles and under the circumstances in which people suffer grief', it was difficult to satisfy one's inner and external desires, so one must first change the conditions of one's existence. That is, in Buddhist terms, 'to deliver all living creatures from torment' (*pudu zhongsheng*).⁴⁸

Li Hanjun started out his questioning of the traditional system by looking at its origins. At a certain stage in human development, contracts regulated relations between individuals in society; they reflected the spirit of mutual aid, manifesting human nature. However, some strong men with grander ambitions broke the bounds of convention to enslave the weak and promote self-serving rules. In this way, a political system emerged, and ethics and laws were produced to maintain it. In Li's opinion, the political system, morality and laws are interrelated: the system was a frame, ethics were a net on the frame and laws were the wall. Gradually, the nets and walls

⁴⁶ Li Dazhao, 'Qingchun' (Youth), in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 1, p. 196. Cf. The English translation in Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, p. 10; Li Dazhao, 'Dong-xi wenming genben zhi yidian' (The fundamental differences between the civilisations of the East and of the West), 1 July 1918, in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 1, pp. 559-560, p. 569.

⁴⁷ Xuanlu, 'Fakanci' (Foreword to *Sunday Review*), *XQPL*, no. 1, 8 June 1919, p. 1; 'Shui shi shi? Shui shi di?' (Who is the teacher? Who is the enemy?), *XQPL*, no. 17, 28 September 1919, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁸ Buddhist terms appeared several times in this letter. During the period in question, Li might learn and talk about Buddhism with his friends. Dai Jitao went to Wuxing to study Buddhism not long after he arrived in Shanghai with Sun Yat-sen in 1918. See H. Mast, *An Intellectual Biography of Tai Chi-T'ao from 1891 to 1928*, PhD. diss., University of Illinois, Champaign, 1970, pp. 50-55. Of the members of the Society of *Xingqi pinglun*, Liu Dabai and Shen Zhongjiu were interested in Buddhism. See 'Yu Xiusong lieshi riji' (Martyr Yu Xiusong's Diary), 21 July 1920, *SGZY*, no. 1, September 1992, p. 315.

thickened and became a ‘dead prison without any gap’. This metaphor is similar to Lu Xun’s, who likened Chinese tradition to ‘an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible.’⁴⁹

Li believed that traditional systems, laws and moral codes run counter to and extinguished human nature and thus hindered humans’ natural and free development. He felt it was a pressing task for young intellectuals to ‘smash the environment’, and declared: ‘What we should do is break these fetters and return to essence and original genuineness (*fan ben gui zhen*).’

Li Hanjun and Lao-Zhuang Philosophy

‘Returning to simplicity and original purity’ (*fan pu gui zhen*) is a Taoist idea. Laozi and Zhuangzi believed that people should follow the laws of the universe and that all things have no real difference in essence. They preached non-action (*wuwei*). Taoist theory, especially Zhuangzi’s theory was sometimes interpreted as advocating retiring from political life to attain happiness. Taoism has thus been regarded as a philosophy with negative, passive, inactive and conservative elements by some modern Chinese thinkers. Kang Youwei wrote: ‘The theory of Laozi has brought calamity upon posterity’;⁵⁰ Liang Qichao blamed Laozi for poisoning people’s minds with ‘cynicism’ and ‘selfishness’;⁵¹ Hu Shi said Zhuangzi advocated submitting to the will of Heaven and was therefore ‘extremely conservative’.⁵²

Li Hanjun was aware of such criticisms and mentioned Zhang Ji’s criticism of Laozi’s idea of ‘non-action’ as an obstacle to the development of China. He did not deny that Lao-Zhuang thought had elements of passivity and admitted that their idea of ‘returning to simplicity and original purity’ implied regression to a primitive state. Instead, he advocated returning to the human ‘essence and original genuineness’ rather than to ‘simplicity and original purity’. For him, returning to the ‘essence and original genuineness’ did not mean giving up material civilisation but restoring the spirit of

⁴⁹ Lu Xun, ‘Nahan zixu’ (Preface to Call to Arms), in *Lu Xun quanji*, vol. 1, p. 274.

⁵⁰ Kang Youwei *quanji* [Collected Works of Kang Youwei], Shanghai guji chubanshe, Shanghai, 1990, vol. 2, p. 362.

⁵¹ Liang Qichao, *Lun Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi* [Commentary on the Major Trends in the Development of Chinese Academic Thought], Zhonghua shuju, Taipei, 1974, pp. 59-62.

⁵² Hu Shi, ‘Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang’ (An outline history of Chinese philosophy), in *Hu Shi xueshu wenji* [Hu Shi’s Collected Scholarly Works], Jiang Yihua (ed), Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1991, vol. 1, pp. 190-191, p. 187.

mutual aid, which is part of human nature, especially in the period before social classes formed.

Laozi's concept of *wuwei* is especially embodied in the following passage from *Daode jing*:

I take no action and people are transformed of themselves;
I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of themselves;
I am not meddlesome and the people will of themselves become rich;
I am free from desires and the people of themselves attain to the unadorned simplicity.⁵³

According to Li Hanjun, 'non-action' did not mean doing nothing but meant avoiding coercion by means of standards, rules, moral codes and laws. In his opinion, it was not Laozi's 'non-action' that endangered the Chinese people but Chinese rulers' excessive action. He criticised authorities' attempts to centralise state power to meddle with everything: to control the press, to disband people's associations, to nationalise railways and mines, and even selected MPs by the Government. Because those in authority are too fond of action, the Chinese people can and dare do nothing. So 'non-action' meant for Li Hanjun non-interference and opposition to centralism, coercion, and state monopolies, as well as the promotion of autonomy. Such views were not exceptional in Chinese intellectual history. Many ancient and modern thinkers utilised the Taoist concept of 'non-action' to oppose autocratic politics.⁵⁴

Moreover, Li advanced a new interpretation of Lao-Zhuang thought, using it as a weapon to criticise Confucian ethics. He said that Confucianism, which had dominated Chinese thinking for more than two thousand years, had had a pernicious influence and been used to maintain the despotic system. He attacked Confucian morality and opposed any attempt to manipulate and mould human personality; as he later told a friend, those who submit to the supreme ruler, kin and teachers might just as well be killed.⁵⁵ He pointed out that Confucianism did not teach how to act humanly but trained people to abide by the existing order and intellectuals to act as officials; its moral code suppressed and inhibited free development in the light of human nature. As

⁵³ Cf. Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, translated with an introduction by D. C. Lau, Penguin Books, London, 1963, Chapter 57, p. 118 and other translations.

⁵⁴ *Zhuangzi, Basic Writings*, translated by B. Watson, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, 'Introduction', p. 10; Lü Xichen, p. 108, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁵ Fu Guangpei, 'Huiyi Li Hanjun lieshi jijian nanwang zhi shi' (A memoir of some unforgettable deeds of the martyr Li Hanjun), Li Danyang edited according to Fu's oral recollections (interviewed by Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi in the summer of 1980) and his several letters between 1980 and 1983. The title was given by Fu Guangpei after reading the edited version. Fu's recollection published in Luo Zhongquan's *Zhonggong yida daibiao - Li Hanjun* is incomplete and contains many mistakes. I will refer to the version kept in my study.

Lü Fangshang, a Taiwan historian, commented, Li's article delivered the fiercest attack on Confucius of any article published in *Jianshe*.⁵⁶

During the May Fourth period, some intellectuals who attacked Confucianism derived nourishment from other ancient thinkers, but few early Communists shared Li's esteem for Taoism. Both Laozi and Zhuangzi denounced state authority and argued against constraints. In contrast to Confucius and Mozi, who emphasised the need for a wise ruler and compassionate government, Taoism implied that the less government, the better. Some Chinese anarchists were therefore fond of Taoism and regarded Laozi as the father of anarchism in China.⁵⁷ Anarchists like Liu Shiwei, Jing Meijiu and Zhu Qianzhi favoured Lao-Zhuang philosophy. In May 1921, while the Communists were polemicising with the anarchists, Chen Duxiu wrote: 'The anarchism now rampant among our youth is not completely a Western product. In the final analysis, it is nothing more than a revival of our own Taoism. It is a Chinese variety of anarchism.'⁵⁸

That Lao-Zhuang theory stood high in Li Hanjun's favour was perhaps due to some extent to his anarchist leanings. According to Dong Biwu, Li had read some books on anarchism before he started reading Marxist works.⁵⁹ This orientation was probably enhanced by the prevalent form of socialist thought in Japan, anarcho-syndicalism. Interestingly, a major figure in Japan's anarcho-syndicalist movement, the famous socialist Kōtoku, assumed the personal name Shūsui ('Autumn Flood'), the opening words of Chapter 17 of *Zhuangzi*.⁶⁰

Zhuangzi especially celebrated freedom, equality and spontaneity unconstrained by moral injunctions. He wanted people to retain their inherent nature and abolish all things that prevent them from attaining happiness. He and other Taoists rejected authority and the idea of copying models in pursuit of rigid uniformity.⁶¹ Unlike Confucius' graded benevolence, both Laozi and Zhuangzi advocated philanthropy: loving and treating without partiality and distinction, and showing sympathy with

⁵⁶ Lü Fangshang, p. 232.

⁵⁷ A. Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles & Oxford, 1991, p. 102. This book shows that, in some interpretations, Buddhism was more associated with anarchism than Taoism. Li was also familiar with Buddhist terminology.

⁵⁸ Duxiu, 'Zhongguo shi de wuzhengfuzhuyi' (A Chinese brand of anarchism), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1 May 1921, p. 6.

⁵⁹ 'Tian Haiyan ji Dong lao tanhua'.

⁶⁰ Crump, p. 128.

⁶¹ Chen Guying, *Lao-Zhuang xin lun* [A New Commentary on Lao-Zhuang], Shanghai guji chubanshe, Shanghai, 1997, p. 3.

ordinary people. Laozi wrote that the people suffer from hungry because the rulers eat up too much in taxes; he even proposed ‘taking from those who have in excess in order to supplement those who are deficient.’⁶²

Li Hanjun’s preference for Taoism suggests that he attached importance to liberty, equality, fraternity and autonomy. According to him, Lao-Zhuang’s teachings required people to discard fetters so that their pure and transparent natural characters could develop spontaneously and their spirit grow freely, giving free rein to their autonomous creativity. In Li’s view, Laozi wanted people to destroy the *status quo*, to which end he urged them to ‘go all out regardless of the danger to wage a great struggle.’ My thesis is that Li remoulded Lao-Zhuang thought along revolutionary lines.

In contrast to Li Hanjun, Li Dazhao believed in good and virtuous rulers as well as efficient government by a strong ruler and stressed the need to strengthen social order. He even supported the autocratic Yuan Shikai during the first year of his presidency.⁶³ For application to present dilemmas, some other early Communists also valued certain schools of ancient Chinese thought. Cai Hesen favoured Mozi’s theory, especially the idea that people should ignore personal interests and freedom while seeking to pursue collective interests.⁶⁴ Mozi advocated ‘identifying with one’s superior’ (*shang tong*), ‘unifying all wills, purposes, ideas and standards espoused by the state’ and the notion that ‘what the superior thinks is right, all shall think of as right; what the superior thinks is wrong, all shall think of as wrong.’⁶⁵ This demonstrates a strong strain of authoritarianism. Early Communist leaders’ different constructions on ancient systems of thought help in part to explain why they turned to authoritarian and libertarian forms of socialism, as well as their divergences of views on the nature of Party.

Like Li Hanjun, several important modern Chinese thinkers, including Yan Fu, Zhang Taiyan, Hu Shi and Feng Youlan, appreciated the implications of freedom, equality, democracy, revolution and even science in Taoist philosophy.⁶⁶ Hu Shi, who criticised passivity in Zhuangzi, regarded Laozi as a leftist, because he rejected

⁶² *Daode jing*, Chapters 75 and 77.

⁶³ Cf. Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, pp. 8-10; p 40.

⁶⁴ Wang Jiping et al., *Cai Hesen sixiang lungao* [Thesis on Cai Hesen’s Thinking], Hunan renmin chubanshe, Changsha, 2003, p. 4.

⁶⁵ *Mo Tzu, Basic Writings*, translated by B. Watson, Columbia University Press, New York, 1963, pp. 34-38.

⁶⁶ Gao Feng, *Dadao xiyi* [The Great Way, Invisible and Inaudible], Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, Shenyang, 1997, pp. 63-64, pp. 67-68, p. 80.

conventional beliefs, and saw ‘non-action’ as a political counter to state interference and therefore a ‘revolutionary political philosophy’.⁶⁷ Recently, the philosopher Li Zehou explained this point with admirable clarity: ‘Laozi’s political philosophy is one of active intervention in worldly affairs’, while the core of Zhuangzi’s philosophy stresses ‘the independence of personality and the freedom of spirit.’⁶⁸ To participate actively in the political struggle while maintaining one’s own independent character and spiritual freedom was Li Hanjun’s great strength and distinguishing characteristic. This explains his fundamental affinity with the Lao-Zhuang philosophy.

Views on Truth

The New Culture Movement aimed for a ‘revolution in thought’ that would transform Chinese mental habits and responses to the world. Its first object, as Luo Jialun, a student leader of the May Fourth Movement, declared, was ‘to change a slavish mentality into independent thinking’.⁶⁹ May Fourth intellectuals realised that to facilitate independent thinking, they must first eradicate obedience to inherited beliefs and establish an environment in which new thought and the capacity for doubt could flourish. According to Hu Shi, a sceptical attitude was a form of scientific spirit. The sceptical attitude and scientific methods were essential for reappraising old values and a weapon for the liberation of thought.⁷⁰

In his article, Li Hanjun elaborated on his views about truth and sceptical attitudes. He pointed out: ‘A major fault of Chinese is that we are not willing to doubt and do not know doubt’; Confucius did not know either doubt or abstraction and only knew how to preserve the old order, so he cannot be regarded as a philosopher; whereas Laozi was a philosopher, because he was inclined to doubt. In Li’s opinion, a serious thinker or philosopher must know doubt and must be able to transcend the boundaries of existing circumstances to observe, study, and analyse things; only thus can invention and creation happen.

⁶⁷ *Hu Shi xueshu wenji*, Part. 1, p. 373, p. 41, pp. 581-584; Part 2, p. 744.

⁶⁸ Li Zehou, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun* [Collected Papers on Ancient Chinese Thoughts], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1986, p. 177.

⁶⁹ Luo Jialun, ‘Da Zhang Puquan laixin’ (Reply to Zhang Puquan), *Xin chao*, vol. 2, no. 2, December 1919, pp. 366-368.

⁷⁰ Quoting Nietzsche, Hu Shi explained that this critical attitude would lead to a ‘revaluation of all values.’ Cf. V. Schwartz, *The Chinese Enlightenment, Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, p. 122.

‘Every truth is built on hypotheses,’ wrote Li, ‘If we can use a hypothesis to explain and confirm the reasons for some phenomenon, the result is truth.’ If, as science develops, a hypothesis that formerly could explain things now can no longer do so, then that hypothesis is no longer tenable; so ‘it cannot count as a truth and must be replaced by a new hypothesis’. Proposing a hypothesis to explain phenomena and using evidence to verify the hypothesis through deduction and induction was the way to develop scientific research and seek the truth. Nevertheless, there is no unalterable absolute truth, and ‘we should regard no truth, no matter what, as absolute, and we should always be sceptical about it.’⁷¹

Clearly, Li Hanjun leant towards sceptical relativism. His fellow provincial Yun Daiying, who later converted from anarchism to Communism, demonstrated similar views in two early essays, both titled ‘On Scepticism’. A sceptical spirit can be found in the Chu culture as well as Taoist tradition. A poem by Qu Yuan, a native of Chu, called Questions about Heaven was said to demonstrate sceptical spirit.⁷² All these influences helped shape Li’s mental attitudes.

Li Hanjun’s concept of truth is somewhat similar to the pragmatic theory. Pragmatism was imported into China by Hu Shi and his former teacher at Columbia University, the American philosopher J. Dewey, who visited China in 1919-1921. Pragmatism emphasises linking theory with practice and means with ends. Every idea, theory and doctrine should serve to help people adapt to their environment and be an instrument of human behaviour. Truth is no more than a hypothesis and has only disjunctive or relative meaning: all truth is pluralistic rather than monistic. Pragmatists hold that the criterion of truth lies in its effect upon human action and practice, and reject any absolute principle beyond experience. Dewey and Hu Shi repeatedly stressed that ideas are not fixed, unalterable prescriptions but hypotheses and plans of action, verifiable by their consequences; truth is an appliance for coping with environment, so no principles are ever valid everywhere and forever.⁷³ These ideas

⁷¹ Li Renjie, *Jianshe*, p. 1145.

⁷² The Chinese scholars Liang Qichao and Liu Shipei held that Qu Yuan’s thought was Taoist. See Huang Zhenyun, ‘20 shiji *Chuci* xue yanjiu shuping’ (A review of *Songs of Chu* studies in the twentieth century), *Wenxue pinglun* [Literature Review], no. 2, 2000, p. 21.

⁷³ See Shen Yihong (ed), *Duwei tan Zhongguo* [Dewey: On China], Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, Hangzhou, 2001, pp. 308-9; p. 221, p. 224, p. 377; C. B. Dockser, *John Dewey and the May Fourth Movement in China: Dewey’s Social and Political Philosophy in Relation to His Encounter with China*, PhD diss., The Faculty of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1983, pp. 116-117; Liu Fangtong, ‘The sixty-year samsara of studies on pragmatism and the road of

impressed Chinese intellectuals, including Chen Duxiu. Li Hanjun was also receptive to them, thus heightening his tendency to doubt.

Favouring as he did a sceptical and relativistic view, Li Hanjun tended to reject absolutism and dogmatism even after becoming a Communist. For him, as for Marx, there are no dogmas, no petrified opinions; everything must be re-examined when facts challenge certainty. Li was not the sort of sceptic who doubted everything endlessly. He believed that only through doubt, study and analysis can people invent and create something new in the cultural and material realms. His aim was to use a critical and scientific approach to transform the world.

Partial Reform or Total Transformation

Toward the end of his article, Li expressed his views on partial or total transformation. He wrote that he had never believed that partial reform was possible or feasible. According to him, the Nationalists' past struggles, the war then being waged against the northern warlords, and the students' national salvation movement all committed the error of not planning a thorough transformation. In his view, 'A whole is the organic collection of its parts; if you intend to change a part, you must first destroy the whole. Otherwise, you will meet with stubborn resistance from the whole. Only when the whole has been defeated will partial reform be possible. ... To preserve the part that has been reformed, one must destroy the [old] whole and to create a [new] organic whole to accommodate the part. It is thus clear that to transform the parts, one must destroy and reconstruct the whole.' Li told his friends in Wuhan that it would not be enough to carry out educational reform in Hubei alone, since China's troubles were not confined to one province. He concluded that unless the old whole was destroyed, it would be impossible to carry out either partial reform or total transformation.

Although Li Hanjun preferred total transformation to compromise and partial reform, he did not exclude reform and reconciliation under certain conditions. He thought that it was possible to reconcile divergences of opinions and things that are of different levels or degrees, though not of systems of an opposite nature, such as republics as opposed to autocracies. Li appreciated that British politicians were good at reconciliation, thus permitting social progress.

cultural development in China', in *Philosophy and Modernisation in China*, Liu Fangtong et al. (eds), The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, D.C., 1997, pp. 93-94.

However, Li Hanjun believed, China, as part of the world, lagged behind the rest of the world by several hundred years. If it wanted to avoid elimination, it would have to accelerate its development in order to catch up with the advanced countries. There could be no ‘evolution with reconciliations’. He concluded: ‘To save China, we must destroy and create on a large scale. Great destruction! Great construction!!!’ Li was clearly prepared to take strong measures to carry out a radical revolution in China’s ‘darkest hours’.

Terms like ‘destruction’, ‘construction’, ‘transformation’ and ‘revolution’ appeared frequently in writings by Li’s contemporaries. Sun Yat-sen’s speech ‘The First Step of China’s Transformation’ delivered on 8 October 1919 contained numerous such terms. Sun pointed out that transformation was necessary because China’s political system was corrupt. He criticised the idea that transformation could be achieved by means of educational reform and provincial autonomy. Transformation required a revolution. The revolution Sun referred to was political in its orientation. Sun argued that to build a house one must first remove the ‘obsolete dirt’, i.e., the old bureaucrats, warlords and politicians. Only thus could a solid foundation be laid for the Republic of China.⁷⁴

Li was aware of Sun’s arguments. ‘Old bureaucrats, warlords, and politicians’ were also his targets in articles he wrote around this time. However, he did not believe that China could be transformed by mere political revolution and insisted on the need for social revolution. He frequently discussed with friends the ideal way of bringing about a social revolution in China and the movement’s strategy and plans.⁷⁵ Sun also advocated social revolution, but through the agency of the republican state and to forestall the sharpening of class conflict and violent social upheaval. To some extent, Li agreed with this opinion, but he suspected the politics of the minority and politicians’ good will, and preferred a fundamental social revolution by the common people. In ‘How Should We See the Current Situation?’ published on 21 September

⁷⁴ *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, vol. 5 (1985), pp. 124-126.

⁷⁵ ‘Dong Biwu tan’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 370; Akutagawa Ryunosuke, ‘Shina yūki’ (Travel notes in China), in *Akutagawa Ryunosuke zenshū* [Collective Writings of Akutagawa Ryunosuke], Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1977, vol. 5, pp. 48-49. Akutagawa was a famous writer in Japan. He studied at Tokyo University from 1913 to 1916, and started the magazine *Shin shichō*. In 1919, he began to work for *Asaka mainichi shimbun* (Asaka Daily News) and visited China in 1921.

1919, he urged people to wage struggle with an uncompromising and creative spirit to achieve liberation and transformation. Only thus could China be rejuvenated.⁷⁶

With the publication of ‘Transformation Should Be Complete’, the debate about ‘Problems and Isms’ had come to an end. During it, Hu Shi published ‘More Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms’ and elaborated upon this theme: ‘Civilisation was not created in total, but by inches and drops. Evolution was not created overnight but in inches and drops. People nowadays indulge in talk about liberation and reform, but they should know that there is no liberation in total, or reform in total. ... Progress in the recreation of civilisation lies in the solution of this or that problem.’ He said that the biggest danger ‘is to make people feel content and satisfied that they have found the fundamental solution to all illnesses and need not worry about seeking solutions for this or that concrete issue.’⁷⁷ Hu made these suggestions in the name of pragmatism, following Dewey, who had said that the scientific approach to human problems was ‘to search for concrete methods to meet concrete problems according to the exigencies of time and place.’⁷⁸ However, pragmatists sometimes seemed to search for a general plan adapted to current circumstances. Dewey held that inquiry starting from a problematic situation should end with a situation that is so ‘determinate’ and ‘unified’ that hesitancy to act is eliminated.⁷⁹ Dewey’s social and political philosophy was not, as Hu seems to suggest, instrumental logic applied to social issues. Dewey valued the freedom to make choices and the chance to struggle to achieve one’s ideals.⁸⁰

Li Dazhao, on the other hand, believed that problems could not be separated from isms, for the solution of a social problem should first make the problem common for most people; and then equip those capable of solving it with common ideals or isms. For Li Dazhao, the idealism was Marxism or Bolshevism. He believed that the correctism can guide people in solving problems. He declared: ‘At present, I am afraid that

⁷⁶ Xianjin, ‘Shiju zenmeyang?’ (How should we see the current situation?), *XQPL*, no. 16, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Hu Shi, ‘Duo yanjiu xie wenti, shao tan xie zhuyi’ (More study of problems, less talk of isms), *Meizhou pinglun* [Weekly Review], no. 31, 20 July 1919. Part of the English translation is quoted from Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, p. 107.

⁷⁸ Quoted from Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, p. 21.

⁷⁹ Cf. Liu Fangtong et al. (eds), p. 101; T. Honderich (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1995, p. 710.

⁸⁰ Dockser, pp. 119-120.

only through a fundamental solution can we hope to resolve concrete problems one by one.⁸¹

In his response to this dispute, Li Hanjun came out in favour of a fundamental solution and thorough transformation of the sort advocated by Li Dazhao and other radical intellectuals, and opposed Hu Shi's willingness to compromise with the *status quo* and did not agree to his non-ideological forms of action and step-by-step reform. However, he accepted scientific method and the spirit of doubt Hu advocated.

Lü Fangshang points out that Li Hanjun's idea of thorough transformation led him in the direction of radical socialism. Using Lin Yusheng's frame of analysis, Lü maintains that such ideas, like those of other May Fourth radical intellectuals, led to an iconoclastic repudiation of the past and stemmed from the influence of 'a monistic and intellectualistic mode of thinking' rooted in Confucianism.⁸² It is true that Li's idea of total transformation led him embrace socialism. But, this did not prevent him from paying attention to concrete social problems. Li was one of just a few early Chinese Communists who held a pluralistic view and eclectic view of socialism, and did not oppose all traditional thoughts.

Several of the topics Li Hanjun discussed in this important writing are interrelated and amount to a consistent theme: humans and their circumstances. These views reflect his response to vital issues raised by Chinese intellectuals at the time. His attitude to the then situation and historical tradition demonstrate his intellectual leanings and philosophical predilections, as well as his worldview.

In 'Social Philosophies and Political Philosophies', a speech delivered in China, Dewey described philosophical theories as falling roughly into two camps, radical and conservative, tendencies that reflect two basic human dispositions. Radical theorists attach more importance to individual freedom than conservatives. Radicals were not satisfied with the *status quo* and wanted to abolish the political and social system of the time; they yearned for an ideal society or Utopia and were inclined to adopt a

⁸¹ Li Dazhao's 'Zailun wenti yu zhuyi' (Once more on problems and isms) was published in *Meizhou pinglun* on 17 August 1919, in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 2, pp. 32-38. The office of *Meizhou pinglun* was sealed by the Beijing Government at the end of August and the polemic was continued in other journals.

⁸² Lü Fangshang, p. 234. Cf. Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979, pp. 28-29.

‘fundamental solution’ to realise their aim. According to Dewey, Laozi’s precepts represented this sort of radical tendency in ancient China.⁸³

Li Hanjun valued Laozi and borrowed several terms from Taoism (and, to a lesser extent, from Buddhism). He stressed the free development of human nature, physical and spiritual. He opposed old ethics, political institutions and laws, constituted on the basis of a class society. He insisted on a total and thorough transformation of the system, which had made people ‘artificial’ and ‘formal’ and alienated them from their ‘human essence and nature’, so that people could ‘return to their essence and original authenticity, in conformance with the ‘universal self’ (*da wo*).

These views were reminiscent of terms Marx used in his early writings, particularly those later published under the title *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. In these early writings, Marx talked of ‘human essence’ and ‘natural essence’. He wrote that people alienated from their ‘species life’ and from ‘the essence of humanity’ should ‘return’ to themselves ‘as a social (i.e. human) being’ and ‘a real species-being’, in order to achieve the harmony between ‘existence and essence’ and between ‘individual and species’; to realise ‘the transcendence of human self-estrangement’, people should ‘overthrow all those conditions in which [they are] an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being.’⁸⁴

For Li Hanjun as for Marx, the human individual and his or her relations with nature and society were important philosophical issues. Marx’s Manuscripts were not published until the 1930s, so Li could not have read them. The similarities between the terms used by Marx and Li Hanjun suggests that Li inherited in part the humanist Western philosophical tradition in which Marx’s philosophy was rooted. They are also due to, of course, their common political and intellectual concerns and to the influence of the Lao-Zhuang philosophy on Li.

Erich Fromm noted certain resemblances between Marx’s early views and Zen Buddhist thinking.⁸⁵ Similar resemblances can also be found between certain ideas of Marx and of Lao-Zhuang. Both cherished doubt and a critical attitude, and both

⁸³ Shen Yihong (ed), *Duwei tan Zhongguo*, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁴ K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Cited in E. Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man, with a Translation from Marx’s Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts by T. B. Bottomore*, Frederick Ungar Publishing, New York, 1972, pp. 127, 136, 177; *Essential Writings of Karl Marx*, selected, and with an introduction and notes by D. Cauter, The MacMillan, New York, 1967, p. 54.

⁸⁵ Fromm, p. 33, fn. 22.

rejected the corrupt systems of the time and aimed to change or destroy them.⁸⁶ Lao-Zhuang philosophy is informed by a strong naturalism and stresses the harmony of humans and nature. *Dao* means ‘way’ in the sense of spontaneity and freedom from artificiality. Marx often talked about the ‘natural essence’ of humans and stressed that ‘Communism as a fully-developed naturalism is humanism and as a fully-developed humanism is naturalism. It is the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature.’⁸⁷ For humans to return to themselves, Marx believed that communism was necessary, whereas Lao-Zhuang’s vision of Utopia was a primitive agrarian society. Although they lived in different eras and advocated different solutions to the problems of their times, still some commonalties bound Marx and Lao-Zhuang. Such affinities are not surprising, for as Dewey pointed out: ‘Philosophies which emerge at distinctive periods define the larger patterns of continuity which are woven in effecting the enduring junctions of a stubborn past and an insistent future.’⁸⁸ So Li Hanjun’s philosophical inclination and commitment to the autonomous value of liberty and equality inclined him towards socialism and Marxism.

Li Hanjun’s mental orientation and philosophical tastes also made him receptive to anarchism. Like many others who joined the CCP, he first went through an anarchist phase. As Dirlik observed, ‘when a revolutionary discourse was taking shape, anarchist ideas played a crucial part’, and anarchism ‘moved into the centre of mainstream radical thinking’ around 1919; furthermore, there is an ‘overlap between anarchism and Marxism.’⁸⁹ P. Zarrow noticed, ‘Prominent intellectuals such as Li Dazhao, though already on his way to Marxism, displayed an anarchist strain.’⁹⁰ Mao Zedong reminisced in 1936 that between 1918 and 1919 he was influenced by a curious mixture of ideas of anarchism, liberalism, democratic reformism and Marxism.⁹¹ The same could be said of Li Hanjun and many other radical intellectual in that period. Li had read anarchist works and accepted several anarchist ideas before becoming a Marxist. However, unlike many other early Chinese Communists, he retained anarchist inclinations even after converting to Marxism. These included a mistrust of political

⁸⁶ Cf. Yang Wei, ‘Huaiyi zhuyi he xiandai Zhongguo’ (Scepticism and modern China), *Minzhu tongxun* [Democratic Bulletin], 12 August 2004, viewed on 6 September 2004, <<http://asiademo.org/b5/news/2004/08/20040812.htm>>.

⁸⁷ Quoted from Fromm, p. 127.

⁸⁸ J. Dewey, *Philosophy and Civilization*, Minton, Black & Company, New York, 1931, p. 7.

⁸⁹ Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, p. 2, p. 149, p. 30.

⁹⁰ P. Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990, p. 217.

⁹¹ E. Snow, *Red Star over China*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1968, pp. 152-158.

institutions, opposition to coercion and an attachment to the idea of autonomy. These inclinations remained with him throughout his later life.

‘Transformation Should Be Complete’ was not the first article Li Hanjun published in China. By the end of 1919, he had already written or translated more than twenty articles, most of which showed socialist leanings. ‘Trends in World Thought’ by Yamakawa Kikue, which Li translated from Japanese with Zhan Dabei, declared: ‘Since the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, ... the world has been advancing by leaps and bounds towards the emancipation of the proletariat. This has become the general trend.’ It criticised Kropotkin’s strategy on revolution and praised ‘the Republic of the Proletariat’ established in Russia. The article strongly advocated a political, social and economic revolution, in which ‘great destruction and great construction will be carried out at the same time’. The translators’ postscript shows that Li agreed with these views.⁹² So perhaps Li Hanjun began to repudiate anarchism around this time, although he was never purged entirely of anarchist influences. More important, the work shows that he advocated a fundamental and complete transformation, virtually a socialist revolution, like the October Revolution. It seems that Li had basically decided on his theoretical and political orientation.

⁹² Shanchuan Jurong (Yamakawa kiky e), ‘Shijie sichao zhi fangxiang’ (Trends in world thought) and translators’ postscript, *Juewu* [Awakening], *Minguo ribao* [The Republican Daily News] supplement (abbreviated to *JW* in footnotes), 5-7 September 1919.

3 Interpreting and Disseminating Marxism

To carry out social revolution, we have to rely on propaganda. Therefore, we must start with writing. Awakening Chinese intellectuals nowadays are not unconcerned about new knowledge; rather, they seek it eagerly. However, the books and magazines that can meet their demands are inadequate. I can assert that the most pressing matter of the moment is writing. ... We have the seeds in our hands, but there are thousands of acres of fallow land waiting. I am afraid that my ability falls short of my desires. I cannot help worrying about the completion of this task, and whether I can physically manage it.¹

The above words were spoken by Li Hanjun to Akutagawa Ryunosuke when the latter visited Li's home in Shanghai in April 1921. The seeds were socialist theories, Marxism in particular. Engels once wrote: 'Theoretical ignorance is an attribute of all young nations, but so is speedy practical development.'² Li Hanjun always attached importance to the role of advanced thought and theory in awakening people. He contended that to transform social institutions 'rich and profound thoughts are needed' to guide actions; and so is deep study. He observed that even Marx sometimes withdrew from public to study.³

Li Hanjun spared no efforts to sow the seeds of revolutionary theory, even at the cost of his health. He often worked long hours writing and translating; to keep himself going, he smoked copiously.⁴ He was aware that his capacity and knowledge as well as his time and energy were limited, so he encouraged more advanced intellectuals to devote themselves to the work of introducing Marxism and other socialist theories.

In this chapter, I analyse Li Hanjun's study of Marxism and his efforts at introducing and disseminating Marxism, as well as distinguishing features of his understanding and interpretation of Marxist economics and historical materialism.

Since socialist theories Li mentioned normally include Marxism, I thus sometimes necessarily touch upon socialist theory in the general sense here. In regard to his views of socialism, I will discuss them fully in Chapter 7.

¹ Akutagawa Ryunosuke, p. 49.

² 'F. Engels to F. A. Soege', 29 April 1886, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works* (henceforth abbreviated to *MECW*), vol. 47, p. 441.

³ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, pp. 12-13, p. 8.

⁴ Xing Tian (Shen Yanbing's pen name), 'Ji Li Hanjun' (Memoir of Li Hanjun), *Bitan* [Pen Conversations], no. 3, 1 October 1941, p. 36; Xue Wenshu, *Hubei wenshi ziliao*, p. 52.

3.1 *The Source of Li Hanjun's Marxist Studies*

Although there is no evidence to show that Li Hanjun started believing in Marxism while in Japan, he, like other early Chinese Marxists, first absorbed Marxist ideas from Japanese sources. He was proficient in Japanese. After meeting Li, the famous Japanese writer, Akutagawa Ryunosuke commented that Li 'spoke Japanese fluently. He can express very complex meanings clearly, so his Japanese is perhaps better than mine.'⁵ Li's translations and articles show that the Marxist journals he liked to read and cite from included Yamakawa Hitoshi's *Shakai shugi kenkyū* (Socialist Research), Kawakami Hajime's *Shakai mondai kenkyū* (Research in Social Problems) and *Kaizō* (Reconstruction), which disseminated orthodox Marxist thought by publishing translations and exegeses of basic German Marxist texts. Li also studied Marxist works in Japanese. He once asked Shi Cuntong, then in Japan, to buy Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* in Japanese for him.⁶ According to the owner of a Japanese bookshop in Shanghai, Uchiyama Kanzou, some Chinese came to his bookshop to read or buy Marxist works in Japanese, among them Li Hanjun and other Chinese 'socialist pioneers'.⁷ Li sometimes bought books at the *Liqun* (The Benefit the Masses) Book Society, a society for reading and selling books in Wuhan, and recommended members of the Society to read Kawakami Hajime's works on Marxism.⁸ As I shall show later, most of the Marxist and socialist works Li translated were from Japanese.

Several of the first Japanese socialists, such as Katayama Sen, Yoshino Sakuzo and Abe Iso, were Christian socialists. They believed that, alongside social reform, there was also a need for a new ethical awareness and social consciousness. For them, socialism (including Marxism) was infused with a humanist spirit. This humanist tradition made a deep impression on Kawakami Hajime and other Japanese socialists. Among Japanese socialists, Kawakami's proficiency in foreign languages gave him access to academic discourses emanating from Germany, England, and the USA. In introducing the rudiments of Marxist thought, his sources were primarily Western and

⁵ Akutagawa Ryunosuke, p. 48.

⁶ 'Shi Cuntong's confession', December 1921, in Ishikawa, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, Appendix 3, p. 486.

⁷ Neishan Wanzao (Uchiyama Kanzou), 'Shuji, zuozhe, duzhe' (Books, authors and readers), *Shulin* ['The Forest of Books'], no. 6, 1980, p. 14.

⁸ Wu Huazhi, 'Oral Recollection of Li Hanjun', interviewed by Li Danyang, 18 July 1981 (unpublished).

especially German. Kawakami was sometimes criticised for his ‘incomplete blend of humanist philosophy and socialist economics’.⁹

Several other important Japanese Marxists believed in anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism before converting to Marxism. Yamakawa Hitoshi, who helped Kōtoku translate Kropotkin’s *The Conquest of Bread* and was influenced by European anarcho-syndicalism, was one of the first Japanese socialists to support the Bolshevik revolution and later became a founder of the Japanese Communist Party.¹⁰ However, he was still interested in the anarcho-syndicalist movements in Western countries and his explanation of the Soviet system retained vestiges of syndicalism even as late as the early 1920s.

Several early Chinese Communists, such as Liu Renjing, Bao Huiseng, Zheng Chaolin and Wu Huazhi, later pointed out that Kawakami Hajime and Yamakawa Hitoshi had probably influenced Li Hanjun.¹¹ Their comments are accurate: Li did embrace some interpretations of Marxism by them and other Japanese socialists.

Li Hanjun set forth the system of Marxist theories in the light of Kawakami’s explanation: Marxism can be divided into two parts, theory and policy. In respect of theory, there is ‘historical materialism’, ‘economic theory’, and ‘the principle of class struggle’; in respect of policy, there is ‘the principle of social democracy’. Historical materialism is for studying the causes and process of social development; economic theory is for analysing present capitalist institutions; and the principle of social democracy deals with the methods of the socialist movement and the future realisation of socialism. The theory of class struggle, like a ‘golden thread’, links these three principles.¹² Li Dazhao and some other Chinese Marxists expounded Marxism using the same structure and even the same terms (including ‘golden thread’) as Kawakami.¹³ In Kawakami’s view, scientific socialists neglected moral reform by

⁹ Bernstein, p. 113.

¹⁰ Crump, p. 225, pp. 248-49.

¹¹ Liu Renjing, ‘Oral recollections of Li Hanjun’, interviewed by Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi between 1980 and 1981 (unpublished); Bao Huiseng *huiyilu* [Bao Huiseng’s Reminiscences], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1983, p. 17; Zheng Chaolin, *Shishi yu huiyi* [Reminiscences of Historical Events], Cosmos Books, Hong Kong, 1998, p. 257; Wu Huazhi, ‘Oral recollections of Li Hanjun’.

¹² Hanjun, ‘Yanjiu Makesi xueshuo de biyao ji women xianzai rushou de fangfa’ (The necessity of studying Marxism and how to make a start on it), *JW*, 6 June 1922, p. 4; Bernstein, p. 109.

¹³ Li Dazhao, ‘Wo de Makesizhuyi guan’ (My views on Marxism), *XQN*, vol. 6, nos. 5-6, 1919. Meisner in *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* wrote that Li Dazhao first encountered Marxist theory when reading Kawakami Hajime’s works during his student days in Japan. In fact, by the time when Li left Japan in 1916, Kawakami had not become a Marxist. However, Meisner is right to

exclusively emphasising institutional change.¹⁴ Although Li Hanjun did not necessarily agree with such criticisms, he stressed the ethical awakening of intellectuals and their role in helping labourers. In this, Li might have been influenced by the Japanese socialists such as Yamakawa Hitoshi and Asou Hisasi.

Besides of their emphasis on ethics, Yamakawa and Asou for some time opposed any form of power and coercion and advocated freedom and autonomy. Yamakawa Hitoshi's 'A Study of the Soviet' was among important works Li Hanjun translated. In Yamakawa's view, Russian Soviets, like other autonomous proletarian organisations, emerged spontaneously from the workers' struggle and were under the control of the working class.¹⁵ Li's understanding of the soviet system and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was at one point influenced by Yamakawa's interpretation.

Li Hanjun also read socialist and Marxist works in Western languages. According to Shen Yanbing, he could read and translate from English, German and French as well as Japanese.¹⁶ When French police came to search Li's home in Shanghai in July 1921, they censured him for collecting so much socialist literature.¹⁷ Li had a large number of socialist books, including Marxist works in Western languages, in his homes in Shanghai and Wuhan.¹⁸ From Li's books and articles we can see that he quoted Marxist and socialist works, included books in English and Germany, such as P. Lafargue's *Social and Philosophical Studies* and Marx's *Historical Methods*; G. V. Plekhanov's *Die Grundprobleme des Marxismus* (Fundamental Problems of Marxism), K. Kautsky's *Ethics and the Materialistic Conception of History and The Class Struggle*, and W. Sombart's *Sozialismus und Soziale Bewegung* (Socialism and Social Movement), as well as works by Marx and Engels.

observe that 'no traces of Marxist influences can be found in his writings before the end of 1918.' (p. 56).

¹⁴ Bernstein, p. 105.

¹⁵ Yamakawa Hitoshi, 'Soviets no kenkyu' (A study of soviet), *Kaizō* [Reconstruction], no. 5, May 1921.

¹⁶ Xing Tian, *Bitan*, p. 35.

¹⁷ The French police found English books on Marxist economics. See Gongbo (Chen Gongbo), 'Shiri lüxing zhong de chun Shenpu' (Ten-days' travel in Shanghai in the spring), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1 July 1921, p. 9.

¹⁸ Chen Tanqiu, 'Diyici daibiao dahui de huiyi' (Reminiscences of the First Congress), in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 288. This article was translated from Chen Pan-tsu (Chen Tanqiu), 'Reminiscences of the First Congress', *Communist International*, vol. 7, nos. 4-5, October 1936. Liu Nongchao, 'Wo suo liaojie de Li Hanjun (What I know about Li Hanjun)', *Gemingshi ziliao*, no. 8, September 1982, p. 209; Chen Gongbo, 'Wo yu gongchandang' (I and the CCP), in *Chen Gongbo Zhou Fohai huiyilu hebian* [Combined Edition of the Recollections by Chen Gongbo and Zhou Fohai], Chunqiu chubanshe, Hong Kong, 1967, p. 21.

Li Hanjun also got access to several Western socialist journals, and publications of Soviet Russia and the Comintern. It was reported that J. Lizerovitch and other Soviet agents supplied some socialist literature from Western countries to *Xingqi pinglun* and other progressive journals in China, and asked Li Hanjun to translate some articles from them. The literature included the *Daily Herald*, *New York Call*, *Workers' Dreadnaught*, *Soviet Russia*, *International Press Correspondence*, *Soviet Constitution*.¹⁹ Among them, *Soviet Russia* was 'an official organ of Soviet Russia's Information Bureau' in New York, which was 'devoted to spreading the truth about Russia.'²⁰ These Western journals carried articles by Western socialists and writings by Lenin, Trotsky and other Soviet leaders, as well as reports on Soviet Russia.²¹ They kept Li abreast of socialist theories and developments in the world socialist and Communist movements. They also provided him with a wider perspective on Marxism and other socialist ideas. Although Li did not always agree with the views of all the various socialist schools, he believed that 'research on issues should be unrestricted and many-sided', in line with his general pluralism.²²

3.2 'How Should We Evolve?'

In the summer of 1919, Li Hanjun publicly showed his affinity with Marxism, initially in the article 'How Should We Evolve?'²³ In its first part, he dealt with the question of human evolution. He wrote that in Marx's opinion, making tools was the starting point at which humans stopped being animals. Their ability to make tools

¹⁹ FO 228/3211, July 1920; FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157; FO 228/3214, June 1920; *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 2, no. 7. Lizerovitch's background and his activities in China can be seen in Li Danyang, 'Hongse E qiao Lizeluoweiqi yu Zhongguo chuqi gongchanzhuyi yundong' (A Red Russian in China, Lizerovich, and the Chinese Communist movement in the early days), *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* [Journal of Sun Yat-sen University], no. 6, November, 2002.

²⁰ *The Communist International*, nos. 16-17, 1921, p. 134; L. W. Levy (ed), *Revolutionary Radicalism, Its History, Purpose and Tactics*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1971, vol. 2, p. 641; T. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, The Viking Press, New York, 1963, p. 175.

²¹ Some of the above journals published in the USA and the UK had relationships with Soviet Russia and the Comintern. Cf. S. R. Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1956, p.170; J. Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1969, vol. 2, p. 24; H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1975, p. 7; B. Holman, *Good Old George*, Lion Publishing, Oxford, 1990, pp. 78-79; A. Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-1943*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p. 29, p. 43; T. Draper, *The Roots of American Communism*, The Viking Press, New York, 1957, p. 427; Levy (ed), vol. 2, pp. 639-646.

²² Hanjun, 'I.W.W. gaiyao' (A General Survey of the IWW), *XQPL*, no. 33, 18 January 1920, p. 3.

²³ Xianjin, 'Zenmeyang jinhua' (How Should We Evolve?), *XQPL*, no. 11, 17 August 1919, pp. 2-3.

was crucial. Li went on to discuss the evolution of civilisations. He wrote: 'People in ancient times could only employ natural materials to make tools, whereas nowadays they can use complex powers to make and drive machines. A product that needed a hundred people to make in the past now needs only one.' Steam engines and electrical power had led to a colossal growth in productive capabilities. Yet this did not bring happiness to humankind. Instead, the Industrial Revolution seemed to have brought bad luck – world war, economic crisis and other 'big panics'.

Why? Li disagreed with T. Malthus, who blamed distress and scarcity on population growth. According to Li, it happened because the means of production are owned by capitalists. Capital has an inherent tendency to accumulate, so capitalists intensify their exploitation of the workers by giving them low wages and forcing them to work long hours. As a result, workers 'become tools, just like machines'. The capitalists also concentrate political and social power in their own hands. Because production under capitalism was not for the people's needs, crises of overproduction repeatedly occurred, leading to a 'crippled society'.

To find an outlet for 'surplus' products, the capitalists strove to expand abroad. As a result of their monopoly of the market, as well as the means of modern production, vast numbers of people in weak and small countries lose their means of livelihood and fall under foreign political and economic control. Worse still, the industrial countries' scramble for spheres of influence and markets caused the world war.

However, Li Hanjun still affirmed modern progress in science and technology and was confident that humankind would find a way to end its distress. He believed that 'science should bring a life of pleasure to everyone rather than just a few people'. He ended his article: 'Work needs to be done by everybody, so security and happiness should be enjoyed by everybody. ... How can we bring the ownership of machinery to those who run the machines?'

This article demonstrates that Li was trying to use Marxist philosophical anthropology and materialist conceptions of history to interpret human evolution, to analyse the causes of the social, political and economic crisis, and to predict the future of humanity. Perhaps Li also knew some of Lenin's ideas, for he talked about monopolies, the world war, and the sufferings of peoples in colonies. The major topic of 'How Should We Evolve' is human social evolution. Li Hanjun, like many

of his contemporaries, was familiar with the ideas of Darwinian evolution and Social Darwinism, which were prevalent at the time, especially after Yan Fu's interpretation and translation of them.²⁴ However, Li disagreed with the then fashionable theories of Social Darwinism, which viewed human society and the world as a competitive arena in which the 'fittest' would rise to the top through 'natural selection'. In fact, Li advocated social progress rather than evolution; he used the word *jinhua* to mean 'progressive growing or development', which, according to him, can express forward movement better than the word *jinbu* (progress).²⁵

The idea of progress, born in the seventeenth century, came to dominate contemporary discourse in the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century, and at some stage, the term 'progress' became equated with 'development' and 'evolution'. History was thus regarded as a process, in which human civilisation moved in the direction of liberty and happiness.²⁶ Li Hanjun, like Marx, believed in a bright future for the human race.

Although Li mentioned Marx only once in this article, it is clear that several of his views are in some respects similar to Marx's. For example, he criticised capitalist society as 'crippled'; the fact that workers became 'implements the same as machines'; and that under capitalism, big industrial and scientific progress did not bring happiness to most people. Marx said that modern industry 'makes science a productive force distinct from labour and presses it into the service of capital', and that machinery 'converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity'; and in capitalist society, the industrial worker has been reduced to 'a cog in the machine', and 'an appendage of a machine'.²⁷ These passages deal with the alienation of labour. Marx once wrote that, if the source of all alienation is an 'alien, hostile, powerful and independent object', not the object but the owner of this object is the ultimate source of all forms of alienation, for only humans can constitute this alien power over others.

²⁴ Wang Min, 'Lun Yan Fu de "Tianyan lun" dui Zhongguo jindai shehui de yingxiang' (On Yan Fu's 'Tianyan lun's influence upon Chinese modern society), in *Yan Fu yu Zhongguo jindai wenhua* [Yan Fu and Chinese Modern Culture], Zhang Guangmin (ed), Haifeng chubanshe, Fuzhou, 2003, pp. 76-86.

²⁵ Hanjun, 'Du Zhang Wentian xiansheng di "Zhongguo di luanyuan jiqi jiejie"' (On Mr Zhang Wentian's 'Origins and settlement of chaos in China'), *JW*, 2 February 1922, p. 4.

²⁶ Cf. Fang Zhiqiang, 'Jinbu de linian: neihan yu dingyi' (The idea of progress: meanings and definitions), *Si yu yan* [Thoughts and Words], vol. 39, no. 3, September 2001.

²⁷ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, in *MECW*, vol. 35, p. 639; Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto, With an Introduction and Notes by G. S. Jones*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p. 227. See also B. Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 60-62.

People are not free because they are under the domination of others.²⁸ He pointed out that private ownership of the means of production is the source of the alienation of labour. In ‘How Should We Evolve’, Li seemed to come to the same conclusion.

Li Hanjun’s ideas seemed to echo Marx’s humanistic concern and concept of alienation. For Li as for Marx, the human being is the primary object and starting point. However, unlike his ‘Transformation Must Be Total’, which lashes out at old traditions and the despotic system, ‘How Should We Evolve?’ aims to criticise capitalism, a new system of exploitation that had dominated advanced countries and recently reached China. Li’s central concern is industrial workers rather than abstract human beings. He expressed the belief that mankind would found a new social system capable of bringing happiness and security to all.

This article shows that Li Hanjun absorbed many Marxist ideas from works he had read before August 1919. It can be safely asserted that by this time, he had become convinced of the truth of Marxism and started making conscious efforts to introduce it to China.

3.3 Urging People to Study Socialist Theories Systematically

Not long after the October Revolution in Russia, some Chinese intellectuals concluded that the ‘great tide of socialist revolution’ would soon reach China.²⁹ During the May Fourth period, numerous new journals started up in China. In many, as well as in several older journals, socialism and other new ideas became main topics.³⁰ Yang Duanliu observed in the summer of 1920: ‘Socialism seems to have become a pet phrase these days; newspapers and magazines spare no efforts to advocate socialism. Recently, even some people who know nothing about socialism parade themselves as socialists.’³¹ However, few Chinese knew the real meaning of socialism.

²⁸ Cf. Z. A. Jordan, (ed), *Karl Marx: Economy, Class and Social Revolution*, Thomas Nelson & Sons, London, 1971, pp. 18-19.

²⁹ Luo Jialun, ‘Jinri zhi shijie xin chao’ (The new tide of today’s world), *Xin chao*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1919, p. 19.

³⁰ According to incomplete statistics, between 1919 and 1920 out of around 400 Chinese journals, more than 200 had socialist tendencies. See Zhu Hanguo et al., *Zhongguo gongchandang jianshe shi* [History of the Establishment of the CCP], Sichuan renmin chubanshe, Chengdu, 1991, p. 5.

³¹ Yang Duanliu, ‘Guiguo zagan’ (Random thoughts on returning to the motherland), *Taipingyang* [The Pacific Ocean], vol. 3, no. 6, August 1920, quoted from Lü Fangshang, p. 266.

Li Hanjun believed that short articles full of empty talk and fragmentary comments would make little contribution to Chinese thinking. Given that writings about socialism were lacking in China, he hoped Chinese intellectuals would concentrate on filling the gap by writing and translating ‘special books’ to introduce socialist theory systematically. Realising his own capacity was limited, Li hoped other more advanced intellectuals would join him in this work. He appealed to those who knew foreign languages to ‘use their time and energy to translate more books, particularly works on social sciences.’ Such works, he believed, were essential for providing Chinese intellectuals with ‘weapons’ and ‘food’ to aid their participation in the cultural movement and social revolution. He encouraged people to learn Russian and Indian languages to enable them to introduce Russian and Indian thinking into China.³² In response, the head of the library of the Custom Office in Shanghai wrote to Li offering to lend foreign books to those wishing to do translation work.³³

The stress Li Hanjun laid on specialised and systematic study was, perhaps, one reason why publication of *Xingqi pinglun* stopped. Its ‘Declaration about Stopping Publication’, which appeared in the final issue of *Xingqi pinglun* (on 6 June 1920), stated: ‘During the last year, we have lamented our lack knowledge and must make a systematic study of the basic sciences. Therefore we have decided to stop publication of this journal in order to concentrate on academic study.’ It also announced plans to publish serious socialist works and pamphlets and the authors’ intention to devote mental and physical energy to social transformation.³⁴

The next day, *Minguo ribao* carried a notice on forthcoming books published by ‘The Society for the Publication of a Series of Books on Sociology and Economics’. It said: ‘China’s cultural movement is moving towards the transformation of economic institutions’; in such a situation, ‘piecemeal comments’ cannot make much contribution to the future thinking circle, so [we have] determined to discontinue publishing periodicals.’ The notice revealed that the Society laid special emphasis on

³² Xianjin, ‘Wenhua yundong de liangshi gongji’ (Providing sustenance for the cultural movement), *JW*, 19 March 1920, p. 4; Xianjin, ‘Yanjiu E-wen Yinduwen de biyao’ (The necessity of studying Russian and Indian), *JW*, 19 March 1920, p. 4.

³³ ‘Fanyi zhuanmen shuji de jihui’ (Opportunities to translate special books — Zhou Chuangchuang to Xianjin), *JW*, 22 March 1920, p. 4.

³⁴ ‘Kanxing zhongzhi de xuanyan’ (Declaration about stopping publication), *XQPL*, no. 53, 6 June 1920, p. 4.

studying the economic causes of social change and wanted to introduce relevant theories; it announced that sixteen books would be published within a year.

The contact address of the Society for the Publication of Book Series on Sociology and Economics was the same as the offices of *Xingqi pinglun* and *Jianshe*, and all the authors or translators listed in the notice had belonged to the societies associated with the two journals.³⁵ This reveals that the ‘Society for the Publication of Books on Sociology and Economics’ was formed on the initiative of the editors of and contributors to *Xingqi pinglun* and *Jianshe*. Having edited *Xingqi pinglun* and contributed to *Jianshe*, Li Hanjun was a co-founder of the Society. The ‘Declaration’ and ‘Notice’ reflected Li’s views. It is possible that he drafted the two documents.

Li Hanjun had started translating socialist works in 1919. The ‘Notice’ shows that the works to be published included Li’s translation of A. Loria’s *Le Basi Economiche della Costituzione Sociale* (The Economic Basis of Society) and *Shehuizhuyi yundong shi* (A History of Socialist Movement) compiled by him. In May 1920, Li’s translation of ‘The Economic Basis of Morality’, part of *The Economic Basis of Society*, was published. In the translator’s note, Li wrote that this work had absorbed Marx’s theory, in spite of his disagreement with some of Marx’s economic ideas.³⁶ This translation shows that Li regarded economics as the basis of morality, law and social system.

In Shanghai between 1920 and 1921, Li Hanjun and several other socialists, including Chen Duxiu, Chen Wangdao and Li Da, organised the Society for the Study of Marxism, the Society for the Study of Socialism, and the Society for Editing a Series of Books of the New Era (*Xin shidai congshu she*). Through these societies, they promoted the dissemination of socialist theories and the publication of relevant books.

In Li Hanjun’s view, Marxism was the acme of socialist theory. He wrote: ‘Today, only Marx has accurately observed the origins, development and outcome of social phenomena in modern countries, and studied them profoundly and expounded them thoroughly.’³⁷ Introducing Marxism was therefore his first priority. For Li, Marxism was ‘a set of integrated systems’. He called it ‘an organic system that cannot be

³⁵ ‘Shehui jingji congshu diyiqi chuban yugao’ (Notice on forthcoming book series on sociology and economics, no. 1), *Minguo ribao*, 7 June 1920, p. 1.

³⁶ Luoliya (A. Loria), ‘Daode di jingji de jichu’ (The economic basis of morality), translated by Hanjun, *Jianshe*, vol. 2, no. 4, May 1920, p. 779.

³⁷ Hanjun, ‘Yanjiu Makesi xueshuo de biyao’, *JW*, p. 4.

separated', except for analytical convenience. He illustrated his point with two main arguments: studying historical materialism without referring to Marx's theory of class struggle could lead to mechanical materialism; studying Marx's historical materialism and his theory of class struggle without consulting his economic theory would only produce empty concepts. Those who intended to study Marxism should first try to know the whole system and understand it in all its aspects.³⁸ As I shall show later, Li studied and introduced Marxism systematically, covering all its main theories, including political economics, historical materialism, and scientific socialism.

3.4 Translating Marxist Works

Li Hanjun always attached importance to reading original Marxist works. He once wrote: 'Those who advocate and attempt to grasp Marxist socialism must carefully read the three Marxist classics: *The Communist Manifesto*, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, and *Das Kapital*.'³⁹ In 1919, the *Xingqi pinglun* society, in which Li Hanjun played a key role, invited Chen Wangdao to translate *The Communist Manifesto*.⁴⁰ After Chen Wangdao completed his translation of *The Communist Manifesto* from Japanese, he handed it to Li Hanjun and Chen Duxiu for proofreading and revision.⁴¹

Li Hanjun understood that translating Marxist works was essential for making Marxism accessible to the Chinese, and thus was a task he was prepared to fulfil. In November 1919, the Chinese translation of K. Kautsky's *Karl Marx' Ökonomische Lehren* (Karl Marx's Economic Doctrines) began publication in instalments in *Jianshe* under the title *Makesi zibenlun jieshuo* (Interpreting Marx's *Capital*). The translator was given as Dai Jitao. However, when *Zibenlun jieshuo* (Interpreting *Capital*) came off the press as a book in 1927, Dai revealed in the Foreword that he translated only

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Li Hanjun, 'Yizhe xu' (Translator's foreword) to Marcy, *Magesi Zibenlun rumen* [An Introduction to Marx's *Capital*], Shehuizhuyi yanjiushe, Shanghai, September 1920, p. 1. The English and German titles of these Marxist works are given by Li Hanjun in this Foreword.

⁴⁰ Chen Wangdao, 'Huiyi Dang chengli shiqi de yixie qingkuang' (Some recollections on when the Party was established), 17 June 1956, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 20; Shao Lizi, *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴¹ Xuanlu, 'Da ren wen Gongchandang xuanyan de faxing' (An answer to a question: on the issue of *the Communist Manifesto*), *JW*, 30 September 1920, p. 3.

some of it, together with Zhu Zhixin and Li Hanjun, and that the rest was translated by Hu Hanmin.⁴²

From late 1920, Li Hanjun's translations were part of the Chinese Communists' effort to propagate Marxism. In September 1920, the Society for the Study of Socialism, an institute of the CCP, published its first batch of Marxist works, including Li Hanjun's translation of *Makesi zibenlun rumen* (An Introduction to Marx's *Capital*). This book was originally titled *Shop Talks on Economics* and its author was Mary E. Marcy, editor of *International Socialist Review*. Li translated it from a Japanese version by Endo Musui. In the Foreword, Li wrote that Marcy's work 'expounds in simple language the essential concepts and tenets of Marxist economic theory, including commodity, value, price, surplus value, and the relations between capital and labour. It is the best work published in the West so far. It makes Marx's economic theory easy to understand and grasps all its main points.' Li had previously stressed the importance of studying original Marxist works on economics, but he was aware that Marx's *Capital* was very complicated and the level of knowledge of Chinese intellectuals was not at the time sufficiently high. He believed that *Shop Talks on Economics* would give readers the necessary basis for them to progress to further study of *Capital*, which is why he changed its title to *An Introduction to Marx's Capital*. He told readers they should later go on to read Marx's *Value, Price and Profit*⁴³, which he set about translating, and would be published soon thereafter.

In September 1921, *Xin qingnian* (vol. 9, no. 5) announced the existing or forthcoming publication of translations of several Marxist works. They included *Jiazhi jiage yu lirun* (Value, Price and Profit) translated by Li Ding, a name Li Hanjun had used in Japan; there were also *Zibenlun* (*Capital*), *Jingjixue piping* (*The Critique of Economics*)⁴⁴, *Geming yu fangeming* (*Revolution and Counter-revolution*)⁴⁵ and *Gongqian laodong yu ziben* (*Wage Labour and Capital*). The translator of the first three was 'Li Shushi', an exact homophone of Li's original name, once used by Li as a

⁴² Kautsky, *Zibenlun jieshuo* [Interpreting Capital], translated by Hu Hanmin, Shanghai minzhi shuju, Shanghai, October 1927, p. 1.

⁴³ This is the same work as *Wage, Price and Profit*.

⁴⁴ This referred to *The Critique of Political Economy*. Li Hanjun cited Marx's 'Preface to A Contribution to *The Critique of Political Economy*' in an article published in January 1922, in which, after the Chinese title *Jingjixue piping*, Li put *Zur Kritik [der] Politischen Oekonomie* in brackets. Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu also cited *The Critique of Political Economy* as *Jingjixue piping* in their works.

⁴⁵ Engels' *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*.

pen name.⁴⁶ So Li Hanjun was the translator of these three works. The translator of the last book was named as Yuan Xiang, later changed to Yuan Rang.⁴⁷ This may also have been Li Hanjun, for several early Hubei Communists recalled that Li Hanjun was the translator of *Wage Labour and Capital*;⁴⁸ and Li was born in Yuanjiaqiao (Yuan family's bridge) village, where ancestors of people surnamed Yuan and Li originally lived.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the work was translated in part from German, in which Li (rare among Chinese Communists at the time) was proficient.⁵⁰

In June 1922, the People Press, the CCP's publishing institute, announced the publication of Marx's *Zibenlun chuban xuyan* (Preface to *Capital's First Edition*), translated by Li Shushi.⁵¹ This and other translations by Li Shushi including *The Critique of Political Economy* and *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* seem not yet to have been found. However, in an article published in June 1922, Li Hanjun quoted at length a passage from Marx's 'Preface to the First German Edition' of the First Volume of *Capital*. Li's translation is quite different from Fei Juetian's translation of this Preface, published earlier, which shows that Li did translate the work, or at least a part of it.⁵²

⁴⁶ In July 1922, Li Shushi's *Taipingyang huiyi yu wuren zhi taidu* (Our attitudes towards the Pacific Conference) was published by People's Press. This pamphlet was Li Hanjun's lengthy article (under the pen name 'Han') 'Taipingyang huiyi ji women ying qu de taidu' (How we should deal with the Pacific Conference), published in *Gongchandang* [The Communist] (henceforth *GCD*), no. 6, 7 July 1921.

⁴⁷ Several editions can be found in the China National Museum, Hubei Provincial Museum, and the Memorial House of the First Congress of the CCP in Shanghai. The translator is Yuan Rang.

⁴⁸ Yuan Puzhi recalled that she and several other students in 1922 had listened to Li Hanjun expound *Wage Labour and Capital* translated by Li himself. Yuan Puzhi, 'Huiyi Dong laoshi' (Reminiscences of my teacher Dong), in *Yi Donglao* [In Memory of Dong Biwu], Hubei Shehui Kexueyuan (ed), Hubei renmin chubanshe, Wuhan, 1980, vol. 1, p. 107; also see Yuan Puzhi, 'Hubei shengwei taolun guo Li Hanjun huiyu dangji de wenti' (The CCP's Hubei Provincial Committee discussed the issue on resuming of Li Hanjun's Party membership), *Gemingshi ziliao*, no. 14, 1984, p. 183. This article first came from Yuan Puzhi's four letters to Li Danyang between July 1981-June 1983 and edited by Li Danyang in 1983. The original title of the article given by Yuan was 'Huainian geming qianbei Li Hanjun tongzhi' (In memory of a revolutionary of the old generation – Comrade Li Hanjun). Liu Zigu recalled that, after his translation of *Wage Labour and Capital* had been published again, Li Hanjun handed all of the remuneration to the Hubei branch of the CCP. See Liu Zigu, 'Oral recollection of Li Hanjun', interviewed by Tian Ziyu and Li Danyang on 10 July 1981 (unpublished). The translation Liu referred to was probably the one reprinted in 1925.

⁴⁹ Cf. Long Congqi, 'Oral recollection of Li Hanjun', interviewed by Gan Ziji and Li Danyang on 21 December 1981; Yuan Lin (an old villager of Yuanqiao), 'Letter to Li Xiaowen' (a daughter of Li Shucheng), September 1998. Many Yuanqiao villagers told me this when I visited there on 13 October 2005. Their testimony has been recorded by a member of staff of Qianjiang Museum, Luo Deming.

⁵⁰ See the translator's note to the editions of 1921 and 1926.

⁵¹ Ni Xingxiang (ed), *Zhongguo gongchandang chuanguangshishi dashiji* [Chronicle of Events concerning the History of the Establishment of the CCP], Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 2004, p. 181.

⁵² Fei Juetian's 'Makesi zibenlun zixu' (Marx's Preface to *Capital*) was published in *Guomin* [The Citizens], vol. 2, no. 3, October 1920.

Li Shushi's translation of *The Critique of Political Economy* has not yet been found, but Li Hanjun quoted several paragraphs from 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' in his articles and teaching material.⁵³ It seems that these paragraphs were translated by Li, since they contained several German terms and differ from the earlier translations by Chen Puquan and Li Dazhao from Japanese. The same teaching material contains parts of Marx's *Capital*.⁵⁴ Again, the fact that there are several German terms in them suggests Li Hanjun might have translated them directly from the German.⁵⁵

Several Marxist works translated by Li Hanjun and announced as 'forthcoming' have not yet been found. Shen Yanbing once wrote that Li was so busy with revolutionary activities that he was not able to publish many works and translations; and that 'some of Li Hanjun's translations published as single pamphlets have been out of print for a long time.'⁵⁶ However, some of Li's translations were published in many editions and exerted a significant influence. For example, *An Introduction to Marx's Capital* was on the reading list of the Societies for Studying Marxism and Book Societies in Beijing, Shanghai, Changsha, Wuhan and Jinan.⁵⁷ Li's translation of *Wage Labour and Capital* was also widely read and studied by intellectuals. Such translations transmitted to China a basic knowledge of Marxist economics.⁵⁸ Xu Dixin, later an economist in the PRC, recalled that the first Marxist work on economics he ever read was Li Hanjun's translation of *An Introduction to Marx's Capital*.⁵⁹

⁵³ Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?' (How can we quickly bring China's chaotic situation to an end?), *JW*, 1 January 1922, supplementary issue, p. 2; Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 2, pp. 7-10.

⁵⁴ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 2, pp. 74-78, pp. 78-81.

⁵⁵ For the textual research, see Li Danyang, 'Guanyu Li Hanjun dui Makesizhuyi zhuzuo fanyi qingkuang de tantao' (Research on Li Hanjun's translation of Marxist works), *SGZY*, no. 8, December 2008.

⁵⁶ Xing Tian, 'Ji Li Hanjun', *Bitan*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Shao Chongsheng, 'Wusi shiqi Ma-Lie zhuyi zai Zhongguo de chuanbo' (The spread of Marxism-Leninism in China during the May Fourth period), *Liaoning shiyuan xuebao* [Journal of Liaoning Normal Institute], no. 4, 1980, pp. 6-10; Zhou Shizhao, 'Xiangjiang de nuhou' (Roars of the Xiang River), in *Wusi yundong huiyilu* [Collected Reminiscences of the May Fourth Movement], Zhongguo shehuikexueyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo (ed), Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1979, vol. 1, p. 451.

⁵⁸ Li Da's translation of *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx* (by K. Kautsky) was published in 1921. Earlier, Dai Jitao had translated Marxist economic works and published them in *Xingqi pinglun*.

⁵⁹ Xu Dixin, 'Oral recollection of Li Hanjun', interviewed by Li Danyang on 8 July 1981 (unpublished).

Li Hanjun was always willing to lend his help to other translators of Marxist works. He checked Chen Wangdao's translation of *The Communist Manifesto*⁶⁰ and helped Li Da to translate the Dutch Marxist H. Gorter's *An Explanation of Materialist Conception of History* from German.⁶¹ According to Luo Zhanglong, the translations of Marxist works by Beijing's Society for the Study of Marxism were handed for further revision to a translation team led by Chen Duxiu in Shanghai, of which Li Hanjun was an important member.⁶² In the common cause to translate Marxist works, Li exerted all possible efforts to fulfil his task.

3.5 Introducing and Popularising Marxist Economic Theory

Li Hanjun believed that 'the transformation of economic institutions is the basis for social transformation.'⁶³ In an article on the social sciences, he wrote that economics is the study of how to organise material production. According to him, 'the change of production technology would certainly bring about changes in relations and institutions of production.' He also stressed distribution, in the belief that economics should benefit the majority of the people.⁶⁴

Li's translations were mainly of Marxist economic theory. He once said that Marxist economics is a theory for analysing capitalist institutions and that economic theory is essential for understanding current and future social institutions.⁶⁵ However, importing Marxist economic theory into China was an arduous task. Capitalism in China was not yet ripe and many terms in Marxist economic writings were not easily comprehensible.

Li Hanjun often lectured on Marxist economics at study societies and at schools and universities. According to Peng Shuzhi, he and other students at the School of Foreign Languages in Shanghai studied Marxist economics at the 'Society for the

⁶⁰ According to Yu Xiusong's diary of 27 June 1920, they could not find *the Communist Manifesto* in German, and had only English, Russian and Japanese versions (SGZY, no. 1, p. 278).

⁶¹ Translator's Preface to Guotai (Gorter), *Weiwushiguan jieshuo* [Interpreting the Material Conception of History], translated by Li Da, Zhonghua shuju, Shanghai, 1921.

⁶² Luo Zhanglong, 'Huiyi Beijing daxue Makesi xueshuo yanjiuhui' (Recollections of the Society for the Study of Marxism in Beijing University), 4 September 1978, in *Wusi yundong huiyilu*, vol. 1, p. 415.

⁶³ *Minguo ribao*, 7 June 1920, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Hanjun, 'Shehui kexue tekan fakan zhiqiu' (Our aim in starting the publication of Special Social Science Issues), *JW's Special Social Science Issues*, no. 1, 1 December 1924, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Hanjun, 'Yanjiu Makesi xueshuo de biyao', *JW*, p. 4.

Study of Marxism'. Peng wrote that it was hard to understand terms such as 'surplus value', 'monetary system', 'extended reproduction' and so on. He added: 'When we were immersed in the study of Marxist economics, Li Hanjun became our guide.'⁶⁶ At the Women's Study Society organised in Wuhan in 1922, Li helped members read *Wage Labour and Capital*. He used his own words to expound Marxist economics and taught that workers' surplus labour is extracted by the capitalists.⁶⁷ As a supervisor of the Society for the Study of Social Sciences, founded by students and teachers at Wuchang Commercial University in 1924, he guided readers through *An Introduction to Marx's Capital* and other books and directed discussion at seminars.⁶⁸

Li Hanjun also thought that it was essential to popularise Marxist economics, particularly among workers. In this vein, he wrote articles introducing the ABC of Marxist economics in simple language. In May 1920, he published 'The Formation of the Robber Caste'.⁶⁹ Paraphrasing Bernard Shaw, he called the capitalists 'the Robber Caste', and pointed out that the capitalists did not act as ordinary robbers who broke the existing system to rob by using violence, but plundered and exploited the working people under the protection of the existing state, law and morality, with the weapons of knowledge and money. In the course of exposing them, Li introduced the Marxist concepts of commodity, value, money, capital, labour power, and so on. He then tried to explain the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation, including the formulae of $C_1 - M - C_2$, and $M - C - M'$, as Marx formulated it in *Capital*. The secret of their exploitation was that they bought a special commodity, labour power, which can add value to other commodities and create surplus value, i.e., 'the value created by workers during their work in the factory above and beyond the wages they are paid'.

Li noted that the Chinese industrial capitalists' genesis and development was different from in Europe. The Chinese capitalist class was first formed in the late Qing dynasty, when the Qing government, facing foreign invasion, encouraged and rewarded Chinese merchants to engage in manufacturing. Afterwards, and in the

⁶⁶ C. Cadart and Cheng Yingxiang (eds), *Mémoires de Peng Shuzhi, L'Envol du Communisme en Chine* [Memoirs of Peng Shuzhi, The Take-off of Communism in China], Gallimard, Paris, 2000, pp. 205-206.

⁶⁷ Xia Zhixu, 'Huiyi Li Hanjun laoshi' (Memories of my teacher Li Hanjun), interviewed by Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi between January 1980 and April 1982, published in *Gemingshi ziliao*, no. 14, 1984, p. 178; Yuan Puzhi, *Gemingshi ziliao*, pp. 183-184.

⁶⁸ Guoli Wuchang gaodeng shangke daxue shehuikexue yanjiushe (ed), *Shehui kexue yanjiu* [Studies of Social Sciences], vol. 1, Wuchang, 1926.

⁶⁹ Hanjun, 'Qiangdao jieji di chengli' (The establishment of the robber caste), *XQPL*, no. 48, 1 May 1920, p. 10. Not long after the publication of this article, Li made a speech on the topic 'The Robber Caste and Morality', *Minguo ribao*, 18 May 1920, p. 3.

Republic, some officials also became capitalists. Those Chinese capitalists, without exception, as Marx wrote in the *Capital*, make a fetish of commodity and money, and have mercenary motives ‘to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus-value, and consequently to exploit labour-power to the greatest possible extent.’ However, threatened by bandits and soldiers, Chinese capitalists felt insecure, and deposited their money in foreign banks in China, thus becoming dependent on foreign finance.

In ‘Money and Labour’, published in *Laodong jie*, Li Hanjun explained the relationship between labour power, commodity value, and money. He wrote that all products are created by the labour power of workers and peasants. Wood changes from its natural state into a thing of value by means of felling, cutting, carrying, transporting, and manufacturing. A commodity becomes dearer if more labour is added and the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of necessary labour-time it embodies. This was meant to elucidate Marx’s thinking in *Capital*: ‘A commodity has a value, because it is a crystallisation of social labour. ... The relative values of commodities are ... determined by the respective quantities or amounts of labour, worked up, realised, fixed in them.’⁷⁰ Li went on that money has value because it can be used to buy commodities created by labour power, so ‘money is nothing more than a thing representing the quantity of labour power’; if there is no labour power, money has no use. Labour power therefore deserves greater respect than money. The reason for working people’s poverty was that the fruits of their labour are plundered by their employers.⁷¹

Li Hanjun acknowledged that ‘[t]he rate of profit is the motive power of capitalist production. Things are produced only so long as they can be produced with a profit’ (cited from Marx’s *Capital*).⁷² From the perspective of Marx’s labour theory of value, profit is a part of total surplus value, whereas surplus value is actually that part of workers’ labour (the unpaid part) appropriated by the capitalist class. Moreover, a portion of the surplus product or surplus value as accumulated, materialised labour is reconverted into capital to multiply itself by exchanging itself for labour power, i.e., by dominating immediate living labour.⁷³ Following this theory, Li Hanjun wrote that

⁷⁰ *MECW*, vol. 35, p. 639.

⁷¹ Hanjun, ‘Jinqian he laodong’ (Money and labour), *Laodong jie* [The World of Labour], no. 2, 22 August 1920, pp. 3-4.

⁷² Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 2, p. 79.

⁷³ Cf. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 24. ‘Conversion of Surplus Value into Capital’, in *MECW*, vol. 35, pp. 578-606; Marx, ‘Wage Labour and Capital’, Part 3, in *MECW*, vol. 9, pp. 211-215.

when surplus value put into extended reproduction, it converts into capital. In this sense, capital can be also regarded as an outcome of labour. He thus claimed that workers should have the right to get dividends as well as wages.⁷⁴ But Li realised this was a mere reform and that the main task was to change the capitalist mode of production.

It can be seen that Li Hanjun's explanations differed somewhat from Marx's terms and definitions, but he nevertheless grasped the essentials of the theory and always related it to the specific situation in China. He was therefore regarded as an expert in Marxist economics. Zhang Guotao called him a noted Marxist theorist who was especially interested in Marx's economic theories.⁷⁵ Cai Hesen also praised his studies on Marx's *Capital* and his works on Marxist economics.⁷⁶

In fact, although Li Hanjun translated several Marxist economic works, he did not write many articles of his own on Marxist economic theory. His best-known articles in this respect were written in simplified terms for workers. One cannot say that he ever made a constructive contribution to Marxist economics.

3.6 *Elaborating on the Materialist Conception of History*

The materialist concept of history, for Li Hanjun, was 'Marx's historical conception and the basis of all his theories'; and unless one understands the materialist concept of history, one cannot comprehend his other works and doctrines.⁷⁷ However, when the materialist concept of history or historical materialism was introduced as a major topic by Li Dazhao, Hu Hanmin, Chen Puxian, Li Da, Chen Duxiu and Yang Bao'an in 1919-21, Li Hanjun continued to concentrate on Marx's economics, and only started introducing historical materialism in 1922. However, his introduction to and

⁷⁴ Hanjun, 'Du Yong'an gongsi "fei gudong" quanti zhiyuan qishi' (Views on reading the announcement by Yong'an Company's non-shareholding shop-assistants), *Pingmin* [The Common People], *Minguo ribao*, supplement, no. 55, 18 June 1921, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Chang Kuo-t'ao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1927*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 1971, vol. 1, p. 105, p. 137.

⁷⁶ Cai Hesen, 'Zhongguo gongchandang shi de fazhan (tigang)' (An outline of the historical development of the CCP), 1926, in *Zhonggong dangshi baogao xuanbian* [Selected Reports on the History of the CCP] (henceforth *ZDBX*), Zhongyang dang'anguan (ed), Zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, Beijing, 1982, p. 28.

⁷⁷ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, p. 1.

interpretation of historical materialism differed to some extent from that of others, and had distinguishing feature.

In January 1922, Li Hanjun published ‘What Conceptions Do Not Belong in the Materialist Concept of History?’⁷⁸ Unlike contemporaries, he first tried to clear up misunderstandings about historical materialism and to expound its features. He pointed out: ‘If one misreads the materialist concept of history, one will misunderstand [Marx’s] doctrines.’ According to him, many scholars misunderstood historical materialism, so his aim was to differentiate historical materialism from other concepts and theories and to criticise wrong explanations of it.

Firstly, Li Hanjun pointed out that historical materialism is not like philosophical materialism, which looks at the relationship of thinking to being. It is not an abstract philosophical idea but ‘a kind of concrete science’. In support, he cited Engels: historical materialism ‘puts an end to philosophy in the realm of history, just as the dialectical conception of nature makes all philosophy of nature as unnecessary as it is impossible’; and ‘modern materialism is essentially dialectic, and no longer requires the assistance of that sort of philosophy which, queen-like, pretended to rule the remaining mob of sciences.’⁷⁹ Strictly speaking, historical materialism is an empirical theory, i.e., ‘a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men. ... these abstractions ... by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history.’⁸⁰

Li Hanjun continued that the materialist concept of history, as a basic Marxist ‘scientific’ concept, ‘combines the materialist mode of observing things and the dialectic mode of thought’, and is therefore ‘dialectical materialism’. While developing his concept of history, Marx adopted Hegel’s theory of the process of historical development and his dialectic thinking, so some people mistook Marx’s historical materialism for a philosophy akin to Hegel’s. Li affirmed Hegelian philosophy’s great merit but pointed out that Hegel was an idealist for whom matter was merely the realised idea. Historical materialism was not a variety of Hegelianism.

⁷⁸ Hanjun, ‘Weiwushiguan bushi shenme?’ (What conceptions do not belong in the materialist conception of history?), *JW*, 23, 31 January 1922.

⁷⁹ The English translations are cited from Engels, ‘Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy’, in *MECW*, vol. 26, p. 397; Engels, ‘Socialism: Utopian and Scientific’, *ibid.*, vol. 24, p. 303.

⁸⁰ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology, Edited and with Introduction by C. J. Arthur*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1974, p. 49.

Li Hanjun argued against those who mistook the materialist concept of history for sophistic materialism. Rather, it was evolutionary or historical materialism, since it sees and explains things from an evolutionary or historical perspective.

In this article, Li Hanjun also introduced dialectics. In order to give his readers a deep understanding of dialectical concepts, he believed that it was necessary to compare dialectics with its opposite - metaphysics. Again he cited from the Engels' 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific': 'To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas are isolated, are to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. ... For him a thing either exists or does not exist; a thing cannot at the same time be itself and something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in a rigid antithesis one to the other.' Dialectics, however, 'comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin, and ending.'⁸¹

In Li Hanjun's view, Marx's materialist concept of history was not merely economical conception of history, since it allowed other material conditions a role in historical change. At the time, some Chinese scholars, following Kawakami Hajime, equated historical materialism with an economic interpretation of history.⁸² For example, Li Dazhao once wrote that 'the economic interpretation of history' (proposed by E. R. A. Seligman) was an appropriate description of historical materialism.⁸³ Li Dazhao sometimes criticised historical materialism for ignoring spiritual activity and echoed Kawakami's criticisms in his 'My Views on Marxism': 'The reason some denounce Marxism is that it completely erases ethical concepts.' He added: 'We advocate remoulding the spirit of humankind with humanism, while transforming economic institutions with socialism. ... What we propose is to reconstruct matter and mind, as well as spirit and flesh.' In that way, one could 'remedy the shortcomings' of Marx's materialist concept of history.⁸⁴

Li Hanjun, in contrast, wrote that historical materialism does not merely concern itself with material things: it has little or nothing in common with mechanical

⁸¹ The English translation is cited from *MECW*, vol. 24, pp. 299-301.

⁸² This can be seen in the Chinese translation of Kawakami's 'Marx's Materialist Concept of History' by Yuanquan (Chen Puxian's pen name), in Lin Daizhao and Pan Guohua (eds), vol. 2, pp. 8-18, pp. 28-36.

⁸³ Li Dazhao, 'Weiwushiguan zai xiandai shixue shang de jiazhi' (The value of the material concept of history in modern historical studies), *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1 December 1920, p. 1.

⁸⁴ Li Dazhao, 'Wo de Makesizhuyi guan', *XQN*, p. 536.

materialism. According to him, Professor Seligman's 'The Economic Interpretation of History' resulted from a misreading of historical materialism.

To clarify the nature of historical materialism, Li Hanjun translated directly from Marx's classic formula of this theory in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. ... The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production ... but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation.⁸⁵

Li Hanjun expounded this compact statement paragraph by paragraph and concluded: the forces of social production or their level of development are the basis of all social systems; so the ultimate reason for social, political and ideological change is economic, where changes in production tools precede changes in the mode of production.

In Li's view, historical materialism covers the interaction between productive forces and production relations as well as between the economic base and superstructure. Material production comes first, and the invention of new tools and machines is crucial. New technology was the main stimulus for changes in the mode and relations of production, followed by ideas, politics, law, etc. New social systems or organisations (*shehui zuzhi*) correspond to definite stages in the development of the productive forces. However, changes in these *shehui zuzhi* are unlike changes in the natural world: they can be achieved only by human action, which depends on ideas. So new ideas, 'the reflection of economic changes', can sometimes become 'an important factor in the social progress of humankind'.⁸⁶

It is worth mentioning that Li Hanjun often used the term *shehui zuzhi* to represent production relations and the political and legal system, which belong to both the economic base and the superstructure. People constitute the *shehui zuzhi*, which refers

⁸⁵ Li's quotation is here abridged. *Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* is also referred to in this article. Comparing Li Hanjun's translation with others by Li Dazhao and Yuanquan, I found they differ greatly. The latter two translated the formulation from Kawakami's work. The English translation is quoted from *MECW*, vol. 29, pp. 263-264.

⁸⁶ Li Hanjun expressed a similar view in several other articles.

to relations among people.⁸⁷ Marx and Engels occasionally used the term ‘social organisation’ in the sense of relations of production. For example, ‘the social organisation evolving directly out of production and commerce, which in all ages forms the basis of the State and the rest of the idealistic superstructure, has, however, always been designated by the same name.’⁸⁸ However, Kawakami frequently used the Japanese term *syakai sosiki* (‘social organisation’) in his works and translations as a substitute for Marxist terms such as ‘social formation’, ‘social order’ and ‘social conditions’. Kawakami’s usage was copied by many Chinese, including Li Hanjun and Li Dazhao.⁸⁹

For Li Hanjun, historical materialism was a theory not only about the causes and effects of historical development but also about the necessity for social revolution. In the debate on socialism and industrialisation (which I deal with later), he elaborated on historical materialism. In ‘How Can We Quickly Bring China’s Chaotic Situation to an End?’ he stressed the role of people’s actions and self-consciousness in social changes. Normally, only a change in productive forces can change the *shehui zuzhi*, but changes in the *shehui zuzhi* do not automatically follow from changes in the productive forces; they need a medium, i.e., human action engendered by will. However, ‘Human will is also a product of environment, ... and human will to change the *shehui zuzhi* emerges only when the productive forces come in conflict with *shehui zuzhi*.’

To strengthen his position, Li again cited Marx’s ‘Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*’:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformations of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from

⁸⁷ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’ (Schools of Socialism), *JW’s Special Social Science Issues*, no. 12, 13 May 1925, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 57.

⁸⁹ Li Dazhao in ‘My Views on Marxism’ explained ‘shehui zuzhi’ as ‘social relations’.

the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production.⁹⁰

This paragraph, according to Li, suggests the will to change the *shehui zuzhi* arises from people's material life and existing social conflicts. He wrote: 'The change of *shehui zuzhi* can be only achieved through the people's will, which can be incarnated in class struggle. ... So, Marx's historical materialism cannot be well explained if we separate it from his theory of class struggle.' There were, Li went on, always struggles between opposing classes, one of which tries to maintain the *status quo* for its own interests while the other advocates changing it; only when the latter wins can the *shehui zuzhi* be changed, producing a new society. That is why *The Communist Manifesto* writes 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.' In another article, Li clarified that the so-called 'initiative of the people' is same as 'class struggle'.

Li Hanjun further contended that since social productive forces change ceaselessly while *shehui zuzhi* remained stable in certain periods, if *shehui zuzhi* always changes passively in response to the growth of the productive forces, there will be no possibility for it to maintain itself for even a short time. In his opinion, the *shehui zuzhi* in its early stages adapts to productive forces, and its changes may sometimes precede changes in the productive forces. Sometimes, when the productive forces have not developed to the stage where they are in conflict with the *shehui zuzhi*, the will to change the *shehui zuzhi* might result from people's observation of the experience of others. The new *shehui zuzhi* can in turn promote the development of productive forces. This may be abnormal, but human evolution does not always follow normal lines.⁹¹

Commenting on this article, M. Luk wrote that 'Li Hanjun believed that "will" was the key to human evolution and, with it, man could transform the social system before the change of productive forces.'⁹² This view is too simplistic. In a later article, Li Hanjun admitted that the views he had expressed in 'How Can We Quickly Bring China's Chaotic Situation to an End?' might easily be misconstrued, so he tried to clarify his stand: 'My meaning is: the destruction of all the old *shehui zuzhi* and the establishment of the new one will be result from actions generated by human will. However, that will is engendered by conflicts between the productive force and the

⁹⁰ The English translation is quoted from *MECW*, vol. 29, pp. 263-264.

⁹¹ Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *JW*, p. 2.

⁹² Luk, p. 47.

existing *shehui zuzhi*. When the productive forces have not developed to the stage where they enter into conflict with the *shehui zuzhi*, the will may also result from people learning from others. . . . Since a *shehui zuzhi* cannot transcend the bounds of productive forces, I would like to stress that “the new system should be established within the possible bounds of the productive force.”⁹³ However, despite this explanation, Li Hanjun’s interpretation of historical materialism leans towards activism.

In fact, there is a tension between determinism and activism in historical materialism itself. Marx and Engels tended towards economism in their positive and categorical deterministic formations, but on several occasions, they stressed that material production and other human activities reciprocally condition each other and ‘all human relations and functions, however and wherever they manifest themselves, influence material production and have a more or less determining effect upon it.’⁹⁴ M. Meisner considers Marxism to be ‘a peculiar amalgam of deterministic and activist elements, for it is both a theory of the general laws of socio-historical development and a philosophy of revolutionary practice’; and in his opinion, ‘Marx did not fully reconcile the conflicting deterministic and activist elements of his thought’.⁹⁵ This lack of clarity confused Chinese Marxists.

In 1923-1924, Li Hanjun’s *Weiwushiguan jiangyi chugao* (Materialist Concept of History, Teaching Materials [First Draft]) came out in two volumes.⁹⁶ In around 1925, his *Weiwu shiguan jiangyi* (Materialist Concept of History, Teaching Materials) also appeared.⁹⁷ In these monographs, Li articulated his view of historical materialism.

Weiwu shiguan jiangyi has a chapter titled ‘The Original Text of the Materialist Concept of History’ introducing Marx and Engels’ writings on the materialist concept of history. The works cited in this and the other teaching materials include *The Critique of Political Economy*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *Capital*, *The Holy Family*,

⁹³ Hanjun, ‘Du Zhang Wentian’, *JW*, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Cf. S. Stojanović, ‘A Tension in Historical Materialism’, in *PRAXIS: Yugoslav Essays in the Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences*, M. Marković and G. Petrović (eds), J. Coddington et al (transl), D. Reidel Publishing, Dordrecht, Holland, 1979, p. 66, p. 68, p. 74.

⁹⁵ Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, p. 128, p. 136.

⁹⁶ Both were issued by Wuchang Normal University and printed by Wuchang zhengxin yinwuguan, without publishing date.

⁹⁷ This book was preserved by Li Shucheng and can not be found recently. I read it in the early 1980s and took notes of its table of contents. It is divided into four parts: ‘The Prerequisite of the Materialist Concept of History’, ‘The Original Text of the Materialist Concept of History’, ‘The Materialist Concept of History and Social Organisations’, and ‘The Materialist Concept of History and Social Systems’.

The Poverty of Philosophy, Wage Labour and Capital, Civil War in France, Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany; Feuerbach, The Roots of the Socialist Philosophy, The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. Li expounded Marx and Engels' views and used the materialist concept of history to interpret and analyse history.

According to Li Hanjun, the basic law of historical materialism was that 'transformations in the *shehui zuzhi* would correspond to the economic conditions of production.' From this law, he developed several extended meanings that can be summarised as follows:

Human society always makes unceasing changes and progress. The establishment and destruction of all *shehui zuzhi* in history was due mainly to changes in economic conditions. This should break the delusion that existing *shehui zuzhi* cannot be changed, and that there is such a thing as the highest stage of a *shehui zuzhi*. Since *shehui zuzhi* change in accordance with the economic conditions of production, human efforts and measures to transform the society should stem from economic conditions.

Here, Li Hanjun still attached importance to the role of human will in social transformation. However, he wrote that ideas change in accordance with economic conditions: they are the outcome of historical circumstance and cannot transcend the age. For Li, there is no such thing as immutable truth. The will generated by thought cannot be absolutely free. He believed that the *shehui zuzhi* can sometimes change due to human effort and that the new *shehui zuzhi* will, in turn, promote change in economic conditions. However, economic conditions must develop step by step rather than by leaps. The transformation of the *shehui zuzhi* was not the product of ambitious people intent on becoming heroes and geniuses as a result of a plan to transform society regardless of economic conditions. If change were not caused by change in economic conditions, it would lack a solid foundation and have no outcome. Worse still, to try to speed up or wipe out social change regardless of economic conditions might 'damage society or even bring about a big disaster'.⁹⁸

In these monographs, Li Hanjun made a further exposition of dialectics. He wrote that dialecticians deny that the world is static and consider existence to be a process of constant change and development. This view was probably first formulated by

⁹⁸ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, pp. 6-11, pp. 33-41.

Heraclitus: everything is and is not, everything is fluid, everything constantly comes into being and passes away. In Li's opinion, dialectical views encompass interconnections, know the motion of everything, and understand that two poles of an antithesis are inseparable and mutually interpenetrating. It is not hard to see that Li's views on dialectics were drawn mainly from Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, which Li put as one of the reference books and translated and cited its contents frequently. Nevertheless, it clearly demonstrates that Li Hanjun had a basic grasp of dialectical conceptions, including the interpenetration or the unity of opposites, the fundamental law of dialectics. His interest in dialectics probably originated in his earlier interest in dialectical thought in ancient China.

Li Hanjun appreciated materialist dialectics and saw the materialist concept of history as materialists applying dialectics to human history. He perceived the close connection between historical materialism and dialectical materialism, and he sometimes combined them as one, while other scholars see them as different constituents of the Marxist system. According to them, dialectical materialism is tantamount to Marxist philosophy and the principal element in the system, whereas historical materialism is merely an 'historical concept of dialectical materialism'.⁹⁹

In his biography of Li Hanjun, Tian Ziyu wrote that Li did not distinguish between historical materialism and dialectical materialism but combined the two into one, and that his mistake was overcome by Chinese Marxists in the late 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁰⁰ Tian is only partly right. Starting in the late 1920s, Chinese Marxists like Li Da, Qu Qiubai, and Ai Siqi, imitating Soviet interpretations of philosophy, especially Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, separated historical materialism and dialectical materialism into two systems and neglected their organic connection.¹⁰¹

Li Hanjun's interpretation of dialectical materialism was important, even if it was in some ways rather superficial. His monographs and 'What Conceptions Do Not Belong in the Materialist Concept of history?' published in January 1922, may have been the first work in China to discuss dialectical materialism. Up to then, no other Chinese Marxists seem even to have mentioned it.

⁹⁹ Cf. Markesi zhuyi zhexue yuanli bianxie zu, *Markesi zhuyi zhexue yuanli* [Principles of Marxist Philosophy], Fujian renmin chubanshe, Fuzhou, 1981, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁰ Tian Ziyu, *Zhongguo gongchandang chuangshiren - Li Hanjun*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Guo Luoji, 'Tupo jianghua de Stalin zhexue tixi de jiannan licheng - jinian Feng Ding shishi 20 zhounian' (At the time when Stalinist philosophy dominated: in memory of Feng Ding), *Dangdai Zhongguo yanjiu* [Modern China Studies], no. 1, 2004.

A recent work points out that, due to the unavailability of Engels' *Anti-Dühring* and *Dialectics of Nature* and to the influence of foreign Marxists like Kawakami Hajime, the early Chinese Marxists ignored dialectical materialism. The authors claim that Qu Qiubai in his *Shehui zhexue gailun* (An Introduction to Social Philosophy), published in 1924, first introduced dialectical materialism to China.¹⁰² Nick Knight even regards Qu as 'the pioneer of Marxist philosophy in China'.¹⁰³ These authors seem to have overlooked the fact that Li Hanjun pioneered dialectical materialism. Qu's *Shehui zhexue gailun*, based on Bukharin's *Theory of Historical Materialism*, and the Russian translation of *Anti-Dühring* explained basic dialectical laws (translated by Qu as *hubian lü* or *hubian fa*), including the transformation of quantity into quality and vice-versa, the interpenetration of opposites, and the negation of the negation.¹⁰⁴ Although Li Hanjun did not mention all of these and could not have read *Anti-Dühring* and *Dialectics of Nature* at the time, he did touch on basic tenets of the theory.

Li Hanjun's *Weiwushiguan jiangyi* (The Materialist Conception of History) and other articles show that he cited many works by Marx and Engels and other Marxists. His interpretation of historical materialism was therefore rather well founded. The biographer of Li Da says that Li Da's *Xiandai shehuixue* (Contemporary Sociology), published in 1926, systematically elaborated historical materialism and Li Da was 'the first person in China to disseminate historical materialism systematically'.¹⁰⁵ It might be true that the influence of Li Da's book was greater than Li Hanjun's (Li Hanjun's teaching materials were never published formally and his writing was not as good as Li Da's), but his systematic dissemination of historical materialism should not be ignored.

Between 1922 and 1925, Li Hanjun lectured on historical materialism at Zhonghua University, Wuchang Normal University, and Wuchang Commercial University in Wuhan. His lectures drew auditors from outside, some of whom later converted to Marxism.¹⁰⁶ On 5 May 1923, he spoke about Marx's historical materialism at a meeting jointly convened by Beijing University's Society for

¹⁰² Xu Quanxing et al. (eds), *Zhongguo xiandai zhexue shi* [A History of Modern Chinese Philosophy], Beijing daxue chubanshe, Beijing, 1992, p. 106, p. 136.

¹⁰³ N. Knight, *Li Da and Marxist Philosophy in China*, Westview Press, Colorado & Oxford, 1996, p. 101.

¹⁰⁴ Xu Quanxing et al. (eds), p. 138.

¹⁰⁵ Wang Jionghua, *Li Da pingzhuan* [A Critical Biography of Li Da], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 2004, p. 131.

¹⁰⁶ 'Chunguang's letter', 20 December 1922, in *Hubei geming lishi wenjian huiji* [Collected Documents of Hubei Revolutionary History] (1922-1924), The CCP's Central Archives and Hubei Provincial Archives (eds), Wuhan, 1984, p. 34; 'Changqun, Kaiguo to Yunan', 23 September, in *ibid.*, p. 91.

Studying Marxism and the Society for Studying Marxism in Beijing.¹⁰⁷ Later, he lectured on similar themes at Beijing Women's Normal University, the Sino-Russian University and Shanghai University.

* * * * *

Few people at the time in China could introduce Marxist theories as systematically as Li Hanjun. Yang Xianzhen, who heard Li Hanjun's lecture at Wuchang Commercial University, commented: 'Li Hanjun was probably the first to propagate Marxism in Wuhan in a systematic way.'¹⁰⁸ Qu Qiubai wrote in 1927 that Li Hanjun, Dai Jitao, Hu Hanmin, Zhu Zhixin, and Chen Duxiu were China's first Marxists in the May Fourth period.¹⁰⁹ During that period, Chen Duxiu did nothing to introduce Marxism, and the others were then followers of Sun Yat-sen. Among them, as Dai commented, only Li Hanjun was a Marxist.¹¹⁰ Li was also regarded as 'an accomplished Marxist theorist' by several contemporaries, including Dong Biwu, Liu Renjing, Peng Shuzhi, Bao Huiseng, and Shen Yanbin.¹¹¹ Shen once wrote that Li Hanjun's level of Marxist theory surpassed Chen Duxiu's.¹¹² Maring, the Comintern representative in China, also considered Li Hanjun 'one of the best skilled theoretical workers'.¹¹³ As A. Dirlik noticed, 'By early 1920, the name of Li Hanjun, the Japan-returned student from Hubei,

¹⁰⁷ 'Makesi shengri jinianhui' (Meeting in commemoration of Marx's birthday), *Chen bao* [The Morning Post], 6 May 1923, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Yang Xianzhen, 'Li Hanjun minguo chunian zai Wuhan de huodong' (Li Hanjun's activities in Wuhan in the early years of the Republic of China), Li Danyang edited according to Yang's oral recollections on 30 August, 21 October 1980 and 23 May 1981, and his letters dated 28 August 1980 and 14 May 1983 (unpublished). During 1950s-60s, Yang Xianzhen was Chancellor of the Party School of the CCP's CEC.

¹⁰⁹ Qu Qiubai, 'Qu Qiubai wenji zixu' (Preface to *Writings of Qu Qiubai*), 17 February 1927, in *Qu Qiubai wenji (Zhengzhi lilun bian)* [Writings of Qu Qiubai (Political theory)], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1993, vol. 4, p. 414.

¹¹⁰ Dai Jitao's Preface to *Zibenlun jieshuo*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ Liu Renjing wrote that Li Hanjun knew more Marxism than other delegates to the First Congress of the CCP. See Liu's 'Huiyi Wusi yundong, Beijing Makesihuyi yanjiuhui he dang de yida' (Recollections of the May Fourth Movement, the Society for the Study of Marxism in Beijing and the Party's First Congress), April 1957, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 117; Peng Shuzhi told Feng Naichao after the latter's return to China in the fall of 1927 that 'Li Hanjun was the first in China to introduce Marxism.' Feng Naichao, 'Oral recollections of Li Hanjun', recorded by Li Danyang on 13 August 1980 (unpublished).

¹¹² Shen Yanbing's son, Shen Shuang, showed me the original manuscript at their home in 1981. It is different from Maodun, *Wo zougou de daolu* [The Road that I Walked], Renmin wuxue chubanshe, Beijing, 1981, vol. 1 (p. 177).

¹¹³ Maring, 'Report on the situation in China and our work in the period 15-31 May 1923 for the ECCI and Profintern, Vladivostok Bureau and Eastern Department ECCI', in T. Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China, The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1991, vol. 2, p. 539.

[was] recognized at the time as one of China's most learned Marxists'.¹¹⁴ Recently, Li Hanjun's contribution to the dissemination of Marxism in China has been acknowledged by more and more historians.¹¹⁵

In fact, no one in China could, at the time, be seen as having made crucial innovations in Marxist theory. Instead, Chinese Marxists expounded and interpreted it. This was also the case with Li Hanjun. Li knew his own limits. In response to Zhang Wentian's criticism that he adhered rigidly to what Marx had advocated, Li agreed that Marx's socialism is a living thing and has room to develop; but he frankly admitted that due to his limited knowledge he could only accept Marx's theoretical system and was unable to create a new system of his own.¹¹⁶

The fundamental concern of Marxist philosophy is to transform the world: 'In reality and for the practical materialist, i.e., the communist, it is a question of revolutionising the existing world, of practically attacking and changing *existing* things.'¹¹⁷ For Li Hanjun and other Chinese Communists, Marxism was not a pure theory for pedantic study and discussion but a guide to analysing and solving the problems of China and the world.

¹¹⁴ Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, p. 161.

¹¹⁵ Those works include: Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhongguo gongchandang lishi* [The History of the CCP], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1991; Tang Baolin (ed), *Makesizhuyi zai Zhongguo 100 nian* [One Hundred Years of Marxism in China], Anhui renmin chubanshe, Hefei, 1998; Luk, *Origins of Chinese Bolshevism*; Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*; Ishikawa, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, and Yeh, *Provincial Passages*.

¹¹⁶ Hanjun, 'Du Zhang Wentian', *JW*, p. 4. Ironically, Zhang, who was the General Secretary of the CCP in the 1930s and the 1940s, was later accused of dogmatism by Mao Zedong.

¹¹⁷ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 62.

4 A Founding Member of the CCP

When did Li Hanjun, a founder of the CCP, start participating in the Communist movement and what role did he play in the establishment of the CCP? These and other questions are the subject of this chapter.

4.1 Advancing the Idea of Forming a Proletarian Party

Regarding who took the initiative in setting up the CCP, there are several views. In official historical circles in the PRC, it is claimed that Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu first discussed setting up a Communist party in February 1920, and subsequently took steps to establish a CCP in the South and North.¹¹⁸ This claim is based on a speech by Gao Yihan, who said that when Li Dazhao accompanied Chen Duxiu to Tianjin in early 1920, the two talked about a plan to form a party.¹¹⁹ However, Gao Yihan was not in China at that time, so his account was not first-hand.¹²⁰

Tian Ziyu, a historian, recently proposed that Li Hanjun first advanced the idea of setting up a proletarian party. His main evidence is Li's statement in the translators' postscript to 'Trends in World Thought', published in September 1919.¹²¹ In it, Li raised these questions: 'If we intend to go in for the enlarged mass movement, what will be its ideology? What will be its goal? What will be its force?' To him, the answer was clear: the enlarged movement should be socialist, along with global trends; the

¹¹⁸ Sha Jiansun (ed), *Zhongguo gongchandang tongshi* [A Comprehensive History of the CCP], Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, Changsha, 1996, vol. 1, p. 299; Wu Jialin and Xie Yinming, *Beijing dangzuzhi de chuangjian huodong* [Activities in Establishing the Beijing Communist Organisation], Renmin daxue chubanshe, Beijing, 1991, p. 93; Zhou Youxin, 'Li Dazhao yu Zhongguo gongchandang de chuangjian' (Li Dazhao and the founding of the CCP), in Zhu Chengjia (ed), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu lunwen xuan* [Selected Theses on the History of the CCP], Hunan renmin chubanshe, Changsha, 1983, vol. 1, p. 51; The Party History Research Centre of the CC of the CCP (ed), *History of the Chinese Communist Party, A Chronology of Events (1919-1990)*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1991, p. 5 (Its publisher's note writes that the *Chronology* is 'authoritative for understanding the CPC').

¹¹⁹ Gao Yihan, 'Li Shouchang xiansheng shilüe baogao' (The biographical sketch of Mr Li Shouchang), *Hankou minguo ribao* [Hankou Republican Daily News], 25 May 1927.

¹²⁰ Ga Yihan's travel notes published in *Xin shenghuo* [New Life], nos. 23-27, 25 January-29 February 1920, indicate that he left Beijing for Japan in December 1919 and arrived in Japan in February 1920.

¹²¹ Tian Ziyu, 'Woguo zuizao tichu jiangang sixiang de shi Li Hanjun' (Li Hanjun was the first man to put forward the idea of establishing a Communist party in China), *Guangming ribao* [Brightness Daily], 12 September 1990, p. 3.

revolutionary force should comprise the general populace and the proletariat. Yet Li realised that the Chinese populace and the proletariat had obtained nothing from the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen and the May Fourth Movement, and there was no party in China to represent their interests. In view of this, Li claimed: ‘Our Party is called *min dang* (‘People’s Party’) and *geming dang* (‘Revolutionary Party’), so we need a realistic plan for it.’ In my opinion, ‘it’ here (and below) means representing the interests of the populace and the proletariat as well as leading them. Li continued: ‘It seems the Party has contemplated it before, but political tactics, power struggles, alliances and compromises have hindered us from acting out the plan, and [the Party] virtually did as the military warlords, the bureaucrats and the dark forces demanded.’

According to Tian Ziyu, ‘People’s Party’ and ‘Revolutionary Party’ meant a Russian-style Social-Democratic Workers’ Party or a proletarian party.¹²² But in my view it referred to the Nationalist Party or Chinese Revolutionary Party, which usually called *min dang* or *geming dang* at the time. Although Li initially pinned his hopes on Sun Yat-sen’s party and intended to transform it into a party to represent the populace and the proletariat, he also realised it sometimes compromised with the dark forces. That is why he declared at the end of the postscript that he himself was ‘a member of the common people, of the populace and the proletariat’ and would do what was necessary regardless of the consequences.¹²³ This suggests that Li Hanjun was prepared to make a fresh start, asking the populace and the proletariat to organise in support of their own interests, without counting on any existing party.

The postscript demonstrates Li Hanjun’s intention to swing the Chinese revolution towards socialism and create a party for the populace and the proletariat. In the autumn of 1919, no other Chinese, not even Li Dazhao or Chen Duxiu, had publicly expressed such a view. By the end of 1919, Chen still believed that China should practise British or American-style democracy.¹²⁴ In the spring of 1920, Chen even praised Christianity as the doctrine of the poor and advocated the religion as a new belief for the

¹²² Tian Ziyu, *Guangming ribao*, p. 3; Tian Ziyu, *Li Hanjun*, p. 59.

¹²³ ‘Translators’ postscript’ to ‘Shijie sichao zhi fangxiang’, *JW*, 7 September 1919, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Chen Duxiu, ‘Shixing minzhi de jichu’ (The basis for implementing democracy), *XQN*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1 December 1919, p. 16.

Chinese.¹²⁵ In this sense, I partly agree with Tian Ziyu that Li Hanjun was the first person in China to advance the idea of a proletarian party.

Yet, despite their differences, both Tian Ziyu and several other PRC historians who stress the role of Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu have tried to prove that the birth of the CCP arose from combining Marxism-Leninism and the labour movement and that organising a Communist party was a Chinese initiative. Some Western historians, including Schwartz and Meisner, in their studies, posited indigenous origins of the Communist movement in China, and emphasised that some ideas, such as nationalism, populism and cosmopolitanism, inclined radical Chinese to believe in communism. However, they recognised the role of the Bolshevik message and the involvement of Soviet Russia and the Comintern in the establishment of the CCP. Schwartz observed:

A close reading of the writings of Chen [Duxiu] and Li [Dazhao], does not suggest that the rise of a Chinese proletariat was itself an important factor in their conversion. It would be more correct to say that Leninism turned their attention to the proletariat rather than that the proletariat turned their attention to Leninism.¹²⁶

After the publication of the relative archives kept in Russia, we now know more about Soviet and Comintern efforts in the establishment of the CCP. To that extent, the view that the CCP was organised by radical Chinese themselves without the intervention of the Comintern has, in the opinion of most serious scholars, been invalidated.

In fact, before Bolshevik agents arrived in China no one had ever explicitly planned to organise such a party. To explore this question, historians should widen their field of vision, since the establishment of a Communist Party in China did not happen in isolation.

From the outset, the Communist movement was internationally inspired. For Marx and his followers, the Communist party was a tool for realising communism in the world. Although *The Communist Manifesto* was published in 1848, the first effectively Communist party (as opposed to earlier loose federations) was not formed until March 1918, when the Bolsheviks changed their name to Russian Communist Party (b) (henceforth RCP[b]) and declared their goal to be the creation of a communist society. In March 1919, the Bolsheviks set up the Communist International (hereafter Comintern),

¹²⁵ Chen Duxiu, 'Jidujiao yu Zhongguoren' (Christianity and the Chinese), *XQN*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1 February 1920. According to Lee Feigon, Chen's advocacy of Christian socialism seemed to have been stirred by idealistic young Koreans. See his *Chen Duxiu*, p. 144. Those 'young Koreans' may refer to the Korean Christians, such as Yō Unhyong and Kim Kyusik, leaders of the New Korea Youth Party.

¹²⁶ Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, p. 25.

designed as a 'common fighting organ with the purpose of maintaining permanent co-ordination and systematic leadership of the [Communist] movement'.¹²⁷ Under Comintern direction, Communist parties were organised worldwide.

After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks developed a global strategy for world socialist revolution. After failing to foment a European revolution in 1919, they saw 'Asia may become the arena of the next uprising' and prepared to shift the centre of gravity of their international orientation to the East.¹²⁸ Lenin declared at the Second Congress of the Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East at the end of 1919: 'The emancipation of the peoples of the East is now quite practicable. ... Here contact with the peoples of the East is particularly important.' The Congress passed the 'Outline for the Revolutionary Work of the Communist Party in the East', which stated the need to 'prompt the necessity of a gradual formation of communist parties in the countries of the East as sections of the Communist International' and to support the national movement in the East aiming to overthrow of the rule of Western European imperialism.¹²⁹ This idea was adopted at the Second Congress of the Comintern, when Lenin stressed that in addition to supporting national liberation movements the Comintern should also set about creating 'independent contingents of fighters and Party organisations in the colonies and the backward countries'.¹³⁰

As the largest country in East Asia and Russia's biggest neighbour, China occupied a special strategic position. From 1918 to the beginning of 1920, foreign intervention in Siberia was a main threat to the Soviet regime. The Beijing Government, which had adopted a hostile attitude towards the Soviet regime, agreed to sign a Joint Military Defence Pact with Japan in May 1918 to check the threat from Russia, and in August 1918 it joined the Allied intervention in Siberia. Chinese soil was to be used for transporting the Allied troops and setting up anti-Bolshevik organisations.¹³¹

¹²⁷ J. Degras (ed), *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents*, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, vol. 1, p. 5.

¹²⁸ *The Trotsky Papers*, J. M. Meijer (ed), Mouton & Co., The Hague, 1964, vol. 1 (1917-1919), doc. 349, p. 627.

¹²⁹ X. I. Eudin and R. C. North, *Soviet Russia and the East (1920-1927), A Documentary Survey*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1957, p. 164.

¹³⁰ V. I. Lenin, 'Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions', 26 July 1920, in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (henceforth abbreviated to *LCW*), vol. 31, p. 244.

¹³¹ D. Footman, *Civil War in Russia*, Faber & Faber, London, 1961, pp. 214-215.

The movement that broke out in Beijing on 4 May 1919 was welcomed by the Bolsheviks, who issued a 'Declaration to the Chinese People and to the Governments of North and South China' (the so-called Karakhan Manifesto), which annulled the unequal treaties between the Tsarist Government and the Qing Court and promised to return all properties and concessions to the Chinese people. The Manifesto also stressed that the Red Army, which was marching across the Urals to the East, would bring 'liberation' and 'help' to the Chinese people. V. D. Vilensky-Sibiriyakov, who drafted the Declaration, suggested: 'The creation of Soviet Russia's alliance with revolutionary China is one of our foremost tasks, for the attainment of which we should apply all the energy and resources at our disposal.'¹³²

To achieve a revolutionary China, it was necessary to create a Communist party. Vilensky-Sibiriyakov was soon dispatched to the Russian Far East as plenipotentiary of the Soviet Government. One of his tasks was carrying out Communist work among the peoples of East Asia and establishing firm connections with revolutionary organisations in Japan, China and Korea.¹³³

In China, Sun Yat-sen and his Party were the Bolsheviks' main target, since they were fighting for national liberation and seemed to have socialist inclinations. In 1912, after reading an article by Sun Yat-sen in the socialist newspaper *Le Peuple*, Lenin praised him as 'a revolutionary democrat'.¹³⁴ In the same year, Lenin wrote that the Nationalist Party was 'predominantly a party of the more industrially-developed and progressive southern part of the country'; and Sun intended to 'avoid a capitalist fate'.¹³⁵ After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks regarded Sun and his followers as their potential allies in China. In instructions issued by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of Soviet Russia (Narkomindel) in February 1918, Sun's Southern Government was portrayed as progressive and 'similar to us in its spirit'.¹³⁶ In May 1918, following the development of the Russian Revolution, Sun Yat-sen sent a

¹³² Vilensky-Sibiriyakov, *Kitai i Sovetskaia Rossia* [China and Soviet Russia], Moskva, 1919, p. 14; quoted from Leong Sow-theng, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1926*, Hawaii University Press, Honolulu, 1976, p. 133.

¹³³ 'Vilensky-Sibiriyakov's Report to the ECCI on the Work among the People in the Eastern Asia', 1 September 1920, in *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, pp. 38-39.

¹³⁴ Lenin, 'Democracy and Narodism in China', in *LCW*, vol. 18, p. 165.

¹³⁵ Lenin, 'Regenerated China', in *LCW*, vol. 18, p. 401.

¹³⁶ Leong Sow-theng, p. 33; also in 'An Appeal from a Russian Proletarian', *Millard's Review*, 18 May 1918, p. 436.

telegram to Moscow expressing his congratulations on the victory of the revolution.¹³⁷ Deeply moved, Lenin planned to send ‘a brave man’ to China in 1918 to contact Sun.¹³⁸

After Sun Yat-sen settled in Shanghai in June 1918, several Soviet emissaries reached this port city, trying to get touch with him and his adherents. In September 1919, several Korean and Japanese socialists visited Sun to discuss organising a Communist party that would incorporate the organisations of the three countries.¹³⁹ An FO report revealed that a Soviet emissary sent Sun a letter urging a Soviet revolution in China, and that Sun was believed to have been in communication with the Bolshevik Headquarters in Siberia by way of his secretary.¹⁴⁰ Sun later claimed that Lenin had urged him to found a Communist party in China.¹⁴¹

As I showed in Chapter 2, Li Hanjun was on good terms with Sun Yat-sen and several important KMT socialists between 1919 and 1920, and I will go on to show that he also had connections with several Russian, Korean and Japanese socialists in Shanghai. So it is quite likely that Li had heard of the discussions and Lenin’s letter to Sun before Li expressed a desire to form a new type party.

4.2 ‘A Chinese Bolshevik’

In October 1919, Li Hanjun’s name appeared in a British secret report that mentioned ‘two Chinese Bolsheviks living in the French Concession of Shanghai’, one of them Lee Jen Jehy (i.e. Li Hanjun) and the other Ho Hyan Lieu.¹⁴² It is not known why Li Hanjun was considered a ‘Chinese Bolshevik’. However, Li praised the Russian October Revolution in his writings and said it was necessary to have a socialist revolution like in Russia. For British intelligence, Li’s words and deeds were radical.

¹³⁷ *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, vol. 4, p. 500; *Song Qingling xuanji* [Selected Works of Song Qingling], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1992, vol. 2, p. 52.

¹³⁸ L. Holubnychy, *Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution, 1923-1925*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1979, pp. 137-138.

¹³⁹ Kuksa p’yŏnch’an wiwŏnhoe (ed), *Han’guk tongnip untong sa* [The History of the Korean Independence Movement], Kuksa p’yŏnch’an wiwŏnhoe, Seoul, 1968, vol. 4, p. 675.

¹⁴⁰ FO 228/3211, 2 November 1919. Around that time, there were several reports showing that Koreans, Japanese and Chinese who came to Shanghai as Bolshevik missionaries called on Sun Yat-sen.

¹⁴¹ Yang Kuisong, *Zhonggong yu Mosike de guanxi, 1920-1960* [The CCP’s Relations with Moscow, 1920-1960], Dongda tushu, Taibei, 1997, p. 53.

¹⁴² FO405/228, Enclosure in no. 157. Ho Hyan Lieu was reported to be a frequent visitor to Sun Yat-sen and a close friend of Rash Behari Bose, an Indian leader of the independence movement.

Perhaps the intelligence officer had evidence that he had been approached by Soviet agents directly or indirectly.

Not long after the October Revolution, the Soviet Government tried to establish contact with China. A. Voznesiensky, head of the Far Eastern Department of Narkomindel, could not get permission from the Beijing Government to go to China as a Soviet representative, so the Bolsheviks dispatched agents secretly from the beginning of 1918 to collect intelligence, conduct propaganda and make contacts. By early 1920, there were said to be at least ten Bolsheviks in Shanghai alone.¹⁴³ But the Bolsheviks in China normally concealed their identities.¹⁴⁴ Since there was not enough time to train agents familiar with China and Chinese, several left-wing Russian émigrés or refugees in China were entrusted with working for the Soviet cause. A report by the Eastern Peoples' Section of the Siberian Bureau of the RCP(b) CEC to the ECCI revealed that work had been done by C. A. Polevoy, A. A. Ivanov, A. E. Khodorov and A. F. Agalyov, before the arrival of Voitinsky's team.¹⁴⁵ Together with some Bolsheviks, these people established contact with Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Zhang Tailei, Jiang Banruo, Liu Qingyang, Zhou Enlai and Li Hanjun.¹⁴⁶

M. G. Popov, a colonel in the Tsarist army, was sent by Narkomindel to Shanghai in the spring of 1918 to assume the post of Soviet Consul-General, set up a secret intelligence bureau, and publicise Soviet policy in the East.¹⁴⁷ In China he made

¹⁴³ Kuksa p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe (ed), *Han'guk tongnip untong sa*, vol. 3, p. 400. According to a report of the Section of Eastern People of the RCP(B) Siberian Bureau dated 21 December 1920, around a dozen Russian Communists were working in China. *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 8.

¹⁴⁴ For example, V. E. Polyak, who joined the RCP(B) in 1918, appeared as a tailor in Shanghai in 1920. FO 228/3214, 19 February 1920; FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157. He became a member of the Russian Military Advisory Team head by Borodin in 1923 and assumed the post of first military advisor to the Huangpu Military Academy. Cf. Huang Xiurong, *Gongchanguoji yu Zhongguo geming guanxi shi* [A History of Relations between the Comintern and the Chinese Revolution], Zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, Beijing, 1989, p. 332; Holubnychy, p. 263.

¹⁴⁵ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Müller, *Plameni Revoliutsii, 1917-1920*; quoted from Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, p. 105; Liu Qingyang, 'Guanyu Wusi qianhou lishi qingkuang de jianshu' (A brief account of the historical events that happened during the May Fourth period), January 1957, in Wang Laidi (ed), p. 204. Li Danyang, 'Zuizao yu Li Dazhao jiechu de Su-E daibiao — Ivanov' (Ivanov, the first Soviet representative in China to make contact with Li Dazhao), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* [The CCP History Studies], no. 4, 1999, pp. 88-90; Liu Jianyi, *The Origins of the Chinese Communist Party and the Role Played by Soviet Russia and the Comintern*, PhD diss., University of York, 2000 (unpublished), Chapters 2-3.

¹⁴⁷ FO 228/3214, Weekly Report dated 16 May 1918; Cf. M. Kriukov, *Ulitsa Molière, 29 – Sekretnaya missiya Polkovnika Popova* [29 Rue Molière – The Secret Mission of Colonel Popov], Pamiatnik istoricheskoi muisli, Moskova, 2000; Li Danyang, 'Su-E zai Hua fabiao de diyige wenjian: guanyu wenben neirong yu fabiao beijing de yanjiu' (The first Soviet Russian document published in China: a

contact with Koreans and Chinese, among them Zhang Mochi, a Christian Socialist and Anarcho-Communist, who had been to Russia and met G. Chicherin, Commissar of Narkomindel, and worked for the Bolsheviks afterward.¹⁴⁸ In spring 1920, this man met Chen Duxiu and Li Hanjun in Shanghai and discussed social revolution with them.¹⁴⁹

In December 1919, A. S. Potapov arrived in Shanghai. It was reported that he had been expelled from Japan on account of his revolutionary tendencies. A major-general in the Tsarist army, he had switched to the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution and established agencies in Yokohama, Shanghai and Manila. During his stay in Shanghai, he was frequently in touch with Sun Yat-sen and his followers, as well as with Chinese and Korean radicals. Potapov was said to be able to communicate with Moscow and present Lenin with letters of introduction.¹⁵⁰ In his report to Chicherin, he wrote that he had given *Soviet Constitution* and other pamphlets in English to Sun Yat-sen and ‘Li Rienie’, asking the latter to translate them.¹⁵¹ This ‘Li Rienie’ was probably Li Renjie.¹⁵²

In March 1920, A. F. Agalyov’s name appeared in a report by the Japanese Military Attaché in Shanghai. It stated: ‘A Russian, Agalyov, who came from Vladivostok in February, planned with Li Renjie, Yō Unhyong and others to publish a journal titled *Labour* in Chinese and in Russian.’¹⁵³ Agalyov was an old socialist who joined the RSDLP in 1902 and later lived as a political émigré in France, the USA and Australia. After the Russian Revolution, he returned to Vladivostok, where he edited

study of its text, content and the circumstances of its publication), *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research], no. 4, 2003, pp. 85-99.

¹⁴⁸ FO 228/3140, p. 76; USDS 761.93/142; Zhang Meimei (Zhang Mochi’s daughter), Letter to Li Danyang, 22 April 2007 (In September 2007, Liu Jianyi and I interviewed Zhang Meimei in Guilin several times); Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, ‘Zaoqi lai Hua de Su-E zhongyao shizhe — Popov (M. G. Popov, an important Soviet Russian emissary to China in early years), *Dang’an yu shixue* [Archives and Historical Studies], no. 6, December 2002, pp. 52-56.

¹⁴⁹ Zheng Peigang, ‘Wuzhengfuzhuyi zai Zhongguo de ruogan shishi’ (Some historical facts about anarchism in China), April 1963, in Ge Maochun et al. (eds), *Wuzhengfuzhuyi sixiang ziliao xuan* [Selected Materials on Anarchist Thought], Beijing daxue chubanshe, Beijing, 1984, vol. 2, pp. 957-958.

¹⁵⁰ FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157 and FO 228/3211, May 1920. In May 1920, Potapov visited Zhangzhou and talked with Chen Jiongming and other KMT leaders there. After his return to Russia in the fall of 1920, he wrote several reports and articles on his activities in China and the situation in China, published in the organ of the Narkomindel. Cf. Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, ‘Yingguo dang’an suojian Su-E yu Sun Zhongshan ji Guomindang de lianxi’ (Documents on the Bolsheviks’ relationship with Sun Yat-sen and the KMT kept in the PRO in the UK), *Jindai Zhongguoshi yanjiu tongxun* [Newsletter for Modern Chinese History] (Taipei), no. 31, March 2001, pp. 115-133.

¹⁵¹ ‘Potapov’s Report to Chicherin, 12 December 1920’, in *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 7.

¹⁵² In his ‘Certificate of Studying at Tokyo Imperial University’, Li Hanjun’s Romanised name is written as ‘Nen Je Lee’.

¹⁵³ Ishikawa, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, p. 100.

Red Flag, a Bolshevik paper, although he was a Menshevik. He was first elected as mayor of Vladivostok and later as Chairman of the Municipal Council.¹⁵⁴ During his first stay in China in 1919, he worked for the Russian section of the *Shanghai Gazette*, an English-language paper of the Chinese Revolutionary Party and *Shanhaiskaia rizni* (Shanghai Life), a Russian paper published in Shanghai. He was said to have acted on the instructions of the Bolshevik military authorities in the Maritime Region before 1920 and joined the RCP(b) before becoming an envoy of the Provisional Government of the Maritime Region to Beijing in May 1920.¹⁵⁵

In February 1920, British Intelligence reported: ‘Certain Chinese of known advanced socialistic ideas had, at last, definitely decided to carry out Bolshevik propaganda in Shanghai and to found a regular Bolshevik society. For this purpose an informal dinner was held at the restaurant of Wing On’s Hotel, Shanghai.’ Nearly all the Chinese presented at the dinner were on close terms with Sun Yat-sen. They included Jue Gwon (i.e. Zhu Zhuowen), I. C. Lien Tsin, M. Chow, Moy (i.e. Mei Guangpei) and Lin Jen Jehy (i.e. Li Hanjun). A Russian Jack Lizerovitch and a Korean K. S. Lee (i.e. Yi Kwangsu) also attended.

Zhu Zhuowen, in charge of KMT labour activities,¹⁵⁶ addressed the meeting and his speech was recorded as follows by an Intelligence Officer: ‘Some of China’s true well wishers advised them to form a society, and this they proposed to do. It was also suggested that a magazine should be started for the propagation of Bolshevism and for giving news of Soviet Russia.’ According to the report, these two proposals were discussed and finally adopted; a monthly subscription of \$10 was decided on to defray

¹⁵⁴ M. I. Kasanin, *China in the Twenties*, translated by H. Kasanina, Department of Oriental Literatures, Moscow, 1973, pp. 92-93; H. K. Norton, *The Far Eastern Republic of Siberia*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1923, p. 55, p.148; FO 228/2773, 14 December 1920; FO 405/233, p. 438; Important information on Agalyov was provided by Russian scholar, N. Mamayeva, in her emails to me dated 5 and 23 December 2010.

¹⁵⁵ M. A. Persits and Institut narodov Azii, *Dal’nevostochnaia Respublica i Kitaya* [The Far Eastern Republic and China], Izd-vo Vostochnoi Lit-ry, Moskva, 1962, p. 60. This information was provided and translated by Li Yuzhen in her email dated 5 February 2006; Norton, p. 148; FO 228/2773, 14 December 1920; FO 405/233, p. 438; M. S. Kapitsa, ‘1920 zhi 1921 nian de Zhong-Su guanxi’ (Soviet-Chinese relations during 1920-1921), Huang Jilian (transl), *Jindaishi ziliao*, no. 78, February 1991, p. 57.

¹⁵⁶ Zhu Zhuowen was a Cantonese by birth, but had lived in America for a long time and had worked with Sun Yat-sen for many years. During the May Fourth Movement, Zhu was a leader of the Shanghai National Congress. Zhu was ‘a labour movement specialist’, as Sun Yat-sen told Zhang Guotao in 1920. See Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p. 83.

the cost of the Chinese magazine, named *The Worker*, whose first issue of 3,000 copies was to appear on 1 May 1920.¹⁵⁷

One may speculate that the ‘well wishers’ were Russians. At least one Russian, Lizerovitch, attended the dinner. Lizerovitch came from Britain in 1917 and was ‘active in Bolshevik interests’ and worked for *Shanhaiskaia rizni* as its ‘travelling agent’. He was in direct touch with Russian Bolsheviks in Shanghai and Vladivostok, as well as with socialists and anarchists in Britain. He maintained a correspondence with Sylvia Pankhurst, a British socialist (later a Communist), and passed on a message from Pankhurst to Sun Yat-sen urging Sun to do his utmost for socialism in China.¹⁵⁸ Lizerovitch was said to have received ‘Bolshevik literature’ from abroad and tried to engage the services of Cao Yabo and Li Hanjun in translating it. He then supplied them to *Xingqi pinglun* and *Xin Han qingnian* (Young Korea) in Chinese. Lizerovitch had wide-ranging connections and was considered to be acting as ‘a link between the Bolshevik organisation and the Chinese’.¹⁵⁹

The British and Japanese reports referred to preparations for a journal titled *Labour* or *Worker*, and both mentioned Russians, Chinese and Koreans involved in such activities. Li Renjie’s name appeared in both reports. A further British intelligence report confirmed the two Russians’ connection, describing Agalyov as ‘an active propagandist working in close cooperation with Lizerovitch’, through whom he could get in touch with disaffected Chinese.¹⁶⁰ This suggests Agalyov might have asked Lizerovitch to invite Chinese and Koreans to the dinner to discuss publishing *The Labour* (or *Worker*) and organising a society.

Who engineered these plans and activities? Both Agalyov and Lizerovitch were working with *Shanhaiskaia rizni*. *Shanhaiskaia rizni* was first established in Shanghai in September 1919 by G. F. Shemeshko, a Russian socialist. In November 1919,

¹⁵⁷ FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157; FO228/3214, 8 April 1920.

¹⁵⁸ FO 228/3214, June 1920; FO 228/3216, no. 29, 4 September 1920. Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960) was Emmeline Pankhurst’s daughter, who joined the Independent Labour Party and organised the Workers’ Socialist Federation, which supported Russian October Revolution. In 1918, Pankhurst founded the People’s Russian Information Bureau in the UK and in 1919 she decided to rename WSF the Communist Party. In 1920, she attended the Comintern conferences. Cf. B. Lazitch and M. M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, Hoover Institute Press, Stanford, 1973, p. 350.

¹⁵⁹ FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157; FO 228/3216, Report dated 17 July 1920; FO 228/3211, April 1921; FO 405/233, 26 September 1921. Also see Li Danyang’s article on Lizerovich in *Zhongshan daxue xuebao*.

¹⁶⁰ FO 228/3216, no. 22, 17 July 1920; no. 27, 12 August 1920.

arrangements were made to change it from a bi-weekly paper into a daily paper.¹⁶¹ In February 1920, Vilensky-Sibiryakov bought the paper for \$5,000, and afterwards ‘it owed its existence to a subsidy granted by the Far Eastern Republic’.¹⁶² From then on it became a vehicle for Bolshevik propaganda and a cover for Bolshevik and Comintern activities. Members of staff included Soviet agents like Voitinsky, Goorman, Kaufman, Khodorov and Baranovsky.¹⁶³

The office of *Shanhaiskaia rizni* had close connections with Vladivostok. In Soviet Russia’s early strategic plan in the Far East, Vladivostok was important. The Narkomindel’s instructions of February 1918 to soviets in Siberia entrusted work in Shanghai and several other seaport cities to Vladivostok. Popov and other emissaries from Moscow got instructions and aid from Vladivostok soviet before entering China. More importantly, the Far Eastern Regional Committee of the RCP(b) in Vladivostok decided, as they told the CEC of the RCP(b) in a letter of January 1920, to establish permanent relations with Chinese revolutionaries.¹⁶⁴ In March 1920, Vilensky-Sibiryakov established the Far Eastern Bureau of the RCP(b) in Vladivostok, and set up a Foreign Section under the Bureau to be responsible for directing revolutionary work in China and other Far Eastern countries.¹⁶⁵ Taking the above factors into account, it can be conjectured that attempts to publish *The Labour* (or *Worker*) and establish a Bolshevik-style organisation in China were probably initiated in Vladivostok on Moscow’s instructions.

The irrefutable facts amply prove that at latest from the beginning of 1920, Li Hanjun became deeply involved in the activities promoted by the Bolsheviks. This is why it made sense to call him a ‘Chinese Bolshevik’.

¹⁶¹ Shanghai Municipal Police Daily Report, 7 November 1919.

¹⁶² FO 228/3211, April 1921; FO228/3291, Shanghai Intelligence Report for the December Quarter 1922. *Shanghai Life* later received subsidy from Yourin (real name Dzevaltovsky), the head of the Far Eastern Republic of Siberia’s Mission in Beijing (Shanghai Municipal Police Daily Report, 5 January 1921), and also from Centrosoyuz, an agency for Soviet and Comintern financial transactions in Shanghai.

¹⁶³ Cf. Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, ‘Shanghai E-wen shenghuo bao yu Buershiweike zaoqi zai Hua huodong’ (The Russian journal *Shanghai Life* and early Bolshevik activities in China), *Jindaishi yanjiu* [Modern Chinese History Studies], no. 2, 2003, pp. 1-43. Baranovsky later became the manager of the Rosta and Dalta News Agency’s Shanghai Branch. See FO228/3291, the December Quarter 1922.

¹⁶⁴ K. Shevelyov, ‘On the History of the Formation of the Communist Party of China’, *Far Eastern Affairs*, no. 1, 1981, p. 129.

¹⁶⁵ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 8.

4.3 A Key Link between Socialists in East Asia

Li Hanjun was an internationalist and kept abreast of events throughout the world. Besides socialist and Communist movements, he also kept an eye on national liberation movements in Korea, India, Iran and Ireland. He formed links with revolutionaries in other countries, particularly in East Asia, many of whom later became socialists and Communists. Yang Zhihua recalled that Li had relations with the Japanese and Korean Communist parties and often took her to 'progressive Japanese and Korean friends' home.'¹⁶⁶

There was no Japanese Communist party until August 1921, when the Enlightened People's Communist Party (*Gyomin kyosanto*) was formed. Before that, Li had links with some Japanese progressive societies and leading socialists such as Sakai Toshihiko, Takatsu Masamichi, Yamazaki Kesaya, and Miyazaki Ryūsuke, some of whom founded the Japanese Communist Party.¹⁶⁷ It was reported that there were forty to fifty Japanese socialists in Shanghai at the time.¹⁶⁸ As far as I know, several Japanese with socialist inclinations went to Shanghai, including Miyazaki Ryūsuke, Taira Teizo, Sawamura Yukio, Matsumoto Saburo, Takashima Ichiro and N. Okamoto. At least the first three got in touch with Li Hanjun in Shanghai.¹⁶⁹ Although Li maintained friendships with many Japanese progressive intellectuals, he often frankly criticised those who argued in favour of Japanese imperialism and colonialism. In the meantime, he stressed that the Chinese anti-Japanese movement should not be directed against ordinary Japanese people.¹⁷⁰

Li Hanjun sympathised greatly with the Korean people. In his writings, he denounced Japan's annexation and misrule of Korea and commended the Koreans' struggle against Japan.¹⁷¹ Li had close relations with several Koreans in Shanghai,

¹⁶⁶ 'Yang Zhihua de huiyi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 25-26.

¹⁶⁷ Ishikawa Yoshihiro (ed), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ This information was given in a report by the Japanese Government-General of Korea, 5 May 1920, in *Han'guk minjok untong sahyo (Jungkuk pyeon)* [Documents of the Korean National Movement (Chinese section)], Gukhoe toseoguan (ed), Gukhoe toseoguan, Seoul, 1976, p. 25.

¹⁶⁹ See Miyazaki Ryūsuke, 'Shisō no mingoku kara'; Ishikawa Yoshihiro, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, p. 57; p. 342, note 6.

¹⁷⁰ See Xianjin, 'Ribei de xin yundong', *XQPL*, p. 4; Li Renjie, 'Pai Ri wenti' (On the problems of anti-Japan), *Jiuguo ribao* [National Salvation Daily], 16 January 1920, Supplementary issue, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷¹ Xianjin, 'Chaoxian de duli jingshen heru?' (What about the Koreans' spirit for independence?) *XQPL*, no. 35, 1 February 1920, p. 4; Xianjin, 'Qiu shen jiu wo' (Praying to God for salvation), *JW*, 20 March 1920, p. 4; Li Renjie, 'Pai Ri wenti', *Jiuguo ribao*, 16 January 1920, p. 1.

including socialists and Communists. It is necessary to review the relative history briefly, since Korean Communists acted as the 'chief channel for the Comintern's contact with the Chinese and the Japanese' in the early stages of the Communist movement in East Asia.¹⁷²

Around the time of the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910, a large number of Koreans escaped to Siberia and China, where many settled.¹⁷³ After the October Revolution, numerous Korean expatriates living in Russia supported the Bolshevik cause and joined the Red Army. For the Bolsheviks, it was useful to enlist these Korean militants when Japan invaded Russia. Under Bolshevik direction, the Korean People's Socialist Party (*Han'in sahoe-tang*) was founded in Khabarovsk in June 1918. The Chairman was Yi Tonghwi, a patriotic military leader who had led an uprising against Japanese rule in Korea. The General Secretary, Pak Chinsen, was a graduate of a university in Moscow.¹⁷⁴

This Party, according to Pak Chinsen, 'laid the basis for a close rapprochement of all the Socialist parties of Eastern Asia for a joint struggle against Japanese imperialism.'¹⁷⁵ At a united congress held in April 1919, the Korean People's Socialist Party merged with the New People's Party (*Shinmin-tang*) into the Korean Socialist Party (KSP). The newly-formed party commended 'the fraternal cooperation between the Japanese and Chinese social democracies who together with our party will carry on the fight against Eastern-Asiatic reaction for the final liberation of the toilers, for world revolution.'¹⁷⁶ After this congress, Pak Chinsen went to Moscow to register his Party with the Comintern. Thus the KSP became the first Party organised by East Asian people to join the Comintern and was regarded as the 'first organisation of the Korean Communists'.¹⁷⁷ While in Moscow, Pak and other Koreans reached an agreement with Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders whereby they pledged to use

¹⁷² Suh Dae-sook, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1948*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1967, p. 17.

¹⁷³ R. A. Scalapino and C. S. Lee, *Communism in Korea*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972, p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Lazitch and Drachkovitch (eds), p. 350.

¹⁷⁵ Pak Chin-sun, 'The Socialist Movement in Korea', *Kommunist Internatsional*, nos. 7-8, 1919, in Suh Dae-sook (ed), *Documents of Korean Communism, 1918-1948*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970, pp. 44-51.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Suh Dae-sook (ed), p. 8.

Comintern funds for the liberation of Korea and the Communist cause.¹⁷⁸ The KSP thus became the Bolsheviks' best vehicle for carrying out revolution in East Asia. In August 1919, the Comintern sent Pak Chinsen to Shanghai with money to sponsor national and Communist movements.¹⁷⁹

Shanghai at the time had become the main centre for the Korean nationalist and Communist movements. After Japan suppressed Korea's 'March First Uprising', a nationwide protest against Japan's annexation, numerous leaders fled to China, where they established the Korean Provisional Government (in Shanghai) in April 1919. Yi Tonghwi was elected Prime Minister. As chairman of the KSP, he moved the Party's headquarters to Shanghai in August 1919, at the suggestion of a Russian Bolshevik Rozardovitch, who had arrived in Shanghai from Vladivostok in May 1919. This Russian established contact with several Koreans, including Yŏ Unhyong, Yŏ Unhŏng, Yŏ Unil and Yi Kwangsu, some of whom had socialist inclinations.¹⁸⁰

As far as I know, Li Hanjun was on friendly terms with Yŏ Unhyong and Yi Kwangsu. Yŏ Unhyong, a Christian, graduated from University of Nanking (Jinling). In November 1918, he organised the Young Korea Party in Shanghai and this Party dispatched Kim Kyusik to present a petition for Korean independence to the Paris Peace Conference. In 1919, Yŏ became the Korean Provisional Government's councillor for Foreign Affairs. Yi Kwangsu (K. S. Lee) was a famous novelist. In February 1919, he and other Korean students in Tokyo issued the 'Declaration of Independence of Korea', which triggered the March First Uprising in Korea. After escaping to Shanghai, Yi became chief editor of the organ of the Korean Provisional Government and also edited *Xin Han qingnian*, the organ of the Young Korea Party. Both Yŏ and Yi knew English well, and may have used it to communicate with Russians and Chinese progressives. It may have been they who introduced Li Hanjun to Russian Bolsheviks and other Korean Socialists. Li's socialist inclinations were no doubt the main factor in attracting the attention of the Bolsheviks and those Koreans.

¹⁷⁸ Lazitch and Drachkovitch (eds), p. 350; Scalapino and Lee, pp. 9-10; Suh Dae-sook, p. 11; Kim Chun-yŏp and Kim Ch'ang-sun, *Han'guk kongsanjuŭi undong sa* [The History of Korean Communist Movement], Koryŏ taehakkyo Asea menje yŏn'guso, Seoul, 1986, vol. 1, p. 169.

¹⁷⁹ Suh Dae-sook, p. 11; Kim Chun-yŏp and Kim Ch'ang-sun, vol. 1, p. 169.

¹⁸⁰ Shanghai Municipal Police Files, I. O. 2-76, real 64, see Kim Sooyoung, p. 76; Ku Dae-yeol, *Korea under Colonialism: The March First Movement and Anglo-Japanese Relations*, Seoul Computer Press, Seoul, 1985, p. 233. According to *Gendai Chōsen jinme jiten* [Modern Korean Names Dictionary] (Sekai Jurnalu sha, Tokyo, 1962, p. 245), Yŏ Unhŏng graduated from Leicester University in Britain.

On 1 March 1920, Li Hanjun attended a rally commemorating Korean Independence Day with more than seven hundred Koreans and around one hundred guests of other nationalities. Following speeches by the Premier of the Korean Provisional Government Yi Tonghwi and two ministers, Li Hanjun delivered a speech on behalf of the Chinese. He pointed out the similarities between Korea and China, both of which were bullied and humiliated by imperialism. He said: ‘Our two countries had a very close relationship and could easily act in concert [to oppose the common enemy]. ... Power and capital could cause estrangement and separation, whereas the struggle for justice would unite [the peoples of the two countries].’¹⁸¹ Li’s attendance and speech at the rally demonstrates that he got to know Yi Tonghwi no later than 1 March 1920 and supported the Korean independence movement as well as socialist movement.

In May 1920, the Korean Communist Group formed in Shanghai, and in January 1921 the Koryŏ Communist Party was established under Yi Tonghwi as chairman. Yŏ Unhyong became head of the Party’s translation department and translated the *Communist Manifesto* into Korean.¹⁸² So it was probably true that Li Hanjun had connections with the Korean Communist Party.

This last point is important, for many Korean Communists were sent by the Bolsheviks to China to promote the nationalist and Communist movements. In May 1919, a Korean named An accompanied the Russian Bolshevik Rozardovich to Shanghai; in March 1920, a Russian Bolshevik went to Shanghai with Koreans and a Chinese.¹⁸³ In April 1920 the Korean Communist Kim Mangyom (in Russian name V. I. Selebriakov) went to China with Voitinsky and other Bolsheviks.¹⁸⁴ Han Hyŏngkwŏn, who had met Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders in Moscow, took 400,000 golden rubles as part of an initial grant to the Koreans and Chinese in the autumn of 1920.¹⁸⁵

Among Koreans sent to China, the most important was Pak Chinsen. Pak first arrived in Shanghai in November 1919.¹⁸⁶ In addition to directing and financing Korean Communists and nationalists there, he was entrusted with a mission to establish

¹⁸¹ ‘Hanren duli zhounian jinianhui’ (Meeting to commemorate the anniversary of Korean Independence Day), *Minguo ribao*, 3 March 1920, p. 3.

¹⁸² Kim Chun-yop and Kim Ch’ang-sun, vol. 1, p. 199, p. 247;

¹⁸³ Kim Sooyoung, p. 76; Scalapino and Lee, p. 14.

¹⁸⁴ *VKNRDK*, no. 49.

¹⁸⁵ Suh Dae-sook, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 11; Kim Chun-yop and Kim Ch’ang-sun, vol. 1, p. 169; Scalapino and Lee, pp. 9-10.

Communist parties in East Asia. Wang Ruofei, later secretary-general of the CCP's CEC, said that the Comintern dispatched a Korean named 'Bake-Jing-chun' (i.e. Pak Chinsen) to China in 1919 to organise a Communist Party.¹⁸⁷ Since Pak stayed in Shanghai only briefly on his first visit, Yi Tonghwi and the other Korean Communists took responsibility for setting up a Communist party in China. These Korean Communists wanted to foster a Chinese organisation that was strongly anti-Japanese and supported the Koreans' struggle. The following account describes the Chinese organisation the Koreans contacted:

At the beginning of 1920, the Comintern dispatched a Korean comrade named Kim Sen – who had attended its first Congress – to China in order to lay the groundwork for the organisation of a Communist party. When he arrived in China, he contacted Huang Jiemin, a member of the Datong Party, and twenty-one anarchists, and organised a Communist party which elected a Central Executive Committee of nineteen.¹⁸⁸

'Kim Sen' here was probably Pak Chinsen, for he had attended meetings of the ECCI. *Datong* means 'great harmony', an ancient Chinese political concept of the ideal society on which Kang Youwei elaborated in his *Datong shu* (Tatong Book). Sun Yat-sen regarded *datong* as his ultimate aim and a synonym for Communism.¹⁸⁹

The Datong Party was founded in the beginning of 1920. It grew out of the Allied Party of New Asia (*Xin Ya tongmeng dang*) organised on 8 July 1916 by Chinese and Koreans studying in Japan, including Huang Jiemin, Chen Qiyou, Ha Sangyen and Cang Teksu.¹⁹⁰ Its platform was 'human equality and world harmony', and its programme stipulated that the Party was to denounce warlord rule in China; abolish unequal treaties between China and foreign countries; and fight imperialist rule in Korea, Taiwan, India, Vietnam and all other weak nations. It aimed to convene a National Conference to decide state affairs or raise a common people's revolution. In addition to

¹⁸⁷ Wang Ruofei, 'Guanyu dageming shiqi de Zhongguo gongchandang' (On the CCP during the Great Revolution), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 1, 1981, p. 41.

¹⁸⁸ Liu Yasheng, *Zhongguo minzu minzhu geming yundong shi jiaocheng* [A Textbook on the History of Chinese National Democratic Revolutionary Movement], Suide, North Shensi, 1941, p. 115. I quote the English translation of this paragraph from C. Brandt's *Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-1927*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1955, pp. 20-21. Liu Yasheng might have obtained this information from the Korean Communists in Yan'an during the anti-Japanese war.

¹⁸⁹ Cui Shuqin, *Sun Zhongshan yu gongchanzhuyi* [Sun Yat-sen and Communism], Yazhou chubanshe, Hong Kong, 1954, p. 90; Leng Shao-chuan and N. D. Palmer, *Sun Yat-sen and Communism*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1961, p. 97.

¹⁹⁰ Huang Jiemin, 'Sanshi qi nian youxi meng' (My thirty-seven years' dream – Huang Jiemin's reminiscences), written in 1920, *Jindaishi ziliao*, no. 122, October 2010, pp. 152-153, p. 181. However, according to Huang Jitao's 'Huang Jiemin tongzhi zhuanlüe' (A brief biography of comrade Huang Jiemin), the Datong Party was founded in 1917. *Qingjiang wenshi ziliao* [Selected Materials on Qingjiang's Culture and History], no.1, 1986, p. 52.

Chinese, the Datong Party also included Koreans, Vietnamese, Indians and an Iranian.¹⁹¹ Several Chinese radicals who later became Communists had been the members of the Allied Party of New Asia and the Datong Party, including Li Dazhao, Zhou Enlai, Lin Boqu, Huang Rikui, Zhang Guotao and Liu Qingyang. Several important leaders of the KSP and the Korean Provisional Government, such as Yi Tonghwi, Kim Rip, Yŏ Unhyong and Kim Kyusik were the members of the Datong Party. The Soviet agent Potapov also joined in.¹⁹²

Huang Jiemin, Yao Zuobin and Wen Jincheng, leaders of the Datong Party, were all returned students from Japan who worked on *Jiuguo ribao* (National Salvation Daily). *Jiuguo ribao* was an organ of the Returned Students' National Salvation League, set up in Shanghai during the campaign against the Sino-Japanese Joint Military Defence Convention in 1918. This paper aimed 'to arouse people's patriotic feelings and consciousness' to fight the Japanese.¹⁹³ It often reported news of national liberation movements in China and abroad, especially Korea. It was said that the Korean Provisional Government once granted a subsidy to the paper, and its member Cho Tongho even worked as a correspondent.¹⁹⁴ *Jiuguo ribao*'s manager, Yu Yuzhi, later recalled that Yi Tonghwi had connections with the paper.¹⁹⁵ Besides its nationalist colouring, *Jiuguo ribao* exhibited strong socialist tendencies, particularly in 1920. It ran a column titled 'The Study of Socialism', published articles introducing Marxist theories, socialist ideas and stories about Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, and reported news of Soviet Russia, the Comintern, labour movements in China and abroad,

¹⁹¹ Xie Bin, *Minguo zhengdang shi* [A History of the Parties in the Republic of China] (Enlarged edition), Xueshu yanjiu zonghui, Shanghai, 1926, pp. 133-134. Wang Jueyuan in his work *Zhongguo dangpai shi* [The History of the Parties of China] (Zhengzhong shuju, Taipei, 1983, pp. 94-95) copied relevant paragraphs in Xie Bin's book without giving reference.

¹⁹² See Huang Jiemin's recollection in *Jindaishi ziliao*. According to the Russian archives kept in Moscow, Li Yuzhen in her *Sun Zhongshan yu Gongchanguoji* [Sun Yat-sen and the Comintern] (Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, Taipei, 1996, p. 57) revealed that Potapov became a member of Datong Party in May 1920.

¹⁹³ *Guomin*, vol. 1, no. 3, March 1919.

¹⁹⁴ *Han'guk tongnip untong sa*, vol. 4, p. 558; Cho Tongho joined the Koryo Communist Party in 1920, and later became the leader of the Korean Communist Party. It was also said that Shin Kyusik, a famous Korean nationalist leader, also took part in editing the paper.

¹⁹⁵ Yu Yuzhi, 'Oral Recollection', recorded by Yu Anlan during late 1992 and early 1993 (unpublished).

and Lenin's speeches.¹⁹⁶ It often carried articles from Rosta and Dalta and the Chinese-Russian News Agency.¹⁹⁷

An article by a Korean Communist in the *Communist International* classified *Jiuguo ribao* as one of China's 'principal' socialist papers.¹⁹⁸ It seems that the Korean Communists' attempt to organise a Chinese Communist party on the basis of the Datong party was recognised by the Soviet Government. In his 'On the Eve of the Establishment of the Communist Party in China' written on 10 December 1920, Vilensky-Sibiryakov said that the Datong Party was an 'International Socialist Party', because, according to him, 'Communist ideology had infiltrated this party'.¹⁹⁹

Li Hanjun published several articles and translations in *Jiuguo ribao*.²⁰⁰ In the first issue after the paper enlarged on 16 January 1920, his 'My Hopes for the Enlarged *National Salvation Daily*' appeared on the front page.²⁰¹ On the same page was an article by Huang Jiemin titled 'New Asia'. Huang wrote that numerous students in Asian countries were studying socialism, and he expected that a new Asia would develop towards *datong* in the future.²⁰² This article by Huang actually revealed the rough ideas of the Datong Party.

The Datong Party's main leaders, Huang Jiemin and Yao Zuobin, were members of the KMT. According to Potapov, Sun Yat-sen's secretary and financial minister also

¹⁹⁶ Several comments in it praised Soviet Russia as a 'real good friend of China', *Jiuguo ribao*, 22-23 September 1919.

¹⁹⁷ 'Rosta' is the abbreviation of the Russian Telegraph Agency. It was the news agency of the Soviet Russian Government. 'Dalta' is the abbreviation of the Far Eastern Telegraph Agency. It was the news agency of the Far Eastern Republic of Siberia. The Beijing branch of Rosta & Dalta News Agencies was established in June 1920, and several other branches were set up in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Harbin and other cities in China later. The Chinese-Russian News Agency was established by the Revoburo of the East Asian Secretariat of the Comintern. See Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, 'Khodorov yu Su-E zai Hua zuizao sheli de dianxunshu' (A. E. Khodorov and Soviet Russia's first news agency in China), *Minguo dang'an* [Republican Archives], no. 4, 2001, pp. 50-61. Since the publication of this article, I have collected more material of the Rosta and Dalta News Agencies.

¹⁹⁸ R., 'The Situation in Eastern Asia', *The Communist International*, no. 13, August 1920, p. 107. The author 'R' is said to be Korean Communist, R. W. Kim.

¹⁹⁹ W. Wilenski (Vilensky-Sibiryakov), 'Am vorabend der Entstehung der Kommunistischen Partei in China' (On the Eve of the Establishment of the Communist Party in China), *Die Kommunistische Internationale* [Communist International], no. 16, 1920, p. 136, p. 139.

²⁰⁰ They include Li's translations of 'The Trade Union Movement in Russia' and 'My Life in the New Russia' by W. K. Humphries. The two translations were published in instalments in *Jiuguo ribao* on 15-17 and 18-20 of September 1920.

²⁰¹ Li Renjie, 'Duiyu *Jiuguo ribao* kuozhang de xiwang' (My hopes for the enlarged *National Salvation Daily*), *Jiuguo ribao*, 16 January 1920, pp. 1-2. Before this date, the paper had ceased publication for a long time.

²⁰² Jiemin (Huang Jiemin)'s 'Xin Yaxiya' (New Assia) appeared in Page 1 of *Jiuguo ribao*'s supplementary issue on 16 January 1920, while Li's 'Pa-Ri wenti' was published directly afterward in pp. 1-2.

joined the Datong Party.²⁰³ These leaders of the Datong Party took a leading role in the National Students' Union, the Federation of National Organisations of China, the Shanghai Students' Union and the All-China Industrial Federation. Although there is no evidence that Li Hanjun joined the Datong Party, he was acquainted with some of its leaders and members.

When Zhang Guotao, a Beijing student leader, was in Shanghai in late 1919 and early 1920, he visited Sun Yat-sen, Dai Jitao, Shen Xuanlu and Li Hanjun, and got in touch with Kim Kyusik and Yŏ Unhyong of the Korean Provisional Government, as well as with Huang Jiemin. According to Zhang, Huang was trying to organise the Datong Party 'on the platform that all socialists in China should unite, cooperate with the Korean revolutionaries, and establish connections with Russia.'²⁰⁴ Zhang's account indicates interactions between the radical Chinese and Korean political forces in Shanghai on the one hand and the Russian Bolshevik contacts on the other.

A news report in April 1920 shows that two Russians (Potapov and Stopany), several Koreans and Japanese attended a meeting held by the National Students' Union, the Federation of National Organisations of China, and some trade unions, at which they agreed if the Chinese central government refused to accept the Karakhan Manifesto, they would organise an alliance of Chinese, Koreans, Japanese and Russians in Shanghai to overthrow the warlords.²⁰⁵ In the later part of March, an article in *Shanhaiskaia rizni* expressed such an idea: The fates of China, Japan and Korea were 'closely allied'; Russia, which position was similar to the three countries not long ago, 'has been freed from foreign intervention', and 'will appear in the world as a strong and united nation. Can China hope for such an ending to her present troubles?'²⁰⁶ This suggests that a revolutionary alliance between Russians and East Asian peoples was about to form.

In the summer of 1920, Shanghai, according to a Korean Communist, was 'playing the role of the centre in the political life of Eastern Asia' and also became 'the centre of the Chinese Socialist movement.'²⁰⁷ Around this time, socialists of China, Korea and Japan started coordinated actions to establish Communist parties under the

²⁰³ 'Potapov's Report to Chicherin', in *VKNRDK*, p. 48; Potapov's explanation about his report can be seen in Li Yuzhen, *Sun Zhongshan yu Gongchanguoji*, p. 57.

²⁰⁴ Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, pp. 89-90.

²⁰⁵ *Xinwen bao* [Shanghai News Post], 5 May 1920.

²⁰⁶ An extract from *Shanghai Life* in FO 228/3214, 25 March 1920.

²⁰⁷ R., 'The Situation in the East Asia', *The Communist International*, p. 107.

direction of the Comintern. Some Korean Communists in Shanghai worked as intermediaries. For example, Yi Chunsuk and Yi Chungrim were sent to Japan to contact socialists there and invite them to Shanghai for a joint conference.²⁰⁸ In the late autumn of 1920, a joint conference of East Asian socialists took place in Shanghai attended by 40 Chinese delegates, 3 Koreans, 18 Japanese and one Indian.²⁰⁹ Voitinsky, Kim Mangyom, Yi Tonghwi, Osugi Sakae, Yŏ Unhyong, Chen Duxiu and Huang Jiemin reportedly attended this conference or the preparatory meetings. The central theme of their discussions was the feasibility of establishing a league of Far Eastern revolutionary parties directed by the Comintern.²¹⁰ Vilensky-Sibiriyakov wrote in *Izvestiia* (News) on 12 January 1921: ‘The conference marks the growth of communism in the Far East and the organisational shaping up of communist parties. ...This is a great historical event in the life of the peoples of East Asia.’²¹¹

In May 1921, another conference attended by Chinese, Koreans and Japanese was held in Shanghai. It was presided over by Pak Chinsen, a member of the ECCI. At one meeting, Pak heard a report by Kondo Eizo, a representative of ‘the Provisional Executive Committee of the Japanese Communist Party’, and gave him instructions and funds for propaganda work in Japan. Not long after his return to Japan, Kondo formed the Enlightened People’s Communist Party.²¹² Chinese present at this conference reportedly included Huang Jiemin and Yao Zuobin. Li Da took part in its preparatory work; he and Li Hanjun might also have attended the conference.²¹³

The Korean historian Kim Sooyoung considered March 1919 - March 1920 ‘the preliminary period of the Far Eastern Communist movements in Siberia and in Shanghai’. She points out that of the Chinese in Shanghai who later became Communists, only Li

²⁰⁸ Kim Chun-yop and Kim Ch’ang-sun, vol. 1, pp. 231-232.

²⁰⁹ R. C. North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1963, p. 56; Eudin and North, p. 90. It was reported that a similar conference was held in Harbin in spring 1920, and there were present representative of socialists from Japan, China, Korea and Siberia. *The Call* (Organ of the British Socialist Party), 1 April and 8 April 1920. This journal is kept in the British Library’s Newspaper Library at Colindale.

²¹⁰ Suh Dae-sook, p. 18; G. M. Beckmann and O. Genji, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922-1945*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1969, p. 30; Chang Kuot’ao, vol. 1, p. 691.

²¹¹ Eudin and North, p. 90.

²¹² Beckmann and Genji, p. 390; Iwamura Toshio, *Komintern to Nihon kyōsantō no seiritsu* [The Comintern and the Founding of the Communist Party of Japan], Sanichi syobou, Tokyo, 1977, p. 105.

²¹³ Ishikawa Yoshihiro (ed), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, A-3 and its footnote 2.

Hanjun ‘had close associations with Korean and Japanese socialists.’²¹⁴ Li also appears to have been among the few Chinese who joined the Communist ranks in this period. As we have seen, Li built up relations with several leaders of the KMT, the Datong Party, the National Students’ Union, representatives of Beijing’s radical students, leaders of the Korean Provisional Government and the KSP, Japanese radical societies and individual socialists as well as with Russian Bolshevik agents, thus promoting the unification of radical forces. This might be why British Intelligence in Shanghai described Li as ‘a mysterious person, as he is on friendly terms with many different parties’.²¹⁵ So Li Hanjun, who had worked to link up Korean, Japanese and Chinese socialists, played an important role in helping found East Asian Communist movements.

4.4 ‘A Central Figure’ in the Founding of the Embryonic Party

According to *A Brief History of the CCP*, which contains information on the early history of the CCP from first-hand sources, ‘by the beginning of 1920, an embryo of the CCP existed in Shanghai.’²¹⁶ One may ask why the first organisation of the CCP formed in Shanghai rather than Beijing, where Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu normally worked, and why did Chen Duxiu have to go to Shanghai to prepare the establishment of the CCP? I will try to answer these questions here.

It was a fundamental Marxist principle that a Communist party should represent or be of the proletariat. Lenin once predicted that some kind of Chinese Social-Democratic

²¹⁴ Kim Sooyoung in her dissertation (p. 87) expresses regret that ‘Li’s service time in the CCP in Shanghai was too short to allow his associations with Korean and Japanese socialists to be effectively utilised.’

²¹⁵ FO 405/228, Enclosure in no. 157.

²¹⁶ ‘A Brief History of the CCP’ in *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China, 1918-1927* (henceforth *DCNSAC*), C. M. Wilbur and J. L. Y. How (eds), Columbia University Press, New York, 1956, p. 49. This brief history was written by S. N. Navmov, a Russian advisor at Huangpu Military Academy during 1926-1927, and was first published in Russian in 1926 under the pen name ‘S. Kalachyov’. The text was based entirely on source materials offered by the Chinese Communists. See V. Nikiforov, ‘Zhongguo gongyun yu Zhonggong de dansheng’ (The Chinese labour movement and the birth of the CCP), Lin Yincheng translated from *Problemy Sovet Istoriiya* [Soviet Historical Problems], no. 1, 1982, in *Gongchanguoji yu Zhongguo geming - Sulian xuezhe lunwen xuanyi* [The Comintern and the Chinese Revolution - Selected Translations of Treatises by Soviet Scholars], Xu Zhengming et al. (transl and comp), Sichuan renmin chubanshe, Chengdu, 1987, p. 293. A Japanese historian Otsuka Reizo believed that Li Dazhao was credited with drafting the preliminary text as a report to the Comintern. See Otsuka Reizo, *Shina kyosanto shi* [The History of the Communist Party in China], Seikatsu sha, Tokyo, 1940, vol. 1, p. 8. The Russian expert on the CCP history, K. Shevelyov, told me on 20 August 2002, that Navmov had interviewed Zhang Tailei in 1926 to gather material for *A Brief History of the CCP*.

labour party would appear in Shanghai, since the number of the Chinese proletariat would increase there.²¹⁷ According to *A Brief History of the CCP*, Chen Duxiu moved to Shanghai because he ‘fully realised the close connections between the party and labour organisations’ and intended to use Shanghai ‘as the base of the labour movement and the centre of his work.’²¹⁸ In fact, besides Shanghai was China’s industrial center, it also a central point for Soviet agents and the KSP to initiate Communist movements in East Asia.

In Shanghai, Chen Duxiu soon came into contact with several trade unions, and became an advisor to the All-China Industrial Federation. Its president was Cao Yabo, an old KMTer, but it was under the direct charge of Huang Jiemin, leader of the Datong Party. In March, Zhang Guotao, who had been sent to Shanghai by Li Dazhao, was appointed general secretary of the Federation. Other student activists from Beijing, Tianjin and Nanjing, such as Kang Baiqing, Liu Qingyang, Wang Dexi and Wang Duqing, also joined the Federation.²¹⁹ According to Huang Jiemin, these student activists who worked for the the All-China Industrial Federation were the members of the Datong Party, and Chen Duxiu also got to know the Datong Party’s plan.²²⁰

Zhang Guotao later admitted that he participated in the trade unions in order to meet workers in Shanghai with the purpose of organising a political party.²²¹ We have seen that in early 1920 Huang Jiemin was trying to establish a ‘Communist party’ based on the Datong Party, and the All-China Industrial Federation was virtually its front organisation. It seems that Chen Duxiu and Zhang Guotao were at first was brought into line with the Datong Party, in the hope that they would establish a Communist party.

On April 2, Chen Duxiu appeared in public at a trade union meeting for the first time. He and editors of *Xingqi pinglun*, Li Hanjun, Dai Jitao and Shen Xuanlu, plus several KMTers, including Cao Yabo and Wu Zhihui, attended the inaugural meeting of the Shanghai Ship and Godown Workers' Union, organised by Zhang Futang with the help of

²¹⁷ Lenin, ‘Democracy and Narodism in China’, in *LCW*, p. 169.

²¹⁸ *DCNSAC*, p. 48.

²¹⁹ *Minguo ribao*, 17 March 1920, p. 3.

²²⁰ Huang Jiemin, pp. 183-182, p. 192; In Vilensky-Sibiriyakov’s article on the eve of the establishment of the CCP, the names of Kang Baiqing and Wang Dexi were written as ‘Kai-Bei-Dsin, Wan-Dei-Shi’ (*Die Kommunistische Internationale*, p. 136). Liu Qingyang had earlier met with Soviet agents in Tianjin. See Liu Qingyang’s recollection, in Wang Laidi (ed), p. 204.

²²¹ ‘Zhang Guotao guanyu Zhonggong chengli qianhou qingkuang de jianggao’ (Zhang Guotao’s speech draft on the events happened during the period of the establishment of the CCP), provided by K. Shevelyov, *Bainian chao* [One Hundred Years Tide], no. 2, 2002, pp. 53-54.

at least one Bolshevik, V. A. Stopany.²²² This Union had a close relationship with the All-China Industrial Federation and its founding was praised by the Datong Party's Wen Jincheng.²²³ On 18 April 1920 Chen Duxiu attended a meeting of the All-China Industrial Federation convened by Huang Jiemin to prepare International Labour Day celebrations.²²⁴

On May Day, having broken through the barriers created by the police and soldiers, a small mass meeting was held. The leaflet issued by the All-China Industrial Federation declared:

Our labourers are the most important class in the human society. ... The time when we will live in the great harmony (*datong*) in the world is near. Arise to unite with workers! Overthrow the government and capitalists to establish a new government, ... Each takes what he needs. Long live communism!²²⁵

The leaflet had a revolutionary and communist tone. Moreover, the All-China Industrial Federation and other six trade unions, including the Shanghai Ship and Godown Workers' Union, issued an open letter to the Soviet Government on behalf of all Chinese workers: 'We are trying to create a new, happy and permanently peaceful world for humankind and are determined to shoulder the responsibility for it with you.' It further expressed the hope that the working class in Soviet Russia would offer 'vigorous' aid and guidance to their fellow labourers in China, India, Korea and Vietnam still under capitalist oppression.²²⁶ This indicates that the Datong Party, which had Korean, Indian and Vietnamese members, took the lead in the May Day rally. A leaflet issued by the Beijing Communist Group in May 1921 stated that the May Day celebration in 1920 had been held by a Socialist Party and trade unions.²²⁷ The 'Socialist Party' here might refer to the Datong Party, which was once called by Vilensky-Sibiryakov an 'International Socialist Party'.²²⁸

²²² 'Chuanwu zhanfang gongjie lianhehui chengli ji' (Report on the founding of the Shanghai Ship and Godown Workers' Union), *Shen bao* [The Chinese Daily News], 3 April 1920, p. 11. Stopany, one of the staff of *Shanghai Life*, had made a speech at the preparatory meeting for the foundation of the Union on 29 February 1920. See *Jiuguo ribao*, 26 February and 7 March 1920; FO228/3214, 4 March 1920. Cf. Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, 'Yige anarqi-buershiweike de beiju — Stopany zai Shanghai' (The tragedy of an Anarcho-Bolshevik — V. A. Stopany in Shanghai), *Bainian chao*, no. 3, 2003, pp. 45-50.

²²³ *Jiuguo ribao*, 26 February.

²²⁴ 'Choubei laodong jinian dahui' (Preparations for Labour Day celebration), *Minguo ribao*, 20 April 1920, p. 3.

²²⁵ Shanghai Municipal Police Daily Report, 30 April 1920.

²²⁶ 'Jieyan sheng zhong zhi laodong dahui' (Labour Day celebrations under martial law), *Shi bao*, 2 May 1920, p. 5.

²²⁷ Zhonggong zhongyang dangshiziliao zhengji weiyuanhui (ed), *Gongchanzhuyi xiaozu* [Communist Groups], Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, Beijing, 1987, vol. 1, p. 289.

²²⁸ Wilenski, *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, p. 136.

Chen Duxiu and several members of the *Xingqi pinglun* Society participated in the commemorative activities. The May Day movement in 1920 showed that various radical forces were cooperating. The military authorities in Shanghai considered the May Day incident ‘a disturbance created by the Bolsheviks’ and even ‘a Russian Movement’.²²⁹ The Bolsheviks did influence the movement, since several leaders of the trade unions involved knew Soviet agents such as Stopany, Potapov, Popov, Lizerovitch and Diernav;²³⁰ and the news from Shanghai soon reached the Moscow press.²³¹ The 1920 May Day movement has been regarded as an important event in the origins of the CCP.²³²

Now we know that before Chen Duxiu’s arrival in Shanghai in early 1920, the foundations for the labour movement had already been laid by the Datong Party, the KMT and other organisations. The Datong Party was about to form a Communist party with Comintern funding passed on by way of the KSP. Several socialist intellectuals around the KMT’s *Xingqi pinglun* also established contact with Russian and Korean Communists and participated in labour activities. A Bolshevik centre, under cover of the offices of *Shanhaiskaia rizni*, was set up in Shanghai. Those provided a base for establishing a Communist party in Shanghai.

In discussing the origins of the CCP, Cai Hesen pointed out that Chen Duxiu’s move to Shanghai in early 1920 was part of ‘a plan’.²³³ Li Lisan also revealed that when Chen reached Tianjin from Beijing, a correspondent of the Comintern News Agency contacted him and they went together to Shanghai to discuss forming a Communist party.²³⁴ This correspondent may have been Khodorov. After his arrival in Shanghai in April 1919, Khodorov worked for *Shanhaiskaia rizni* and afterwards moved to Tianjin, where he made preparations for setting up the Rosta & Dalta News Agencies in

²²⁹ Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui Zhongguo gongren yundongshi yanjiushi (ed), *Zhongguo gongyun shiliao* [Historical Materials on the Chinese Labour Movement], Gongren chubanshe, Beijing, 1984, vol. 2, p. 17.

²³⁰ There is evidence showing that labour leaders, such as Zhu Zhuowen, Cao Yabo, Huang Jiemin, Zhang Futang, Chen Jianai, Xia Qifeng and Fei Zhemin, had close links with Russian or Korean Communists in Shanghai. Cf. Liu Jianyi, *The Origins of the CCP and the Role Played by Soviet Russia and the Comintern*, Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.

²³¹ *Workers Dreadnought* of September 1920 reprinted the news report from Moscow on the May Day celebration in Shanghai.

²³² Qu Qiubai, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang lishi gailun’ (Outline of the history of the CCP), 1929-1930, in *Qu Qiubai wenji (Zhengzhi lilun bian)*, vol. 6 (1996), p. 875.

²³³ Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 10.

²³⁴ Li Lisan, ‘Dangshi baogao’ (A report on the history of the CCP), 1 February 1930, in *ZDBX*, p. 211.

Northern China.²³⁵ It is reported that in 1921 Khodorov transferred Soviet money to Chen Duxiu.²³⁶ After seeing Chen off to Shanghai, Li Dazhao and several other Chinese met with a Soviet Russian representative in Tianjin.²³⁷ Various pieces of evidence indicate that the so-called ‘plan’ was not Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao’s own initiative. In fact, as will show, the impetus for organising a Communist party in China came mainly from Soviet Russia and the Comintern.

In April 1920, the Bolshevik G. N. Voitinsky, later considered the ‘chief architect’ in the founding of the CCP, together with two other Communists, Titov and Kim Mangyom, were sent to China by the Foreign Section of the Vladivostok Committee of the RCP’s Far Eastern Bureau, with the approval of the Comintern.²³⁸ Voitinsky’s team arrived in Beijing, where the Soviet agents Ivanov and Polevoy introduced them to Li Dazhao and his followers. Before journeying on to Shanghai, Voitinsky held a meeting with Stoyanovich, Khodorov, Agalyov and Polevoy in Tianjin, where they discussed establishing Communist organisations in China.²³⁹

The ‘plan’ was put on the agenda as soon as Voitinsky had settled down in Shanghai as editor of *Shanhaiskaia rizni*. In May 1920, Voitinsky established the East Asian Secretariat of the Comintern (EASC) in Shanghai to direct Communist movements in East Asia. His associate, Kim Mangyom, continued providing Comintern funds to the Datong Party while reorganising the KSP into a Communist party. However, Voitinsky concentrated mainly on Chen Duxiu and the socialists around *Xingqi Pinglun*.

In early 1920, *Xingqi pinglun* began to sound more radical. Its New Year issue published an article expressing the hope that 1920 would usher in a new era of working class movement in China and that a grand alliance of proletarians in the East would form. In the same issue was a poem titled ‘A Red New Year’:

Suddenly a red light is passing through the dark.
What is it?
It is a new tide from the remote North,
Sweeping past the Near East and then reaching the Far East.
Above the waves are many hammers and hoes,

²³⁵ FO 228/3214, 22 April 1920; FO228/3216, no. 22; V. Nikiforov, *Sovetskie Istoriki o Problemaxh Kitaya* [Soviet Historians on Problem of China], Nauka, Moskva, 1970, pp. 91-92. Also see Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, *Minguo dangan*.

²³⁶ Shanghai Municipal Police Files, 5 May 1922, I.O. 4514, Reel 64.

²³⁷ ‘Zhang Zhi’s recollection’ in Zhang Jingru, *Zhongguo gongchandang de chuangli* [The Founding of the CCP], Hebei renmin chubanshe, Shijiazhuang, 1981, p. 121.

²³⁸ *VKNRDK*, no. 8; Shevelyov, *Far Eastern Affairs*, p. 12; Dirlik, *The Origins of the Chinese Communism*, p. 191.

²³⁹ V. N. Usov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Kitae: 20-e gody XX veka* [Soviet Intelligence in China: 1920s of the 20th Century], Olma-Press, Moskva, 2002, p. 137.

Which will remove the unfairness and injustice from the world.
Greeting the light of the rising sun,
The whole land will turn red in a trice.²⁴⁰

Given *Xingqi pinglun*'s new radical direction, its editors became a prime target group of the Bolshevik agents. According to Dov Bing, the Bolsheviks in 1920 believed that editors of *Xingqi pinglun* intent to set up a Communist party in China.²⁴¹ Not later than February 1920, Agalyov and Lizerovitch made contact with at least one of its editors, Li Hanjun, as we have noted. The British Intelligence Report of April 1920 shows that Lizerovitch was 'very busy at present in connection with the Chinese extremist paper *Sunday Times* [*sic*] and supplied the paper with articles from British and American socialist journals.²⁴² Several articles from Lizerovitch were translated by Li Hanjun and published in *Xingqi pinglun*.²⁴³ *Xingqi pinglun*'s commemorative issue for Labour Day in 1920 contained articles by Li Dazhao, Li Hanjun, Dai Jitao, Shen Xuanlu, Shi Cuntong, Shen Zhongjiu and several others soon to be involved in the establishment of the CCP.

On the eve of May Day 1920, Lizerovitch invited 'a number of Bolshevik agents and sympathisers' to dinner, when the health of Soviet Russia was drunk, and 'Soviet matters' and 'Bolshevism' were discussed. Li Hanjun and several Russians, Chinese and Koreans were present.²⁴⁴ Voitinsky was probably among these 'Bolshevik agents'. He got to know Lizerovitch in Shanghai and remarked 'Comrade Lizerovitch was doing good service to the cause among the Chinese.'²⁴⁵ Perhaps it was Lizerovitch and Agalyov who helped draw Voitinsky's attention to *Xingqi pinglun*, and made him gradually drift apart from the Datong Party. Before long, the cooperation between Datong Party and socialist intellectuals led by Chen Duxiu and Li Hanjun came to an end. On hearing that Kim Mangyom had brought gold rubles to China and supported Huang Jiemin of the Datong Party, Chen Duxiu said: 'It would be laughable indeed if one relied

²⁴⁰ The poem was probably written by Liu Dabai, a poet who joined the office of *Xingqi pinglun*.

²⁴¹ Dov Bing, 'G. N. Voitinsky and the establishment of the CCP', translated by Zhang Polong, *Feiqing yuebao* [Information on the CCP, Monthly] (Taipei), vol. 19, no. 5, 1976, p. 84.

²⁴² FO 228/3214, 22 April 1920; 29 April 1920. The 'Sunday Times' was the title given in the British report. Actually, it referred to *Xingqi pinglun*.

²⁴³ Those articles include 'Qiangdao jieji – Xiaobona zanmei boerseweike' (The robber caste - Bernard Shaw praises the Bolsheviks), (published on 18 April 1920); 'Wuyi' (May Day) by Lizerovitch, and 'Renli chefu' (A rickshaw coolie), a short story written by one of Lizerovitch's friends, E. Maharan (the later two were published on 1 May 1920).

²⁴⁴ FO228/3214, Summary for Month of May, 1920. Lyuh (i. e. Yö Unhyong) and other Koreans who were invited sent excuses. The report dated 17 July 1920 in FO228/3216 writes that during the dinner 'the health of Soviet Russia was drunk and Bolshevism discussed.'

²⁴⁵ FO228/3214, Summary for Month of September, 1920.

solely upon rubles to build a Communist party and to start a revolution without studying Marxism and without establishing the Communist Party's foundations among the masses of workers.²⁴⁶ But Chen also knew little about Marxism and only converted to it and Bolshevism after the arrival of Voitinsky.²⁴⁷

For Voitinsky, the group around Chen Duxiu and *Xingqi pinglun* became the centre of gravity for the formation of a Communist party. According to Chen Wangdao and Shao Lizi, a 'Society for the Study of Marxism' set up in Shanghai in May 1920 later developed into a Communist group.²⁴⁸ This might have been the 'group' formed by Chen Duxiu, Dai Jitao, Shen Xuanlu, Chen Wangdao, Li Hanjun, Shi Cuntong and Yu Xiusong, as described in *A Brief History of the CCP*.²⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that with the exception of Chen Duxiu, all others belonged to the *Xingqi pinglun* Society. Dirlik observed that, after Chen Duxiu's arrival in Shanghai, 'he was a relative newcomer to the Shanghai radical scene, ... he lacked the organisational affiliations' and 'did not even have a publication organ that he controlled directly'; thus Chen's influence 'rested largely on his association with the statesmen of radical politics in Shanghai.' Dirlik further pointed out: 'If there was a center in Shanghai, it was the Guomindang-related *Weekend Review*.'²⁵⁰

The ready-made centre for organising a Communist Party in Shanghai was indeed *Xingqi pinglun* rather than Chen Duxiu's *Xin qingnian*, for the other editors of *Xin qingnian* remained in Beijing. However, by the spring of 1920, more radical intellectuals from Hangzhou, Beijing and Shaoxing had already admitted into *Xingqi pinglun*. They included Chen Wangdao, Yu Xiusong, Shi Cuntong, Liu Dabai, Shen Zhongjiu, Yang Zhihua and Ding Baolin. Alongside *Xingqi pinglun*'s old editors, most of these newcomers took part in establishing a Communist party. That is why Qu Qiubai considered it (and other radical societies) as the 'cells' for forming the CCP.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, pp. 122-123.

²⁴⁷ According to Ishikawa, Chen experienced a 'curious reversal' as he 'undertook a formal study of Marxism after having embraced Bolshevism.' *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, p. 50. Dirlik believed that Chen's 'new inclinations found expression in Marxism' possibly 'through his association with socialists in Shanghai, especially Dai Jitao and the *Weekend Review*.' *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, p. 199.

²⁴⁸ See their recollections in *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, no. 1. 1980, and *YDQH*, vol. 2.

²⁴⁹ *CNSAC*, p. 48.

²⁵⁰ Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, pp. 160-161.

²⁵¹ Qu Qiubai, 'Zhonggong dangshi gangyao dagang' (An outline of the CCP history), in *ZDBX*, p. 200.

Before the end of April, Voitinsky visited the office of *Xingqi pinglun* and discussed with the people working there and Chen Duxiu.²⁵² Voitinsky convoked several semi-overt discussion meetings; those present were socialists of different ideological persuasions, including anarchists, democratic socialists and guild socialists. In addition to Chen Duxiu of *Xin qingnian* and several members of *Xingqi pinglun*, Zhang Dongxun, the chief editor of *Shishi xinbao* (The China Times), and Shao Lizi, the chief editor of *Juewu*, also attended. Voitinsky at first hoped that these editors would take the lead in forming a party in China.²⁵³ The meetings between April and May were the first attempt to build a Communist party. Yu Xiusong, who joined *Xingqi pinglun* on 27 March 1920, later recalled: ‘We attempted to establish a Chinese Communist party in the spring of 1920, but the initial effort failed since we did not reach a consensus on this matter at the first meeting.’²⁵⁴

As ‘the leading intellectual’ of *Xingqi pinglun* and a key link among radical forces in Shanghai, Li Hanjun was in an important position in establishing the CCP. Perhaps this is why he (together with Chen Duxiu) was absorbed into the Chinese Revolutionary Bureau (Revoburo for short) set up by Voitinsky in Shanghai in the summer of 1920. The Revoburo, headed by Voitinsky, was virtually the Central Revoburo in China, and worked as the EASC’s subsidiary body for directing the revolutionary movement and setting up the Communist Party in China. Later, Bolshevik agents such as Polevoy, Stoyanovich (alias Minor) and Perlin tried to establish sub-Revoburos in Beijing, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Hankou.²⁵⁵

For some time, the Revoburo focused on rallying Chinese socialists of different ideological persuasions to take part in social revolution. They concentrated on the Socialist League, which can be seen as an alliance of Chinese Marxists and anarchists as well as Russian Bolsheviks. Zarrow observed that ‘anarchists had been among the first Chinese to cooperate with the Comintern representatives sent to China in the early 1920s and to aid Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu in their first attempts to establish

²⁵² Chen Gongpei, ‘Huiyi dang de faqizu he fu Fa qingongjianxue deng qingkuang’ (Recollections of the Party’s sponsoring group and Chinese Work-Study in France), in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 564.

²⁵³ Qiwu laoren (Bao Huiseng’s pen name), ‘Zhongguo gongchandang chengli qianhou de jianwen’ (Before and after the formation of the CCP), *Xin guancha* [New Observation], no. 13, July 1957, p. 16.

²⁵⁴ Yu Xiusong, ‘Zizhuan’ (Autobiography), written on 1 January 1930, in *Yu Xiusong jinian wenji* [Collected Papers in Memory of Yu Xiusong], Zhonggong zhejiang shengwei dangshi yanjiushi (ed), Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe, Beijing, 1999, p. 230.

²⁵⁵ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 2; Cf. Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi, ‘Gemingju bianxi’ (Identification and analysis of the Revolutionary Bureau), *Shixue jikan* [Collected Papers of Historical Science] no. 3, 2004, pp. 38-52.

communist organisations in Beijing and Shanghai.²⁵⁶ My research also reveals that it was Bolshevik agents who took the initiative to make contact with Chinese anarchists and their organisations, and endeavored to involve the latter into the cooperation with Chinese Marxists for social revolution and also convert the latter into Bolshevism.²⁵⁷

The Socialist League first formed in Beijing at the beginning of 1920 at the suggestion of Polevoy. Its Shanghai branch was founded in May 1920, with Chen Duxiu, Li Hanjun and several anarchists, such as Zheng Peigang, Yu Keshui and Yuan Zhenying, as members.²⁵⁸ Later, other branches were set up in Guangzhou, Tianjin, Hangzhou and other cities. Several Russians (actually the members of Revoburos) joined the League and provided it with funds.²⁵⁹ The League's main work was to promote the labour movement. Its branches started publishing weekly journals for labourers, such as *Laodong jie* (The World of Labour) in Shanghai, *Laodong yin* (The Voice of Labour) in Beijing and *Laodongzhe* (The Labourer) in Guangzhou, with Comintern subsidies. The editor-in-chief of *Laodong jie* was Li Hanjun, whereas the other two journals were edited by anarcho-communists. Since the Yong'an meeting in February 1920, at which Li Hanjun was present, had planned to start publishing a weekly magazine, *The Worker*, these publications probably stemmed from that earlier plan and were later continued by the Revoburos.

Another important function of the Socialist League was to convert anarchists, to Marxism in order to enlarge the base for organising a Communist party. After much persuasion, several youths who had been interested in anarchism gave up their previous beliefs and became Communists. The Socialist League, despite its short life, was closely

²⁵⁶ Zarrow, p. 210.

²⁵⁷ See Li Danyang, 'AB hezuo zai Zhongguo ge'an yanjiu — Zhenli she ji qita' (The cooperation between the Chinese anarchists and the Russian Bolsheviks in China: a case study on the Truth Society and other organisations), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 1, 2002.

²⁵⁸ 'Zheng Peigang de huiyi' (Zheng Peigang's recollections), 1964, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 483. In newly published *Yuan Zhenying zhuan* [Biography of Yuan Zhenying] by Li Jifeng et al. (Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, Beijing, 2009), there is a Yuan Zhenying's letter to B. Russell (written in the autumn of 1920), in which Yuan called himself 'the secretary of the Chinese Socialist League' (p. 69). In 1920, Yuan worked for *Shanghai Life* as an English translator. See Yuan Zhenying, 'Fajue wo de wuzhizhuyi de gongchanzhuyi de sixiang genyuan' (Uprooting my ideological root of anarcho-communism), written in Guangzhou in 1953, unpublished. It was sent to me by Li Jifeng and Guo Bin in their email of 5 May 2009).

²⁵⁹ Haiyu Guke (Liang Bingxian's pen name), 'Jiefang bielu' (An alternative record of the liberation), firstly published in *Ziyouren* [Free People], nos. 73-86, 14 November-29 December 1951, in *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan* [Modern China Historical Materials Series], Wenhai chubanshe, Taipei, 1968, vol. 19, no. 189; Liu Shixin, 'Guanyu wuzhengfuzhuyi huodong de diandi huiyi' (Some recollections of anarchist activities), in Ge Maochun et al. (eds), vol. 2, p. 936; Zheng Peigang, in *ibid.*, p. 961.

involved in the formation of the CCP.²⁶⁰ Although no hard and fast line can be drawn between the Socialist League and early Communist organisation, the processes by which each was established differed somewhat.

In June 1920, Voitinsky started preparing for a Communist party with the help of Chen Duxiu, Li Hanjun and Yang Mingzhai (the latter came from Siberia in 1919 and worked in Shanghai as Voitinsky's aide and translator). Several meetings were convened. Shortly after the proposal to form a Communist party, Dai Jitao and Zhang Dongsun dropped out. In mid June, Chen Duxiu, Li Hanjun, Shen Xuanlu, Shi Cuntong and Chen Gongpei held a preparatory meeting in Shanghai.²⁶¹ However, according to Yu Xiusong's diary of 10 July 1920, the Party they had formed several days before was named 'Social Communist Party' and Yu was still confused about Bolshevism and anarchism.²⁶² This suggests that the 'Social Communist Party' was not a Marxist party and might have served as an interim organisation between the Socialist League and a purely Communist organisation. A year later, Yu Xiusong reported at the Second Congress of the Youth Communist International: 'The first [Chinese] Socialist Youth League has been founded in Shanghai, and its principle is to prepare social revolution. This League was at first called the "Youth Social Revolutionary Party".'²⁶³ So the 'Social Communist Party' established in the early summer of 1920 might refer to the 'Youth Social Revolutionary Party', since Yu Xiusong, Shi Cuntong and Chen Gongpai were young men who had been interested in anarchism. Later, Yu and Shi became leaders of the Socialist Youth League and Chen Gongpei joined the Youth Communist Party in France.

²⁶⁰ Unfortunately, most works concerning the origins of the CCP have not mentioned the Socialist League. Dirlik, who always attaches importance to the Chinese anarchists' role in the founding of the CCP, totally neglects the existence of the Socialist League.

²⁶¹ Shi Fuliang (Shi Cuntong), 'Zhongguo gongchandang chengli shiqi de jige wenti' (Some issues during the period of the formation of the CCP), December 1956, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 34-35; Chen Gongpei, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 564. According to Ishikawa's textual research, this meeting was probably held on June 16. See Ishikawa Yoshihiro, 'Qingnian shiqi de Shi Cuntong – Riben xiaozu yu Zhonggong jiangdang de guocheng (Shi Cuntong in his youth – the Japanese group and the establishment process of the CCP), translated by Wang Shihua, in *Zhongguo gongchandang chuanguoshishi yanjiu wenji* [Collected Theses on the History of the CCP's Establishment], Zhonggong yida jinianguan (ed), Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 2003, p. 410. Ishikawa's article was first published in Japanese in *Toyoshi kenkyu* [East Asian History Studies], vol. 53, no. 2, 1994.

²⁶² *SGZY*, no. 1, p. 297. Shi Cuntong also said that when he participated in establishing the CCP in May 1920, he still believed in anarcho-communism. See his 'Beitong zhong de zibai' (Grievous confession), 1927, in *Wuhan guominzhengfu ziliao* [Historical Materials on Wuhan National Government], Wuhan difangzhi pianzuan weiyuanhui (comp), Wuhan chubanshe, Wuhan, 2005, p. 116.

²⁶³ Gongqingtuan qingyunshi yanjiushi, Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo (eds), *Qingnian Gongchanguoji yu Zhongguo qingnian yundong* [The Youth Communist International and the Chinese Youth Movement] (henceforth *QGYZQY*), Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, Beijing, 1985, p. 52.

Around this time, a ‘Socialist party’ appeared in Shanghai. At the Second Congress of the Comintern, the Chinese representative Liu Shaozhou said that a ‘weekly newspaper’ had been published by the ‘Socialist Party’ in Shanghai, according to him a ‘Marxist’ party’.²⁶⁴ This ‘weekly newspaper’ was in fact *Xingqi pinglun*, for articles and slogans Liu quoted were from *Xingqi pinglun*.²⁶⁵ As Vilensky-Sibiryakov reported, *Xingqi pinglun* belonged to the EASC; and Voznesiinsky once telegraphed Shanghai asking ‘Comrade Li’ to mail to Moscow every issue of ‘the Chinese Socialist Paper’ he was publishing.²⁶⁶

This ‘Socialist party’ differed from the socialist party established by Jiang Kanghu and Huang Jiemin, and was probably an alternative and temporary name for the CCP’s preliminary organisation, to cover its true nature.²⁶⁷ Chen Duxiu wrote in September 1920 that ‘our party’ was the ‘Socialist Party’.²⁶⁸ He Fenglin, Military Commanding Officer (*Hujun shi*) of the Songjiang and Shanghai region, reported to the Beijing Government in October 1920: ‘Chen Duxiu of the Socialist Party, colluding with the Russian [Bolshevik] Party and Liu Heling, has organised a machinery workers’ union at the foreign settlements and published journals to spread socialism.’²⁶⁹ The Shanghai Machinery Workers’ Union was a trade union organised by the Shanghai Communists, so the ‘Socialist Party’ almost certainly meant the CCP.

The advent of Vilensky-Sibiryakov, head of the EASC, hastened the establishment of a formal Communist Party. Once in Beijing, from 5 to 7 July 1920, he convened a meeting of the RCP members working in China, including Voitinsky and others. One topic was the establishment of a Chinese Communist Party. Vilensky-Sibiryakov pointed

²⁶⁴ ‘Lao Hsiu-Tao [Liu Shaozhou]’s speech’, in *Second Congress of the Communist International: Minutes of the Proceedings* (first published by the Publishing House of the Comintern in Moscow, 1921), New Park Publications, London, 1977, vol. 1, p. 139. Liu might have obtained the journal from Pak Chinsen at the Comintern’s Second Congress, where they met.

²⁶⁵ For example, the slogan ‘Those who do not work should not eat’.

²⁶⁶ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 4, no. 2.

²⁶⁷ Zhang Shenfu, a member of the Beijing Communist Group, recalled that Chen Duxiu wrote a letter to Li Dazhao and him in summer 1920 to solicit their opinions on which name would be better for the new party: ‘Communist Party’ or ‘Socialist Party’. Li suggested that it should be called the Communist Party. Zhang Shenfu, ‘Jiandang chuqi de yixie qingkuang’ (Some circumstances in the early period of the establishment of the CCP), 1979, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 220-221. In an earlier recollection, Zhang wrote that it was Voitinsky suggested so. See Zhang Shenfu, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang jianli qianhou qingkuang de huiyi’ (Recollections of the period of establishment of the CCP), 1977-1978, *ibid.*, p. 548. Building a Communist party in China was a fixed goal of Chen Duxiu and the Revoburo, and they had tried to found a party with the name ‘Communist’ before. So, it is not reasonable to suggest, as Zhang wrote, that Chen Duxiu did not know what kind of party he should found.

²⁶⁸ Chen Duxiu, ‘Duiyu shiju de wo jian’ (My views on the current situation), *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 1, September 1920, p. 2.

²⁶⁹ *Shen bao*, 16 October 1920.

out that the conditions for establishing one had matured and the participants agreed it would be possible to convene a congress and complete the work.²⁷⁰ Soon after his return to Shanghai, Voitinsky said at meetings convoked by himself and Chen Duxiu that it was time to ‘organise a Chinese Communist Party’.²⁷¹ At a meeting of ‘the Chinese active elements’ on 19 July, Chen Duxiu, Li Hanjun and Shen Xuanlu advocated establishing a Communist Party. Afterwards, Yu Xiusong, Li Da, Zhou Fohai and others joined them.²⁷²

Before long, the Chinese Communist Party was founded in Shanghai with Chen Duxiu as secretary.²⁷³ Perhaps because Li Hanjun was regarded as the ‘foremost theorist’ among early Communists, he was entrusted with drafting the programme in advance. According to Li Da and Shi Cuntong, it contained several items, notably the dictatorship of the workers and peasants and co-operative production.²⁷⁴ Since this ‘Communist Party’ was the first such and the hub for a nationwide party, historians have called it the ‘Sponsoring Group of the CCP’ or the ‘Provisional Centre of the CCP’. I follow the convention in order to differentiate this early organisation from the formal and national CCP.

The above facts demonstrate that Li Hanjun played a crucial part in establishing the first and central organisation of the CCP, as all early participants agree. For instance, Chen Duxiu told Li Da when the latter came to Shanghai that he and Li Hanjun were preparing to organise the CCP.²⁷⁵ Shao Lizhi recalled that both Chen Duxiu and Li Hanjun were jointly in charge of the early Communist organisation.²⁷⁶ Li Hanjun’s role in establishing the CCP in Shanghai has also been recognised by scholars. Dirlik points out that Li Hanjun was ‘a central figure in the founding of the nuclei’.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁰ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, p. 41; Yang Yunruo and Yang Kuisong, *Gongchanguoji he Zhongguo geming* [The Comintern and the Chinese Revolution], Shanghai, 1988, p. 16.

²⁷¹ Zhou Fohai, ‘Wo taochu le chidu Wuhan’ (My escape from the red capital - Wuhan), in *Chen Gongbo Zhou Fohai huiyilu hebian*, p. 140.

²⁷² Shevelyov, *Far Eastern Affairs*, p. 128.

²⁷³ The date of the CCP’s birth is not quite sure. Li Hanjun wrote that he and others established the ‘Communist Party’ at Chen Duxiu’s house in summer 1920. Han. 12993.2. Chen Duxiu, Li Da, Mao Zedong, Shi Cuntong, Deng Zhongxia, Bao Huiseng, Cai Heseng and several other early Chinese Communists ensured that the ‘Chinese Communist Party’ rather than the ‘Shanghai Communist group’ was set up in 1920.

²⁷⁴ Li Da, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi he diyici dierci daibiao dahui jingguo de huiyi’ (Memoirs on the founding of the CCP and the process of its First and Second Congresses’, 1955, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 7; Shi Fuliang, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang chengli shiqi de jige wenti’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 36.

²⁷⁵ ‘Li Da zizhuan’ (Li Da’s autography), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, no. 8, April 1980, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ Shao Lizhi, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 62.

²⁷⁷ Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, p. 248.

4.5 Building a Nationwide Communist Party in China

Under the direction of the Revoburo, the sponsoring group of the CCP took responsibility for promoting Communist organisations across China. As leaders of the sponsoring group and members of the Revoburo, Chen Duxiu and Li Hanjun made use of their personal connections, persuading radical friends in other cities to set up local branches of the CCP. By the end of 1920, local Communist groups had been organised in Beijing, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Changsha and Jinan. Prominent members such as Zhang Guotao, Tan Pingshan, Mao Zedong, Dong Biwu and Wang Jinmei previously had close connections with Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Li Hanjun. Later, CCP branches were set up in France and Japan by people who had previously participated in preparatory activities for organising the CCP in Beijing and Shanghai. They included Zhang Shenfu, Chen Gongpei, Shi Cuntong and Zhou Fohai. Li Hanjun had a special relationship with the Chinese Communist group in Japan. Before Shi Cuntong's departure for Japan, Li gave him a letter of introduction to the Japanese socialists and later corresponded with him.²⁷⁸

The setting-up of most local Communist branches was due to Chen Duxiu. However, the Wuhan Communist Branch was mainly an outcome of Li Hanjun's efforts. In the late summer of 1920, Li wrote to Dong Biwu and Zhang Guo'en in Wuhan, asking them to organise a Communist group.²⁷⁹ Later, Chen Duxiu also entrusted Liu Bochui, a Hubeinese lawyer working in Guangzhou, with setting up a CCP branch in Wuhan. As the result of the efforts of Dong Biwu, Liu Bochui and others, the Wuhan Branch of the CCP was founded in the autumn of 1920. In November, Li Hanjun went to Wuhan to help, give advice and lectures to the Communist group. He also visited the Liqun Book Society, a radical student society with anarchist tendencies, in an attempt to win over its members.²⁸⁰ Around that time, Li introduced I. K. Mamayev, a Chinese-speaking member of Voitinsky's team, to the Wuhan Branch to help them with Communist work and teach Russian.²⁸¹ In April

²⁷⁸ Ishikawa, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, p. 165, p. 370.

²⁷⁹ Dong Biwu, 'Chuangli Zhongguo gongchandang' (The founding of the CCP), in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 292.

²⁸⁰ Bao Huiseng, 'Gongchandang diyici quanguo daibiao huiyi qianhou de huiyi (Recollections of the period of the First Congress of the CCP), August-September 1953, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 313-15.

²⁸¹ 'Dong Biwu tan', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 370; According to Bao Huiseng, Plevoy came to Wuhan with Mamayev. Bao Huiseng, 'Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui de jige wenti' (Some issues on the First Congress of the CCP), 12 August 1978, interviewed and edited by Wo Zhongren and Ye Xinyu,

1921, Li's friends Lizerovitch and Mahar went to Wuhan, where they met with Yuan Zhenying and Huang Lingshuan, two anarcho-communists.²⁸² According to Yuan, they persuaded the Liqun Book Society's members to join the Communist group.²⁸³ Most members later joined the CCP, and some, such as Yun Daiying and Lin Yunan, became leaders.

Work on establishing a Socialist Youth League (SY) also started in the summer of 1920. To this end, the Organisation Section of Revoburo stepped up its work among students. It convened a conference in Beijing of student representatives from Beijing, Tianjin, Hankou, Nanjing and other cities on 17 August 1920. At it, Bolshevik agents and student representatives agreed to establish a Socialist Youth League.²⁸⁴ Several days later, on 22 August 1920, its formal founding meeting was held in Shanghai.²⁸⁵ Li Hanjun, Yu Xiusong, Shen Xuanlu, Chen Wangdao, Yuan Zhenying, Jin Jiafeng and Yie Tiandi were present, and Yu Xiusong was elected Secretary. A Japanese, Bansai Taro, and two Koreans (Pak and An) also reportedly attended.²⁸⁶ Yuan Zhenying, Jin Jiafeng and Yie Tiandi were anarcho-communists at the time, so the SY was probably not purely Communist and its admission requirements were less strict than the CCP's. SY branches were soon set up in other cities. Although anarchists abounded in the SY, several CCPers also joined and assumed leadership roles. Li Hanjun was one of the Communists occupying leading positions in the SY.²⁸⁷

The SY organised under cover of the Foreign Languages School in Shanghai, a centre for training radical youths and Communist preparatory school. Yu Xiusong, Secretary of the SY, was the School's secretary. The headmaster was Voitinsky's interpreter, Yang Mingzhai. The School provided students with Communist courses and books and taught foreign languages, Russian in particular, to prepare them for

in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 373. In 1921, Mamayev became the head of the Chinese Section of the Comintern's Far Eastern Secretariat in Irkutsk.

²⁸² FO 228/3211, May 1921.

²⁸³ 'Yuan Zhenying de huiyi' (Recollections of Yuan Zhenying), February-April, 1964, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 475.

²⁸⁴ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 2.

²⁸⁵ 'Zhongguo shehuizhuyi qingniantuan daibiao de baogao' (The report of the representative of the Chinese Socialist Youth League), July 1921, in *QGYZQY*, p. 52.

²⁸⁶ Fang Lu (probably Yuan Zhenying's pen name), 'Qingsuan Chen Duxiu' (Liquidating Chen Duxiu), in *Chen Duxiu pinglun* [Comments on Chen Duxiu], Dongya shuju, Beijing, 1933, pp. 66-67. The Korean named 'An' was said to have just come from Russia and brought a large amount of money to Shanghai. This Korean might have been An Pyongchan, who was the president of the Korean Youth League founded in 1919. He was sent to Moscow to seek financial support from the Comintern, and after his return became one of the leaders of the Korean Communist Party. 'Banzai Taro' is perhaps the assumed name of Yoshihara Taro, a Comintern agent.

²⁸⁷ 'Shi Cuntong's confession', in Ishikawa Yoshihiro, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, pp. 485-486.

study in Soviet Russia. Li Hanjun lectured on Marxist theory and taught French.²⁸⁸ Nearly all the students joined the SY.

Because of Li Hanjun's important role in establishing the CCP and the SY, he enjoyed high status among the early Communists. Bao Huiseng said: 'In the first stage of forming the CCP, Li Hanjun's position within the Party was second only to that of Chen Duxiu.'²⁸⁹ Recently, historians have called Li 'a proto-Communist' and 'a leading figure' in the Party.²⁹⁰ Yet both Chen and Li were working under the direction of the Revoburo and its leading body, the EASC. Voitinsky, who led the two organisations, was the 'soul' of all the efforts to establish Communist organisations, as K. Sokolov-Strakhov wrote in January 1921.²⁹¹

In November 1920, after the CCP's organisations had taken shape in Shanghai and elsewhere, Voitinsky drew up 'The Manifesto of the CCP' as the basis for admission.²⁹² This Manifesto advocated abolishing private ownership, practising public ownership of the means of production, doing away with the old state apparatus and eliminating classes. To that end, Communists must 'organise a revolutionary political party of the proletariat – the Communist Party'. This Party would 'lead the proletariat to wage class struggle and overthrow the state of the capitalists' and to seize state power, and would then 'put power into the hands of the workers and peasants, just as the Russian Communist Party did in 1917.' According to it, class struggle in all other countries would inevitably develop in the same way as in Russia, i.e., in the direction of a dictatorship of the proletariat.²⁹³

On 17 November 1920, on the third anniversary of the October Revolution, *Gongchandang* (The Communist) started publication as the CCP's organ. Its chief

²⁸⁸ Cadart and Cheng Yingxiang (eds), pp. 179-180; Xu Zhizhen, 'Guanyu Xin Yuyangli 6 hao de huodong qingkuang' (On the activities at 6 New Yuyang Lane), *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, no. 1, 1980, p. 39; Chen Shaokang and Liu Rongzhu, 'Lüelun waiguoyu xueshe jige tedian yu rencai de zuoyong' (On the features of the Foreign Languages School and the role of its graduates), *SGZY*, no. 2, 2002, p. 267.

²⁸⁹ Bao Huiseng, *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, p. 137.

²⁹⁰ Kim Sooyoung, p. 87; Xu Xiangwen, 'Zhongguo gongchandang jiandang wenti de zai shangque' (More discussions on the problems in the establishment of the CCP), *SGZY*, no. 4, 2004, p. 100.

²⁹¹ V. I. Glunin, 'The Comintern and the Rise of the Communist Movement in China (1920-1927)', in *The Comintern and the East: The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movement*, R. A. Ulyanovsky (ed), Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1979, p. 283. K. Sokolov-Strakhov did secret work from 1919-1921.

²⁹² Zhang Guotao in his draft of speech on the establishment of the CCP wrote that the Party programme the Beijing Communist group discussed in 1920 came from Voitinsky via Chen Duxiu. *Bainian chao*, p. 54. Yang Kuisong and Dong Shiwei in *Haishi shenlou yu damo lüzhou* [Mirage on the Sea and Oasis in the Desert] (Shanghai remin chubanshe, Shanghai, 1991, p. 172) write that the Russian Communists directly participated in the drawing up of the Manifesto.

²⁹³ *Gongchanzhuyi xiaozu*, vol. 1, pp. 48-51.

editor was Li Da. Li Hanjun sometimes contributed to it under the pen name ‘Han’ or ‘Jun’. The publication of this semi-public journal marked the CCP’s formal foundation.

After laying the foundations for Communist work in Shanghai, Voitinsky went to Guangzhou in the company of Polevoy.²⁹⁴ On 16 December 1920, Chen Duxiu departed for Guangzhou at the invitation of Chen Jiongmeng, Governor of Guangdong Province, to head the Guangdong Educational Commission. One purpose in going to Guangzhou was to ‘utilise the opportunity to plant the seeds of a Communist organisation there’.²⁹⁵ Before their departure, leadership of the Party’s sponsoring group, i.e. provisional centre in Shanghai was entrusted to Li Hanjun, who became Acting Secretary. The editorship of *Xin qingnian* was jointly undertaken by Chen Wangdao, Li Hanjun, Li Da and Shen Yanbing.

Under Li Hanjun’s leadership, the CCP’s provisional centre set up a Labour Movement Committee in January 1921 with Yu Xiusong and Li Qihan in charge. It also set up an Education Committee to take charge of educating radical youth and selecting candidates from among them for study in Moscow. Li Hanjun appointed Bao Huiseng and Yang Mingzhai to lead the Committee.²⁹⁶ Li also took part in sending students to study in Russia, and even wrote letters of introduction.²⁹⁷ Later, many who had been sent to Russia became important Communist leaders in China, including Liu Shaoqi, Ren Bishi, Luo Yinong and Peng Shuzhi. The CCP’s branch in Shanghai often met in Li Hanjun’s home. Under Li’s direction, it recruited Li Qihan, Shen Yanbing, Shen Zemin and Dong Chuping.²⁹⁸

Voitinsky returned to Russia by way of Beijing in January 1921. The CCP’s provisional centre in Shanghai then fell into financial difficulties.²⁹⁹ In February, *Xin qingnian*’s editorial office, distribution office and printing house were closed and fined

²⁹⁴ *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 9.

²⁹⁵ ‘A Brief History of the CCP’, in *DCNSAC*, p. 50.

²⁹⁶ *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 304.

²⁹⁷ Wu Tenghuang, ‘Guanyu Ren Bishi de shiliao’ (Materials concerning Ren Bishi), *Dushu* [Reading], no. 5, 1981, p. 156.

²⁹⁸ Maodun, *Wo zouguo de daolu*, vol. 1, p. 175; Dong Chuping, ‘Jianli’ (Curriculum Vitae), 1968, provided by his wife Gao Lang in 1980 (unpublished).

²⁹⁹ ‘Report of Comrade H. Maring to the ECCI’ (11 July 1922) confirmed this. Saich, p. 309; B. Z. Shumiatsky in his letter to M. Kobiesky (26 February 1921) admitted that about from the latter part of January of 1921, the work of the Chinese Communist organisations stagnated due to insufficient funds. ‘Eluosi xin faxian de youguan Zhonggong jiangdang de wenjian’ (Newly found documents in Russia relating to the establishment of the CCP), provided by Shevelov and translated by Li Yuzhen, *Bainian chao*, no. 12, 2001, p. 58.

by the French police.³⁰⁰ To keep the Party alive and active, Li Hanjun and others in Shanghai sold articles and contributed the proceeds to Party funds.

In the spring of 1921, Chen Duxiu sent Shanghai a Party constitution he had drafted, which advocated centralism. Convinced that this constitution would strengthen Chen's personal dictatorship, Li Hanjun drafted another stressing local Party autonomy. Chen reacted angrily, reprimanding the Communists in Shanghai for their disobedience. On receiving this letter, Li Hanjun and others were indignant. According to Li Da, Li Hanjun handed over to Li Da his job as the Party's acting secretary.³⁰¹ However, it seems he may have done so in a moment of anger and in fact retained his duties. Chen Wangdao recalled that after Chen Duxiu's departure in December 1920, important Party issues were discussed by Li Hanjun, Yang Mingzhai and himself; there was no mention of Li Da.³⁰²

In March 1921 a conference of representatives of the various Communist organisations was reportedly convened in Shanghai. This Conference is considered as a preparatory meeting for the First Congress of the CCP.³⁰³ It issued a declaration of goals and principles and formulated a provisional programme. The programme especially stipulated the Communist organisations' relations with and attitudes towards the SY, the trade unions and other organisations.³⁰⁴ One resolution adopted was the same as the 'Manifesto of the CCP' drafted in November 1920.³⁰⁵ This Manifesto

³⁰⁰ FO 228/3291, Quarterly Report Ended on 31 March 1921; Lu Miqiang, 'Xin qingnian zazhi bianji chuban shishi kaolüe' (Textual research in the editing and publishing of *New Youth*), *SGZY*, no. 5, December 2005, p. 153.

³⁰¹ Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 9-10.

³⁰² Chen Wangdao, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 20.

³⁰³ 'Shumiatsky to Kobiesky', 26 February 1921, and 'The minutes of the joint meetings of the Far Eastern Secretariat and its Chinese Section and Yang Haode', no. 1, *Bainian chao*, pp. 58-59; Zhang Tailei, 'Zhi Gongchanguoji disanci daibiao dahui de shumian baogao' (The written report to the Third Congress of the Comintern), 10 June 1921, in *Gongchanguoji liangongbu yu Zhongguogeming wenxianziliaoxuanji* [Selected Materials on the Comintern, All-Union CP(B) and the Chinese Revolution] (*GLZWX*), vol. 2 (1917-1925), Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi yibu (ed and transl), Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, Beijing, 1997, p. 175. Recently, some historians have argued that no such conference was held in March 1921 and even suspects the authenticity of the report by Zhang Tailei. See Liu Jianhui and Zheng Yaru, 'Zhonggong yida qian zhaokai guo sanyue huiyi ma?' (Did the March Conference convene before the First National Congress of the CCP?), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 4, 1989, pp. 67-70; Ishikawa Yoshihiro, "'Zhongguo gongchandang xuanyan" yu 1921 nian Zhonggong sanyue huiyi guanxi kao' (The relationship between the Declaration of the CCP and its March Conference in 1921), Wang Shihua (transl), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 5, 2000, p. 100.

³⁰⁴ Zhang Tailei, in *GLZWX*, p. 175.

³⁰⁵ In his 'On the History of the Communist Party of China', Shevelyov wrote: 'The search for the documents of the programme and the declaration has been unsuccessful so far.' Nevertheless, the quotation Shevelyov cited from *Kommunist* (Irkutsk, 1921) as the tasks the Conference formulated is part of contents of the 'Manifesto of the CCP', which also includes the goals, principles and programmes of the CCP.

stressed the dictatorship of the proletariat, which many anarchists in the Communist organisations could not accept. In this way, the Conference resolved the previous ideological and organisational confusion.³⁰⁶

Around this time, the removal of anarchists from Communist organisations started and a polemic between Marxists and anarchists followed. The main topics were the dictatorship of the proletariat and the concept of iron discipline. Chen Duxiu's criticism of the anarchists gained the support of Zhang Guotao and others, whereas Li Hanjun seems to have stayed aloof and Li Dazhao tried to mediate. Because of this, Chen Duxiu even thought of expelling Li Dazhao.³⁰⁷

Throughout the spring and summer of 1921, Li Hanjun, Li Da and others in Shanghai worked for the Party by publishing *Gongchandang*, contributing to *Xinqingnian* and directing the struggles of workers, shop assistants and students. They celebrated International Women's Day and prepared to celebrate Labour Day. Several May Day preparatory meetings (Li Hanjun attended some of them) came to the notice of the French Concession Police, who raided No. 6 Yuyang Lane on 29 April and confiscated a number of circulars and Communist literature. The Police warned the occupants not to hold meetings on the premises and later kept a watch on it.³⁰⁸

During that time, No. 6 Yuyang Lane was actually the CCP's headquarters in Shanghai. Since the headquarters could no longer be used and because of the shortage of funds and the absence of several leaders, Li Hanjun decided that Party activities should be suspended for a while.³⁰⁹ Li Hanjun sent Bao Huiseng to Guangzhou to report to Chen Duxiu on the situation in Shanghai and suggested to him that the Party headquarters move to Guangzhou, or alternatively that Chen should return to Shanghai to take charge of Party work there. Chen, then Commissioner of Education in Guangdong, told Bao that he could not return to Shanghai for the time being, and Li Hanjun in Shanghai had to maintain liaison with other Communist groups. Chen added

³⁰⁶ I believe that those events probably relate to the Tenth Congress of the RCP(b) held in early March 1921, which resolved to oppose the tendency to anarchism and syndicalism within the Party.

³⁰⁷ Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

³⁰⁸ Shanghai Municipal Council Police Daily Report, reports of 21, 22, 25, 30 April and 2 May 1921. According to a report, Li Hanjun attended the meeting held on April 20.

³⁰⁹ In addition to Chen Duxiu, Shen Xuanlu also went to Guangzhou later; Yu Xiusong and Yang Mingzhai left for Russia in spring 1921 one after another.

that the Chinese proletarian revolution had a long way to go and realising Communism was a thing of the remote future, and Li Hanjun need not feel anxious.³¹⁰

Yet the Comintern and its Far Eastern Secretariat scheduled the first National Congress of the CCP for May 1921.³¹¹ However, the Congress was postponed, probably to await the arrival of an ECCI representative. The Dutch Communist H. Sneevliet, who had experience of revolutionary work in the Dutch East Indies and had served as secretary of the Committee on National and Colonial Questions of the Comintern's Second Congress, was appointed on Lenin's recommendation as Comintern plenipotentiary in China.³¹² On 3 June 1921, Sneevliet (alias Maring) arrived in Shanghai. Not long after reaching Shanghai, he got in touch with N. A. Nikolsky, who had already sent there by the Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern to attend the Founding Congress of the Korean Communist Party in May and act on behalf of the the Far Eastern Bureau of the International Trade Union Council (the predecessor of the Red International of Labour Unions, commonly known as the Profintern) in China.³¹³ Although Nikolsky was the RCP's new member and apparently Maring's assistant, Maring mainly confined himself to helping execute orders Nikolsky received from the Far Eastern Secretariat.³¹⁴ Their main task was to make preparations for the First Congress of the CCP and build a Communist party in China affiliated to the Comintern.

Maring and Nicolsky soon made contact with Li Hanjun and Li Da. At their first meeting, Maring demanded that Li Hanjun hand over a work report, a programme of activities and a budget, saying that the Comintern would provide financial support. Finding Maring's approach peremptory, Li Hanjun refused, saying that the

³¹⁰ 'Bao Huiseng de yifengxin' (A letter from Bao Huiseng), 29 January 1961, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 432-433; Bao Huiseng, 'Wo suo zhidao de Chen Duxiu' (What I know about Chen Duxiu), May 1979, in *Bao Huiseng huiyilu*, p. 367.

³¹¹ 'Shumyatsky's report to the ECCI, 27 March 1921', in Xu Zhengming at el. (transl and comp), pp. 17-18.

³¹² R. T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1965, p. 76.

³¹³ In March 1921, the Far Eastern Bureau of the International Trade Union Council and the Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern reached agreement on cooperating in the Far East. Cf. Kartunova, 'An Unknown Participant in the First CPC Congress', *Far Eastern Affairs*, no. 3, 1989; S. A. Smith, *A Road is Made – Communism in Shanghai, 1920-1927*, Curson Press, Surry, 2000, p. 27.

³¹⁴ 'Report of Comrade H. Maring to the ECCI', 11 July 1922, in Saich, vol. 1, p. 307. According to Kartunova's recent finding in the Central Archives of the Federal Security Service in Moscow, Nikolsky served in the White troops before joining the Red Army in April 1920. He joined the RCP(b) and began working for the intelligence service of the army of the Far Eastern Republic not long before his arrival in China in 1921. So, Nikolsky actually attended the CCP's First Congress also as a secret agent. See Kartunova 'Neuman-Nikolsky: A Participant of the First CPC Congress', *Far Eastern Affairs*, no. 3, 2006.

organisation was still in its infancy and had not yet decided to join the Comintern, so it was premature to discuss work reports, plans, and budgets.³¹⁵ In talks with Li Da, the Comintern representatives also met with a rebuff. According to Bao Huiseng, Maring and Nicolsky ‘came to Shanghai to discuss the plan of convening the First Congress of the CCP with the acting secretary of the CCP’s provisional centre, Li Hanjun.’³¹⁶ That the Comintern representatives asked Li Hanjun rather than Li Da for a Party work report and budget indicates that Li Da had not completely taken over the post of acting secretary from Li Hanjun as Li Da later claimed, and Li Hanjun was still main leader of the Party’s provisional centre.³¹⁷ It is perhaps better to say that Li Hanjun and Li Da jointly bore responsibility for preparing the First Congress. Although Li Hanjun and Li Da did not reach a complete consensus with the Comintern representatives, they agreed to the representatives’ suggestion that they convoke the Congress.

Having fixed the time for the Congress, Li Hanjun and Li Da wrote asking Party’s local organisations to send two delegates each to Shanghai and remitted money from the Comintern for their travelling expenses. Zhang Guotao arrived in Shanghai earlier than others, to help in the preparations. Li Hanjun suggested that Zhang talk with Maring to reach some sort of understanding and improve relations between Chinese Communists and Comintern representatives, and he also discussed practical problems concerning the Congress with Zhang.³¹⁸ As for the venue, Li offered the house shared by his and his brother’s families.³¹⁹ Everything was now ready for the First Congress.

4.6 *At the Founding Congress*

³¹⁵ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, pp. 137-138.

³¹⁶ Shao Weizheng, ‘Yida zhaokai riqi he chuxi renshu de kaozheng’ (Textual research on the date of the First Congress of the CCP and the number of people who were present), in *Yida huiyi lu* [Collected Reminiscences of the First Congress of the CCP], compiled and published by Zhishi chubanshe, Beijing, 1980, p. 136; Bao Huiseng, ‘Huiyi Malin’ (Reminiscence of Maring), in *Bao Huiseng huiyilu*, p. 427. Zhang Guotao’s recollection also said so.

³¹⁷ Several scholars have noticed that the reliability of Li Da’s recollections is not beyond doubt. See van de Ven, p. 63; Schoppa, p. 84, p. 88. Shen Yabing also expressed the similar view.

³¹⁸ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, pp. 138-139.

³¹⁹ In the summer of 1921, Li Shucheng left Shanghai for Hunan to lead the movement to expel the Hubei Military Governor (*Dujun*), Wang Zhanyuan, a Beiyang warlord, who had misruled and plundered the people of Hubei.

On 23 July 1921, fifteen men gathered around a big dinner table on the ground floor of a two-storey house at 106 Rue Wantz in Shanghai's French Concession.³²⁰ Thirteen were Chinese delegates to the First Congress, representing more than fifty members of the Party's initial organisations in China and abroad. Li Hanjun and Li Da had previously worked in Shanghai, but the rest came from elsewhere: Zhang Guotao and Liu Renjing from Beijing, Dong Biwu and Chen Tanqiu from Wuhan, Mao Zedong and He Shuheng from Changsha, Chen Gongbo and Bao Huiseng from Guangzhou, Wang Jinmei and Deng Enming from Jinan, and Zhou Fohai from Japan. Two foreigners, Maring and Nikolsky, were also present.

As chairman, Zhang Guotao, who enjoyed the confidence of the Comintern representatives, addressed the inaugural meeting first and proposed tasks and agenda. Maring and Nikolsky, representing the Comintern and its Far Eastern Secretariat respectively, spoke about the international revolutionary movement, the situation in Soviet Russia and the tasks and organisations of the Comintern. They pointed out the significance of the foundation of a Chinese Communist Party and suggested that it accept the Comintern's leadership and report to the Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern. Maring stressed that the Party should pay special attention to establishing labour organisations. The two men's speeches were translated into Chinese by Li Hanjun and Liu Renjing. At this and the second meeting, the regional Communist organisations reported to the Congress.

At Maring's suggestion, a committee drafted the Party's programme and work plan, for which purpose the Congress was adjourned for two days.³²¹ Chen Duxiu, despite his absence, sent a draft outline that emphasised democratic centralism; Party discipline; the education and training of Party members; and mobilising the masses into the Party fold for seizing political power.³²² In formulating the Party's Programme and Platform the drafting committee consulted the CCP Manifesto, the platform and programme outlined previously by Voitinsky and Chen Duxiu, as well as several foreign Communist documents. Zhang Guotao claimed that he was elected to

³²⁰ The homes of Li Shucheng and Li Hanjun were located at 106 and 108, and an opening had been made in the wall between them. Since the dining table was in no. 106, 106 Rue Wantz has been regarded as the site of the CCP's First Congress. In fact, the delegates sometimes also went to Li Hanjun's room at the upstairs of no. 108 in intervals in the meeting.

³²¹ 'Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui' (The First Congress of the CCP), in *YDQH*, vol. 1, p. 21.

³²² 'A Brief History of the CCP', in *DCNSAC*, p. 53; Also see Wang Guangyuan (ed), *Chen Duxiu nianpu* [A Chronicle of Chen Duxiu's Life], Chongqing renmin chubanshe, Chongqing, 1987, p. 113.

draft the ‘Party Platform and Political Programme’ and handed his drafts over to Li Hanjun, Liu Renjing and Zhou Fohai for scrutiny. Although Li Hanjun and other committee members did not entirely agree with Zhang’s draft, they accepted it as a basis for discussion.³²³

At following meetings, the main topic was the Party’s Platform and Programme. Li Hanjun expressed frank disapproval of several provisions. His views became the focus for discussion. There are several versions of what Li said:

Zhang Guotao in his recollection published in 1971 wrote that Li presented the following ‘dissenting views’:

In the contemporary world, he [Li] said, there had been both the Russian October Revolution and the revolution of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. Before deciding upon a Party platform and political program for the CCP, we should first send people to Russia and to Germany to study the situations there, he said. He also proposed that a research organisation be established in China – perhaps a Marxist university - to carry on advanced studies. After that we could reach a final decision about a Party platform and political program. He thought that China was not yet ready for a Communist revolution and that Chinese Communists should for the time being employ the practical measures of stressing study and propaganda while supporting the revolutionary movement of Sun Yat-sen. When Dr. Sun’s revolution had succeeded, the Communists could participate in the parliament that would be established.³²⁴

Zhang said that while discussing the Constitution, Li suggested two revisions: The proposed central committee of the CCP ought to serve merely as a liaison organ, which should not be able to issue orders to local branches; the agreement of comrades in all local branches should be obtained on all matters, and that the policy should prevail of having general discussion of everything and of making all issues public within the Party. There should be no undue restrictions upon the admission of members, and there should be no provision requiring all members to take part in the practical work of the Party; so long as a person believed in Marxism, he was sufficiently qualified for membership.

According to Zhang, a majority of delegates opposed Li to varying degrees and rejected his reformist approach. Liu Renjing developed an argument aimed directly at Li Hanjun’s views. Liu opposed the parliamentary policy of the Western European Social Democrats and the thinking of all reformists; insisted that the CCP must engage

³²³ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p. 142. Some other memoirs show that Li Da and Dong Biwu also participated in the work of drafting Party’s programme.

³²⁴ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p. 144.

independently in its own workers' movement; and advocated seizing state power and establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat.³²⁵

However, in his 'Draft of Speeches on the Events that Happened during the Period of the Establishment of the CCP' written in Moscow around 1929-1930, Zhang Guotao admitted that the controversy was mainly between Li Hanjun and himself (rather than Liu Renjing), and said that Li's views were as follows: According to Marxism, the Party's political line should be determined by circumstance; China had its own special situation, so there was a need to study whether Russian's dictatorship of the proletariat suited China; the Chinese workers lacked political consciousness, so it would be better that the Party first enlist advanced intellectuals to study Marxism; at present, Party members need not be workers and could take posts as members of parliament or civil servants.³²⁶ Allowing for some distortion, Zhang Guotao's remarks may partly have reflected Li Hanjun's opinions.

A similar account was given by Chen Tanqiu: '[Li Hanjun] believed that the Chinese proletariat was still young and did not know about Marxist thought, so it would take a long time to conduct propaganda and education among the workers.' Li therefore opposed organising a real proletarian party and fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat. He advocated achieving bourgeois democracy first, because the CCP 'could openly organise and educate the working class' under such a political system.' Li saw, continued Chen, a need to concentrate on promoting Marxist theory among organised advanced intellectuals, and then to organise and educate workers through those intellectuals. Li suggested that anyone who advocated and propagated Marxism could be admitted to the Communist Party, whether or not he or she engaged in actual work in a Party organisation. There was no need for the time being to organise a disciplined and a militant workers party. According to Chen, several of Li Hanjun's views were supported by a few delegates, including Li Da and Chen Gongbo; and the extreme-left view was represented by Liu Renjing, who maintained the CCP's immediate object of struggle was the dictatorship of the proletariat and opposed participation in the bourgeois democratic movement or any legal campaign and wanted to keep intellectuals out of the Party.³²⁷

³²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 145-6.

³²⁶ Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

³²⁷ Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 286-287.

Chen Tanqiu's account resembled Zhang Guotao's, perhaps because Chen had consulted Zhang's earlier writing about the First Party Congress. Like Zhang, Chen asserted that the majority of the delegates criticised the erroneous opinions of both the rightwing faction headed by Li Hanjun and the extreme leftwing faction led by Liu Renjing.³²⁸ Such views are echoed by many Chinese historians.

But in memoirs Liu Renjing has denied that there was a left and right wing at the Congress. He admitted that he had probably talked about the dictatorship of the proletariat, but he did not remember that he had got into a dispute with others on this issue. According to him, the controversy was about whether the CCP should recruit among intellectuals and whether Party members could become members of parliament. He remembered that Li Hanjun and Zhou Fohai insisted on the need to relax restrictions on recruiting intellectuals.³²⁹

Bao Huiseng also recalled that the disputes were not between left-opportunism or right-opportunism and that Li Hanjun had no salient differences of opinion with other delegates on the general tasks and direction of the CCP; they debated tactical matters, such as whether Party members could become government officials or members of parliament, whether the CCP should co-operate with other revolutionary parties, and what kind of workers' unions to organise – craft unions or industrial unions.³³⁰ Bao's claim has been confirmed by several other delegates, including Li Hanjun, Li Da, Dong Biwu, Chen Gongbo and Liu Renjing.³³¹

In his MA dissertation written in 1924, Chen Gongbo gave some details of the Congress's arguments:

[The majority delegates] 'forbade Party members to be officials and members of the various assemblies, and further explained that the principals of schools and presidents of colleges, if appointed by the government, were to be considered as officials, as indicated above. This evoked a bitter debate. The opponents of this measure held that an educational vocation should not be regarded as official service, and in addition that while the party was young, members should be active where

³²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 287.

³²⁹ Liu Renjing, 'Huiyi Wusi yundong', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 117; 'Fangwen Liu Yiyu tanhua jilu' (Records of the interviews with Liu Yiyu), May 1979, interviewed and edited by Wang Chuan, in *Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiaodahui* [The First National Congress of the CCP] (abbreviated to *ZGDD*), Teaching materials from the Central Academy of Music, Beijing, December 1979, p. 114; p. 123. 'Liu Yiyu' is the alias of Liu Renjing.

³³⁰ Bao Huiseng, 'Gongchandang diyici', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 317-319; Bao Huiseng, 'Tan Zhongguo gongchandang chengli dahui' (Talk on the Founding Congress of the CCP), interviewed by Peng Xinghui in April 1979, in *ZGDD*, pp. 103-104.

³³¹ See *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 11, p. 13, p. 293, pp. 317-8, p. 376, pp. 420-1, p. 289, pp. 175-6; and *ZGDD*, p. 123. Bao Huiseng's several recollections of the Congress are also considered by some historians as more trustworthy than some others' recollections concerned. See Xu Xiangwen, *SGZY*, p. 108.

they could be, no matter in what professions they were, even in governmental positions.

Chen Gongbo went on to say that another debate was about the latter part of the draft Manifesto of the First Congress, which

enumerated the evils of the North and the South government, and stated that the government of Dr. Sun Yat-sen was no better than the government of the northern militarist party. ... Some of the members argued that though many wrong points of view were represented in the Nationalist platform, it [the South government] more or less represented the new tendency for the time being. The principles of general welfare advocated by Dr. Sun resembled state socialism. On the other hand, a majority of the members held that because many of the Nationalists opposed the Communists, the South government should be overthrown.³³²

A reliable source on the Congress is 'The First Congress of the CCP', a report to the Comintern written not long after the Congress. It is said that this report was drafted by Li Hanjun and Dong Biwu and thus expresses Li's opinions more precisely.³³³ It says, on whether Party members could become members of parliament:

One side firmly believed that acceptance of parliament could turn our party into a 'yellow' party. They quoted the example the Social Democratic Party in Germany to show that when people entered parliament they gradually abandoned their principles and became a part of the bourgeoisie, becoming traitors, ... we certainly should not participate in parliament but should engage in struggle outside it.

The others persisted in advocating that the CCP 'musk link open work with secret work'. They said that if the state could not be abolished within 24 hours and a general strike could be suppressed by capitalists, then political activities are a necessity. Since opportunities for uprisings were few and far between, the CCP had to make preparations in the meantime, leading workers to improve their conditions, expand their outlook, and fight for freedom of publication and assembly. They went on:

The open propagation of our theories is an indispensable condition for success and the adoption of common activities with other parties and factions oppressed in parliament could bring partial success. However, we must point out to the people that it is futile to hope to build a new society within the old system.³³⁴

The report also mentioned the intense debate concerning the CCP's attitude towards other parties and factions.

³³² Chen Kung-po, *The Communist Movement in China*, MA diss., Columbia University, 1924, edited with an introduction by C. M. Wilbur, in *Columbia University East Asian Institute Series*, no. 7, East Asian Institute of Columbia University, New York, 1960, p. 84. Li Da gave a similar account about the later part of the draft Manifesto, *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 13.

³³³ 'Dong Biwu gei He Shuheng de xin' (Dong Biwu's letter to He Shuheng), 31 December 1929, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, no. 13, July 1980, p. 3.

³³⁴ This report lay in the Archives of the Comintern until a copy of it was returned to China in 1957. Its English translation can be seen in Saich, vol. 1, pp. 203-208.

A recently found document by Li Hanjun clarifies his position at the First Congress: he argued for support for the KMT and permission to organise craft unions.³³⁵

The above documents and recollections reveal that, during these disputes, Li Hanjun and Chen Gongbo, and sometimes Li Da, Dong Biwu and Zhou Fohai, advocated participating in parliament and cooperation with other revolutionary parties and opposed the radical argument that ‘both the South and North governments were jackals from the same lairs (*yiqiu zhi he*)’, which should be attacked without exception.³³⁶ Li Hanjun, Mao Zedong, Bao Huiseng and others proposed organising both craft and industrial unions. Li Hanjun and Chen Gongbo thought Party members could become civil servants.³³⁷ It was by no means the case, as Hans. J. van de Ven, assumes, that Li Hanjun had raised the issue of ‘whether CCP members should take official positions’ in order to criticise Chen Duxiu, then heading Chen Jiongmeng’s Education Bureau.³³⁸ Zhang Guotao’s assertion that all delegates including Li Hanjun advocated non-cooperation with other parties is also inaccurate.³³⁹ Later, to conceal his own errors and position himself as a representative of the ‘correct’ line at the Congress, Zhang claimed that after the discussion he concluded that the CCP should not shun parliamentary and other legal procedures and should support Sun Yat-sen’s revolution. He asserted that these positions were formally adopted by the Congress as its main platform and political programme and that the majority of the delegates rejected extreme left views and proposals.³⁴⁰ However, the record suggests that the contrary is true.

Whatever the case is, after lengthy disputes Li Hanjun’s viewpoints and proposals were repudiated by most delegates. Out of respect for democratic principles, Li submitted to the majority, but with reservations. Even his main opponents Zhang Guotao and Liu Renjing admitted that Li Hanjun, while persisting in his views, never quarrelled with others; when his views were rejected, he usually abided by the decision

³³⁵ Han. 12993.2.

³³⁶ Li Da, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 13; Zhou Fohai, in *Chen Gongbo Zhou Fohai huiyilu hebian*, p. 142.

³³⁷ Later, Bao Huiseng satirised Li Hanjun and Chen Gongbo’s insistence on this as being because they wanted to be officials of the KMT government. See Bao, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang diyici’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 317-18.

³³⁸ van de Ven, p. 87.

³³⁹ Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

³⁴⁰ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p. 145.

of the majority.³⁴¹ Yet Li concluded that the majority lacked an understanding of Marxism and ‘political tactics’ (*zhenglüe*).³⁴²

After three days of discussion, the Party’s Programme and Resolutions were basically agreed. The Congress invited Maring and Nicolsky to attend its sixth session starting on the evening of July 30. Soon after the chairman opened the Congress, a stranger peeped in and said he was looking for the chairman of the Federation of National Organisations of China but had come to the wrong place.³⁴³ Maring, who had long experience of revolutionary struggle, proposed that the meeting adjourn immediately and everyone leave. Li Hanjun remained to deal with emergencies, and Chen Gongbo stayed to keep him company. Minutes later, some French and Chinese police and detectives turned up at Li’s house and conducted a search. Li admitted in French that he was the occupant. He said the meeting had been to discuss editing a series of books and that the two foreigners present were English professors from Beijing University. Answering why there were so many socialist books on the bookshelves, Li said they were needed for reference. Failing to find anything incriminating, the French police officer admonished Li and Chen but with a smile, as Chen recorded several days later:

We can ascertain from your books that you are socialists; I believe that socialism perhaps will benefit China in the future, but agitating for it might incur danger at present when education is not widespread [in China]. We could seal up your house today and arrest you as originally planned. But seeing that you are people of knowledge and dignity, I will deal with this case as an exception.³⁴⁴

The police and detectives then withdrew.

³⁴¹ Liu Renjing, ‘Oral Recollections of Li Hanjun’; Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p. 147.

³⁴² Bao Huiseng, ‘Gongchandang diyici’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 318.

³⁴³ It was said that before the CCP’s First Congress assembled, several reports were received that a conference of the Oriental Communists would meet in Shanghai, including Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Koreans, Russians (Chen Kung-po, p. 84; Ishikawa, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, pp. 296-297). At the end of July 1921, the authorities of French Concession took a precautionary measure by issuing ‘New Regulations for Banning Assembly in the French Concession’ (*Minguo ribao*, 31 July 1921, p. 3). On July 30th, the Chinese detectives attached to the French Police informed the headquarters of all unions, societies, etc. in the French Concession of the following new regulation: ‘Beginning from August 1st, forty-eight hours’ notice of the intention to hold meetings must be given to the French police. Failure to give the required notice will render the responsible parties liable to prosecution.’ (Shanghai Municipal Police Daily Report, 1 August 1921). Between July and August, several reports made by the Shanghai Municipal Police recorded that the Federation of National Organisations of China frequently held secret meetings at its headquarters at 104 Seu Tuh Lee, which was in fact next door to 106 Rue Wantz. From this I infer that the detectives stumbled on the meeting held at Li Hanjun’s home by chance. Some other stories, for example, asserting that the Police found traces of Maring’s presence at the meeting, lack evidence.

³⁴⁴ Gongbo, ‘Shiri lüxing zhong de chun Shenpu’, *XQN*, pp. 9-10.

The police intervention made it impossible to continue the Congress at Li Hanjun's residence. Li Da's wife Wang Huiwu suggested that further meetings could be held on the South Lake in Jiaxing County, not far from Shanghai, so all delegates except Chen Gongbo went by train to Jiaxing. Li Hanjun, seriously disturbed by the incident, also went to Jiaxing, as if nothing had happened.

The final session of the Congress took place on a houseboat.³⁴⁵ At this meeting, the delegates passed the Party's Programme and Resolutions, after some disputes.³⁴⁶ The last item of the agenda was the election of a Central Executive Bureau. Chen Duxiu was elected as secretary and Zhou Fohai acting secretary (in Chen's absence). Zhang Guotao was put in charge of organisation and Li Da of propaganda. Li Hanjun obtained only one vote, from Liu Renjing, who considered him a man with leadership ability and a profound understanding of Marxism. According to Liu, Li's failure was due to Zhang Guotao's machinations.³⁴⁷ Chen Gongbo's memoirs give an example: Zhang told him that Li's theory was not Lenin's but Kautsky's, and Li was yellow rather than red.³⁴⁸ Other delegates believed that the election had been manipulated by Zhang.³⁴⁹ Perhaps because of Liu Renjing's vote, Chen Tanqiu remembered that Li Hanjun had been elected as an alternate member of the Central Bureau; Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu even regarded Li as a formal member of the Central Committee.³⁵⁰

The First National Congress led to the formal birth of the CCP.

4.7 A Critical Summary

In the heated debates at the First Congress, Li Hanjun expressed his ideas on the principles, organisation, tasks, policies and tactics of a Communist Party in China.

³⁴⁵ Scholars have held differing views on the date of the last meeting. According to Smurgis' letter of 13 October 1921, the First Congress of the CCP closed on 5 August. Smurgis was then the representative of the Far Eastern Bureau of the Profintern in Chita, so he probably based this on a report sent by Nikolsky. However, the closing date 5 August was perhaps scheduled before the Police search.

³⁴⁶ According to the recollections of Li Da, Dong Biwu, Zhang Guotao and Chen Gongbo, the Congress also passed 'The Manifesto of the First Congress of the CCP', but the Manifesto failed to be issued, because different views expressed at the last meeting. *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 13, p. 293, p. 361, p. 174, p. 421.

³⁴⁷ 'Liu Renjing, 'Oral recollections of Li Hanjun'; Liu Renjing, 'Huiyi Wusi yundon', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 117.

³⁴⁸ Chen Gongbo, in *Chen Gongbo Zhou Fohai huiyilu hebian*, p. 18.

³⁴⁹ Bao Huiseng, 'Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui de jige wenti', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 377. Zhou Fohai, in *Chen Gongbo Zhou Fohai huiyilu hebian*, p. 114.

³⁵⁰ Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 289; Snow, p. 158; N. Wales, *Red Dust — Autobiographies of Chinese Communists*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1952, p. 40.

Here I summarise his main viewpoints. To assess their implications, I explicate what Li said according to my understanding of the available records.

Given that China was economically backward, Li Hanjun believed that it was not ripe for a Communist party led by the proletariat: Chinese workers lacked class consciousness and Marxist knowledge. He acknowledged that the CCP was not truly proletarian but a party of Marxist intellectuals. There were therefore no grounds for refusing to admit further intellectuals to it. He knew that one of Communists' tasks was to heighten workers' class consciousness and form 'the proletariat into a class', and consequently, organise them into 'a political party', as he cited *the Communist Manifesto*.³⁵¹ So Li attached importance to spreading Marxist ideas among intellectuals and organising and educating workers with the intellectuals' help.

Given that China was semi-colonial and semi-feudal, Li deemed it not ready for a socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, the immediate aim of the CCP should be a democratic constitution. To achieve this end, the CCP should first support national democratic revolution led by the KMT. Under a democratic political system, the CCP could participate in parliament to propagate its views and organise the working class. It should also undertake common activities with other parties to wage legal campaigns to defend the rights of working people. These, for Li, were indispensable conditions for the further success of the proletariat.

Li Hanjun's those ideas came under attack from doctrinaires and were misunderstood and distorted by some Communists. For example, Chen Tanqiu wrote that Li 'opposed organising a real proletarian party and fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat.'³⁵² Chen Duxiu said Li insisted that the CCP could only conduct Marxist study and propaganda and participate in activities allowed by law, as opposed to illegal revolutionary actions.³⁵³ Cai Hesen assumed that Li believed that students should be the Party's basic force and that he opposed taking part in the labour movement and even feared workers joining the Party.³⁵⁴ Li was thus accused of representing right opportunism.

³⁵¹ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 234; p. 230. Li Hanjun quoted these words in his *Weiwushiguan jianyi chugao*, vol. 2, pp. 50-51.

³⁵² Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 286.

³⁵³ Pu Qingquan, 'Wo suo zhidao de Chen Duxiu' (What I know about Chen Duxiu), 1979, in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji*, no. 71, October 1980, p. 33.

³⁵⁴ Cai Hesen, 'Tigang', in *ZDBX*, pp. 28-29.

Chen Duxiu later remarked that the First Congress rejected both Right and ‘Left’ deviations and adopted a Constitution drawn up ‘in the light of Lenin's ideas on party-building and the Bolshevik Party's organisational principles’. The Constitution was therefore ‘a good one, more revolutionary than the platforms of other parties in European countries.’³⁵⁵

In fact, the CCP had no Constitution until its Second Congress. The first important document adopted at the First Congress was the Party ‘Programme’, which contained general principles: ‘(1) The revolutionary forces and the proletariat must together overthrow the state power of the capitalist class, ...; (2) To stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat until class struggle comes to an end and class distinctions are abolished; (3) To eliminate the system of private ownership by capitalists, and to confiscate machines, land, factory premises, semi-finished products, etc., and to transfer them into public ownership; (4) To unite with the Third International.’ It also claimed to adopt the Soviet system and recognised social revolution as the Party’s chief aim. It concluded with strict rules about Party organisations and recruitment of members: for example, the Party and its members must cut off all relations with ‘yellow’ intellectuals and ‘yellow’ parties; local finance, activities and policies should be under the control of the Central Committee; and Party members should not serve as government officials or members of Parliament.³⁵⁶

The ‘First Resolution of the Communist Party of China’ passed by the Congress set out a plan of action. It included that the CCP would organise industrial unions, training schools for workers and an institute to research labour issues and movements. It especially stipulated that all publications, whether by central or local Party organisations, must be subject to the supervision of the central committee and consistent with the Party’s principles, politics and decisions. The CCP should adopt ‘independent, combative and exclusive attitudes’ towards other parties and ‘allow no relations with other political parties or organisations.’ The Party should report to the

³⁵⁵ Pu Qingquan, in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji*, p. 33.

³⁵⁶ Cf. ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de diyige gangling’ (The First Programme of the CCP), in *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* [Selected Documents of the Central Committee of the CCP] (henceforth ZZWX), vol. 1, 1921-1925, Zhongyang dang’an guan (ed), Zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, Beijing, 1982, pp. 5-7. This was a document translated from Russian. Chen Gongbo translated this programme from the original Chinese document into English in his MA dissertation as Appendix 1.

Third International each month. If necessary, a representative should be sent to its Far Eastern Secretariat in Irkutsk.³⁵⁷

Having compared the CCP's first Programme and Resolution with the Constitution of the RCP(b), the Platform and Manifesto of the Comintern, and several other foreign Communist parties' programmes, the Chinese historian Xie Yinming has concluded that these documents directly influenced the CCP's documents.³⁵⁸ The Japanese scholar Ishikawa Yoshihiro's careful textual comparison shows that the documents of the First Congress took the programme and constitution of the United Communist Party of America as its blueprint.³⁵⁹ It is true that the documents adopted by the First Congress and the Programme of the United Communist Party of America were much alike, but one reason for this is that all Communist parties were influenced by the Bolsheviks and guided by the Comintern. It is also likely that delegates referred to the 'Conditions of Admission to the Communist International' in drawing up documents.³⁶⁰ The 'Conditions', drafted by Lenin, stipulated that 'The Communist International has declared war on the entire bourgeois world and on all yellow social-democratic parties'; and 'Parties which wish to join the Communist International are obliged to recognise the necessity for a complete and absolute break with reformism and with the policy of the "centre"'. It also stated that the party's press and publishing houses must be subordinate to the party presidium and run by reliable communists and must advocate the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.³⁶¹ These points are echoed in resolutions of the First Congress of the CCP.

Yet there was no reference in the First Congress documents to centralised organisation and iron discipline of the sort advocated in Lenin's 'Conditions'. Zhang Guotao recalled that the Party Constitution he drafted contained provisions such as 'To join the Communist Party, a person must ... take part in the practical work of the party'; 'Members must observe discipline and secrecy'; and the principles of democratic centralism. He further wrote that most delegates criticised Li Hanjun for

³⁵⁷ 'Zhongguo gongchandang de diyige jueyi' (The First Resolution of the CCP), in ZZWX, vol. 1, pp. 7-9.

³⁵⁸ Xie Yinming, 'Zhonggong yida danggang yanjiu' (A research on the First Programme of the CCP), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 5, 2000.

³⁵⁹ Ishikawa Yoshihiro, *Chugoku kyosanto seiritsu shi*, p. 303.

³⁶⁰ Its Chinese translation was published in *GCD*, no. 3, 7 April 1921.

³⁶¹ Degras (ed), vol. 1, pp. 168-172.

wanting only a liberal association.³⁶² Chen Tanqiu also asserted that the Congress adopted the Bolsheviks' organisational experience, principles of Party organisation and conditions of admission to the Party.³⁶³ However, the available documents do not bear out these claims. So the Russian scholar K. Shevelyov considered 'the key provision of party membership was not formulated in the Bolshevik spirit'.³⁶⁴ Perhaps Li Hanjun's views were one reason for the absence of some Bolshevik organisational principles from the documents passed at the Congress, or perhaps such provisions were neither raised nor discussed at the Congress at all.

Even so, the CCP's first Programme and Resolution was still quite radical. Firstly, the provisions ignored actual conditions in China, which was basically an agricultural country with no more than two million workers, i.e., a mere 0.5 percent of the population, and was ruled by warlords instead of capitalists. Therefore it was pointless for the CCP to rally the proletariat to 'overthrow the state power of the capitalist class' and 'eliminate the system of private ownership by capitalists', as well as to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat. Moreover, the Congress denied the possibility of fighting for a democratic system and allying with other parties in the struggle against warlords' rule. Even Dong Biwu and Chen Gongbo later admitted that some resolutions passed by Congress promoted a policy of 'closed door' and 'no compromise'.³⁶⁵ The Russian historian A. Pantsov points out that the Congress 'borrowed Bolshevik theory' in formulating their documents but their 'isolationist position' towards other revolutionary parties and organisations was 'even more radical than Lenin and Trotsky'.³⁶⁶

The Congress even neglected and violated Lenin's tactic of supporting national revolutionary or bourgeois democratic movements in colonies and 'backward' countries and of using all means and methods available, both legal and illegal, including participating in bourgeois parliaments.³⁶⁷ It also neglected Marx and Engels' teachings that the first step in a revolution will 'inaugurate a democratic constitution'; so the Communists should support every revolutionary movement against the existing

³⁶² Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, pp. 145-146.

³⁶³ *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 287.

³⁶⁴ Shevelyov, *Far Eastern Affairs*, p. 137.

³⁶⁵ Wales, p. 40; Chen Kung-po, p. 81.

³⁶⁶ A. Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927*, Curzon press, Surrey, 2000. pp. 36-37.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Lenin, 'Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder', in *LCW*, vol. 31; 'Theses on the National and Colonial Question' and 'Theses on the Basic Tasks of the Comintern', in Degras (ed), vol. 1, p. 139; p. 143; pp. 122-123.

social and political order, and ‘take the side of the liberal bourgeois against the governments’ and ‘reach an understanding with democratic socialists’, and pursue ‘a common policy with them’.³⁶⁸

It is not hard to see that Li Hanjun’s Congress speech reflected some of these views of Marx, Engels and Lenin. One can therefore conclude that Li understood Marxism better than most delegates. This may be why Maring pointed out that the hostile attitude adopted by most Chinese Communists towards Li Hanjun at the First Congress and afterwards was ‘wrong’. Later, according to Maring, ‘our comrades all agreed to this opinion.’³⁶⁹

But although the views of most delegates did not tally completely with the Bolsheviks’, in general they were in line with the essentials of Lenin’s thought, which represented a radical, uncompromising and authoritarian school of Marxism.³⁷⁰ So it is not far from the truth to say, as several CCP leaders and many historians have done, that the CCP was built on Bolshevik principles and modelled on the Russian Communist Party from the outset.³⁷¹ Since Li Hanjun did not completely accept Bolshevik doctrines, he was excluded from the Party’s leadership after the First Congress, despite being a key founder of the CCP and Chen Duxiu’s ‘first minister’.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 258; Engels, ‘Principles of Communism’, in *MECW*, vol. 6, p. 350, p. 356.

³⁶⁹ ‘A Comrade’s letter to Li Handjien’, Guangzhou, 25 June 1923. The letter written by Maring in English is kept in the CCP’s Central Archives in Beijing.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Luk, p. 41.

³⁷¹ This viewpoint was reiterated by Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Chen Tanqiu, Peng Shuzhi, and other leaders of the CCP. See *Mao Zedong xuanji* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong], renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1967, p. 994, p. 1249; Liu Shaoqi, ‘Guanyu dangnei douzheng’ (On the struggles within the Party), *Liu Shaoqi xuanji* [Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 185-186; Chen Tanqiu, ‘Zai qingzhu dang de 15 zhounian jinianhui shang de jianghua (tigang)’ (An outline for the speech at the celebration meeting of the 15th anniversary of the founding of the CCP), written in Moscow, 1936, in *Gongchanzhuyi xiaozu*, vol. 1, p. 363; Peng Shuzhi, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang ji Zhongguo dierci geming jianshi’ (A brief history of the CCP and the Second Revolution in China), in *Peng Shuzhi xuanji* [Selected Works of Peng Shuzhi], Shiyue chubanshe, Hong Kong, 1983, vol. 1, pp. 52-53. A similar view by historians can be seen in academic works, such as Zhang Jingru’s *Zhongguo gongchandang de chuangli* and Luk’s *The Origins of Chinese Bolshevism*.

³⁷² Zheng Chaolin in his *Shishi yu huiyi* (p. 257) described Li Hanjun as Chen Duxiu’s first ‘conseiller’ or ‘ministre’.

5 Pioneering the Chinese Labour Movement

Although formed by intellectuals, the CCP came onto the scene as a ‘Chinese proletarian party’ or ‘workers’ party’.¹ The discussions at its First Congress were devoted largely to the labour movement, and it decided to form an institution to conduct propaganda among the workers and organise trade unions. Not long after the CCP was founded, it set up the Chinese Labour Organisation Secretariat (hereafter CLOS), named and funded by the Comintern. During its first years, the CCP spared no effort to promote a labour movement, which progressed rapidly throughout the country.

As a founder of the CCP, Li Hanjun fully understood the proletariat’s role in Communist movements and attached great importance to the labour movement. Around one third of his publications chiefly had relation to labour issues or theories of labour emancipation. He put into practice what he preached by throwing his time and energy into the labour movement. He was regarded by contemporaries as ‘a director of the labour movement during the period of the Republic of China’.² Contemporary historians appraise him as ‘a pioneer of the Chinese labour movement’.³

However, some early Communists, such as Cai Hesen, Li Lisan and Chen Tanqiu, censured Li Hanjun for opposing labour-movement and the immediate establishment of trade-unions organisation. Were such criticisms reasonable?

¹ ‘Zhongguo gongchandang dierci daibiao dahui xuanyan’ (Manifesto of the Second Congress of the CCP) and ‘Zhongguo gongchandang duiyu muqian shiji wenti zhi jihua’ (The CCP’s programme for the current actual issues) in ‘*Erda’ he ‘Sanda’ – Zhongguo gongchandang dier disanci daibiaodahui ziliao xuanbian* [The 2nd and 3rd Congresses of the CCP - Selected Materials on the 2nd and 3rd Congresses of the CCP] (henceforth abbreviated to *EHS*), Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan jindaishisuo xiandaishi yanjiushi (comp), Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1985, p. 105, p. 143.

² *Kaizō*, vol. 8, no. 8, p. 127.

³ Tian Ziyu, *Li Hanjun*, p. 113. Li Hanjun’s theories and practice in directing the labour movement are fully detailed in my article ‘Li Hanjun yu Zhongguo gongren yundong’ (Li Hanjun and the Chinese labour movement), *SGZY*, no. 7, December 2007, pp. 249-279.

5.1 Devotion to the Emancipation of the Proletariat

Li Hanjun started to become interested in labour issues even before becoming a Communist. In the early twentieth century, especially after World War One, the labour movement advanced rapidly across the world. Li's experiences in Japan, the most advanced industrial country in Asia, had a significant impact on him. He witnessed a massive upsurge of the labour movement there and was well acquainted with Japanese intellectuals' advocating the liberation of the workers and directing the organisation of trade unions in Japan.⁴ When he arrived back in China in late 1918, the 'sacredness of labour' (*laogong shensheng*) became a fashionable slogan.⁵ During the May Fourth Movement the Chinese workers began to flex their muscles in strikes. The first International Labour Conference in Washington in October 1919 made labour issues a focus of world attention. All this convinced Li Hanjun that the emancipation of the proletariat had become an irresistible world trend.⁶

Coincident with this world trend, the improvement of labourers' working and living conditions was an immediate need in China's social reform. In his homeland, Li Hanjun saw with his own eyes that Chinese workers were suffering inhumane treatment in factories and living miserable lives. In Shanghai, regarded as a 'paradise' by foreign capitalists, Li found hell:

Bad smells filled the air. Grey and brown ragged clothes flapped in the wind. Excrement and urine lay everywhere. In such a place live sallow and emaciated people dressed in tatters. ... Some sit outside catching lice in their clothes, others lie under dirty and ragged quilts moaning and groaning.

Such conditions were a great shock to him. He further wrote: 'Perhaps some people may believe that such sights can be seen only in hell and not in a world of humans. However, such was the situation in a slum in magnificent Shanghai.'⁷ The vivid description suggests that he personally visited the slums. With deep sympathy, Li described the workers' sufferings and poverty:

⁴ Cf. Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

⁵ 'The Sacredness of Labourers' was first proclaimed by Cai Yuanpei in his speech made in november 1918, and originally published in *Beijing daxue xuesheng rikan* [Beijing University's Students Daily], 27 November 1918.

⁶ Cf. 'Shijie sichao zhi fangxiang' and its 'postscript by translators', *JW*, 5-7 September 1919.

⁷ Hanjun, 'Paodao neidi cai zhengkai yanjing me?' (Open your eyes only when going inland?), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 1, *suiganlu* (Random thoughts), p. 1.

Labourers suffer most in the world. Regardless of the heat or cold, they have to get up before dawn and go to work in factories or fields. They cannot rest until late evening. Their working hours are at least 15-16 a day, their sleeping time is about 5-6 hours a day at most. Despite their sufferings and hardship, labourers can hardly afford to buy food and clothing, let alone pay for a decent dwelling place. If they fall ill and are unable to work one day, they go hungry the next. Sometimes things become so bad that they are expelled from their rooms by the landlord and have to pawn their clothes and bedding. ... They have to look on helplessly while their children cry and die of hunger and cold.⁸

Noting the huge gap between the rich and the poor, Li often wrote about the striking contrast between the lives of labourers and capitalists. He argued that the capitalists' rich and luxurious life-style was based on exploiting workers:

Labourers are the 'mothers' of social life and civilisation. However, what they get from society is less than they deserve. Owing to labourers' work, some people can live in mansions, wear gorgeous clothes, and eat dainties of every kind, surrounded by pampered wives and beautiful concubines and going around in luxury cars or on sleek horses. They can spend money like water for a mere moment's joy. Yet labourers suffer hunger and cold. Their houses cannot keep out the wind and rain and they work only to stay alive. Once they lose their jobs, they face life-endangering hunger and cold.⁹

The injustice distressed Li Hanjun and impelled him to seek to change the fate of the working class. He wrote: 'Labour movements and socialist movements across the world originate in workers' sufferings. Those active in such movements are concerned to relieve workers' sufferings.'¹⁰ He added that the Chinese labour movement was 'generated by humanity'.¹¹ Relieving workers' suffering was a direct motivation for Li to participate in the labour movement.

Li Hanjun believed that no one who was hungry and constantly busy searching for food and clothing could ever have great thoughts.¹² He knew that those other than labourers who devoted themselves to the cause of improving labourers' working and living conditions were motivated by ideals of freedom, equality and universal fraternity.¹³ In many countries, the first to advocate workers' emancipation were intellectuals with a sense of social justice and humanitarian sympathy, most of them from the middle or upper-middle classes. Marx, Engels, and S. and B. Webb are

⁸ Hanjun, 'Weishenme yao yin zhege bao? (Why are we starting to publish this journal?), *Laodong jie*, no. 1, August 1920, pp. 2-3.

⁹ Li Renjie, 'You dai xuesheng yu you dai laodongzhe de yiyi ji ke fou' (The significance of giving preferential treatment to students or workers, and my opinion), *JW*, 18 March 1920, p. 4.

¹⁰ Hanjun, 'Laodongzhe yu "guoji yundong"' (Labourers and 'the international movements'), *XQPL*, no. 53, 6 June 1920, p. 2.

¹¹ Haijing, 'Lun Zhongguo laodong yundong de quedian he jiuji de fangfa' (On the Chinese labour movement's shortcomings and ways to overcome them), *Gongshang zhi you* [Friends of Industry and Commerce], *Shishi xinbao* [The China Times]'s supplement, 21 August 1920, p. 3.

¹² Hanjun, 'Shehui kexue tekan fakan zhiqiu', *JW*, p. 5.

¹³ Hanjun, 'Hunpu de shehuizhuyizhe', *XQPL*, p. 2.

examples. As an intellectual with middle-ranging economic status, Li Hanjun is also a case in point. His study of Marxism caused him to link his fate with that of the proletariat, the grave digger of capitalism, destined to emancipate the whole of humankind. This strengthened his determination to devote himself to the cause of the proletariat.

Chinese working class misery aroused the attention of Chinese engaged in social reform, including KMT socialists, anarchists and Christians. *Xingqi pinglun* championed labour reform. It invited contributions on workers' wages, working hours, living conditions, living expenses, employment, unemployment, relationships with factory owners and foremen, workers' solidarity and so on.¹⁴ Members of the Society of *Xingqi pinglun* tried to befriend workers in Shanghai and find out how they lived and worked. As a result, *Xingqi pinglun* came to enjoy the trust of many workers, and some contributed articles to the paper; many frequented its office. Li understood intimately how industrial workers worked and lived. He noticed that their working and wages were the worst in the world: two twelve-hour shifts were common in many factories; if there was no night shift, working hours could be extended to 16-18 hours; a male worker's daily wage was 3-6 *jiao*, the wage for female workers was around 1 or 2 *jiao*, and for child labourers it was even less.¹⁵ Li's figures were close to the data collected by scholars at the time.¹⁶ An investigation by *Xingqi pinglun* showed that Shanghai workers' average monthly income was 9 *yuan* – much lower than the minimum (i.e. 17.5 *yuan*) needed to maintain a family or even a couple.¹⁷ Such wages could not buy even a picul (50 kilograms) of poor-quality rice (9.23 *yuan* in Shanghai in 1920). A contemporary pointed out: 'Workers in no other countries earn as little as

¹⁴ *XQPL*, no. 41, 14 March 1920, p. 4.

¹⁵ Hanjun, 'Yuan zai wang ye! – pengji Zhang Dongsun xiansheng de renmen!' (That a wrong he has suffered! – to those who attacked Mr Zhang Dongsun), *JW*, 14 August 1921, p. 4; *Ri Jin ketsu*, *Kaizō*, p. 23.

¹⁶ Cf. Table IX (C) 'Daily Wages of Male and Female Workers (1919-1920)' and Table IX(B) 'Average Wages in the Textile Industry (1920)' in Lin Tung-hai, *The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China*, China United Press, Shanghai, 1933, pp. 68-69. Table IX (C) shows that male workers' daily wages around 0.21-0.45 *yuan*, and female workers 0.14-0.26 *yuan*; Table IX(B) indicates that male textile workers' daily wage came to around 0.16-0.77 *yuan*, and female textile workers earned 0.14-0.52 *yuan*. After first-hand studies of labour conditions in China, J. B. Tayler and W. T. Zung wrote in 'Labour and Industry in China': 'In machine industries the hours are still frequently as much as 14-17 per day, though it is becoming usual in the large factories to work 12-hour shifts, generally with no fixed or regular break.' *International Labour Review*, vol. VIII, no. 1, July 1923, p. 7.

¹⁷ *XQPL*, no. 41, 14 March 1920, p. 4.

Chinese workers.¹⁸ The French historian J. Chesneau concluded that ‘workers and their families simply did not have enough to live on.’¹⁹

To elevate workers’ social status, Li Hanjun and Dai Jitao are said to have tried to organise cooperatives and to have taught workers to read and write in a night school in Shanghai.²⁰ Li and his colleagues at *Xingqi pinglun* also supported workers’ strikes. In early 1920, when workers of the Shanghai Dyeing and Weaving Mill struck, the Society of *Xingqi pinglun* printed and distributed more than 7,000 handbills.²¹

On 3 March 1920, Li Hanjun first voiced his opinions publicly on a dispute between capitalists and workers. In ‘Was This the Right Way to Increase Wages?’ he argued that Mu Ouchu, a Shanghai capitalist, was wrong to say that female cotton mill workers’ wages had been increased. He pointed out that over the previous ten years the price of rice, cloth and rent had risen by nearly 200 per cent, whereas female workers’ wages had merely increased from 1 *jiao* 7-8 *fen* to 2 *jiao* 7-8 *fen*. He wrote further: ‘What we ought to do is improve workers’ living standards instead of merely maintaining their lives.’²² Here, Li showed that he wanted to elevate workers’ living standards.

Li Hanjun also paid special attention to workers’ right to form unions and strike. In October 1919, he made a comprehensive analysis of strikes. According to him, the recent strikes in Shanghai indicated that strikers’ demands were confined mostly to pay rises rather than to calls for shorter hours, better treatment, better tools and the right to form unions. The owners of enterprises were hostile to strikes and put pressure on striking workers. They refused to admit that workers had the right to make representations or form associations; they dismissed workers’ representatives and told

¹⁸ Yuzhi, ‘Wairen zai Hua touzi zhi liyi’ (The interest for foreigners’ investment in China), *Dongfang zazhi* [Oriental Miscellany], vol. 15, no. 1, January 1918, p. 43. For instance, the average wages of American workers were over ten times of the average wages of Chinese workers. Cf. a table in Liang Yukui, *Zaoqi Zhongguo gongren yundong shi* [The Chinese Labour Movement in Early Stage], Jilin keji chubanshe, Changchun, 2000, p. 59.

¹⁹ Cf. Tables 15, 16, 17 in J. Chesneau, *The Chinese Labour Movement, 1919-1927*, translated from French by H. M. Wright, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1968, pp. 96-99.

²⁰ Cf. B. Z. Shumiatsky, ‘Zhongguo gongqingtuan shi he gongchandang shi pianduan – daonian Zhongguo gongqingtuan he gongchandang de zuzhizhe zhiyi Zhang Tailei tongzhi’ (An episode of the history of the Communist Youth League and the Communist Party of China: To mourn for Zhang Tailei, one of the organisers of the CY and the CCP), in *QGYZQY*, p. 598. This article was first published in *Revoliutsionnyi Vostok* [Revolutionary East], nos. 4-5, 1928.

²¹ ‘Yang Zhihua de huiyi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 26.

²² Xianjin, ‘Gongqian shi zheyang zengjia ma?’ (Was this the right way to increase wages?), *Minguo ribao*, 3 March 1920, p. 3.

other owners not to employ them. Worse still, in Li's opinion, workers themselves were unaware of their right to form associations and engage in collective bargaining.

Li Hanjun analysed the reasons as follows: China had a huge population and many impoverished peasants came into cities. Industry was still backward and could not offer sufficient job opportunities, so the redundant population increased rapidly and formed a reserve workforce. Workers were thus prone to mutual hostility. This situation enabled capitalists to fire workers easily and to threaten workers who went on strike. It was therefore hard for the workers to unite in unions and raise demands. Moreover, they were generally ignorant about such issues and lacked a 'concept of human dignity'. Li hoped that the Chinese workers would overcome those shortcomings.²³

To improve labourers' working and living conditions, promote their literacy, and get them organised in trade unions and cooperatives was also the KMT's labour policy, shaped by Sun Yat-sen's 'Principle of People's Livelihood'. Sun preferred class harmony to class struggle. He once said: 'In solving the problem of people's livelihood in China, we are not going to apply a violent and unsuitable method but adopt a preventive measure to stop the growth of large private capital and forestall the great evils of social economic inequality.'²⁴ Guided by Sun's teaching, the KMT's leaders of labour movement stressed coordination and compromise between workers and capitalists and believed that class conflict would hinder the development of national industry and cause unrest.²⁵ Perhaps such ideas influenced Li, who sometimes appealed to people to study labour problems in order to prevent social unrest, and even appealed to capitalists to yield to workers' demands for their own sake and that of social justice.

However, as a believer in Marxism, Li Hanjun knew there was no possibility of compromise between the capitalists and the working class or of avoiding class struggle. He mocked those who had tried to mediate the interests of different classes, saying: 'To add the word "class" before "mutual aid" is ridiculous. Were such a method of

²³ Xianjin, 'Zuijin Shanghai de bagong fengchao' (Recent strike waves in Shanghai), *XQPL*, no. 21, 26 October 1919, p. 4; Haijing, 'Lun Zhongguo laodong yundong de quedian he jiuji de fangfa', *Gongshang zhi you*, p. 3.

²⁴ Quoted from Ma Chao-chun, *History of the Labor Movement in China*, China Cultural Service, Taipei, 1955, pp. 63-67. Sun once told Dai Jitao that it was very important to direct the labour movement according to moderate social theory. Dai Jitao, 'Fang Sun xiansheng de tanhua' (Interview with Mr Sun Yat-sen), *XQPL*, no. 3, 22 June 1919, p. 3.

²⁵ Wu Yulin, *Sanmin zhuyi laogong zhengce yanjiu* [A Study of the Labour Policy of the Three Principles of the People], Zhengzhong shuju, Taipei, 1979, pp. 29-32.

mutual aid to exist, the sun would start rising from the west.²⁶ In ‘Mediators and Mental Disorder’, Li wrote that the president of the American Federation of Labour, S. Gompers, had tried to reconcile labourers and capitalists in order to pass the ‘Regulations of Labourer Protection’ but met with opposition from both capitalists and the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World).²⁷

Li Hanjun held that Chinese workers should develop class consciousness in addition to national consciousness. During the period of the Ri-Hua Cotton Mill strike, which was triggered by Japanese goons beating workers’ representatives and ended being suppressed by the police, Li found that so-called patriots, including merchants, students and the media in Shanghai, had no concern for such incidents. He thus told workers that they should be fully aware of this fact and love their own class.²⁸

Li believed that the working class had the right to resist capitalist oppression. In his translation of ‘The Ethics of Directing the Labour Movements’ by Sano Manabu, he introduced the ethics of equalisation, respect for labour, and social ties as well as violence. He knew that the aim of the labour movement was to overthrow the old social system based on the exploitation of labour and build a new civilisation.²⁹ These views were quite different from those of KMT socialists.

To widen workers’ horizons, Li Hanjun wrote and translated many articles about working class organisations and labour movements elsewhere in the world. They included ‘My Thoughts on the Great Strikes in Britain’, ‘Confession of a Coal Mine Proprietor’, ‘The Cause of the Coal Miners’ Strike in Britain and Its Significance in Social Revolution’, ‘The Development of the IWW’, ‘General Survey of the IWW’, ‘The Statutes of the Confédération Générale du Travail’, ‘Trade Union Movements in Russia’ and ‘Labourers and the International Movements’. His articles introduced or mentioned labour movements in the UK, the USA, Japan, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Russia and so on. He especially admired the British labour movement and told readers that the army had not dared to suppress the strikes in

²⁶ Xianjin, ‘Sanyi zhuyi’ (A principle that would benefit three kinds of people), *XQPL*, no. 41, 14 March 1920, p. 4.

²⁷ Xianjin, ‘Tiaohezhe yu shenjingbing’ (Mediators and mental disorder), *XQPL*, no. 21, 26 October 1919, p. 4.

²⁸ Xianjin, ‘Guomin shibushi yinggai fenjia de? (Should state and citizens be separated?), *XQPL*, no. 36, 8 February 1920, p. 4.

²⁹ Zuoye Xue (Sano Manabu), ‘Laodongzhe yundong zhi zhidao lunli’ (The ethics of directing the labour movements), translated by Dabei and Hanjun, *JW*, 9-14 September 1919. Sano Manabu was a member of the New Human Society and later became the head of the Japanese Communist Party.

Britain because ‘the working class is powerful’.³⁰ He noticed that the workers in Britain had become aware that only with their force of solidarity could they gain an equal footing with the capitalists and make contracts with them.³¹

Li Hanjun painstakingly studied labour issues in China and knew a lot about labour organisations and movements world-wide. And he also carefully studied and analysed working class’ means and tactics in winning their struggles with capitalists, including collective bargaining, sabotage, strike, general strike and so on. At the time, few Chinese intellectuals – later Communists – could match him in this respect. Employing his knowledge of labour movements and Marxist theory, he started directing the labour movement in China even before the birth of the CCP.

5.2 A Leader of the Labour Movement in the CCP’s Founding Period

The CCP claimed to be a proletarian party. However, several of its leaders, including Chen Duxiu, Cai Hesen and Mao Zedong, did not at first fully understand the real meaning of the word ‘proletariat’, which they sometimes mistook for ‘labourers without property’ (*wuchan zhe*). They therefore believed that all Chinese labourers belonged to the proletariat and that China was ‘a proletarian nation’.³² According to Marxist theory, the proletariat is the modern working class linked with industry, a class whose labour increases capital and whose members sell themselves piecemeal as commodities. They are crowded into big factories and regimented like soldiers. Li Hanjun well understood this Marxist definition of the proletariat. He once attempted to illustrate the difference between proletarians and ordinary labourers by contrasting the workers of Hankou Water Plant with the individual porters who carried buckets of water in Wuchang. The latter, as independent labourers, competed with each other and were hard to unite, whereas the former were concentrated in greater masses and their wages and conditions of life were comparatively equalised, so they tended to have

³⁰ Xianjin, ‘Duiyu Yingguo dabagong de ganxiang’ (My thoughts on the great strikes in Britain), *XQPL*, no. 19, 12 October 1919, p. 3.

³¹ Hanjun, ‘Hunpu de shehuizhuyizhe’, *XQPL*, p. 2.

³² ‘Duanyan’ (Brief foreword to *Gongchandang*), *GCD*, no. 1, 7 November 1920, p. 1; Cai Hesen, ‘Makesi xueshuo yu Zhongguo wuchanjieji’ (Marxist theory and the Chinese proletariat), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1 August 1921, Tongxin (Correspondances), pp. 8-9; ‘Mao Zedong to Cai Hesen and others’, 1 December 1920, in *Mao Zedong shuxin xuanji* [Collected Letters of Mao Zedong], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1983, p. 7.

common interests. Workers in capitalist industry were apt to form unions and wage general strikes; with the development of transportation and communications, the workers of different localities could contact each other easily and achieve their goals by united action. In this way, ‘they would naturally raise their class consciousness.’³³

From the spring of 1920, while the CCP was taking shape, Li Hanjun began to participate in the labour movement. With Chen Duxiu, he attended the inaugural meeting of the Shanghai Ship and Godown Workers’ Union on 2 April 1920 and took part in May Day activities. Soon after the CCP’s first organisation was formed in Shanghai in the summer of 1920, Li took charge of the Party’s labour movement and dispatched Li Zhong and Li Qihan to organise schools, clubs and trade unions among machinery and textile workers in Shanghai.³⁴ In October 1920, Li Hanjun, Chen Duxiu and others attended a meeting to initiate the Shanghai Machinery Workers’ Trade Union as ‘honorary members’. According to the Union’s Regulations, all its honorary members were also executive board members. This Union was formally founded on 21 November, as the first trade union set up by the CCP.³⁵ In December, under the direction of Communists, trade unions were organised among textile and print workers in Shanghai.³⁶ On 19 December 1920, around four hundred workers attended a meeting that led to the organisation of the Chinese Labourers’ Association, initiated by Communists.³⁷

To conduct propaganda among workers, *Laodong jie* started publication on 15 August 1920. It was the first Communist organ devoted to reaching workers. Its editor-in-chief was Li Hanjun. In their ‘Announcement of the Publication of *Laodong jie*’, Li and Chen Duxiu declared:

Our aim in starting publication of this weekly journal is to promote the cause of improving the working class’s conditions. ... We hope that every labourer will help contribute to the paper and promote its sale, to enable it to become a powerful medium of the Chinese working class.³⁸

In the opening article ‘Why are we starting to publish this journal?’ Li Hanjun wrote: ‘Workers were the most miserable people in the world’; the purpose in

³³ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 12, pp. 3-4.

³⁴ ‘Li Da zizhuan’, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 4; *Gongchanzhuyi xiaozu*, vol. 1, p. 38.

³⁵ *Minguo ribao*, 6, 7 October 1920; 22 November 1920.

³⁶ Ni Xingxiang (ed), *Zhonguo gongchandang chuangjianshi cidian* [A Dictionary of the History of the Establishment of the CCP], Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 2006, pp. 94-95; pp. 100-101.

³⁷ Shanghai Municipal Council Police Daily Report, 20 December 1920; Ni Xingxiang (ed), *ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

³⁸ *Minguo ribao*, 17 August 1920.

publishing this journal was to ‘let our Chinese workers know what they ought to know’, so they could improve their condition.³⁹

Articles in *Laodong jie* revealed labourers’ misery and tried to awaken them to the need for organisation. Under Li Hanjun, the journal also became a mouthpiece for workers. It published many letters from workers and replies by its editors. Circulating in Shanghai and several other cities in China, *Laodong jie* was well received by labourers and others.⁴⁰ The journal established a close link between Communists and workers. On New Year’s Day in 1921, it held a get-together of workers and Communist intellectuals.⁴¹ For Li Hanjun, *Laodong jie* and other journals were vehicles not only for disseminating Marxism and information about the international labour movement but for directing specific labour activities.

In 1920, a strike wave hit Shanghai. According to a report, 54,088 workers went on strike; most strikes were due to increases in the price of rice, together with general increases in the cost of living.⁴² In ‘How Do Workers Cope with the High Price of Rice?’ Li Hanjun wrote: ‘The price of rice is a matter of life and death for workers who have only a little money to live on. How to cope with the high price of rice is an important problem for us.’ He believed that the rise in the price of rice was connected with the general increase in the cost of living. Without it, peasants who grew rice could not survive. In his view, ‘the only way for our workers to cope with the high price of rice is to demand increased wages.’ He urged workers to struggle for pay rises and not be deceived by employers’ measures such as a temporary payment of rice compensation money or the selling of rice at lower prices by some capitalist philanthropists.⁴³

In March 1921, the drivers and conductors of the Tram Company in the French Concession went on strike. The CCP’s Shanghai organisation under Li Hanjun sent

³⁹ *Laodong jie*, no. 1, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰ For example, only in Hunan province, the quantity of *Laodong jie* sold by Wenhua Book Society between September 1920 and March 1921 was over 5,000 copies. See Chen Shaokang, ‘Zhonggong lishi shang de diyiben kanwu – *Laodong jie*’ (The first journal published by the CCP - *The World of Labour*), in *Chen Shaokang Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu wenji* [Chen Shaokang’s Writings of the Study of the History of the CCP], Lu Miqiang (comp), Shanghai guji chubanshe, Shanghai, 2007, p. 198.

⁴¹ Cadart and Cheng (eds), pp. 210-211.

⁴² ‘Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council of 1920’, Shanghai Archives, UI-1-933.934, p. 68A.

⁴³ Hanjun, ‘Gongren ruhe duifu mi gui?’ (How do workers cope with the high price of rice?), *Laodong jie*, no. 8, 3 October 1920, pp. 1-7.

several SY members to investigate the strike and help the strikers.⁴⁴ Li wrote three articles to support and direct this strike. He refuted the view that it was unreasonable to put pressure on the company and tried to show that the workers' demands, such as a pay rise, payment of medical expenses and the revision of penalty clauses, were natural and legitimate; similar demands by workers in other countries had been met. He considered the 20 per cent pay rise demand reasonable given the 3-4 fold increase in the cost of living. He praised the strikers' display of 'unity' and 'steadfastness' and the absence of rioting, which contributed to the victory.⁴⁵

In 'My Thoughts on the Issue of Strikes', Li Hanjun spoke highly of Chinese workers' progress in recent strikes by coal miners in Tangshan, mechanics in Hong Kong, and a series of strikes during the rice panic in Shanghai between 1920 and 1921. He wrote that Chinese workers, allegedly unable to unite or achieve anything because of their ignorance, 'nowadays go so far as to act unanimously. It is thus obvious that working people would inevitably make efforts to strive to secure their existence when they suffer hunger and cold.' He warned society not to look down on labourers, since cornered beasts can act desperately.⁴⁶

Shanghai was also China's commercial centre. Like industrial workers, shop assistants were wage labourers, too. The Chinese Communists tried to start up a journal aimed at shop assistants. Li Hanjun, together with Yu Xiusong and Chen Duxiu, invited Zhongyuan and several other members of the Merchants and Labourers' Mutual Aid Society to discuss publishing *Dianyuan zhoukan* (Shop Assistants Weekly) in September 1920.⁴⁷ When this plan failed, *Shanghai huoyou* (Shanghai Shop Assistants) came out, on 10 October. Li once wrote an article telling shop assistants to be aware of their human dignity and strive for the right to proper treatment and education and to form associations.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Zhang Tailei, in *GLZWX*, p. 174; Ren Wuxiong, *Dangshi yanjiu wenji* [Collected Writings of the Study of the History of the CCP], Ni Xingxiang (comp), Shanghai guji chubanshe, Shanghai, 2004, p. 618.

⁴⁵ Hanjun, 'Fa zujie dianche bagong gei women de jiaoxun' (Lessons from the tram workers' strike in the French Concession), *JW*, 8 March 1921, p. 4; 'Meiyou laodongzhe de Zhongguo' (Supposing that China were a country without labourers) and 'Yaoxie' (Coercion), *JW*, 6 March 1921, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Hanjun, 'Wo duiyu bagong wenti de ganxiang' (My thoughts on the issue of strikes), *Minguo ribao*, 5 March 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Laodong jie*, no. 7, 26 September 1920, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Haijing, 'Shangdian huoyou yingyou de juewu' (What shop assistants should be aware of), *Gongshang zhi you*, 3 November 1920.

A big Shanghai department store, Yong'an Company, distributed dividends only to shareholders and never awarded bonuses to non-shareholders. Angered by this, non-shareholding shop-assistants published an announcement in *Pingmin* (Common People) to arouse public opinion. Li Hanjun expressed his view on 18 June 1921: 'Capital is nothing more than surplus labour invested in reproduction. As the case stands, capital is also the outcome of labour.' There were therefore no grounds for capitalists to monopolise the profits of labour. Li warned the capitalists 'not to rely on the money to ride roughshod over labourers and discriminate against them as if they were slaves.' At the same time, he told shop assistants not to count on the capitalists' conscience to distribute a few dividends, and encouraged them to use their 'invincible weapon – unity' to force capitalists to accept their demands.⁴⁹ A shop assistant working for Yong'an Company told Li Hanjun that he and his companions were grateful for Li's support, but their struggle had failed and several shop assistants had been fired. He asked Li for advice. In his reply, Li wrote: 'The main reason for the failure of your struggle is that labourers haven't become aware of their position in society and have not made use of their power.'⁵⁰

Li Hanjun's articles and letters show that he sided with workers and other labourers and supported their strikes and struggles. In the meantime, he encouraged working people to unite to improve their social and political position. Accordingly, Li was regarded by the labourers as a good teacher and helpful friend.

As a Communist intellectual, Li Hanjun saw his duty as heightening workers' class consciousness. He argued that the exploiting classes imbued the exploited people with the spirit of obedience and established norms of behaviour that suited their own interests, so labourers were unable to grasp the reason for their sufferings. Only when the workers were aware of their common interests and common enemy could they practise solidarity and form organisations.⁵¹ In 'Money and Labour', he wrote that all products are created by the labour power of the workers and peasants and the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of necessary labour time embodied in it. Money had value because it can be used to buy commodities, which are created by labour power. He asked: 'Why do those who do not work have plenty of money while

⁴⁹ Hanjun, 'Du Yong'an gongsi 'fei gudong' quanti zhiyuan qishi', *Pingmin*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁰ Hanjun, 'An open letter to a shop assistant', *Pingmin*, no. 59, 9 July 1921, p. 2.

⁵¹ Hanjun, 'Hunpu de shehuizhuyizhe', *XQPL*, p. 2.

workers and peasants, who toil from early morning to nightfall, have insufficient?’ The answer: employers plunder and exploit the fruits of their labour.⁵² Li pointed out: ‘Capitalists are the modern robbers who fatten themselves on the common people’s sweat and toil in broad daylight.’⁵³ In his opinion, ‘Insatiable avarice and acquisitiveness and the drive to amass wealth are in the nature of capitalists.’⁵⁴ He appealed to the public: ‘We should energetically imbue the common people with the idea that the bourgeoisie is a class of robbers ... and let them know the unfair sufferings of the working class.’⁵⁵

In Li’s view, the working class would play a dominant role in society, since human existence relies on material goods, the products of labour. Human life is therefore maintained by labourers. He continued: ‘So it is only labourers who can declare direct class war on the capitalists and deal them a deathblow. ... Only by your unity and alliance can humankind be saved.’⁵⁶

Soon after Li Hanjun became acting secretary of the sponsoring organisation of the CCP, a leading body for directing the labour movement in China – the Labour Movement Committee - was set up in January 1921. This Committee was probably the Trade Union Central Bureau planned by Revoburo which served as the Chinese Section of the Far Eastern Bureau of the International Trade Union Council. One of the Far Eastern Bureau’s tasks was to establish the central and regional leading bodies of trades unions in countries of East Asia and select cadres who enjoyed prestige among the workers and had experience in the labour movement as leaders of regional labour movement committees.⁵⁷ According to *Huagong xingshi bao* (The Wakening Chinese Worker Times), a journal published by the Chinese Labourers’ Union in Chita, a conference of the Chinese Labourers’ Union in Chita was held on 13 May 1921. At it, Li Hanjun was elected interim chairman and ‘Comrade Xu’ reported on the changes in the Chinese Section of the Far Eastern Bureau of the International Trade Union Council.⁵⁸ This may mean that Li Hanjun was elected interim Chairman of the

⁵² Hanjun, ‘Jinqian he laodong’, *Laodong jie*, pp. 3-4.

⁵³ Hanjun, ‘Qiangdao jieji di chengli’, *XQPL*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Xianjin, ‘Gongqian shi zheyang zengjia ma?’, *Minguo ribao*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Hanjun, ‘Hunpu de shehuizhuyizhe’, *XQPL*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Hanjun, ‘An open letter to a shop assistant’, *Pingmin*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ A. I. Kartunova, ‘Dui Zhongguo gongren jieji de guoji yuanzhu, 1920-1922’ (Internationalist aid to the working class of China, 1920-1922), Ma Guifan translated from *Problemy Dal’nego Vostoka*, no. 1, 1973, in Xu Zhengming at el. (transl and comp), p. 52.

⁵⁸ *Huagong xingshi bao*, no. 5, November 1921.

Chinese Section. However, this Li Hanjun may have been someone else, since our Li Hanjun is said never to have been in Russia and was busy at the time organising the labour movement and establishing the CCP in Shanghai.

In April 1921, the CCP's Sponsoring Group in Shanghai invited representatives of several organisations, including the All-China Industrial Federation, the Merchants and Labourers' Mutual Aid Society, the Shanghai Mechanics' Union, the Shanghai Electric Workers' Union, the Federation of National Organisations of China and the Chinese Students' Union to meet at 6 Yuyang Lane in the French Concession to discuss preparations for International Labour Day. These meetings were presided over by Li Qihan. According to a report, Li Hanjun (reported as Li Hoen-tsung) attended at least one of these meetings. The meetings decided to try to persuade workers not to work on May Day and to hold a mass meeting and procession, and to ask newspapers to print Labour Day supplements. A Labour Day Celebration Preparatory Committee was set up and sub-committees were appointed for Organising, Students, Labourers, Merchants, Newspapers and Finance. The Preparatory Committee issued circulars urging Shanghainese to celebrate Labour Day.⁵⁹

Preparations on such a large scale shocked the Chinese Shanghai authorities and the police in the foreign settlements. On 29 April, the French police searched 6 Yuyang Lane, headquarters of the Preparatory Committee, and seized circulars. Despite the raid and the authorities' precautionary measures, several Communists in Shanghai still managed to distribute leaflets on that day.⁶⁰ Li Qihan with Tong Lizhang, President of the Merchants and Labourers' Mutual Aid Society, and a score of their followers staged a march and distributed handbills urging workers and employees 'to awake'.⁶¹

Overcoming besetting difficulties, the labour movements in Shanghai made progress. In the late summer of 1921, an article titled 'The Trend of the Labour Circle in Shanghai' said: 'Over the past two or three months, the Shanghai labourers' confrontation with capitalists has grown stronger. It is good that workers spontaneously organise trade unions and set up schools.'⁶² Zhang Tailei told the

⁵⁹ Shanghai Municipal Council Police Daily Report, reports of 21, 22, 25 April 1921.

⁶⁰ Xu Zhizhen, *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, p. 41.

⁶¹ Shanghai Municipal Council Police Daily Report, reports of 30 April 1921 and 2 May 1921.

⁶² 'Shanghai laodong jie de qushi' (The trend of the labour circle in Shanghai), *GCD*, no. 6, p. 58. In fact, this issue was printed after the formal foundation of the CCP in August 1921.

Comintern's Third Congress that strikes by tram workers had obtained aid and guidance from Communists in Shanghai; that nearly all recent strikes had been 'organised or led by our Communist comrades'; and that schools and clubs for workers and trade unions in Shanghai and elsewhere were set up by the CCP's organisation department.⁶³ Since Li Hanjun was a main Communist leader in charge of the labour movement in Shanghai during this period, these comments can be seen as an expression of approval for the achievements of labour movements led by him and others. Recently, Yeh Wen-hsin considered Li as 'a principal moving force' behind the creation of several trade unions in Shanghai.⁶⁴

The labour movement plan was on the agenda of the Founding Congress of the CCP. One issue was what kind of workers' unions to organise. Zhang Guotao and Liu Renjing said the CCP should organise only industrial unions while Li Hanjun and others believed that it should organise both industrial unions and craft unions since there were not many industrial workers in China.⁶⁵ Li also said that opportunities for uprisings and general strikes were few, so political activities were a necessity; the CCP must lead workers to improve their conditions.⁶⁶ In fact, Li prioritised industrial workers and knew it was impossible to emancipate labourers within the existing system, but he thought the Party's labour policy should proceed from the interests of the majority of labourers and actual conditions. Marx and Engels had also pointed out that Communists should 'fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class.'⁶⁷ However, Congress resolved that the CCP's basic task was to organise industrial unions and imbue trade unions with ideas of class struggle.⁶⁸ There was no mention of improving workers' conditions.

After the founding of the CLOS under Zhang Guotao, Li Hanjun, who had lost his leading position in the Party, no longer led the labour movement in Shanghai. However, he continued to dedicate himself to the work and maintained close contact with Party members working for the CLOS, including Deng Zhongxia, Li Qihan, Lin

⁶³ Zhang Tailei, in *GLZWX*, pp. 174-176.

⁶⁴ Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, p. 231.

⁶⁵ Han. 12993.2; Bao Huiseng, 'Tan Zhongguo gongchandang chengli dahui', in *ZGDD*, p. 104.

⁶⁶ 'The First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party', a report to the Comintern written in second half of 1921, in Saich, vol. 1, p. 206.

⁶⁷ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 257.

⁶⁸ 'Zhongguo gongchandang de diyige jueyi', in *ZZWX*, p. 7.

Yunan, Bao Huiseng, Dong Chuping and Li Zhenying. He was said to have gone to Beijing in the winter of 1921 to talk about labour movement matters with Li Dazhao and Deng Zhongxia.⁶⁹ Li Hanjun was particularly interested in working-class activists. According to Xu Meikun, then a printer in Shanghai who had just joined the CCP, Li talked cordially with him and suggested he study Marxist principles and disseminate them among other workers.⁷⁰

Li Hanjun also continued to use his pen to defend the interests of the working class and to point the way forward for the labour movement. Around the time of the founding of the CCP, Zhang Dongsun and others wrote that labourers' demands for pay rises were reckless and stirred up by people with ulterior motives, that machinery could relieve labourers of drudgery, and that capitalist industry and commerce could bring a decent life to common people. To refute such arguments, Li wrote that the capitalists forced workers to work long hours so they could employ fewer people and paid them low wages so that workers could not support their families; when new machines were adopted or the economy entered into crisis, they dismissed workers regardless of the consequences. He believed that workers had the right to resist exploitation and oppression and affirmed the necessity of workers' strikes.⁷¹ Yet Li was not satisfied with the struggle only for workers' sectional interests and contemplated pushing the labour movement forward to a new stage.

5.3 Promoting Workers' Organisations in Hubei

At around the end of 1921 or the beginning of 1922, Li Hanjun, having been pushed out of the CCP's leading body, moved to Wuhan in Hubei, his native province, to take up a new post as an engineer-in-chief of the Hankou Municipal Works Administration.⁷² Wuhan, a tri-city of three parts (Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang) and dubbed the 'Chicago of East Asia', had been an industrial centre since the late

⁶⁹ Cf. Le Tianyu, 'Wo suo liaojie de Li Hanjun tongzhi' (What I knew of Comrade Li Hanjun), Li Danyang edited according to Le's two oral recollections (interviewed by Li Danyang and Liu Jianyi in 1981), and his letter dated 5 May 1983. The title was given by Le Tianyu after he read the edited version (unpublished). Fu Guangpei, 'Huiyi Li Hanjun lieshi jijian nanwang zhi shi'.

⁷⁰ Xu Meikun, 'Recollections of Li Hanjun', Li Danyang edited according to Xu's letter dated 7 May 1983 and his oral recollection, 14 June 1983 (unpublished).

⁷¹ Hanjun, 'Yuan zai wang ye', *JW*, p. 4.

⁷² 'Hubei teyue tongxin' (Special correspondences from Hubei), *Minguo ribao*, 4 January 1922, p. 2; Han. 12993.2.

Qing and had many old and modern factories, mills, works, arsenals, mines, and railways.⁷³ Although industrial workers in Hubei were fewer than in Shanghai and Guangdong, heavy industry prevailed in Hubei region.⁷⁴

One of Li Hanjun's purposes in going to Hubei, according to him, was 'to devote himself to the labour movement' there.⁷⁵ Not long after arriving in Wuhan, Li took part in the labour movement. Taking full advantage of his social status as an engineer and later as a professor, Li helped in promoting the labour movement in Hubei.

The Wuhan branch of the CLOS and the CCP planned to set up workers' clubs as a starting point for unions. Their first goal was a club for workers on the Jiang'an Section of the Jing-Han (Beijing-Hankou) Railway. Bao Huiseng, then leader of the Party's Wuhan branch, invited Li Hanjun and several Hubei Communists to meet railway workers. At the meeting, Li spoke about labour movements in other countries. The workers agreed to get organised. When the Jiang'an Railway Workers' Club was set up on 22 January 1922, Li attended the inaugural meeting as a guest to deliver a speech on 'The Situation of the Trades Unions in Japan and the Steps towards Forming Trades Unions in China'.⁷⁶

By 1922, the Hubei Communists had set up a school for railway workers on the northern section of the Yue-Han (Guangzhou-Hankou) Railway at Xujiapeng. In March 1922, the school was reorganised as a Railway Workers' Club, the first such along the Yue-Han Railway. The Communist Li Shuqu was appointed secretary. Li Hanjun often offered him advice.

Li Hanjun made a close study of the strikes that had taken place in Hubei and tried to guide the labour movements in the right direction. On 3 January 1922, he published 'Lessons from the Rickshaw Coolies' Strike in Hankou', in which, he wrote that as a result of the Hankou rickshaw coolies' victory in their strike against a rise in charges, labourers had come to realise that 'their actual strength was greater than that of the

⁷³ Wu Yigu (ed), p. 2.

⁷⁴ According to a statistics made in 1930, the number of factory workers in Hankou and Wuchang was 194,000. See Table: 'Numbers of Factory Workers in 30 Industrial Cities', in Lin Tung-hai, p. 60. If counted in Hanyang, where several big enterprises such as Hanyang Steel and Iron Works and Hanyang Arsenals located, the number of factory workers would be much more.

⁷⁵ Han. 12993.2.

⁷⁶ Bao Huiseng, 'Huiyi gongchandang chuqi Wuhan laodong yundong yu Xiang Ying lieshi' (Reminiscences of the CCP's labour movement in Wuhan in the early stage and martyr Xiang Ying), 9 February 1954, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 325, p. 330; *Gongren zhoukan* [Workers Weekly], no. 28, 5 February 1922.

gentry and the masters, and that this strength can only be shown through solidarity.’ He also mentioned another successful strike at the Anglo-American Tobacco Company’s factory in Hankou. Li spoke highly of the several thousand workers ‘united as one in their strike’. Using these strikes as examples, Li Hanjun pointed out: ‘As soon as labourers are aware of their actual strength, they try to display it.’ He told the Chinese workers that European workers normally struck initially for pay rises but went on to demand shorter hours and better conditions; finally, they demanded a dominant position in production relations and politics. Li wrote that workers first tend to set up unions on a craft basis in one or more factories and then to form a union for workers of various occupations in a factory; with the development of class consciousness, they try to organise trade unions on the basis of an industry and then of territory; eventually, they form a global proletarian organisation.⁷⁷ Li was trying to point the way forward for the workers in Hubei as well as in the rest of China.

Through the efforts of Communists, workers’ clubs sprang up all across Hubei. As centres of mutual aid and recreation, those clubs attracted ordinary workers and even gained recognition from capitalists and local authorities. ‘Workers’ club’ was usually a cover for the Communists to organise the workers, and the clubs were a first step towards the organisations of trade unions. British Intelligence in Hankou clearly perceived that so-called clubs in Wuhan were in reality unions masquerading under the guise of clubs.⁷⁸

The next task for the Communists in Wuhan was to mobilise workers to organise unions. Li’s student Xia Zhixu later recalled that ‘Li Hanjun was very enthusiastic in the labour movement ... and participated in the work to organise trade unions in Wuhan.’⁷⁹ Lin Jun, a worker on the Jing-Han Railway, said Li Hanjun was among the first to come to Jiang’an to organise trade unions among railway workers.⁸⁰ According to Li Shuqu, Li Hanjun ‘was very interested in the labour movement in Wuhan and took an active part in organising trade unions on the Yue-Han and Jing-Han Railways and in the Hanyang Iron Works, the Anglo-American Tobacco Company’s factory in

⁷⁷ Hanjun, ‘Hankou renli chefu bagong di jiaoxun (Lessons of the rickshaw coolies’ strike in Hankou), *JW*, 3 January 1922, p. 4.

⁷⁸ FO 228/3282, Hankow Intelligence Reports, Quarterly Report ended in September, 1922.

⁷⁹ Xia Zhixu, *Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 179; Xia Zhixu, ‘Huainian wo de laoshi Chen Tanqiu’ (Cherishing the memory of my teacher Chen Tanqiu), in *Huiyi Chen Tanqiu* [Memoirs on Chen Tanqiu], Hubei sheng shehui kexueyuan et al. (ed), Hubei renmin chubanshe, Wuhan, 1981, pp. 36-37.

⁸⁰ Liu Nongchao, *Gemingshi ziliao*, pp. 209-210. During the great strike of the Jing-Han Railway, Lin became the head of pickets in Jiang’an section.

Hankou, and so on. ... He maintained that trades unions should be organised chiefly among ordinary and manual workers and should unite with machinery workers with higher pay; trade unions should not normally admit office staff, except as honorary members.’ Li Hanjun argued this point because in his view some of Shanghai’s trade unions consisted mainly of people with long gowns’ who were not really workers and they merely put out the signboard of trade union. He suggested that ‘trade unions should first carry out economic struggles, through which to raise workers’ consciousness, and then proceed to political struggle.’ He added: ‘Special attention must be paid to managing the trade union funds: expenses should be disbursed according to clear procedures and thrift should be practised.’ After adopting Li Hanjun’s suggestions, Li Shuqu drafted the Constitution and Regulations of the Yue-Han Railway Trade Union at Xujiapeng, which was approved by the CLOS.⁸¹

Plunging into action among the workers in Hubei, Li Hanjun established contacts with trade union leaders who had emerged from among the workers, including Lin Xiangqian, Chairman of the Railway Workers’ Union in Jiang’an, and Xiang Delong (i.e. Xiang Ying), Secretary of Jiang’an Union. After Xiang joined the CCP, the first Party meeting he attended was at Li’s home (in the spring of 1922).⁸² In August 1922, Li Hanjun and Bao Huiseng recommended several labour leaders in Hubei, including Yang Defu and Chen Tian, who later became the leaders of the Hubei Provincial Federation of Trade Unions, to join Wuhan’s Society for Studying Marxism, at which Li gave lectures.⁸³

In 1922, the labour movement in Hubei conducted ‘a coherent and coordinated strike wave’.⁸⁴ According to British Intelligence, strikes and disputes occurred in the summer and autumn of 1922 at Hanyang Iron Works, on the Jing-Han Railway, on the Hankou-Changsha section of the Yue-Han Railway, at the Yangtze Engineering Works, the Electric Light and Water Works, the Cotton Mill, the Anglo-American Tobacco Company’s factory, and among ship mechanics, rickshaw coolies and cotton pickers.

⁸¹ Li Bogang, ‘Huiyi Li Hanjun’ (Memoir on Li Hanjun), edited by Chen Huihan, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, no. 4, July 1982, p. 2. Li Bogang’s original name is Li Shuqu. He had known Li Hanjun when he was a member of the Liqun Book Society before joining the CCP.

⁸² Bao Huiseng, ‘Huiyi gongchandang chuqi Wuhan laodong yundong yu Xiang Ying lieshi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 331-332.

⁸³ ‘Yang Defu zishu’ (Yang Defu’s account of his life), in *Er-qi dabagong ziliao xuanbian* [Selected Materials on the Great Strike of February Seventh], Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui gongyunshi yanjiushi et al. (comp), Gongren chubanshe, Beijing, 1983, p. 627.

⁸⁴ Chesneaux, p. 190.

Many differed from the spontaneous strikes of the preceding period: they no longer arose out of economic issues alone but concerned the formation and functioning of workers' associations. Strikers' demands centred around problems such as forcing employers and authorities to grant official recognition to workers' organisations or the restoration of their clubs or unions.⁸⁵ This demonstrates that the labour movement in Hubei had passed beyond the stage of purely economic struggles, entering a new stage.

On 23 July 1922, the Wuhan Federation of Trade Unions was formed to support a strike at Hanyang Iron Works. This Federation was China's first regional federation of trades unions, and it later changed its name to the Hubei Provincial Federation of Trades Unions. Yang Defu was its chairman and Li Hanjun was a director of its Executive Committee and its Commissioner of Education.⁸⁶ The Federation was formally founded on 10 October 1922, China's then National Day. More than one thousand workers marched through Hankou calling for an Eight-Hour Day among other demands. Each workers' club was preceded by a brass band. Students also joined the parade in support of the workers.⁸⁷ The Hubei Federation had twenty seven affiliated workers' clubs and unions with nearly fifty thousand members.⁸⁸ Its Constitution became a model for the Hunan Federation of Trades Unions, formed in November under Mao Zedong.⁸⁹

Not long after this, 'China's first big industrial union' was set up in Hanyang.⁹⁰ The General Trade Union of Hanyeping Company, as it was known, consisted of the clubs and unions of the Hanyang Steel and Iron works, Daye mines and foundries, the Anyuan mines and the combine's network of barge transports. Chen Duxiu praised it as a 'model'.⁹¹ Its members came from Hubei and Hunan, though most were

⁸⁵ FO 228/3282, Hankou Intelligence Reports, quarterly report ended in September, 1922.

⁸⁶ Liu Mingkui and Tang Yuliang (eds), *Zhongguo jindai gongren jieji he gongren yundong* [The Chinese Working Class and Labour Movement in Modern Time], Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, Beijing, 2002, vol. 4, p. 749. However, Li Shuqu recalled that Li Hanjun was an advisor to the Federation on education affairs.

⁸⁷ FO 228/3282, Hankou Intelligence Reports, quarterly report, ended in December 1922.

⁸⁸ Wang Yongxi et al. (eds), *Jianming Zhongguo gonghui shi* [A Brief History of the Trade Unions in China], Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, Beijing, 2005, p. 15.

⁸⁹ 'Hunan quansheng gongtuan lianhehui yi chengli' (The Hunan Provincial Federation of Trade Unions has been founded), *Chen bao*, 11 November 1922, p. 6.

⁹⁰ 'Wuhan gongtuan fengqi yunyong' (The movement of the trade unions in Wuhan is surging forward), *Chen bao*, 15 December 1922, p. 6.

⁹¹ 'Chen Duxiu's Report to the Third Party Congress', June 1923, in Saich, vol. 2, p. 575.

Hubeinese. During the first big wave of the labour movement in China, the number of organised workers in Hubei was second only to Shanghai.⁹²

Li Hanjun was quite gratified with the result, and believed that the labour movement in Wuhan was developing in a down-to-earth manner, so that the trade unions there were more solidly built than those in Shanghai.⁹³ He later wrote that the labour organisations in Hubei had developed from occupational trade unions into industrial unions and from unions in one industry to unions in many industries, culminating in a regional federation of trade unions. He declared: ‘The trade unions’ development and growth took place within one year. No precedent can be found in any other country or at any time.’⁹⁴ Deng Zhongxia, the CCP labour leader, wrote in his *Brief History of the Chinese Labour Movement*: ‘During the first wave of strikes in China, ... the tide of strikes formed in Wuhan was second to none among the cities in China.’⁹⁵ Maring reported to the Comintern that the labour movement in Hankou was ‘very favourable’ and even suggested that *Xiangdao* (Guide Weekly), the organ of the CCP, be moved to the ‘workers centre – Hankou’; he also spoke highly of the Hubei Provincial Federation of Trade Unions.⁹⁶ Given the foundation that had been laid in Wuhan, the First All-China Labour Congress (held in Guangzhou on 1 May 1922) resolved to convoke the second congress in Hankou.⁹⁷ The French historian Chesneaux wrote: ‘Because of both the extent of the strike wave and the importance of the work done by the Secretariat in building up union organisations there, Hupeh [Hubei] and Hunan must certainly be regarded as the area where the labour movement was most vigorous and made the most progress during the summer and fall of 1922.’⁹⁸

Li Hanjun took part in directing several workers’ organisations in Wuhan and was a leader of the Hubei Provincial Federation of Trade Unions, so the achievement of the Hubei labour movement was in part due to his efforts.

⁹² See the table in S. K. Sheldon Tso’s *Labour Movement in China*, the Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1928, p. 100.

⁹³ Li Bogang, ‘Huiyi Li Hanjun’, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Deng Zhongxia, *Zhongguo zhigong yundong jianshi, 1919-1926* [Brief History of the Chinese Labour Movement, 1919-1926], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 1979, p. 31. This book was first published in Moscow in 1930.

⁹⁶ Maring, ‘Report Sent from Peking, 14 October [1922]’; ‘Third Report, 14 October -1 November [1922]’, in Saich, vol. 1, p. 342, pp. 344-345.

⁹⁷ Liu Mingkui and Tang Yuliang, vol. 4, p. 744.

⁹⁸ Chesneaux, p. 191.

5.4 Activities around the Jing-Han Railway Strike

The Jing-Han Railway General Union was the most important industrial union born of the first big wave of the nationwide labour movement. As I mentioned earlier, since the beginning of 1922 Li Hanjun had participated in the preparatory work of the Jing-Han railway workers' organisation at Jiang'an. Around that time, several clubs and unions were founded along the line. In April 1922, the Preparatory Committee for Organising the Jing-Han Railway General Union was set up with Yang Defu, a worker from Jiang'an, as chairman. At a meeting held in August, the Committee drew up the provisional constitution, declaration and regulations. It is said that Li Hanjun and Bao Huiseng had had a hand in drawing up its Outline of Organisation, Draft Constitution and Detailed Rules. According to the Constitution, the aim of the General Union building was:

To improve living conditions, to raise the social status, to seek the interests of all workers for their common well-being;

To make friendly contacts, to practise mutual aid, to remove regional barriers, and to mediate disputes between workers;

To enhance workers' knowledge and arouse their class consciousness;

To make contact with all the railway workers of China with the purpose of organising a nation-wide general railway union; and to establish close relationships with other industrial workers in China as well as workers of the world.⁹⁹

Li had repeatedly preached these points, which were basic principles for directing the railway workers' organisation.

At a meeting held on 3 January 1923, the Committee considering the time ripe to amalgamate sixteen local clubs and unions into a federation, resolved to convoke the founding congress in Zhengzhou on 1 February 1923.

Near the time of the founding the Jing-Han Railway General Union, Li Hanjun urged his students at Wuchang High Normal School to attend the inaugural congress. Most had left for the winter vacation, but four accompanied Li to the congress. On 30 January, they took the train to Zhengzhou together with other union activists and

⁹⁹ 'Jing-Han tielu zonggonghui choubei huiyi' (The preparatory meeting for the Jing-Han Railway General Union), *Yishi bao* [Social Welfare] (Tianjin), 26 August 1922, p. 6; Liang Yukui, p. 420.

representatives of other circles. At stations along the line, Li and others addressed mass rallies. The following evening, they arrived in Zhengzhou.¹⁰⁰

Zhengzhou was the hub of the Jing-Han network and the capital of Henan, controlled at the time by Marshal Wu Peifu, a warlord of the Zhi Clique. To counteract the influence of the Communication Clique, Wu had at one point permitted Communists to promote labour activities along several railways and in areas under his control. In the spring of 1922, he announced a ‘protection of labour’ policy. Realising that the railway unions’ activities threatened his rule and economic interests, Wu banned the founding congress for reasons of ‘military security’ and soon declared martial law, but it went ahead as scheduled.

On the morning of 1 February, more than one thousand delegates and guests, holding banners and inscribed boards, marched through Zhengzhou. Li Hanjun and his students joined in. Breaking through the line of policemen and soldiers, they reached the meeting place, a theatre. Although the theatre was surrounded by armed police, the chairman proclaimed the inauguration of the General Union, and Li Hanjun and others delivered speeches.¹⁰¹ While the meeting was still in progress, the head of Zhengzhou’s Police Bureau, Huang Dianchen, ordered its disbanding within five minutes. The participants ignored the threat and continued meeting until 4 pm.

Breaking through the police encirclement, the delegates and guests went to the premises of the General Union to present gifts, including a red banner inscribed with the words ‘Turning the homeland red’, presented by Li Hanjun and his students in the name of Wuchang High Normal School.¹⁰² Later, police and soldiers encircled the hotels where the delegates and guests were staying and troops occupied the premises of the General Union and destroyed documents and the gifts.

Responding to this harassment, the CCP group in the new union met secretly in Zhengzhou that same evening. The meeting, which Li Hanjun attended, decided to call a general strike and move the headquarters of the General Union to Jiang’an in Hankou. A strike committee was formed under Yang Defu. Zhang Guotao, representing the CCP’s CEC, put forward a large number of demands. Li disagreed with Zhang, saying

¹⁰⁰ Zhao Chunshan, ‘Er-qi yiwang’ (Recollections of the event on ‘February Seventh’), *Changjiang ribao* [Yangtze River Daily], 10 February 1980, p. 4; Chen Bilan, *Wo de huyi* [My Memoirs], Shiyue shuwu, Hong Kong, 1994, p. 68.

¹⁰¹ ‘Yang Defu zishu’, in *Er-qi dabagong ziliao xuanbian*, p. 632.

¹⁰² Zhao Chunshan, *Changjiang ribao*, p. 4; Zhao Chunshan, ‘Fuhui jishi’ (Records of attending the inaugural congress of the Jing-Han Railway General Union), in *Er-qi dabagong ziliao xuanbian*, p. 703.

his terms were too many to be accepted. In his opinion, the key question was the legal existence of the General Union, so one demand – for the return of the Union’s possessions seized by Wu Peifu’s troops – would suffice to achieve recognition of the Union; other demands could be put later. Li wanted a narrower set of enemies and a quick battle to force a quick settlement.¹⁰³ In the end, as a compromise, five demands were made.

Back in Wuhan, which became the new centre of the Jing-Han Railway General Union, Li helped prepare the strike and went with his comrades to railway workers’ dormitory in Liujiamiao to mobilise the workers.¹⁰⁴ On 4 February 1923, a general strike broke out. The Jing-Han Railway and many factories came to a standstill. During the strike, Li Hanjun’s home became a meeting place where he discussed the strike with Li Dazhao, Dong Biwu, Shi Yang, Li Shucheng and others and arranged supporting actions.¹⁰⁵ The Hubei Provincial Federation of Trade Unions and other organisations sent delegations to Jiang’an to express their support. On 6 February, a large number of railway workers and representatives of other organisations held a big rally in Jiang’an to show their solidarity.¹⁰⁶

However, the strike ended in failure. Numerous railway workers were massacred on the orders of Wu Peifu and the Hubei Military Governor, Xiao Yaonan, on 7 February. Lin Xiangqian, Chairman of the Jiang’an branch of the Jing-Han Railway General Union, was killed, and Shi Yang, legal advisor to the Union, was arrested and later executed. Li Hanjun and Li Dazhao discussed the crisis and analysed its causes.¹⁰⁷ The Hubei Federation of Trade Unions called a sympathy strike the next day and others followed. As the Provincial Federation’s Commissioner of Education, Li Hanjun (together with others) arranged for students from Hubei and other places

¹⁰³ Li Bogang, ‘Wuhan jiangang chuqi de huiyi’ (Reminiscences of the events during the founding period of the Wuhan Communist organisation), *Wuhan wenshi ziliao* [Selected Materials on Wuhan’s Culture and History], no. 3, June 1981, p. 5; Wang Huiwen, ‘Wo yu Hanjun xiansheng guanxi shimo’ (The whole story of my relationship with Mr. Hanjun). It was first Wang Huiwen’s oral recollection in the interview with Li Danyang conducted on 22 December 1981, and later, Wang revised it with some additional content, and gave it a title (unpublished).

¹⁰⁴ ‘Chen Xuetao zizhuan’ (An autobiography by Chen Xuetao), viewed on 12 January 2011, <<http://www.whfz.gov.cn/shownews.asp?id=15560>>; Fu Guangpei, ‘Huiyi Hanjun lieshi jijian nanwang zhi shi’.

¹⁰⁵ Liu Nongchao, *Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 210. Before the strike, Li Dazhao was invited to Wuchang to deliver speeches. As soon as Li Hanjun and his students returned from Zhengzhou, he talked with them trying to find out the circumstances surrounding the founding meeting of the Jing-Han Railway General Union.

¹⁰⁶ *Shishi xinbao*, 9 February 1923; Liu Mingkui and Tang Yuliang (eds), vol. 4, pp. 858-859.

¹⁰⁷ Zhu Wushan, ‘Huiyi Shouchang tongzhi’ (Memoir on Comrade Shouchang), *Renmin ribao* [People’s Daily], 29 April 1957.

(including Beijing) to go to Jiang'an to express sympathy and solicitude for the workers who had suffered injury during the massacre, and to hold a press conference in Wuhan.¹⁰⁸

The sympathy strikes and support activities were soon suppressed, including by British marines. Seeing that unarmed workers could not withstand well-armed troops, Zhang Guotao, representing the CLOS, ordered an immediate return to work.¹⁰⁹ Xiang Ying, Secretary of the Jiang'an branch, opposed Zhang's decision, arguing that if Zhang felt that the strikers were unable to hold out the strike should not have been launched in the first place; and stopping it now would result in losing the trust of the workers.¹¹⁰ Eventually, on 10 February, all sympathy strikes were called off.

After the incident, trades unions in Wuhan and other places were closed down and many leaders were arrested. Li Hanjun was a leader of the Hubei Provincial Federation of Trade Unions and had helped stage the Jing-Han Railway general strike, so the local authorities ordered his arrest too.¹¹¹ Li first hid in a relative's home and then fled to Beijing by train, thus making a narrow escape.¹¹²

In Beijing, Li Hanjun participated in actions to raise money for the victims of the repression and their families, personally donating \$50.¹¹³ Starting in March 1923, using the pen names 'Han' and 'Jun', he published a series of articles, including 'The Significance of Our Mourning the Forty People Killed in the February Seventh Massacre' and 'A Brief Account of the Tragic Deaths of Shi Yang and Lin Xiangqian', and 'Are We still Unable to Express a General Desire to Overthrow the Warlords?'¹¹⁴ Li hoped to rouse sympathy for the victims and enhance people's awareness of the struggle against the warlords. The news of the massacre spread all over China and abroad and aroused public indignation.

¹⁰⁸ Zhu Wushan, 'Zhonggong chengli qianhou zai Beijing gongzuo de huiyi' (Recollections of work in Beijing before and after the founding of the CCP), in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 100.

¹⁰⁹ Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, p. 288.

¹¹⁰ Saich, vol. 1, p. 154.

¹¹¹ *Kaizō*, vol. 8, no. 8, p. 127; Xing Tian, 'Ji Li Hanjun', *Bitan*, p. 35.

¹¹² Xue Wenshu, *Hubei wenshi ziliao*, p. 54; Zhao Chunshan, *Changjiang ribao*, p. 4.

¹¹³ Maring, 'Notes Concerning the Situation on the Peking-Hankow Railway Line and the Labour Movement in May and Early June 1923', in Saich, vol. 1, p. 440.

¹¹⁴ Between March and April of 1923, about fifteen articles by 'Han' or 'Jun' were published in *Beijing xueshenglianhehui rikan* [Beijing Student Union's Daily]. The Beijing Students Union and its organ were controlled by the Communists during that time. We have to bear in mind that Li Hanjun had received the representatives of the Beijing Students Union after the incident of February Seventh, and thus established the contact with the Union.

The strike's defeat was a blow to the CCP and the labour movement. It brought to the fore conflicting views about the policy and tactics of the strike's leadership. Several Party members believed that the CEC was responsible for the failure because of their incorrect policy. The CLOS and Zhang Guotao were criticised within and without the Party. However, the CEC argued that its knowledge had been insufficient and it had had no time to make a thorough investigation, which was the cause of the defeat of the strike. Some Communists censured the strikers for 'letting emotion triumph over reason' by raising too many demands.¹¹⁵ Li Hanjun believed that Zhang Guotao, who had directed the strike, was responsible. He wrote to the CEC of the CCP expressing his views and advancing various suggestions about the future course of the movement.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, these letters have not survived. But according to Li Shuqu and Wang Huiwen, Li Hanjun said that Zhang Guotao had not considered the objective conditions and situation from all sides, so his demands were hard for the authorities to meet, and that Zhang quickly called off the strike when confronted by the army. These recollections seem to bear out Li's views. Li also opposed Zhang on the grounds that he 'antagonised too many enemies at the same time' and tried to 'accomplish the whole task at one stroke'.¹¹⁷

After the February Seventh Incident, a tendency described as 'defeatist' began to spread. Some people left the union and others even 'repented' their actions. The CCP leaders concluded that the euphoria had been misplaced. Chen Duxiu remarked that the vast majority of workers had not cast off the ideas of patriarchal society and did not feel the need for a political movement. According to him, 'The Chinese working class is childish both in quantity and quality, ... they cannot form an independent revolutionary force. ... There is neither demand nor the possibility for most of the Chinese workers to fight a political struggle for their own class.' Chen wrote further that the Chinese bourgeoisie was a 'revolutionary class', more powerful than that of the working class, and the working class should now cooperate with the bourgeoisie, in a bourgeois democratic revolution.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ 'Chen Duxiu's Report to the Third Party Congress', in Saich, vol. 2, p. 576; 'A Brief History of the Chinese Communist Party', in *DCNSAC*, p. 65.

¹¹⁶ Xia Zhixu, *Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 180.

¹¹⁷ Li Bogang, *Wuhan wenshi ziliao*, p. 5; Wang Huiwen, 'Wo yu Hanjun xiansheng guanxi shimo'.

¹¹⁸ Duxiu, 'Zhongguo guomin geming yu shehui ge jieji' (The Chinese National Revolution and various classes in the Chinese society), *Qianfeng* [Vanguard], no. 2, 1 December 1923, pp. 6-7; Duxiu, 'Zichanjieji de geming yu geming de zichanjieji' (The bourgeoisie revolution and the revolutionary bourgeoisie), *Xiangdao*, no. 22, 25 April 1923, p. 164.

At the Third Congress of the CCP in June 1923, several delegates mentioned the working class' 'shortcomings': 'The workers are interested in the question of the improvement of their conditions, [and] their understanding of politics and class struggle [is] poor.' According to Maring, Wang Hepo thought some workers in Pukou had 'monarchist tendencies'. Mao Zedong was so pessimistic that he saw 'the only salvation of China in intervention by Russia.'¹¹⁹ Many CCP leaders lacked confidence in the working class when the Chinese labour movement was at low ebb.

Li Hanjun realised that working class weaknesses, including regionalism and a lack of trust in intellectuals, would harm the labour movement. However, he never lost confidence in the Chinese proletariat and its revolutionary character. He thought various methods could be adopted to redress the balance, for example electing trade union leaders from among workers from different regions and staffing the leading body of the general union with workers and intellectuals. He believed that the proletariat could overcome its shortcomings if its class consciousness was raised.¹²⁰

On the anniversary of the massacre, Li Hanjun published 'The Significance of Commemorating the Incident of February Seventh' under the pen name 'Jinghu'. He argued that since the 1830s and 1840s Europe had entered the era of socialist revolution, and that with the May Fourth Movement China had entered the same era, in which 'the backbone of revolution is the proletariat.' For him, February 7th of 1923 was the day 'when the Chinese proletariat first shed blood in the real sense of a proletariat.' However, this Incident, like the failure of the Paris Commune, was a forerunner of proletarian revolution. At the end of this article, Li Hanjun quoted Marx's words from *Civil War in France*: 'Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class.'¹²¹ This article demonstrates that during the period of retreat, Li still cherished hopes for the Chinese proletariat.

¹¹⁹ Sneevliet, 'Discussion on the Relation between the CPC and KMT', June 1923, in Saich, vol. 2, p. 590.

¹²⁰ Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, p. 34.

¹²¹ Jinghu, *Jiangsheng rikan*, 11 February 1924. The English translation quoted from *MECW*, vol. 22, p. 355.

5.5 Striving for Labourers' Legal Rights

The February Seventh Incident showed that Chinese workers lacked the right of assembly and association. Laws to protect workers' rights should therefore be at the top of the agenda. In Beijing in 1923, Li Hanjun contacted members of Parliament, especially those from Hubei, and workers from the Jing-Han Railway presented a petition to Parliament. Hu Egong, Shi Gongjiu and other MPs put a motion to investigate and impeach Wu Peifu and Xiao Yaonan for the massacre and the dissolution of workers' unions and demanded a speedy settlement by the Government.¹²² The following resolutions were adopted at a special session of Parliament: (1) that in accordance with the Provisional Constitution, the Government now recognise the right of the workers to hold meetings; (2) that the Government pay proper indemnity to the families of deceased or wounded; (3) that the Government withdraw troops from the railway stations immediately.¹²³

Afterwards, Li Hanjun helped Hu Egong propose a motion asking the Government to make unions legal.¹²⁴ Chesneaux believed that the retreat in the labour movement in 1923-1924 'coincided with government attempts at social reform', and that '[i]n reaction to the emotions aroused in all circles in China by the Ching-Han [Jing-Han] incident, President Li Yuan-hung [Li Yuanhong] issued a decree on February 22 ordering labour legislation to be drawn up.'¹²⁵ Lowe Chuanhua similarly overstates the Beijing Government's role in labour legislation: 'Although outwardly the strike was a failure, yet it made the Government realise the growing strength of labour organisations and the necessity of adopting labour legislation. As a result a Presidential mandate was issued on February 22 ordering the proper ministries to draft labour laws for Parliament's consideration,' Those laws included the Provisional Factory Law and a draft bill on labour union. Lowe praised the Provisional Factory Regulations promulgated on 29 March as 'the first specimen of modern labour legislation in

¹²² *Shi bao*, 21 February 1923; Li Bogang, 'Huiyi Li Hanjun', *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 2.

¹²³ 'Guohui taolun jiejie gongchao' (The Parliament's discussion to resolve the labour dispute), in *Er-qi dabagong ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 463-64; Lowe Chuan-hua, *Facing Labour Issues in China*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1934, p. 41.

¹²⁴ Li Bogang, 'Huiyi Li Hanjun', *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁵ Chesneaux, p. 227.

China'.¹²⁶ These monographs neglect the Communists' role in the labour legislation movement.¹²⁷

In fact, as early as August 1922 the CLOS launched a campaign aimed at forcing Beijing to adopt laws to improve workers' working and living conditions. However, the campaign failed, serving only to 'strengthen the class consciousness of the proletariat', as its main promoter, Deng Zhongxia, claimed.¹²⁸ The movement re-started in early 1923. Li Hanjun once wrote: 'The campaign to petition the Government to make labour union laws was launched by intellectuals for the sake of the labour union movement after the incident of the Jing-Han Railway strike.'¹²⁹ No doubt Li figured among those intellectuals.

In the legal campaign, Li Hanjun had several advantages. His brother Li Shucheng was an advisor of President Li Yuanhong, who was also from Hubei, as too were many of those killed and wounded in the Massacre. Prime Minister Zhang Shaozeng was on close terms with Li Shucheng: in 1911 they had jointly prepared an uprising in North China. Most of the Hubei politicians who had contributed to the Revolution of 1911 were Li Shucheng's friends. Among them was Hu Egong, a veteran of the Tongmenghui, who became a Marxist after 1922 and organised a Society for the Study of Marxism (alias the Communist Comrades' Association) in Beijing.¹³⁰ In Beijing, Li Hanjun perhaps had relations with the Society and once contributed to its organ, *Jinri* (Today).

On 18 April 1923, a draft trade union law bill was submitted to Parliament by the Government. It provided for trade unions to enjoy legal rights such as freedom of speech, of the press, and of education; to sit with the employers on mixed committees and recommend improved labour conditions; and to strike. But the draft bill also imposed restrictions on union organisations and activities.¹³¹ Having scrutinised the draft bill, Li Hanjun published 'A Critique of the Trade Union Law Submitted to Parliament by the Government' in *Jinri*, criticising some of the Law's articles. One article stipulated that trade unions, newly founded or existing, should register with the

¹²⁶ Lowe Chuan-hua, p. 41.

¹²⁷ For instance, Lin Tung-hai's *The Labour Movement and Labour Legislation in China* and Ma Chao-chun's *History of the Labor Movement in China*, as well as Lowe's work.

¹²⁸ Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement, A Study of Deng Zhongxia*, p. 32.

¹²⁹ Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, p. 33.

¹³⁰ Cf. He Juefei (ed), vol. 2, pp. 470-476.

¹³¹ Sheldon Tso, Appendix IV.

local administration for examination and approval, or their initiators would be fined and the unions dissolved. Li wrote that workers feared persecution by the authorities and hardly dared organise trade unions; and that officials might accept bribes from capitalists and were thus liable to delay ratification or even deny approval of the unions. In his opinion, this regulation actually gave the authorities the power to permit or ban trade unions. Other articles stipulated that unions deemed counter to the interests of the nation and society and seen as jeopardising public security and harming social life could be disbanded. Li argued that since the authorities could decide what kind of actions disturbed the public order, such regulations were tantamount to banning trade unions' right to take action. According to him, the existence of trades unions hinged on the will of the authorities. The draft bill in fact gave the authorities power to dissolve existing unions and ban new ones. It was 'tantamount to giving a bowl of rice to a person with one hand and dealing a deathblow with the other'. Consulting relevant laws in Britain, France, Australia and other countries, he suggested that China should make clear that certain actions by trade unions should not be regarded as offences.¹³²

The draft bill aroused public criticism and was not, in the event, passed by the Parliament. Although Li Hanjun pushed for labour legislation, he did not place much hope in the Beijing Government and successfully exposed its 'use of the recognition of trade unions as a pretext for prohibiting them'.¹³³

5.6 *Encouraging Intellectuals to Integrate with Labourers*

For Li Hanjun, intellectuals should not only pursue their own comfortable and peaceful life regardless of the suffering of the population at large but should dedicate themselves to the cause of social transformation, in a spirit of sympathy, mutual aid and sacrifice.¹³⁴ In October 1919, he wrote that intellectuals should realise the long-term interests they shared with manual labourers and strive to 'unite mental

¹³² Hanjun, 'Duiyu zhengfu tijiao guohui de gongren xiehui fa de piping' (A critique of the Workers' Union Law submitted to the Parliament by the Government), *Jinri* [Today], vol. 3, no. 2, 25 August 1923, pp. 17-29.

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 27.

¹³⁴ Li Renjie, 'Zhishi jieji yingyou de juewu' (The consciousness that the intelligentsia requires), *JW*, 1 September 1926, p. 1.

labourers with manual labourers.’ He also urged intellectuals to help educate manual labourers.¹³⁵

In Shanghai, Li Hanjun and Dai Jitao once encouraged young intellectuals to work in factories. He also sent young Communists to befriend workers and to educate and organise them. In Wuhan, Li often urged his students to go to factories to make investigations.¹³⁶ In his speech made at the commemoration meeting held by the Wuhan Students’ Federation on May Day in 1922, Li gave a brief account of the history of the labour movement and encouraged students to devote themselves to the proletariat.¹³⁷ According to Xia Zhixu, Li Hanjun once encouraged women students at Hubei Women’s Normal School to contact female workers and urge them to unite in struggle.¹³⁸ On the eve of the founding of the Jing-Han Railway General Union, Li spoke to his students in Wuchang: ‘We often talk about theories regarding social issues. Yet if theory is not combined with practice, we cannot have a profound understanding of the theory. For example, there is no value in indulging in empty talk about labour problems without participating in the labour movement.’ Li then asked them to attend the Union’s inaugural congress.¹³⁹ He also told Liu Nongchao, a SY member from Chengdu, that the study of Marxism must apply to reality, and urged him to attend the congress.¹⁴⁰

While in charge of Hubei’s educational affairs between the end of 1926 and the end of 1927, Li Hanjun continued to be concerned about the labour movement. On 1 January 1927, he made a speech at the opening ceremony of the First Congress of the General Trade Union of Hubei, saying: ‘Workers and peasants are the majority, so only when they are emancipated, will social liberation be possible. The liberation of workers and peasants is the key to world liberation.’¹⁴¹

As an educational leader in Hubei and member of Sun Yat-sen University’s administrative commission, Li encouraged students to do revolutionary work in villages and factories and appealed to intellectuals to ‘come to the side of peasants and workers’ and ‘to work for the oppressed class.’¹⁴² He gave lectures at central and local

¹³⁵ Xianjin, ‘Zuijin Shanghai de bagong fengchao’, *XQPL*, p. 4.

¹³⁶ *Shehui kexue yanjiu*, vol. 1.

¹³⁷ Tian Ziyu, *Li Hanjun*, p. 118.

¹³⁸ Xia Zhixu, in *Huiyi Chen Tanqiu*, p. 36.

¹³⁹ Zhao Chunshan, *Changjiang ribao*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Liu Nongchao, *Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 209.

¹⁴¹ *Hankou minguo ribao*, 5 January 1927.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, 14 February 1927.

institutes for training cadres for the workers' and peasants' movements. Even after the Wuhan Government began purging Communists on 15 July 1927, the Youth Department of the KMT's Hubei Branch under Li continued to mobilise students to support strikes in the Anglo-American Tobacco Company's factory and Zhenhuan Cotton Mill in Wuhan.

Li Hanjun realised the mutual benefit of the integration of intellectuals and workers. He recalled that during the May Fourth Movement, workers had supported the students' demonstrations and showed their great strength and revolutionary spirit. This had inspired students to start studying socialism. In his view, having grasped Marxism, intellectuals were willing to help workers understand revolutionary theory, so workers and students together became the backbone of the labour movement: 'Workers passed on their spirit to students, and students gave workers their learning.'¹⁴³

At the CCP's Founding Congress, Li Hanjun had stressed that since the proletariat was young and unacquainted with Marxist thought, therefore it was necessary to concentrate on promoting the spread of Marxist theory among intellectuals and using them to organise and educate workers.¹⁴⁴ Later, he argued that 'it would be a tactical mistake to try and reach the masses with the current small group'. According to Maring, Li 'wanted to disseminate propaganda, mainly theoretical propaganda, especially among the intellectuals.'¹⁴⁵ These recollections, no matter whether wholly true or not, may reflect in some ways the extent to which Li attached importance to the role of the intelligentsia's in enlightening labourers.

Marx and Engels often emphasised the need for 'theoretical guidance'.¹⁴⁶ According to Marx, workers had the advantage of numbers, 'but numbers weigh only in the balance if united by combination and led by knowledge.'¹⁴⁷ As intellectuals, they dedicated their lives to arming the workers with theory.

Li Hanjun never magnified the intelligentsia's role and belittled the importance and initiative of the workers themselves. He argued that 'the working class must

¹⁴³ Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, p. 28.

¹⁴⁴ Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 286-287.

¹⁴⁵ Maring, 'Report on the Situation in China and Our Work during the Period 15-31 May 1923', in Saich, p. 539.

¹⁴⁶ Engels to Soege, 29 April 1886, in *MECW*, vol. 47, p. 441.

¹⁴⁷ Marx, 'Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association', in *MECW*, vol. 20, p. 12.

emancipate itself, because it is not possible to force them to make revolution.’¹⁴⁸ He believed that workers could develop class consciousness spontaneously in the course of the practical revolutionary activities that social and economic conditions force them to undertake. Communist intellectuals, on the other hand, could help workers better understand their position in society and their ability to change the capitalist system.¹⁴⁹ Chinese workers, in his view, had a tradition of autonomous action carried out by secret societies and were capable of managing their own affairs. However, without the direction of intellectuals, workers’ revolutionary spirits and abilities could not reach full development. Despite this, Li noticed that many workers distrusted intellectuals, that unions led by intellectuals rarely achieved much success and that their members became ever fewer, whereas unions led indirectly by the CLOS consisting of both intellectuals and workers achieved better results. According to Li, workers’ distrust of intellectuals had historical causes and was also due to some intellectuals’ overbearing ways and impracticable directions.¹⁵⁰

Without noting Party intellectuals’ mistakes in directing the labour movement, Chen Duxiu said in his report to the Third Congress: ‘Workers exhibit a tendency to divorce themselves from intellectuals, frequently lacking the desire for knowledge.’¹⁵¹ Several other Communist intellectuals blamed the workers for the defeat of the great strikes in 1923. Li, in contrast, praised the bravery and solidarity the workers and pointed out mistakes the intellectuals had made in commanding them. He thought Communist intellectuals should help the work of trade unions rather than monopolise everything and should not order workers about and take over all union jobs. Revolutionary intellectuals, Li said, should not think that they were a cut above the others, but should sacrifice their own interests for those of oppressed.¹⁵²

Li Hanjun practised what he preached. He could have lived safely and prosperously as an engineer or professor, but instead he risked his life and freedom by joining the labour movement and other revolutionary movements, and was therefore

¹⁴⁸ ‘Zhongguo gongchandang diyici daibiao dahui’, in *YDQH*, vol. 1, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ Hanjun, ‘Hankou renli chefu bagong di jiaoxun’, *JW*, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘An open letter to a shop assistant’, *Pingmin*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, p. 34.

¹⁵¹ Saich, vol. 2, p. 575. Sneevliet in his ‘Supplementary Comments’ wrote that he advocated that ‘intellectuals and workers in the Party must unite closely together.’ (p. 577)

¹⁵² Li Hanjun, ‘Zai Wuchang Zhongshan daxue xueshenghui chengli dahui shang de yanshuo’ (Speech at the founding meeting of Wuchang Sun Yat-sen University’s Student Union), *Hankou minguo ribao*, 13 April 1927.

several times listed as wanted by the Hubei provincial government.¹⁵³ In the end, he died for the cause of working people's liberation.

* * * * *

Li Hanjun played a major role in the Chinese labour movement in the realms of both theory and practice. By comparison with other Communists, especially Zhang Guotao, he advocated moderate and balanced tactics. He at first gave priority to economic struggle, through which workers would become class-conscious. He supported strikes, but preferred reasonable and unruffled actions and opposed drastic measures and excessive demands. While aiming for workers' domination of production relations and political power, he also advanced reforms. He campaigned for labour legislation that would enhance workers' rights, but he did not rely solely on legal struggle and knew its limitations. He did his best to interest intellectuals in the labour movement, but he also appreciated workers' spontaneous class consciousness and their capacity for association and self-government.

In brief, Li Hanjun sought to combine economic and political struggles, legal actions and revolutionary methods, and to integrate intellectuals and labourers. These ideas seem not to go beyond what the CCP and the Comintern advocated. For example, the resolution on the trade union movement adopted at the CCP's Second Congress called for improving workers' economic conditions and launching the labour legislation movement. Even so, Li's position was criticised by some Communists for focusing only on economic struggles, legal actions and propaganda work among students. Such censures find little support in the record as I read it. But whatever the case, such divergences of opinion regarding the labour movement, along with other factors, led to Li's quitting the Party.

¹⁵³ Cf. The recollections by Li Bogang, Zhao Chunshan, Fu Guangpei and Xia Zhixu. *Da Han bao* [Great Hankou News] (18 May 1924) reported that Li Hanjun had been arrested and detained. *Chen bao* of 20 June 1925 (p. 2) reported that Xiao Yaonan issued an order to arrest Li and several others.

6 Withdrawal from the CCP

On 5 May 1923, Li Hanjun wrote to the CEC of the CCP resigning. About a year later, his name was removed from Party membership. Why did this happen? Li later wrote that he withdrew because of disagreements with the leadership and the exclusion he encountered.¹ As soon as the CCP was established, disagreements and conflicts between him and other founders of the CCP and the Comintern emerged. As the Party developed, Li continued to dissent from its leading body on some policies and tactics, and also on some issues of principle. However, his suggestions and advice, instead of being heeded and accepted by the CCP's CEC, incurred serious criticisms and accusations. He was excluded from the central leadership and then expelled.

What were the disagreements? What did Li stand for? How did those differences come about? Since they diverged on various issues, I will deal with them under the following headings: Party policies, including strategy and tactics, and especially the policy of the united front; the Party's relations with the Comintern and the Soviet Union; its finances; and its organisational principles.

The conflicts between Li Hanjun and some CCP leaders, Chen Duxiu and Zhang Guotao in particular, were also due to personal character, moral conduct, working style and so on. These issues will also be covered in this chapter.

6.1 *On the United Front*

As I noted, the First Congress adopted a programme of pure proletarian, socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat; and resolved that the CCP should adopt 'independent, combative and exclusive attitudes' towards other parties. Party members were not allowed to be members of Parliament or government officials without special permission. At this Congress, Li Hanjun and a few other delegates advocated cooperation with other revolutionary parties and aiding the KMT in democratic movement. They suggested that the CCP should 'link open work with secret work' and

¹ Han. 12993.2.

work in Parliament with other parties for freedom of publication and assembly. However, their position was rejected by the majority and a ‘closed door’ and ‘no compromise’ resolution was passed.² Li Hanjun concluded that the majority of delegates had little understanding of political tactics.³

In fact, the resolution adopted at the First Congress was not in line with the strategy and tactics devised by Lenin for ‘Eastern’ countries. In 1919, after the collapse of the Bavarian and Hungarian Soviet Republics, the Bolshevik leaders considered that ‘the European revolution appears to have withdrawn into the background’, so they prepared to withdraw from the West to the East.⁴ During this time, Communists should, as Lenin argued, ‘use all the weapons, all the means and methods, ... combining illegal forms of struggle with every form of legal struggle’ in their war with the enemy; and should participate in bourgeois parliaments.⁵ Lenin also concluded that the proletariat of the advanced countries could not win power without the aid of oppressed peoples in colonial countries.

Lenin outlined and elaborated his ‘Theses on the National and Colonial Questions’ for the Comintern’s Second Congress. He argued that no proletarian socialist revolution would occur in ‘Eastern’ countries with pre-capitalist conditions, so the Comintern should ‘pursue a policy designed to achieve a close alliance of all national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia’. He also said that Communist Parties and the Comintern must prepare to assist ‘the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement’ in colonial countries.⁶ In Lenin’s view, the new policy would facilitate overthrowing the rule of imperialist powers in their backyards and winning over the East to the side of Soviet Russia.

The new policy was expounded at the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East, which opened in Moscow in January 1922. The Comintern’s speakers recommended ‘a union between the advanced proletariat of the West and the peoples of the East’, declaring that ‘these two streams are converging before our own eyes.’ The Congress appealed to Far Eastern people to carry out anti-imperialist and anti-feudal national

² Wales, p. 40; Chen Kung-po, p. 81.

³ Bao Huiseng, ‘Gongchandang diyici’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 318.

⁴ *The Trotsky Papers*, vol. 1, doc. 349, p. 627.

⁵ Lenin, ‘Left-wing Communism’, in *LCW*, pp. 96-97.

⁶ In the ‘Theses on the National and Colonial Questions’, Lenin’s original term ‘bourgeois-democratic liberation movement’ was revised to ‘revolutionary liberation movement’.

and democratic revolutions.⁷ During the Congress, Lenin received representatives of the CCP and the KMT and asked about the possibility of a ‘combination’ of the two parties.⁸

Maring and the Youth Comintern’s representative, S. A. Dalin, also tried to exert pressure on the CCP and the SY to adopt a policy of cooperation with the KMT.⁹ In June 1922, the CCP’s CEC issued its ‘First Manifesto on the Current Situation’, which pointed out that of the existing political parties, only the KMT was a comparatively revolutionary democratic party and declared that ‘the pressing task for the Chinese proletariat was to liaise with the democratic parties to wage a revolution against feudal warlords.’¹⁰

In July, the CCP’s Second Congress put forward the Party’s minimum programme: to overthrow the warlords and imperialism and establish an independent and democratic republic. The Congress resolved that the CCP would establish a democratic united front with the KMT and other revolutionary parties and contact members of Parliament to form a democratic left-wing coalition to sweep away the warlords and the imperialists.¹¹ In another resolution, the Congress urged Communists to enter Parliament to expose the warlords and speak up for the workers and peasants.¹²

It is obvious that there had been a sharp shift in the CCP’s position since its First Congress, which had excluded other parties from consideration as potential allies in the struggle against the warlords. The Second Congress, in contrast, was more realistic and practical. Some of its positions looked like those Li Hanjun had advocated at the First Congress and subsequently. One might suppose that Li approved of the new policies and that the differences between him and the CEC would now be ironed out. However, developments were more complicated.

Before long, the United Front policy had a change in form: from a ‘bloc without’ to a ‘bloc within’. In August 1922, Maring convened an enlarged plenum of the CCP’s

⁷ Cf. *The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, Petrograd, 1922, reprinted by Hammersmith Books, London, 1970, p. 4, p. 236, Appendix I. Safarov, ‘Di san guoji yu yuandong minzu wenti’ (The Third International and Far Eastern national issues), in *GLZWX*, vol. 2, p. 283.

⁸ According to Liu Renjing’s recollection in April 1957, Lenin especially used the English word ‘combination’ when he was talking with Zhang Guotao and other two Chinese. ‘Fangwen Liu Renjing de baogao’ (Report on the interview with Liu Renjing), in *ZGDD*, p. 116.

⁹ Saich, vol. 1, p. 93, p. 111; S. A. Dalin, *Zhongguo huiyilu, 1921-1927* [Memoirs of China, 1921-1927], Hou Junchu et al. (transl), Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1981, p. 90.

¹⁰ *EHS*, p. 47.

¹¹ ‘Guanyu “minzhu de lianhe zhanxian” de yijue’an’ (The resolution on the ‘Democratic United Front’), in *ZZWX*, vol. 1, pp. 37-39.

¹² ‘Guanyu yihui xingdong de jueyi’an’ (The resolution on actions in the Parliament), in *ibid.*, p. 47.

CEC in Hangzhou to discuss the form of the United Front, which he interpreted as Communists joining the KMT while remaining members of the Communist Party. This idea followed on Maring's talks with Sun Yat-sen and other KMT leaders and drew on his experience in Indonesia. However, the proposal met with strong opposition within the CCP's central and local organisations after it was first put forward in March 1922. Maring then left for Moscow to seek Comintern endorsement. He returned with the ECCI's backing: the CCP must not only support the left-wing of the KMT but 'organise Communist groups of followers in the KMT.'¹³ With the Comintern's order in hand, Maring stifled opposition at the Hangzhou Plenum and forced the CCP's CEC to accept the policy.

At the Hangzhou Plenum, Maring is said to have expressed his dissatisfaction at the fact that the CCP's CEC members were nearly all newcomers and suggested adding Li Hanjun and Li Dazhao.¹⁴ This was perhaps because he thought they would check the left-wing opposition led by Zhang Guotao and Cai Hesen and support his plan. But contrary to Maring's expectations, the most stubborn objection to the decisions of the Hangzhou Plenum came from Li Hanjun.

In his letter to the CEC, Li Hanjun objected to the proposal that Communists join the KMT. According to him, the CCP was too small and weak to cooperate with the KMT in such a way.¹⁵ At the meetings in Beijing Li contended that a Communist Party should represent the proletariat: its members should not join the bourgeois KMT.¹⁶ Li's arguments were not unlike those of other CCP leaders. However, whereas the majority gave up their objections under pressure from the Comintern and joined the KMT, Li and a few others stuck to their previous position and thus became targets for attack.¹⁷

The main item on the agenda of the Third Congress of the CCP in June 1923 was CCP members' participation in the KMT. The Congress resolved that in semi-colonial China, the Party 'should take the national revolutionary movement as its central task' and 'make efforts to expand KMT organisations throughout China and to amass all

¹³ 'Instructions of the representative of the ECCI in South China', August 1922, in Saich, vol. 1, pp. 328-329.

¹⁴ Cai Hesen, 'Tigang', in *ZDBX*, p. 43.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁶ Chen Bilan, p. 66. Chen heard Li Hanjun's argument personally, since she and Li were in the same Party branch in Beijing, and attended the discussion meetings.

¹⁷ Cai Hesen, 'Dang de jihuizhuyi shi' (A history of the CCP's opportunism), September 1927, in *ZDBX*, p. 79; Zheng Chaolin, *Shishi yu huiyi*, vol. 1, p. 216; Chen Bilan, p. 66.

revolutionary elements of the whole of China into the KMT.’ The resolution claimed conformity with the Comintern resolution on relations with the KMT of January 1923, according to which ‘it is expedient for the members of the CCP to remain within the KMT.’¹⁸ A ‘bloc within’ differed from a ‘bloc without’. The resolution of the Second Congress stressed CCP leadership in the United Front and declared that the proletariat was merely to ‘unite with and assist’ the democratic parties and ‘should never surrender to, be dependent upon or merge with them.’¹⁹ In contrast, the Third Congress yielded leadership to the KMT. After the Congress, many CCP members joined the KMT, but Li Hanjun refused to follow them.

This kind of United Front served Moscow’s geopolitical needs. Drawing the Chinese revolutionaries into a United Front to oust foreign imperialism was a major element in Bolshevik strategy. For some Bolsheviks, the CCP, as a small group, and the Chinese proletariat, as a weak class, had insufficient strength to overthrow imperialism and defend Soviet interests. Instead, they should ally with a bigger national revolutionary party and hope one day to unify China and expel non-Russian influence.

With this aim in mind, the ECCI told the CCP to ‘oppose any attempt by the KMT at rapprochement with the capitalist powers and their agents, the Chinese warlords, who are opposed to proletarian Russia’ and to ‘influence the KMT in the direction of unity of action with the Soviet Union in the common struggle against European, American and Japanese imperialism.’²⁰ So the Third Congress of the CCP resolved to force the KMT towards the Soviet Union and to alert the KMT to the danger of being ‘fooled by the greedy and slippery powers’.²¹ The CCP was ‘an intermediary’ in the construction of this United Front, as B. A. Elleman has shown. In Elleman’s opinion, the original goal of the United Front was to facilitate an alliance between the Bolsheviks and Sun Yat-sen’s Party prior to the founding of the CCP.²²

Having observed CCP policy change rapidly from one of non-cooperation with other parties to one of a forming a united front with the KMT, and then to one of

¹⁸ ‘Guanyu guomin yundong ji guomindang wenti de yijue’an’ (The resolution on the national movement and the KMT), in *ZZWX*, vol.1, pp. 115-116.

¹⁹ *EHS*, p. 67.

²⁰ ‘Resolution Passed by the ECCI on the Relations of the CPC to the KMT’, 12 January 1923, in Saich, vol. 2, p. 566.

²¹ *EHS*, p. 182.

²² B. A. Elleman, ‘Soviet Diplomacy and the First United Front in China’, *Modern China*, no. 4, October 1995, pp. 450-479.

joining the KMT, Li Hanjun concluded that the CCP had a fickle approach to its politics and became disillusioned with it. Moreover, the CCP and the Comintern's attempt to use the banner of the KMT to rally the masses around the CCP and to split the KMT did not, to him, seem just and honourable.²³ In fact, he never opposed cooperating with the KMT, but merely opposed merging with it. Speaking in the spring of 1926, he agreed with Li Da that cooperation should be based on policy and not organisational merger and that the CCP should retain its independence or face ruin.²⁴

The United Front revitalised the KMT and promoted national revolution for a time, but it also had harmful effects. Chen Duxiu admitted in 1925 that some KMT members continued to want to exclude the Communists.²⁵ Many opposed Communist infiltration as a first step to control the KMT and to Bolshevise it or replace it.²⁶ Even PRC historians acknowledge that joining the KMT led to increased conflict between the parties and the rupture of the United Front and failure of the 'Great Revolution'.²⁷ The cooperation finally ended in 1927, when the CCP was nearly destroyed.

In November 1923, F. M. Slepak, a Comintern agent and head of the Rosta in China, told the Comintern he had heard that Li Hanjun had withdrawn from the CCP because he disagreed with the Party's policies and tactics.²⁸ As we have seen, Li most objected to the tactic of joining the KMT.

²³ Liu Renjing, 'Guanyu Zhongguo xingshi de baogao' (Report on the situation in China), in *Gongchanguoji youguan Zhongguogeming de wenxian ziliao* [Comintern's Documentary Sources concerning the Chinese Revolution], vol. 1 (1919-1928), Zhongguo shehuikexueyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo (comp and transl), Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1981, p. 63. It can be also seen in the Comintern representatives and agents' reports to Moscow in *VKNRDK*, vol. 1.

²⁴ Le Tianyu, 'Wo suo liaojie de Li Hanjun tongzhi'.

²⁵ 'Chen Duxiu to Dai Jitao', in *Chen Duxiu shuxinji* [Collected Letters of Chen Duxiu], Shui Ru (comp), Xinhua chubanshe, Beijing, 1987, p. 392.

²⁶ Dai Jitao, 'Guomingeming yu Zhongguo guomindang' (The national revolution and the KMT), written in 1925, in *Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao* [Reference Material for Teaching the CCP History] compiled and printed by the Department of the CCP History, Beijing Normal University, 1975, vol. 1, pp. 310-324; Songmin, 'Guomindangyuan ying xinyang Guomindang de zhuyi' (KMTers should believe in the doctrine of the KMT), *Minguo ribao*, 9 April 1927, p. 1; 'Slepak to Voitinsky, 8 February 1924', in *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 108; cf. Yang Kuisong, "'Rong gong" haishi "fen gong"? - 1925 nian Guomindang yin "rong gong" er fenlie zhi yuanqi yu jingguo' ('Accommodate the Communist Party' or 'breaking with the Communist Party'? The course of the KMT's split over 'accommodating the Communist Party' in 1925), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 4, July 2002.

²⁷ Li Miaoxiang and Liu Songbin, 'Zhonggong "Sanda" xueshu yantaohui shuyao' (A review of the Academic Symposium on the CCP's Third Congress), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 5, 2006, pp. 127-128; Xiao Sheng, 'Cong '4.12' dao '7.15' Guomindang de qingdang yundong' (The KMT's Purification [of its Party] Movements from 'April 12th' to 'July 15th' in 1927), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 4, 1991, pp. 180-196; Liu Weili, 'Guo-Gong hezuo de benyi yu shiji' (The KMT-CCP Cooperation's real intention and its actual results), *SGZY*, no. 6, December 2006, p. 364.

²⁸ 'Slepak to Voitinsky, 25 November 1923', in *VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 94.

6.2 *On the CCP's Relations with the Comintern and the Soviet Union*

The United Front policy was mainly brought about by the Bolsheviks and the Comintern, described as 'a single communist party of the entire world'.²⁹ The CCP, as a section of the Comintern, had to obey its orders. It is therefore illogical and unfair to blame Chen Duxiu for the failure of the Chinese Revolution in 1927.

With regard to the CCP's relationship with the Comintern, Li Hanjun had all along 'opposed unconditional acceptance of the Comintern's subsidy and orders' (as he wrote in 1927).³⁰ On the eve of the establishment of the CCP, Li Hanjun expressed his views on its relationship with the Comintern as follows: 'The CCP alone should assume the responsibility for carrying on the Communist movement in China, with the Comintern merely helping. For the sake of internationalism, we can accept theoretical guidance from the Comintern and act in accordance with it. But the Comintern should not help us financially unless we are unable to raise enough money ourselves.' Li felt that the Comintern representative 'must not be considered anything other than advisor, certainly he should not assume the role of a director.' He told Maring that the CCP had not yet decided whether the Party would join the Comintern, and that even if it did so, its relationship with the Comintern representative would have to be looked into further.³¹ As an internationalist, Li advocated mutual support by Communists around the world, but disapproved of any organisation holding supreme authority over others.

It is worth noting that the CCP's First Congress did not resolve to join the Comintern. According to *The Brief History of the CCP*, 'it was impossible to discuss or even raise the question of the CCP joining the Comintern' at the Congress, allegedly because of the 'opportunistic currents of thought' represented by Li Hanjun.³² Li was thus blamed for the CCP's failure to join the Comintern at the time.

However, with the expulsion of Li Hanjun from the CCP leadership, the chief obstacle to the Comintern's achieving control of it was removed. Chen Duxiu, at first unwilling to submit to Comintern representatives, yielded with certain reservations

²⁹ Degras (ed), vol. 1, p. 164.

³⁰ Han. 12993.2.

³¹ Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, p. 138.

³² CNSAC, p. 53.

later.³³ The most prominent delegates to the Party's Second Congress were those who had just returned from Moscow. They unanimously approved the resolution on joining the Comintern as its Chinese section and accepted 'the Conditions of Admission to the Comintern' drafted by Lenin. This resolution was regarded as the 'most important provision' passed at the Congress.³⁴

Any party affiliated to the Comintern had a duty to support Soviet Russia (The Soviet Union after April 1922) and to obey the Comintern. According to 'The Manifesto of the Second World Congress of the Communist International', 'The Communist International has proclaimed the cause of Soviet Russia as its own' and 'The question of Soviet Russia has become the touchstone by which all the organisations of the working class are tested.' 'The Theses on the Structure of Communist Parties and on the Methods and Content of Their Work' adopted by the Third Comintern Congress also stressed that a Communist party should be 'under the leadership of the Communist International' and 'The decisions of the Communist International are to be carried out by affiliated parties without delay... .' Moreover, 'Unconditional support of Soviet Russia remains as before the cardinal duty of the communists of all countries.'³⁵

Once the CCP joined the Comintern, it lost its autonomy and had to commit itself to the interests of the Soviet Union. The CCP's Second Congress appealed to Chinese workers and the oppressed masses to defend the Soviet Union, 'the homeland of the proletariat' and 'the vanguard of liberating oppressed nations', against attack by capitalist countries.³⁶ The Congress condemned the Beijing Government for sending troops to Mongolia and declared support for Mongolian autonomy.³⁷ 'The Immediate Tactics of the Communist Party of China', drafted by Chen Duxiu in Moscow in November 1922, asked Chinese Communists to: urge the Chinese Government to start direct negotiations with the Soviet Union; commence a movement in favour of the recognition of the Soviet Union and of Mongolian independence; and prevent interference by any third power in relation to the Chinese Eastern Railway, the Mongolian question and so on.³⁸

Around that time, Moscow negotiated with Beijing about building normal diplomatic relations. However, Soviet troops, after ousting White Guards from Outer

³³ Bao Huiseng, 'Oral recollections', 17 May 1979, interviewed and edited by Wang Chuan, in *ZGDD*, p. 107.

³⁴ *DCNSAC*, p. 59.

³⁵ Degras (ed), vol. 1, p. 177, p. 267, p. 269, pp. 255-256.

³⁶ *EHS*, pp. 63-64.

³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

³⁸ Saich, vol. 1, pp. 363-364.

Mongolia, then Chinese territory, remained there and assisted in establishing the Mongolian People's Republic. The Soviet government also refused to return the Chinese Eastern Railway to China, as promised in the 1919 'Karakhan Manifesto'. Negotiations deadlocked. The Chinese Government protested against the Soviet behaviour, which also provoked criticism among Chinese intellectuals, who saw the Soviet Union as 'Red Imperialist'.³⁹ Even Maring and A. Joffe (a Soviet envoy to China) warned Moscow 'not do anything ourselves that can appear as a disguised imperialist policy.'⁴⁰

The Chinese Communists tried to marshal public opinion in support of the Soviet Union and to put pressure on the Beijing Government by organising demonstrations, writing articles and making speeches. Zhang Guotao argued that the Soviet Union was 'the motherland of the proletariat of the world and the supreme headquarters of the oppressed nations in the world', so its alliance with Mongolia was a step towards 'the liberation of the whole world'.⁴¹ Li Dazhao told Gu Weijun, Chinese Foreign Minister: 'If Outer Mongolia was under the domination and the rule of the Soviet Union, the people there could live a better life.'⁴² The CCP's support for Soviet interests, regardless of China's territorial sovereignty and national interests, demonstrates how far it had become a tool of Moscow. It was a bad consequence of the CCP's unconditionally subjecting itself to the Soviet-sponsored Comintern. Because of their deeds, some Chinese Communists were accused of being 'traitors to their country'.⁴³ The CCP's reputation was damaged by its support for Soviet foreign policy.

Li Hanjun seems to have retained an independent stance. Although we have no record of what he said about the Sino-Soviet negotiations, he opposed Moscow's deal with Japan.⁴⁴ Soviet-Japanese negotiations started in 1921 and the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention was signed in Beijing in January 1925. Moscow cannot be blamed for resuming diplomatic relations with Japan, but it can be criticised, from China's

³⁹ See Zhang Jin (comp), *Lian E yu chou E wenti taolunji* (The Debate of Friendship or Enmity towards Russia), Beixin shuju, Beijing, 1927.

⁴⁰ Joffe and Maring, 'Concerning Our Work in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries in General and in China in Particular', End of 1922, in Saich, vol. 1, p. 370.

⁴¹ Guotao, 'Haishi zanzhu xin Mongu ba' (It is still necessary to support New Mongolia), *Xiangdao*, no. 8, 2 November 1922, p. 68.

⁴² *Gu Weijun huiyilu* [Gu Weijun's Reminiscence], Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1985, vol. 1, p. 340.

⁴³ See Ao Guangxu, '1920 niandai guonei Menggu wenti zhi zheng – yi Zhong-E jiaoshe zuihou jieduan zhi lunzheng wei zhongxin' (Controversies over the Mongolia issue in China in the 1920s: centred on arguments in the late stages of the Sino-Russian Negotiations), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 4, July 2007, pp. 63-66.

⁴⁴ Cai Hesun, 'Tigang', in *ZDBX*, p. 31.

point of view, for using the impending Soviet-Japanese rapprochement to frighten Beijing into giving up its claims and for reaffirming the validity of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905 (which divided ‘Manchuria’ into Russian and Japanese spheres of influence). By renewing the Treaty, Moscow tacitly reaffirmed Japan’s control of the South Manchurian Railway and its lease of Lüshun (Port Arthur) and Dalian, while Tokyo tacitly acknowledged the Soviet Union’s majority control over the Chinese Eastern Railway.⁴⁵ It indicates that in its deals with Japan, Moscow to some extent continued the Tsarist diplomatic policy of seizing spheres of influence and economic rights in China. Naturally, Li Hanjun would have opposed such developments.⁴⁶ His attitude towards the Soviet-Japan negotiations suggests that he, at least, did not intend to support Soviet policy unconditionally. Li was seemingly the only important early Chinese Communist to raise his voice in public against Moscow’s pursuit of its own self-interest.

Li Hanjun regarded the Comintern and Soviet representatives in China as advisors and maintained a good working relationship with them. However, he openly voiced differences of opinion with them. His frankness and theoretical accomplishments earned him the respect of some Comintern agents. Maring and Slepak regretted the loss of ‘a precious cadre’ and ‘one of the best skilled theoretical workers’ when Li withdrew from the CCP.⁴⁷ To Li Hanjun, the Soviet Union was the first socialist country in the world, and China could learn from it. However, he saw the drawbacks of the Soviet system and was not prepared to follow it blindly. The Bolsheviks’ uncritical supporters in the CCP could not tolerate Li Hanjun’s attitudes towards Moscow and his views on the CCP’s relations with it. This was an important reason why Li was expelled from the Party.

6.3 On the Communists’ Means of Subsistence

⁴⁵ Cf. Huang Dingtian, ‘Cong “Zhong-E” xieding dao “Su-Ri xieding” — 1924 nian qianhou Sulian de dui Hua dui Ri waijiao’ (From Sino-Russian Convention to Russian-Japanese Convention – the Soviet Union’s diplomacy to China and to Japan around the 1924), *Xueshu jiaoliu* [Academic Exchange], no. 3, 2004, pp. 161-162; B. A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1927*, M. E., Sharpe, Armonk, N. Y., 1997, pp. 131-132.

⁴⁶ In 1923 Li Hanjun actively advocated the retrieving of the Japanese leased territory in China. Cf. Jun, ‘Wu ren zhi shouhui Lü-Da zhuzhang’ (Our stand on retrieving Port Arthur and Dairen), *Beijing xueshenglianhehui rikan*, 26 March 1923.

⁴⁷ ‘Slepak to Voitinsky, 25 November 1923’, in *VKNRDK*, no. 94; Maring, ‘Report on the situation in China and our work during the period 15-31 May 1923’, in Saich, p. 539.

The CCP's submissive attitude towards the Comintern and Soviet interests was not unconnected with their acceptance of Comintern financial aid. From the outset, Li Hanjun objected to the CCP's 'unconditional acceptance of Comintern subsidies and orders.'⁴⁸ As we have seen, before the First Congress, he told Maring that Chinese Communists should not depend on Comintern subsidies and that the Comintern should help finance the Party only if it could not raise enough money independently.⁴⁹

The CCP relied heavily on financial aid from the Comintern, especially in its early stages.⁵⁰ In the summer of 1920, the Comintern started giving the Communist groups in Shanghai and other cities financial help, mainly to promote the labour movement and carry out propaganda and education. For example, the 'Socialist School' in Shanghai received 1,000 yuan from the Russian Bolshevik representative each month and its cadres were paid 30 yuan.⁵¹ A Russian Bolshevik gave Chen Duxiu 2,000 yuan to start a printing house to print journals and pamphlets.⁵² It was said that Chen Duxiu in 1920 received a total sum of \$16,000 through Voitinsky.⁵³ However, when Voitinsky left China in January 1921, the CCP's Shanghai organisation was soon without funds.⁵⁴

To solve the problem, Li Hanjun, as acting secretary of the CCP's central organisation in Shanghai, tried to tap a new source. He suggested in a letter to Chen Duxiu that the New Youth Book Company could supply monthly editing fees to cover some of the Party's costs. However, Chen disagreed, on the grounds that the magazine had not been published on schedule.⁵⁵ Perhaps Chen thought that Comintern money was still available in Shanghai, as it had been when he was in Shanghai.⁵⁶ Li Hanjun

⁴⁸ Han. 12993.2.

⁴⁹ Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Cf. Yang Kuisong, 'Gongchanguoji wei Zhonggong tigong caizheng yuanzhu qingkuang de lishi kaocha' (An investigation into Comintern financial aid to China), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, nos. 1-2, 2004.

⁵¹ 'Shi Cuntong's confession', in Ishikawa, p. 486.

⁵² Zheng Peigang, in Ge Maochun et al. (eds), vol. 2, p. 958.

⁵³ Shanghai Municipal Police Files, May 5, 1922.

⁵⁴ 'Report of Comrade H. Maring to the ECCI', 11 July 1922, in Saich, p. 309; Bao Huiseng, 'Tan Zhongguogongchandang chengli dahui', in *ZGDD*, p. 101.

⁵⁵ Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 9. In fact, the delay in publishing *Xin qingnian* could not be imputed to Li Hanjun and other editors, but was due to a search and closure of its offices by the French police in February 1921. During the search, all copies of Volume 8 Number 6 of *Xin qingnian*, which was in the process of being printed, were confiscated. See FO 228/3291, Quarterly Report Ended on 31 March 1921; Lu Miqiang, in *SGZY*, p. 156.

⁵⁶ When Yuan Tongchou, who had joined the SY in Shanghai, went to Guangzhou to tell Chen Duxiu that Li Hanjun had made strenuous efforts to sustain Shanghai's socialist centre – the Foreign Languages School, Chen said: 'They have roubles to spend.' See Yuan Tongchou, 'Yu Chen Duxiu xiansheng zaonian de yixie jiechu' (My contacts with Mr. Chen Duxiu in early years), *Zhuanji wenxue* [Biographical Literature] (Taipei), vol. 30, no. 5, May 1977, pp. 44-45.

had always lived a simple life.⁵⁷ To him, it seemed immoral to rely on foreign resources to make revolution in China. Therefore he and others sold their essays to raise funds for the Party.⁵⁸ *Xin qingnian* and *Gongchandang* did not pay them for their contributions, so they wrote for other magazines to earn money.⁵⁹ Li Hanjun published articles and translations in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (Novel Monthly) on literature and art. Because these pieces were well received, the editor paid him well.⁶⁰ He also mortgaged belongings and even his deceased wife's jewellery.⁶¹ Several Party members appreciated Li's contributions.⁶² Since few Communists had fixed occupation, not enough money could be raised to maintain the Party.

Seeing Chinese Communist organisation stagnate due to insufficient funds, Shumiatsky, the Comintern representative in the Far East, took steps to resume funding.⁶³ However, Li Hanjun discovered that some members of the SY and the trade unions directed by the Communists had misused Comintern funds, thus essentially committing corruption.⁶⁴ Perhaps this experience led Li to consider the side-effects of Comintern funds.

The CCP came to rely more and more on the Comintern for financial support. Zhou Fohai, elected acting secretary of the Central Bureau at the First Congress, recalled that after the First Congress funds were provided by the Soviet Union.⁶⁵ Chen Duxiu's first report to the Comintern dated 30 June 1922 reveals that between October 1921 and June 1922 the CCP Centre spent 17,655 yuan, of which 16,655 yuan were from the Comintern.⁶⁶ The Sneevliet Archives contain receipts dated December 1922 to May 1923 for money received from the Comintern, signed by Zhang Guotao,

⁵⁷ Shen Yanbing, 'Ji Li Hanjun', *Bitan*, p. 36; *Yuan Tongchou xiansheng fangwen jilu* [The Reminiscences of Mr. Yuan T'ung-ch'ou], interviewed by Chang P'eng-yuan et al., Oral History Series, no. 16, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei, 1988, p. 14.

⁵⁸ Chen Wangdao, Shen Yanbing, Zhang Guotao and Peng Shuzhi mentioned this. According to Zheng Chaolin's recollection, Peng Shuzhi said in 1923 that Li Hanjun had given his fees for writing to the Party organisation during the period of establishment of the Party. Zheng Chaolin, 'Youguan Li Hanjun de er san shi' (Some recollections about Li Hanjun), interviewed and edited by Chen Shaokang, 16 October 1981 (unpublished).

⁵⁹ Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 9; Maodun, *Wo zougou de daolu*, vol. 1, pp. 176-177.

⁶⁰ The articles Li published in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* included 'The Late Impressionists and Expressionists', 'Sturm und Drang Movement', 'Jewish literature and David Pinski', 'Main currents in German literature', 'The art movement of the Young Germany', 'Recent situation of the New Literature in Greek', 'The theory and practice of Popular Arts' and 'Italian poet Gabriele d'Annunzio'.

⁶¹ Xue Wenshu, *Hubei wenshi ziliao*, p. 53.

⁶² Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 57; Zheng Chaolin, *Shishi yu huiyi*, vol. 1, p. 216.

⁶³ 'Shumiatsky to Kobiesky', 26 February 1921, *Bainian chao*, p. 58.

⁶⁴ Han. 12993.2.

⁶⁵ *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 494.

⁶⁶ *GLZWX*, vol. 2, p. 304.

Cai Hesen and Chen Duxiu.⁶⁷ At the Third Congress, Chen Duxiu admitted that since the Second Congress almost all the Party's funds had come from the Comintern and only a small amount from membership dues.⁶⁸

Most Party funds were used to pay Party workers' monthly expenses, about 20-30 yuan each, compared with the Chinese workers' average monthly wage of 6.5 yuan.⁶⁹ With the increase in Party members, the demand for funds grew.⁷⁰ Sometimes the unequal division of living expenses among members caused conflicts within the Party.⁷¹ Even Maring expressed concern that most members had no job and fewer than ten per cent paid their dues, so the Party was almost completely dependent on outside sources.⁷²

Due to its acceptance of money from Russia, the CCP was often called 'a Rouble Party'.⁷³ Lacking financial means of its own, the CCP was subject to the Comintern and Moscow. This elicited many criticisms and even accusations. Some members who supported Moscow's diplomacy regardless of China's territorial sovereignty were accused of having 'their conscience ... seduced away' by the gold from Moscow.⁷⁴ Chen Duxiu was attacked for using money from Lenin's Government to bribe workers to make sacrifices for his ambitious revolution.⁷⁵ Charges of this kind were obviously injurious to the Party.

This was also what Li Hanjun had tried to avert. Between the CCP's Second and Third Congresses, Li wrote to the Party's CEC expressing his disapproval of paying Party members merely for being revolutionaries. He felt it wrong for members to rely entirely on the Party, in effect the Soviet-sponsored Comintern, for a living. Cai Hesen censured Li for

⁶⁷ Saich, vol. 1, p 347; Li Yuzhen and Du Weihua (eds), *Malin yu diyici guogong hezuo* [Maring and the First KMT-CCP Cooperation], Guangming ribao chubanshe, Beijing, 1989, p. 98, pp. 150-151, p. 154.

⁶⁸ *EHS*, p. 169.

⁶⁹ Cf. Liu Renjing, 'Huiyi dang de yida' (Recollection of the Party's First Congress), 1979, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 215; Shi Fuliang, 'Zhongguo shehuizhuyi qingniantuan chengli qianhou de yixie qingkuang' (Some circumstances around the establishment of the Chinese Socialist Youth League), in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 73; Lin Tung-hai, p. 69.

⁷⁰ In 'Chen Tuxiu's no. 2 report to the ECCI', 20 March 1925 (*VKNRDK*, vol. 1, no. 142), he demanded that the Comintern increase the monthly budget for the CCP from 2,250 yuan to 3,650 yuan.

⁷¹ 'Slepak to Voitinsky, 25 November 1923', in *VKNRDK*, no. 94; Yang Kuisong, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, pp. 8-9.

⁷² 'Maring's letter to the ECCI', 20 June 1923, in Li Yuzhen and Du Weihua (eds), p. 243; Saich, vol. 1, p. 611.

⁷³ Bao Huiseng, 'Oral recollections', in *ZGDD*, p. 107.

⁷⁴ Zeng Youhao, 'Lun fandui Zhongguo xiancun zhengfu shouhui Wai-Meng de zhuzhang' (The debate about the opposition to the existing Chinese Government regaining control over Outer Mongolia), *Shishi xinbao*, 8 April 1924, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Zhu Qianzhi and Yang Molei, 'Xuwuzhuyizhe de zaisheng' (The rebirth of an anarchist), *Minduo* [People's Bell], vol. 4, no. 4, 1923, p. 9.

not understanding the meaning of ‘professional revolutionary’.⁷⁶ In Cai and other Communists’ opinion, a Communist should not take up any other occupation and should not obtain money from any source other than the Party and the Comintern.

An additional problem was that the funds were not well administered. Maring reported in June 1923 that ‘finance administration in the Party was previously unknown.’⁷⁷ After the February Seventh Massacre, the CCP received money as relief funds from the Soviet Union, the KMT, and even the Feng clique, as well as donations by ordinary Chinese. However, the CCP’s CEC spent part of this money on propaganda and travel.⁷⁸ Many wounded workers and victims’ families, including Lin Xiangqian’s, got no support.⁷⁹ Worse still, an alternate member of the CEC, Zhang Lianguang, put in charge of the relief funds, embezzled some.⁸⁰ The CCP’s misuse of the funds angered workers who had taken part in the Jing-Han Railway Strike. Even some CCP members from Hubei were dissatisfied with the CEC over the misuse of funds for the support of strike victims.⁸¹ This resulted in the withdrawal of several trade union leaders and intellectuals from the Party. One of Li Hanjun’s close friends, Li Shuqu, quit the Party after he learned that the CCP had squandered the funds and engaged in malpractice.⁸²

Li Hanjun realised that using funds without effective supervision could lead to corruption. He advised that trade union funds should be used sparingly and in accordance with clear procedures.⁸³ He saw that once professional revolutionaries did not have a job arranged by the Party, they would live in poverty. In such a way, they could not maintain their independence and dignity. He therefore believed that Communists should have their own professions alongside their revolutionary work. Having their own means, they could thus not only maintain their own and their families’ lives but also support the Party. Moreover, he considered that Communists who worked hard in factories and schools could

⁷⁶ Cai Hesun, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 31.

⁷⁷ Li Yuzhen and Du Weihua (eds), p. 243.

⁷⁸ Maring, ‘Notes concerning the situation on the Peking-Hankow Railway Line and the labor movement in May and early June 1923’, in Saich, vol. 1, 440-443.

⁷⁹ Han. 9003, ‘Li Xiuran deng shang zhongzhijie cheng’ (Li Xiuran and other thirty five KMT members to the CEC of the KMT), 15 August 1924, Enclosure – ‘The Declaration of the Jing-Han Railway General Union’.

⁸⁰ Qiwu laoren, ‘Huiyi Li Dazhao tongzhi’ (Memoir on Comrade Li Dazhao), in *Wusi yundong huiyilu*, vol. 1, p. 364; Ni Xingxiang (ed), *Zhongguo gongchandang chuanguangshishi cidian*, p. 543.

⁸¹ Maring, ‘Report on the situation in China and our work during the period 15-31 May 1923’, in Saich, pp. 539-540.

⁸² Han. 12993.2. ‘Hubei sheng gaizuweiuyuanhui zhiyuan dengjibiao’, 10 September 1927, An entry filled in by Li Shuqu.

⁸³ Li Bogang, ‘Huiyi Li Hanjun’, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 2.

attract others to join the Party.⁸⁴ This view was not unlike that of Maring, who noted the disastrous effect of the lack of occupation among the majority of CCP members – it meant that the CCP had fewer links with industrial workers, teachers and low-level civil servants.⁸⁵

As a Party member with an occupation, Li Hanjun not only paid his dues but frequently gave part of his salary to the Party and to individual Communists and workers in need. He helped maintain the CCP Wuhan branch's liaison office and subsidised young Communists such as Xia Zhixu, Liu Zigu and Liu Nongchao.⁸⁶ When he escaped to Beijing after the February Seventh Incident, he found work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then at the Ministry of Education. He donated part of his salary to the relief fund for the victims of the February Seventh Massacre and helped three women Communists from Hubei fund their higher education.⁸⁷

Li Hanjun's tenure of office in the government (albeit for a short time and at a low rank) aroused criticism in the Party, which provoked further controversies over the role of the professional revolutionary. The CCP and the SY's Beijing committees even held a joint meeting asking Li to give up his job, on the grounds that a Communist could not become an official. Li quoted the precedents of European socialists and explained that his salary was needed to support women Communists from Hubei. Disregarding Li's explanation, the meeting made a decision condemning him for accepting the post and issued a circular to that effect. According to Chen Bilan, who attended the meeting, Li had to give up his Party membership to avoid being expelled.⁸⁸ Actually, Li had not violated Party regulations, for the CCP's Constitution and its Revised Constitution adopted at its second and third congresses stipulated that Party members should not assume office as a 'political appointee' in the state machine dominated by capitalist class without the CEC's special permission, whereas Li was by no means a political appointee.⁸⁹

When it heard about the Beijing Committee's disciplinary action, the CEC rescinded the decision and invited Li Hanjun to the Third Congress in Guangzhou in June 1923. Although Li did not attend, he was elected an alternate member of the CEC. After the Congress, Li Dazhao brought him a letter (in English) dated 25 June 1923, signed 'Your

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p. 3; Cai Hesun, 'Tigang', in *ZDBX*, p. 31; Liu Zigu, 'Oral recollections of Li Hanjun'.

⁸⁵ Li Yuzhen and Du Weihua (eds), p. 243.

⁸⁶ Xia Zhixu, *Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 180; Liu Zigu, 'Oral recollections of Li Hanjun'; Liu Nongchao, *Gemingshi ziliao*, pp. 208-209.

⁸⁷ Saich, vol. 1, p. 440; Chen Bilan, p. 62.

⁸⁸ Chen Bilan, pp. 66-67.

⁸⁹ *ZZWX*, vol. 1, p. 63, p. 126.

comrade'. Judging by its content and form, as well as the spelling of some names, it was almost certainly written by Maring.⁹⁰ It regretted Li Hanjun's absence from the Third Congress and called the Beijing decision wrong. It hoped Li would help in education and propaganda work, as well as with political tasks, together with Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao.⁹¹ Probably as a result, Li Hanjun remained within the Party for one more year.

6.4 On Party Centralism

The above letter from Guangzhou pointed out that it was impossible to build a good Party organisation without close coordination and a strong dose of centralism.⁹² This remark, for all its mildness, was nevertheless a sharp criticism of Li Hanjun. In his report to the Comintern dated 31 May 1923, Maring wrote that Li Hanjun 'supported strongly the decentralisation view'.⁹³ This divergence of views on organisational principles was significant, since it concerned what kind of Communist Party to build in China.

In the spring of 1921, Li Hanjun got into a dispute with Chen Duxiu over Party organisational issues. Chen's draft of the Party Constitution designed the CCP as a centralist organisation, whereas Li preferred a more democratic, decentralised structure.⁹⁴ At the CCP's founding congress, Zhang Guotao drafted Party's rules based on Chen Duxiu's proposal for the establishment of a central authority and disciplinary terms for the party. And Li Hanjun suggested some revisions, as Zhang Guotao recalled:

[T]hat the proposed central committee of the CCP ought to serve merely as a liaison organ, that it should not be able to issue orders at its own discretion. ... that agreement of comrades in all local branches should be obtained on all matters, and that the policy should prevail of having general discussion of everything and of making all issues public.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ 'A Comrade's letter to Li Handjien' (Guangzhou, 25 June 1923) kept in the CCP's Central Archives in Beijing. In the letter, Li Hanjun's name was spelled as 'Li Handjien', which was similar to 'Li Han Djin' in Maring's English notes made in 1923 which are kept in the Sneevliet Archive. See Saich, vol. 1, p. 440, p. 461. Several other Chinese Communists' names in the letter were spelled as Han Te-lon, Chan Lin-kwan, which were exactly the same as the ones in Maring's notes in the Sneevliet Archive.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ Saich, vol. 2, p. 539.

⁹⁴ Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 9; 'Li Da zizhuan', *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 4.

⁹⁵ 'A Brief History of the CCP', in *DCNSAC*, p. 53; Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, pp. 145-6.

Li Hanjun's proposal that the party centre would serve to coordinate the various local party organisations was, to some extent, similar to the General Rules Marx drafted for the International Workingmen's Association, especially its first rule: 'This Association is established to afford a central medium of communication and cooperation between Working Men's Societies existing in different countries and aiming at the same end.'⁹⁶ Sometimes, Marx also stressed centralism. M. M. Drachkovitch observed: 'Marx's vacillation between flexible decentralization and rigid centralism ultimately contributed not only to the down fall of the IWA, but also to the espousal of the different roads by the Second and Third Internationals.'⁹⁷

It is no doubt, the organising principles adopted by the CCP at its founding congress were basically ones of the Comintern as well as of the Bolsheviks. As Chen Duxiu and Chen Tanqiu later commented, the first Party platform was drawn up in the light of Lenin's ideas on party-building and the Bolshevik Party's organising principles.⁹⁸

The Bolshevik Party was initially a clandestine organisation of 'professional revolutionaries', mainly 'socialist intellectuals' of non-proletarian origins.⁹⁹ When the RSDLP adopted 'democratic centralism', Lenin summed it up as 'freedom of discussion, unity of action'.¹⁰⁰ Lenin advocated a highly centralised, tightly organised, strictly disciplined party, capable of surviving Tsarist repression. He stressed unity of organisation and centralisation of work by means of 'the subordination of the minority to the majority, of the part to the whole', and attacked the Mensheviks' 'tendency towards autonomism as against centralism'.¹⁰¹

Not long after Lenin formulated this doctrine, R. Luxemburg pointed out:

The centralisation of social democracy, based on these two principles – firstly the blind subjection of all party organs and their activity, down to the minutest detail, to a central authority which thinks, acts and decides for everyone, and secondly the strict separation of the organised core of the party from the surrounding revolutionary milieu, as Lenin would have it – seems to us no more or less than a

⁹⁶ Marx, 'General Rules and Administrative Regulations of the Working Men's International Association', 24 October 1871, in *MECW*, vol. 23, p. 4.

⁹⁷ M. M. Drachkovitch (ed), *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1966, p. vii.

⁹⁸ Pu Qingquan, in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji*, p. 33; Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 287.

⁹⁹ Cf. Lenin, 'What Is to Be Done?' in *LCW*, vol. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Lenin, 'Report on the Unity Congress of the RSDLP', in *LCW*, vol. 10, p. 380.

¹⁰¹ Lenin, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back', in *LCW*, vol. 7, p. 207.

mechanical transference of the Blanquist principles of the organisation of conspiratorial groups to the social democratic movement of the working classes.¹⁰²

L. Trotsky, then a Menshevik, voiced similar criticisms. In his opinion,

In the internal politics of the party, these methods lead, as we shall yet see, to this: the party organisation is a substitute for the party, the Central Committee is substituted for the party organisation, and finally a 'dictator' is substituted for the Central Committee.¹⁰³

In spite of the danger they might lead, the Bolsheviks imposed their organising principles on foreign parties through the Comintern. The 'Conditions of Admission to the Comintern' drafted by Lenin demanded:

Parties belonging to the Communist International must be based on the principle of democratic centralism. In the present epoch of acute civil war the communist party will be able to fulfil its duty only if its organisation is as centralised as possible, if iron discipline prevails, and if the party centre, upheld by the confidence of the party membership, has strength and authority and is equipped with the most comprehensive powers.¹⁰⁴

In 1921, the Comintern's Third Congress adopted 'Theses on the Structure of Communist Parties and on the Methods and Content of Their Work' that emphasised the party's and the Comintern's 'central leadership':

The representatives and delegates of the central leadership are entitled to attend all meetings and sessions with a consultative voice and the right of veto. The central party leadership must always have their delegates (commissars) available in order to be able to give responsible instruction and information to district and area committees, not only by political and organisational circulars and correspondence, but also by direct word of mouth.

The theses also stressed that '[t]he directives and decisions of the leading party bodies are binding on subordinate organisations and on all individual members', and 'party members are obliged to act always as disciplined members of a militant organisation'. They stipulated that 'Party organisations and committees also have the duty of deciding whether and to what extent and in what form questions should be discussed by individual comrades in public'; and anyone who 'publicly attacks the party or the International is to be treated as an enemy of the party.'¹⁰⁵

These theses, which stressed central control and the submission of subordinate to superordinate, were adopted by the CCP. In his report to the Comintern dated 30 June

¹⁰² 'Problems of Organisation of Russian Social Democracy', in L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution*, translated by P. S. Falla, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, vol. 2, p. 83.

¹⁰³ L. Trotsky, 'Our Political Tasks', 1904, in *A Documentary History of Communism*, R. V. Daniels (ed), University Press of New England, Hanover, NH, 1984, vol. 1, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Degras (ed), vol. 1, p. 171.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 268-69.

1922, Chen Duxiu emphasised that the CCP would ‘rigorously enforce centralism’.¹⁰⁶ Not long afterwards, the CCP’s Second Congress adopted the first Party Constitution and a resolution on the Constitution. The resolution declared that the CCP was not ‘a Marxist society organised by intellectuals’, and stressed that it should become a ‘tight, centralised, and disciplined organisation’ and ‘have centralist spirit and iron discipline’; Party members had to undergo rigorous and strict military-style training and ‘must sacrifice their personal feelings, opinions and interests to secure Party uniformity.’¹⁰⁷ Under this Bolshevik-style Constitution, the CEC had supreme power over policy-making, finance management and individual members’ actions, so local branches and Party members had no choice other than to obey. Delegates to the Second Congress were not elected by local branches but appointed by the centre. Basic democratic procedures were suspended.

Against this tendency, Li Hanjun again advanced his view of how the Party should be organised. He refused to attend the Second Congress, but, according to Cai Hesen, wrote a letter to the CEC opposing centralism and iron discipline and suggesting that Party’s local organisations should be allowed to make their own policies and tactics in the light of special circumstance; the CEC should not decide everything and order local organisations about in the cause of rigid uniformity.¹⁰⁸ In his report on CCP history, Li Lisan confirmed that Li Hanjun upheld the autonomy of local Party organisations and objected to centralism.¹⁰⁹

From a practical point of view, a centralised and disciplined party might be more efficient and better able to wage struggle against enemy and seize state power, especially in an economically backward country with little by way of democratic tradition. So why did Li Hanjun reject centralism as the CCP’s organising principle? His objection can be explained as follows. When he received Chen Duxiu’s draft of the Party Constitution in the spring of 1921, Li Hanjun thought that centralism would encourage dictatorship.¹¹⁰ At the CCP’s founding congress, he said a centralist centre was unnecessary: it would entail a high cost and lead to manipulation by people with

¹⁰⁶ *GLZWX*, vol. 2, p. 309.

¹⁰⁷ *EHS*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁰⁸ Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, pp. 29-30; p. 42.

¹⁰⁹ Li Lisan, ‘Dangshi baogao’, in *ZDBX*, p. 214.

¹¹⁰ Li Da, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 9; ‘Li Da zizhuan’, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 4.

‘wicked ambitions’.¹¹¹ In his letters to the CEC at the time of the Second Congress, he pointed out that China’s poor communications ruled out the need for a centralised and unitary organisation. In his opinion, ‘centralism might lead to individual dictatorship by Party leaders; the centralist power could also be employed by wicked persons to do evil’, while iron discipline would strengthen the dictatorship. He wrote further: ‘There was autocracy in China in the past. If the CCP adopts centralism, it will follow the old track to ruin.’¹¹² Clearly, Li Hanjun had severe reservations about Bolshevik principles of organisation.

But Li Hanjun did not reject ‘democratic centralism’ tout à fait. On the contrary, he approved of the principle of ‘freedom of discussion, unity of action’ and the ‘subordination of the minority to the majority’, which contained democratic elements. He once wrote that there were always different opinions on a policy within an organisation, so it should adopt the majority’s view, to which the minority should submit. Once a resolution was passed, the organisation should carry it out unitedly. He also said that members of an organisation should elect and supervise its leader, who could not be solely blamed if things went wrong.¹¹³ These ideas were similar in spirit to some early Bolshevik organising principles – members help frame policy and elect leaders, but once policy is decided, everyone is responsible for carrying it out. Li Hanjun followed these principles. At the First Congress, he discussed Party policy and tactics, but abided by the decision of the majority when his opinions were rejected.¹¹⁴ When he felt something was wrong with the Party, he thought it his duty to express his views frankly and offer suggestions unreservedly, by word of mouth or letter.

Moreover, Li Hanjun thought a ‘strong and vigorous organisation’ should be built on solid foundations. He agreed with Zhang Wentian that the Party needed a fixed programme, a good organisation and members committed to carrying out party resolutions and in sympathy with one another (those who used the party for personal fame and gain should be expelled). So Li was by no means opposed to the idea of a well-organised and strong party with combat capability and effectiveness that can conduct joint actions.

¹¹¹ Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

¹¹² Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, pp. 29-30.

¹¹³ Hanjun, ‘Du Zhang Wentian’, *JW*, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p. 147; also see some of Liu Renjing’s recollections.

However, Zhang Guotao likened Li to the Mensheviks, accusing him of telling the First Party Congress that the CCP should be a Marxist federation, without a central organ and discipline.¹¹⁵ Chen Tanqiu wrote in 1936 that Li Hanjun's views on Party organisation at the time of the First Congress were that anyone who believed in and propagated Marxism could be admitted to the Party and members did not need to engage in actual work in a Party organisation: a disciplined, militant working class' party was not necessary.¹¹⁶ In 1926, in a report to the Comintern, Cai Hesen said that there had been a tendency in the CCP to reject centralism and iron discipline, and denounced this as 'Li Hanjun-ism, which was Chinese Menshevism'. According to Cai, Li was expelled from the Party because of his Menshevik inclinations.¹¹⁷

To a certain extent, these people may have wanted to put a Menshevik 'hat' on Li Hanjun. However, in some ways their remarks truly reflected Li's views. As G. V. Plekhanov and Y. O. Martov foresaw, there was an implicit danger of radical elitism and authoritarianism in Bolshevik principles of organisation.¹¹⁸ This was also Li Hanjun's concern: that Party centralism might lead to a personal dictatorship by Party leaders and to the abuse of power.

As in the Bolshevik case, the centralist trend in the CCP increased, at the expense of democracy. The CEC intervened in all aspects of the subordinate organisations' activities. Party members were not allowed to express their different views freely and did not have the chance to discuss important issues: they could only obey decisions imposed on them. A Chinese historian, Guan Huailun, pointed out that there was no democratic centralism in the CCP's early stage, and what it adopted was the centralism of Leninist party.¹¹⁹

At the CCP's August Seventh Conference in 1927, Chen Duxiu was criticised on the following grounds:

The system inside the Party was like one of a patriarchal society. Everything was decided by the upper-level party leaders, and the top leader's opinions were

¹¹⁵ Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 287.

¹¹⁷ Cai Hesen, 'Guanyu Zhongguo gongchandang de zuzhi he dangnei shenghuo xiang Gongchanguoji de baogao' (Report to the Comintern on the CCP's organisation and its inner-party situation), 1926, *Zhongyang dang'anguan congkan* [The Journal of the CCP's Central Archives], no. 2, 1987, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ W. G. Rosenberg and M. B. Young, *Transforming Russia and China: Revolutionary Struggle in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 34.

¹¹⁹ Guan Huailun, 'Jizhongzhi shi Zhonggong "erda" "sanda" "sida" de zuzhi zhidu' (Centralism was the organisation system of the Second, Third and Fourth Congresses of the CCP), *Jiangsu shehui kexue* [Jiangsu Social Sciences], no. 5, 2009, p. 155.

considered as something one ought to and must obey. ... In such circumstances, democracy within the Party became only an empty word.¹²⁰

Ironically, having been persecuted, it was Chen's turn to demand democracy and free discussion within the Party, but the upcoming leader Qu Qiubai criticised his views as a 'full manifestation of Menshevism' and reaffirmed Bolshevik-style democratic centralism and iron discipline.¹²¹

Following this further wave of Bolshevisation, the CCP became more and more centralised. In his 'History of the CCP's Opportunism', Cai Hesen, a member of the CEC who had lashed out against Li Hanjun's view on decentralisation, complained that there was only centralisation and no democracy in the CCP. As a result, 'Party branches relied entirely on direction by higher levels and Party members became nothing more than soldiers mindlessly obeying orders.' He went on,

If the Party's leading bodies encountered dissident views or criticisms from Party branches or members, they saw them as the worst form of offence and took high-handed measures to stifle them. ... Iron discipline became a weapon for intimidating and repressing Party members.¹²²

At the CCP's Sixth Congress held in Moscow in 1928, many delegates criticised Party life: it lacked democratic procedures, the Party ruled like a patriarchy or an emperor, and problems were never handed over to the branches for discussion, so the branches became conveyor belts for transmitting orders from the top to the grass-roots.¹²³

Today, the CCP remains a party in which dissenting voices are not allowed and in which monolithic unity is enforced from above.

6.5 Personal Conflicts within the Party

Li Hanjun's removal from the Party probably also had other reasons beyond his disagreements on policies, tactics and organising principles. Slepak suggested in his letter to the Comintern that in addition to the above factors, Li was elbowed out by someone.¹²⁴ Maring clearly pointed out that 'personal conflicts between members of

¹²⁰ 'The August Seventh Conference's Appeal to All Members of the CCP', quoted from Luk, p. 224.

¹²¹ *Qu Qiubai wenji (Zhengzhi lilun bian)*, vol. 1, p. 685.

¹²² Cai Hesen, 'Dang de jihui zhuyi shi', in *ZDBX*, p. 147.

¹²³ 'Zhou Enlai liuda baogao he fayan xuanzai' (Zhou Enlai's report to the Sixth Congress and his several speeches), *Dang de wenxian* [Literature of the Party (CCP)], no. 3, 2008, p. 15, p. 24.

¹²⁴ 'Slepak to Voitinsky, 25 November 1923', in *VKNRDK*, no. 94.

the Central Committee have caused him [Li Hanjun] to leave the Party.’¹²⁵ At the CCP’s Fourth Congress, Li’s withdrawal evoked sympathy from delegates who attributed it to Chen Duxiu’s ‘imperiousness’ and Zhang Guotao’s ‘severe attack’.¹²⁶ The ‘personal conflicts’ Maring noted were mainly among Chen Duxiu, Zhang Guotao and Li Hanjun. Some arose over differences of conduct and moral character rather than of political opinions.

In January 1922, Li Hanjun published a long article ‘On Mr Zhang Wentian’s “Origins and Settlement of Chaos in China”’. In it, he pointed out: ‘There are five shortcomings that would hinder Chinese from organising a strong and vigorous organisation.’ They were:

1. ‘Harbouring deep suspicions’: some in the organisation were in the habit of distrusting others and of believing that others harboured ill will or malice; they were cynical about others’ intentions.
2. ‘A lack of a sense of responsibility’: when members were thought to be in the wrong, they should first be questioned at a meeting; if they really were, they should be admonished or disciplined. As things stood, people were not given the chance to explain themselves, nor given any disciplinary action, but were instead slandered.
3. ‘No clear line between comrade and non-comrade’: if someone suspected of wrongdoing was proved innocent and not expelled, he or she should still be considered and treated as a comrade, something that did not always happen.
4. ‘Confusion between public and personal interests’: since an organisation formed on the basis of a certain doctrine, its members should not treat others on the basis of their personal likes and dislikes, and be hostile to some comrades in disregard of common cause and joint actions, etc.
5. ‘No knowledge of definite duties’: some members did not know that they had a duty to the organisation, and often shuffled off their responsibilities on others. If something went wrong, they blamed the person in charge and forgot that they themselves were responsible for electing and supervising him or her. On the other hand, the person in charge believed that he would assumed full responsibility for the organisation and regarded the ordinary members as

¹²⁵ Maring, ‘Report on the situation in China and our work during the period 15-31 May 1923’, in Saich, p. 539.

¹²⁶ Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 43.

nothing; he always made decisions on policies and other issues arbitrarily without seeking ordinary members' opinions.¹²⁷

It was obvious that the 'organisation' Li Hanjun wrote about in the article was the CCP, and that the shortcomings of the organisation's leader that Li remarked upon – making decisions on policies and other issues arbitrarily without seeking ordinary members' opinions – was directed at the CCP's top leader, Chen Duxiu.

Chen Duxiu's tendency to arbitrary rule has been noted by many. In 1920, Liu Dabai, an anarchist who attended the discussion meetings to form the CCP, said: 'Chen Duxiu is very autocratic'.¹²⁸ Wu Rongcang, an early CCP member, 'hated Chen Duxiu's dictatorship'.¹²⁹ Li Da thought Chen high-handed and lacking in morality: normally he did not permit other Communists to visit his home, where he was living with a woman other than his wife. Chen sometimes struck the table or threw teacups when he was reproving comrades who had faults or different views from his.¹³⁰ Deng Zhongxia once publicly criticised Chen as the Party 'patriarch'.¹³¹ Lin Boqu, an old Communist, recalled that Chen, acting as a patriarch within the Party, never allowed others to express their opinions at Party meetings.¹³² Chen Duxiu's bureaucracy paternalism, egoism and immorality caused some early Communists to leave the Party.¹³³

As a person committed to retaining his independence and moral values, Li Hanjun was discontented with Chen's patriarchal and peremptory leadership and despised Chen's personal immorality.

Chen Duxiu's refusal to offer the *Xin qingnian* editing fees to the early Communist organisation in Shanghai was, in Li Hanjun's view, an example of Chen's 'private ownership' mentality. This episode cast a shadow over their relationship and caused dissatisfaction among Communists in Shanghai. Another conflict occurred around the spring of 1921, when (after receiving Chen's draft of the Party Constitution, which

¹²⁷ *JW*, 5 February 1922, p. 4.

¹²⁸ Hua Lin, 'Yuyangli 6 hao he fu E xuexi de qingkuang' (On 6 Yuyang Lane and going to study in Russia), *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, no. 1, p. 43.

¹²⁹ Baopu, 'Chi E youji' (Travel notes in Red Russia), *Chen bao fukan* [Morning Post, Supplement], 26 August 1924.

¹³⁰ Li Da's several recollections mentioned this.

¹²⁰ Deng Zhongxia, p. 113.

¹³² Lin Boqu, 'Cong tongmenghuiyuan dao gongchandangyuan' (From a member of the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance Society to a member of the CCP), Lin Boqu's oral recollection interviewed by Wang Laidi in 1956, in Wang laid (ed), p. 22.

¹³³ See Yuan Zhenying's comment. According to him, Chen Duxiu lived with his wife's younger sister after abandoning his wife and two sons. 'Yuan Zhenying de huiyi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 475.

stressed centralism) Li came to the conclusion that Chen was asking members to support his personal dictatorship.¹³⁴ In response, Chen wrote to Communists in other places condemning the Communists in Shanghai for opposing him and claimed that Li Hanjun and Chen Wangdao were trying to take over the leadership. Chen Wangdao was very angry about Chen Duxiu's 'base action' and left the Party.¹³⁵ Li Hanjun's withdrawal from the CCP was, in the opinion of many early Communists, partly related to Chen's 'peremptoriness' and 'paternalism'.¹³⁶

Many of the five shortcomings Li Hanjun pointed out were actually associated with Zhang Guotao. Compared with Chen Duxiu's open and aboveboard style, Zhang Guotao was regarded by many early Communists as dishonest, insincere and overly ambitious.¹³⁷

From the outset, Li Hanjun considered Zhang Guotao neither honest nor upright.¹³⁸ At the Party's founding congress, Li and several delegates disliked Zhang's arranging, controlling and monopolising everything in accordance with the Comintern representatives' bidding. Zhang even forced delegates to change resolutions to please them.¹³⁹ He is said to have used his position as chairman of the Congress to take discriminatory measures against Li Hanjun. According to the original plan, the Congress was supposed to change venue every day. However, Zhang insisted on holding it constantly in Li's home. He told Chen Gongbo that Li Hanjun was 'yellow instead of red. The more he goes in fear of his home being in danger, the longer we will insist on meeting at his home.' So Chen wrote that Zhang was deliberately endangering Li.¹⁴⁰ Li Hanjun also believed that designating his home as the sole meeting place was designed to imperil him.¹⁴¹ During discussions, Zhang always took

¹³⁴ Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 9.

¹³⁵ Chen Wangdao, 'Sixiang xiaojie' (Summary report on my thoughts), 1951; quoted from Deng Mingyi, 'Chen Wangdao', in *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of Prominent Figures of the CCP], Hu Hua (ed), Shanxi renmin chubanshe, Xian, 1985, vol. 25, p. 312; Chen Wangdao, 'Dang de jianli shiqi qingkuang' (The situation during the period of founding the CCP), *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, no. 1, 1980, p. 30; Cai Hesen in his 'Tigang' assumed that Li Hanjun and Chen Wangdao had challenged Chen Duxiu for the leadership, as well as holding different opinions from Chen (*ZDBX*, p. 42).

¹³⁶ Cai Hesen, *ibid.*, p. 43; Xu Meikun, 'Recollections of Li Hanjun'.

¹³⁷ For example, Shen Yanbing wrote that Zhang Guotao harboured personal ambition as soon as he became the head of the Chinese Labour Organisation Secretariat; he started hatching conspiracy of 'small group' within the Party and acted surreptitiously. Xing Tian, 'Suowei "Xiao Lasaier" zhe' (The so-called 'Little Lassalle'), *Bitan*, no. 6, 16 November 1941, pp. 30-31.

¹³⁸ Bao Huiseng, *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, p. 137.

¹³⁹ Cf. *YDQH*, vols. 2-3.

¹⁴⁰ Chen Gongbo, in *Chen Gongbo Zhou Fohai huiyilu hebian*, p. 18.

¹⁴¹ Han. 12993.2.

the lead in attacking Li. Moreover, Zhang manipulated the voting to prevent Li Hanjun from joining the central leadership. Even Liu Renjing, Zhang's confederate at the Congress, claimed that Zhang resorted to manoeuvre during the voting and that several delegates had a strong aversion to him.¹⁴²

After becoming head of the Party's organisation department, Zhang Guotao continued playing tricks and treating other Communists high-handedly. He once shouted abuse at Chen Duxiu and other leading members who tried to maintain the CCP's independence from the Comintern. Maring was even prepared to dismiss Chen from the Party because of Zhang's reports. As a result, Chen called Zhang 'a Comintern running dog'. When the Comintern sent Zhang Tailei to Japan in August 1921, a telegram sent to Japan by Li Da may have hindered Zhang Tailei's mission, whereupon Zhang Guotao suggested shooting Li Da for his mistake.¹⁴³ These words and actions suggest that Zhang Guotao tried to curry favour with the Comintern while taking ruthless measures against his own comrades.

Soon after the CCP was formally established, Zhang began colluding with others to form a 'small group' within the Party. The group is accused of dividing other Communists into good and bad and left and right, thus creating internal conflicts. There is evidence that after the Second Congress the CEC was for a time controlled by this 'small group' and that Zhang Guotao tried to take leadership over from Chen Duxiu. As a result, for a while Chen no longer wished to remain on the CEC. Dalin, the Youth Comintern's representative, observed that the CCP had split into two factions.¹⁴⁴

In their memoirs many early Chinese Communists support this view of Zhang Guotao as devious, keen on promoting internal strife and the instigator of defamatory attacks on comrades or opponents.¹⁴⁵ Such conduct was likely to create unwarranted suspicions, alienate competent members and divide the Party into factions.

Zhang Guotao's divisive activities aroused considerable opposition. At the Third Congress, he failed to get onto the CEC. Chen Duxiu in his report to the Congress criticised that Zhang's thought was 'extremely narrow and thus he committed many

¹⁴² Liu Renjing, 'Huiyi Wusi yundong', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 117; Liu Renjing, 'Oral Recollections of Li Hanjun'; *Bao Huiseng huiyilu*, p. 321.

¹⁴³ Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁴ Shi Fuliang, 'Zhongguo gongchandang chengli shiqi de jige wenti', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 37; 'Maring's letter to the ECCI', 20 June 1923, in Li Yuzhen and Du Weihua (eds), pp. 243-244.

¹⁴⁵ See the recollections of Li Da, Bao Huiseng, Chen Gongbo, Liu Renjing, Shen Yabing and so on, in *YDQH*, vols. 2-3.

mistakes'; one of which is organising 'a small group' in the Party. Chen also pointed out: 'Relations between comrades in the Party are not very close, they are very suspicious of each other.' Chen's criticisms levelled at Zhang were just the shortcomings Li Hanjun had noticed before - 'harbouring deep suspicions', 'treating other comrades on the basis of personal likes and dislikes'.¹⁴⁶

In the same report, Chen Duxiu said: 'In our Party there exist serious tendencies of individualism. Party members are prone not to have complete faith in the Party. Even if the Party is incorrect in a few things, still it is not necessary to leave the Party.'¹⁴⁷ This criticism was aimed at Li Hanjun, Chen Wangdao and Shen Xuanlu (the latter two were also founding members of the CCP and had close connections with Li). Unhappy with some policies and leaders, they became inactive and finally left.¹⁴⁸ Chen Duxiu's report hinted that one reason for some members lacked faith in the CCP and withdrew from it was the atmosphere of suspicion created by Zhang Guotao. Cai Hesen, a member of the 'small group', admitted that Zhang's criticism of Li Hanjun and his alleged extremism were the cause of Li's withdrawal.¹⁴⁹ According to other recollections, Zhang's behaviour towards Li directly prompted Li's exit.¹⁵⁰

In the foregoing sections, I have explored the factors that caused Li Hanjun's withdrawal from the CCP, principally the disagreements and conflicts between him and the CCP's leading body and the Comintern. All these factors were closely interlinked: joining the Comintern and relying on Comintern's financial aid meant that the CCP had to observe policies and tactics designed by the Comintern; as its section, the CCP had to serve Soviet interests and adopt Bolshevik organising principles. So, this demonstrates that what Li Hanjun rejected was a package of Bolshevik schemes.

To a certain extent, the personal conflicts between Li Hanjun and some Party leaders was also related to the issue of the Party's organising principles. The personal character and moral conduct of some leaders added impetus to Li's attempt to reduce the power of the Central Committee and expand that of local committees' autonomy. Li had ample reasons to worry about Party centralism and strict discipline, which

¹⁴⁶ Saich, vol. 2, p. 576; Hanjun, 'Du Zhang Wentian', *JW*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Saich, vol. 2, p. 576.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Maring's notes and report, in Saich, vol. 1, p. 461; vol. 2, p. 539; Cai Hesen, 'Tigang', in *ZDBX*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴⁹ Cai Hesen, *ibid.*, p. 43. Li Hanjun once told Xia Zhixu that Zhang Guotao had been an ultra-leftist one moment and become a right opportunist the next. See Xia Zhixu, 'Oral recollection of Li Hanjun', interviewed by Tian Ziyu in 1981 (unpublished).

¹⁵⁰ Bao Huiseng, *Dangshi ziliao congkan*, p. 137; Maodun, *Wo zouguo de daolu*, vol. 1, p. 178.

would probably ‘be exploited by some person of wicked ambition to do evil’ and to ‘lead the individual dictatorship’.¹⁵¹ Zhang Guotao was just such a person of ‘wicked ambition’, while Chen Duxiu had an autocratic tendency. Therefore, both might be candidates for this scenario.

After leaving the CCP, Li Hanjun remained a committed Marxist, in his theoretical views and also to a large extent in practice. He continued lecturing on historical materialism in Wuhan and using Marxist ideas to direct the labour movement, women’s movement and student movement there. The CCP leaders even persuaded him to continue working for the Party. Between 1925 and 1926, Li was invited to teach at universities and schools jointly run by the CCP and the KMT’s left wing for cadre training. These included the Sino-Russian University in Beijing, Shanghai University and the Northwest Military School of the National Army commanded by the nationalist and pro-Soviet warlord Feng Yuxiang.¹⁵²

During the Chinese Great Revolution (1924-1927), whose aim was anti-imperialism and anti-warlordism, Li Hanjun joined the KMT (in July 1926), on the recommendation of Dong Biwu and Zhang Guo’en, Communists then in charge of the KMT’s Hubei branch.¹⁵³ However, Li believed that the CCP had more active revolutionaries than the KMT, and pinned his hopes for a future revolution on the CCP. In the autumn of 1926, the CCP’s Hubei Committee resolved to resume Li Hanjun’s membership, but this resolution was not approved by the Party’s CEC. According to Yuan Puzhi, the resolution was perhaps vetoed by Chen Duxiu.¹⁵⁴ Despite failing to rejoin the CCP, Li Hanjun still cooperated with it, although he sometimes thought that some Communist principles and measures did not apply to the objective reality in China at the time. In any case, he continued to advocate the liberation of working people, just as he had always done.

¹⁵¹ Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 29; Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

¹⁵² Zhang Ximan, *Lishi huyi* [Historical Reminiscences], Jidong yinshushe, Shanghai, 1949, pp. 6-7; Zheng Chaolin, ‘Youguan Li Hanjun de er san shi’; Le Tianyu, ‘Wo suo liaojie de Li Hanjun tongzhi’.

¹⁵³ Han. 12993.2; Deng Chumin, ‘Jushi shugan’ (Recalling past events with emotion by a man aged 90), *Hubei wenshi ziliao*, no. 3, 1981, p. 15.

¹⁵⁴ Yuan Puzhi, *Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 184; Wang Huiwen, ‘Wo yu Hanjun xiansheng guanxi shimo’.

7 Views on Socialism

As a doctrine, socialism originated in Europe in the age of industrialisation in the eighteenth century, although its roots can be traced back to a more distant past; and the term ‘socialism’ first appeared in print in the early nineteenth century.¹ The modern socialist movement dated from the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. However, Marx and Engels refrained from any attempt to provide a detailed description, or even a definition, of socialism, since they knew that the form, or forms, socialism might take would be revealed by historical processes still unfolding. For them, socialism was first and foremost a negation of capitalism: it would develop its own positive identity (communism) through a long revolutionary process.

Likewise, it was clear to Li Hanjun, the aim of socialism was ‘eradicating social evils’ and socialist society was a transitional stage on the road to communism, an ‘ideal world’. In his view, Marxist socialism came from the scientific study of the past and the present society, and was the particular product of the development of capitalism, so ‘various socialist schools in modern times were based on the principles of Marxian socialism.’² Marxist socialism, said Li, employs the force of the proletariat and their class struggle against the capitalists to turn the means of production over to public ownership. Yet with regard to which form the class struggle would take, what sort of public ownership would be established, and how to conduct production and distribution in the socialist society, Marx left no detailed blueprints or instructions.³

Li Hanjun tried hard to introduce socialist thought and practice to the Chinese public and explored issues such as why socialism was applicable to China, how socialism would be realised in China and what might be the ideal future form of socialism. These are the topics I will deal with in this chapter. However, since Li never tried to predict what kind of socialism China would adopt, I have to gather together his random ideas and vague scenarios from his relevant writings and speeches. It is interesting to notice that around the same time as Li, several other Chinese

¹ Cf. G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, MacMillan, London, 1960, vol. 1, pp. 1-9.

² Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi yu ziyou piping’ (Socialism and free criticism), a letter to Leqin, *JW*, 21 May 1920, p. 3; Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’ (Free criticism and social issues), *JW*, 30 May 1920, p. 4.

³ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 12, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘Shehui kexue tekan fakan zhiqiu’, sequel, *JW*’s Special Social Science Issues, no. 2, 15 December 1924, p. 5.

Communists also articulated their opinions on these issues. I will thus compare Li Hanjun's with theirs to uncover the similarities and differences.

7.1 *Introducing Various Schools of Socialism*

In Chapter 3, I showed how Li Hanjun studied socialist theory and practice. As a result of his studies, he wrote several articles introducing socialism to the Chinese. Firstly, he attempted to make clear what the principles and contents of socialism were. In his article 'Free Criticism and Social Issues' written in May 1920, Li cited fifteen different definitions of socialism by F. Engels, G. Wallace, J. S. Mill, P. La Fargue, T. Kakup, R. T. Ely, A. Wagner, W. D. P. Bliss, the Social Democratic Federation in UK, the Fabian Societies in UK and in USA, and others. Synthesising these definitions, Li came to the conclusion: socialist theories, despite the complicated and frequently rather fine differences between schools, have positions and tenets in common, namely 'to make people equal in society; to transfer the means of production to common ownership, to be fair in distribution.'⁴ Later, Li further expounded these tenets. To him, 'Equal in society' meant equal opportunities for all to work and be educated; and the 'means of production' included factories, mines, lands, forests, transport, and production materials, but not the means of livelihood intended for private consumption. He stated that a socialist should never claim the right to seize other people's food, clothes and houses and to put them to common use.⁵ So the socialist doctrine espoused by Li was not the same as that advocated by some other Chinese Communists, who were concerned chiefly to 'share property' and 'cure economic inequality'.⁶

Li Hanjun once wrote that to study socialism one should look not at the surface texture of society but also at its 'internal trends'.⁷ Never resting content with a smattering of knowledge of socialism, he later conducted a more painstaking and thoroughgoing study of the origins, development, and principles of socialism and the views of various socialist schools, in order to understand socialism thoroughly.

⁴ The definitions Li Hanjun cited were from Issue 2 of *Shakaishugi kenkyū* [Socialist Research], edited by Yamakawa Hitoshi.

⁵ Li Hanjun, 'Shehuizhuyi de paibie', *JW*, no. 12, p. 4.

⁶ Mao Zedong's words spoken at a meeting of National Association of Industrialists and Businessmen on 8 December 1965, in *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long Live Mao Zedong Thought], 1967, Part. 1, p. 71; He (Li Da's pen name), 'Shehuizhuyi de mudi' (The purpose of socialism), *JW*, 9 June 1919, p. 4.

⁷ Hanjun, 'I.W.W. gaiyao', *XQPL*, p. 3.

According to Li Hanjun, socialism could be roughly divided into three groups in both the narrow and the broad sense. He believed socialist ideas in the broad sense included policies for improving public education and promoting social reform, while in the narrow sense could refer to either ‘socialism’ or ‘communism’. From the basic tenets of socialism various schools derived.⁸ In a lengthy article ‘Schools of Socialism’, Li conducted a comprehensive analysis of the various schools of socialism.⁹ At the outset, he distinguished between utopian and scientific socialism: Utopian socialists imagined an ideal and perfect society without competition and exploitation, whereas scientific socialism was the product of the development of capitalism and proceeded from the scientific study of the past and present society. He proclaimed that Marxism was the origin of scientific socialism, since the latter was based on Marx’s ideas of historical materialism and his economic theory.¹⁰

Li Hanjun knew that ‘socialism’ encompassed a wide range of isms, including socialism in the narrow sense, communism, state socialism, collectivism, democratic socialism, guild socialism, syndicalism, anarcho-communism and even anarchism. According to him, these schools can be classified on the basis of different principles, including policy, ideals and distribution. They mainly originated from different ideals for the future society. For example, state socialism (or collectivism) wanted all means of production to be under state ownership and administered by a centralist government; while syndicalism stood for control and management of production and distribution by producers’ unions. According to the different policies and tactics adopted in actual struggle, socialism can be divided into the parliamentary sort and that based on direct action; and according to the different measures of distribution, there also appeared the division between collectivism and communism.

Li then offered further subdivisions. For example, he divided the school of ‘direct action’ into ‘economic direct action’ and ‘political direct action’; and collectivism into subjective equality and objective equality (as determined by the method of distribution). ‘Subjective equality’ meant working people receiving income according to their ability and skills; while ‘objective equality’ meant that working people all

⁸ Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, *JW*, p. 4.

⁹ This article was compiled from the lecture notes made by his student Ji Yongsui during Li Hanjun’s lectures at the ‘Society for Studying History and Sociology’ of Wuchang Normal University between 1923 and 1925. According to Xia Zhixu’s recollection, she started making a clean copy of Li’s draft of ‘Schools of Socialism’ in the later part of 1923 (*Gemingshi ziliao*, p. 180). But it was published in *Juewu* in May and June 1925.

¹⁰ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 12, pp. 2-3.

receive the same income, regardless of ability and skills.¹¹ It seems that no other Communists or socialists in China at the time could compare with Li in respect of his understanding of socialist theory.

For Li Hanjun, socialism was not merely a theory but a movement. He therefore considered it necessary for Chinese to know the history of the international socialist movement and keep abreast of its development. In 1920, he planned to compile a book titled *A History of the Socialist Movement*, which was supposed to be published in April 1921.¹² Perhaps it failed to materialise or was destroyed before being distributed. In February 1921, the police of the French Concession raided a bookstore at 283 rue du Consulate and seized several socialist books including *The History of Socialism*. The books were probably later burned.¹³ However, in ‘Labourers and the “International Movements”’, published in *Xingqi pinglun* in instalments in 1920, Li gave an account of international labour movements starting with the International Working Men’s Association and ending with the Communist International. He quoted the programmes of the First and the Second Internationals and gave a lucid account of their activities. At the end, he briefly introduced the Third International. Li indicated that he was preparing to enlarge this article into a pamphlet and told readers that his writing had referred to *The Social Movements in the Western Countries*.¹⁴ This suggests that ‘Labourers and the International Movements’ was an abridged version of *A History of the Socialist Movement*. Elsewhere, Li Hanjun gave a brief account of the proletarian movement, commencing with the workers’ uprising in Lyons and the Chartist movement in the UK.¹⁵ He also described more recent socialist parties and working-class organisations in the UK, France, Germany, Russia, the USA, Italy, Sweden, and Japan, as well as their doctrines and practices.¹⁶

In so doing, Li Hanjun broadened Chinese people’s view of socialist ideas and revolutionary organisations across the world; besides, he himself acquired a fuller and deeper understanding of them. He took quite an open attitude towards a variety of socialist theories and practices. He reiterated that socialists in different countries

¹¹ Similar points are also written in his ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, *JW*, p. 4.

¹² *Minguo ribao*, 7 June 1920, p. 1.

¹³ ‘French Concession Police and Socialist Literature’, FO 228/3291, Shanghai Intelligence Report for the Quarter Ended 31st March, 1921. According to the Shanghai Intelligence Report for the Quarter Ended 31st December, 1921, many books seized in Chen Duxiu’s house were burnt.

¹⁴ Hanjun, ‘Laodongzhe yu “guoji yundong”’, *XQPL*, nos. 51-53.

¹⁵ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, p. 48; Jinghu, *Jiangsheng rikan*, 11 February 1924.

¹⁶ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’; Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’.

should develop their theories and methods in the light of their own circumstances. He observed that Social Democracy, Bolshevism, syndicalism and Guild Socialism were all manifestations of Marxism under different conditions. In his view, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks in Russia, and the Spartacus League and the Revisionist Social Democratic Party in Germany were all different factions of the same Marxist school.¹⁷

For Li Hanjun, Bolshevism was one school of Marxism among many. Other early Chinese Communists viewed things differently. For example, Li Da believed that only socialism as realised in Russia by the Bolsheviks was truly Marxist, and socialist movements and theories that appeared in other countries deviated from Marxism. He argued that K. Liebknecht, F. A. Bebel, E. Bernstein and K. Kautsky all stood for degenerate forms of Marxist socialism.¹⁸ Similarly, Chen Duxiu, after comparing several kinds of socialism, asserted: ‘Only the Russian Communist Party stands for genuine Marxism in both name and reality.’¹⁹ In contrast, Li Hanjun was not convinced that the Bolshevik interpretation was the only correct one, nor did he ever adopt a dogmatic attitude towards any kind of theory or practice. For him, the cardinal tenet of socialism ‘like a compass with which to find directions, is not a dogma to which one sticks tenaciously. With this compass in hand, we can act according to circumstance and adapt to changing conditions.’²⁰ Clearly, Li Hanjun’s view of socialism is rather pluralistic.

7.2 *Why Did China Have to Take the Socialist Road?*

Marx and Engels once proclaimed: ‘We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.’²¹ The ‘premises’ they referred to were mainly the economic and political conditions of capitalist society. Marxism was a product of the capitalist era, when science and technology revolutionised production. Yet, during the time concerned, China was basically a pre-capitalist country, where most Chinese were engaged in agriculture and fewer than two million in industry, 0.5% of the population.

¹⁷ Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, *JW*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Li Da, ‘Makesi huanyuan’ (Returning to Marx), *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 5, p. 1, p. 8.

¹⁹ Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’ (The critique of socialism), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 13.

²⁰ Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, *JW*, p. 4.

²¹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, pp. 56-57.

The desire to avoid the evils of capitalist industrialisation by leaping straight to socialism was a feature of Chinese socialism. The Chinese Communists believed that although industry in China was still in the embryonic phase, however, if China could develop industry by socialist way, it could avoid evils occurred in capitalist countries, and its transformation could be easier.²² Cai Hesen even considered China a 'proletarian nation' within international capitalism. According to him, the Chinese 'proletariat', though lacking the industrial preconditions for socialism, could take pre-emptive measures to wage a social revolution.²³

Between 1920 and 1921 the CCP aimed at launching a proletarian socialist revolution. This plan was challenged by Zhang Dongsun, a Guild Socialist, who saying that China's only disease was poverty, so the urgent task was not empty talk about socialism or other isms but industrialisation to enable Chinese people to live like human beings. Zhang's opinion was mainly inspired by the views of J. Dewey and B. Russell, who were then lecturing in China. They both realised the crucial problem in China was the low level of industrial development, and once stated that industrialisation could best be accomplished through capitalism. Zhang's view was supported by his associates at the Research Clique, including Liang Qichao, Lan Gongwu and Jiang Boli. They contended that only after a lengthy period of economic development and the formation of a strong industrial working-class would socialism be suitable for China.²⁴

These views were soon rebutted by the Chinese Communists and thus caused the polemics on socialism and industrialisation. In response to the arguments by Zhang Dongsun and those like him, the Chinese Communists stated that they agreed that industry had to be developed, but the key problem was how to do so. In their opinion, a principal cause of China's poverty was foreign capitalism, of which Chinese capitalists were but the agents; neither foreign nor Chinese capitalists could improve the lives of the common people, so China had to take the socialist road to achieve this goal. The international environment would enable China to bypass the capitalist stage. As Li

²² 'Duanyan', *GCD*, no. 5, 7 June 1921, p. 1; Jiang Chun (Li Da's pen name), 'Shehui geming di shangque' (The discussion of social revolution), *GCD*, no. 2, 7 December 1920, p. 3; Li Da, 'Taolun shehuizhuyi bing zhi Liang Rengong' (A discussion on socialism and questions addressed to Liang Rengong), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 7, p. 15.

²³ Cai Hesen, *XQN*, p. 8.

²⁴ The details of the polemics are given in Cai Guoyu's monograph *1920 niandai chuqi Zhongguo shehuizhuyi lunzhan* [Polemics on Socialism in China during the Early 1920s] (Shangwu yinshuguan, Taipei, 1988).

Dazhao put it, the Chinese economic situation could not be considered apart from the international economy. The contemporary world economy was already moving from capitalism to socialism, but China was only at the starting point of the capitalist stage. If Chinese wanted to survive, they would have to redouble their efforts to keep up with global developments. Further,

[i]f we want to develop industry in China, we must organise a government made up exclusively of producers in order to eliminate the exploiting classes within the country, resist world capitalism, and follow the path of industrialisation organised on a socialist basis.²⁵

Chen Duxiu expressed a similar view: ‘The capitalist system in many countries is going to collapse, how can China alone keep it on the excuse of special national characteristics and conditions?’²⁶ Zhou Fohai even declared that China could realise socialism even in a society without modern industry and workers, because it could get support from Russia.²⁷ These Communists believed that capitalism was dying worldwide and about to be replaced by socialism, so China should follow the general trend.

Li Hanjun, who started criticising some of Zhang Dongsun’s opinions in May 1920, participated actively in the ensuing polemics. He elaborately expounded his view on why China ought to adopt socialism. In his opinion, although China had not completely broken away from the feudal system politically, the capitalist production mode had already reached China and would dominate China sooner or later; a modern proletariat had already formed in China and they were suffering from inhuman treatment and poverty.²⁸ He argued that people in some developed capitalist countries also could not ‘live like human beings’, especially those peoples living in the East End of London and several slum areas in New York.²⁹ He pointed out that in order to avoid the sufferings, the Chinese should carry out a socialist revolution to transform the old social relations.³⁰

²⁵ Li Dazhao, ‘Zhongguo de shehuizhuyi yu shijie de zibenzhuyi’ (Chinese socialism and world capitalism), 20 March 1921, in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 2, pp. 454-455.

²⁶ Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’, *XQN*, p. 7; Duxiu, ‘Guoqing jinian di jiazhi’ (The value of commemorating National Day), *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1 November 1920, p. 3.

²⁷ Zhou Fohai, ‘Shixing shehuizhuyi yu fazhan shiye’ (Realising socialism and developing industry), *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 5, p. 4, p. 10, p. 12.

²⁸ Cf. Hanjun, ‘Jin le bu le’ (Some progress has been made), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 2; Hanjun, ‘Fa zujie dianche bagong gei women de jiaoxun’, *JW*, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘Yuan zai wang ye’, *JW*, p. 4.

²⁹ Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi shi jiao ren qiong de me?’ (Does socialism make people poor?), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 2.

³⁰ Han, ‘Taipingyang huiyi ji women ying qu de taidu’, *GCD*, pp. 20-21.

Li attributed the chaos in China to international capitalism, because international capitalists competed with Chinese capitalists for China's market and sometimes supported feudal warlords. Since the Chinese capitalist class had no strength to resist the force of international capitalism, native capitalism could never develop fully in China. In his view, the conflicts between feudal and bourgeois forces complicated the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in China. These also contributed to the chaos in China. He observed that China lagged behind the world and parts of China lagged behind other parts in terms of their level of development; in consequence, there would be a process whereby the ones lagging behind would be to develop quickly in order to catch up with the advanced. Li contended that, only by realising socialism could the chaos be terminated. He wrote that the socialist revolution in Russian was a manifestation of the will of the people in the world to overthrow capitalism, and wanted Chinese to draw lessons from developments in other countries and unite with the international proletariat, moving towards socialism. In his view, the world had entered the socialist stage, so China could not advance slowly, step by step, but should make its way towards socialism directly.³¹

Li Hanjun's arguments resembled those of other Communists in most respects but were in some ways distinctive. M. Y. L. Luk noticed that Li Hanjun emphasised 'the relatively high degree of capitalist development in China and seemed to look for a short course of capitalism rather than a non-capitalist path.' In Luk's opinion, the views of Li Hanjun and other Chinese Communists 'significantly reflected their strong voluntarist orientations of thought.'³² It is a view I share and will later return to.

The idea of skipping capitalism was Populist in inspiration, but can also be associated with views of Lenin. It is well known that Lenin attacked Russian Populism after he converted to Marxism. He also criticised the populist trend in Sun Yat-sen and other Chinese democrats. In his view, Sun held 'the petty-bourgeois utopias and reactionary views'.³³ Nevertheless, several voluntarist (and largely Populist-inspired)

³¹ Hanjun, 'Zhongguo di luanyuan jiqi guisu' (The origins of China's chaos and their ultimate fate), *JW*, 1 January 1922, supplementary issue, p. 1; Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *ibid.*, p. 2.

³² Luk, pp. 47-48.

³³ Lenin, 'Democracy and Narodism in China', in *LCW*, p.169.

assumptions still remained essential features of Lenin's outlook, as Meisner noted.³⁴

In 1920 Lenin proposed:

With the aid of the proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward countries may pass to the Soviet system and, after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism, without passing through the capitalist stage of development.³⁵

This formulation offered the Chinese Communists a scheme for skipping the capitalist stage.

To some extent, Marx and Engels presaged this idea when they wrote:

[A]ll collisions in history have their origin ... in the contradiction between the productive forces and the form of intercourse. Incidentally, to lead to collisions in a country, this contradiction need not necessarily have reached its extreme limit in this particular country. The competition with industrially more advanced countries, brought about by the expansion of international intercourse, is sufficient to produce a similar contradiction in countries with a backward industry.

This contradiction had occurred several times in history, and 'necessarily on each occasion burst out in a revolution.'³⁶ Marx was not committed to a mechanistic evolutionary scheme of history. Referring to Russia as a 'semi-Asiatic' country, he believed that the Russian *mir* (commune) could provide a basis for socialism. For the common ownership of land and the contract of *artel* of the Russian rural commune could facilitate the transition to collective farming and cooperative labour, which may 'develop directly as an element of collective production on a nationwide scale'; in addition, 'the *contemporaneity* of western production' would allow Russia 'to incorporate in the commune all the positive acquisitions devised by the capitalist system without passing through its Caudine Forks.' This suggested that bypassing capitalism and directly entering the socialist stage in countries with an 'Asiatic mode of production' was 'the *theoretical* possibility'.³⁷

So the idea of revolutionary activism held by Li Hanjun and other Chinese Communists was not incompatible with Marx's ideas. Li even took notes on Marx's analysis, as set out in 'Preface to the First German Edition of the First Volume of *Capital*'. He quoted Marx's observations and recommended them to his compatriots, in the hope that they would learn from the developed countries and 'shorten and lessen

³⁴ M. Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1982, p. 89.

³⁵ Lenin, 'Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions', in *LCW*, vol. 31, p. 244.

³⁶ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 89.

³⁷ Cf. Marx, 'First Draft of Letter to V. Zasulich', March 1881, in *MECW*, vol. 24, pp. 346-360.

the birth-pangs of our China in its future development.’³⁸ Li was convinced that the best way was to use socialist methods to develop industry and education in China.

It is interesting to notice that Russell and Dewey also warned Chinese not to take the same disastrous road as Europe and America by adopting a policy of complete *laissez-faire* to develop industry, and they proceeded to present the Chinese with several socialist programmes. In addition to introducing Guild Socialism and Syndicalism, Dewey recommended state control of the economic life-lines to avoid the evils of private capitalism, and Russell advised Chinese to emulate the Soviet dictatorship and adopt state socialism as the first step towards developing China’s industry and education.³⁹ It seems that the two philosophers’ final advice strengthened Chinese confidence in their choice – to take the socialist road.

7.3 *How to Bring about a Transition to Socialism in China?*

Having defined the socialist direction, the next problem was how to effect the transition to socialism in China.

The first step in the socialist revolution as stated by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* was for the proletariat to ‘acquire political supremacy’ and ‘win the battle of democracy’.⁴⁰

To these Marxist tenets Li Hanjun sometimes consented, writings that the transition from capitalism to socialism must employ the might of the proletariat and through their class struggle against the capitalists to ensure working class domination in production relations and political power.⁴¹ However, with regard to the form class struggle would adopt, and how to progress to socialism, he thought this would depend upon the circumstances in different countries and at different times. He recognised that there were several policies and methods for achieving the transition to socialism in the

³⁸ Hanjun, ‘Yanjiu Makesi xueshuo de biyao’, *JW*, p. 4.

³⁹ Cf. Zhang Jinglu (ed), *Duwei Luosu yanjianglu hekan* [Collected Speeches by Dewey and Russell], Taidong shuju, Shanghai, 1921; Shen Yihong (ed), *Duwei tan Zhongguo*, and *Luosu tan Zhongguo* [Russell: On China], Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, Hangzhou, 2001; Feng Chongyi, ‘Luosu fanghua pingyi’ (A fair comment on Russell’s visit in China), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 4, July 1991, pp. 153-179.

⁴⁰ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 241, p. 243.

⁴¹ Hanjun, ‘Hankou renli chefu bagong di jiaoxun’, *JW*, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘Du Yong’an gongsi “fei gudong” quanti zhiyuan qishi’, *Pingmin*, p. 2.

contemporary world, and he carefully examined and compared them in order to offer multiple possible programmes for the Chinese to choose from.

As Li Hanjun saw it, the Russian Bolsheviks advocated political direct action to overthrow capitalist rule and seize political power through a proletarian revolution; and afterwards, they tried to realise socialism by the means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In his opinion, this was a radical way, the advantage of which was that it could bring about a quicker transition to socialism; its disadvantages were that such a transition was bound to involve bloodshed and destruction; and the foundation of the new socialist society would probably be unstable. Another policy, economic direct action, was adopted mainly by Syndicalists. They wanted to overthrow the capitalist class through a general strike, before which they would conduct piecemeal strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, sabotage, etc against the capitalists. This did not require support from intellectuals and did not have to wait till the proletariat became the majority of the population. However, according to Li, such actions might damage society.

The Social Democrats in Germany and several other countries advocated the transition to socialism by means of social legislation in Parliament and by socialistic measures by the state. Their tactics were to win majorities in Parliament in order to gradually achieve their goal. In Li's view, this kind of transition, albeit slow, might avert bloodshed; in addition, working class conditions could be improved even before the realisation of socialism.⁴² He once wrote: 'Approaches to social transformation would differ from country to country.' Given different political, economic and educational conditions, it might be possible for the British to realise social transformation gradually and peacefully, while Russia's social revolution had erupted suddenly and speedily.⁴³ Although Li hoped to avoid bloodshed and thought that gradual social and political reforms reflecting a moderate approach sometimes actually involved revolutionary change, he did not completely rule out use of force, since he knew that workers in their struggle for liberation might under certain circumstances shed blood and require violent revolution.⁴⁴

It is quite clear that Li Hanjun understood the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of transition towards socialism and never clung to either peaceful or

⁴² Li Hanjun, 'Shehuizhuyi di paibie', *JW*, no. 14, 8 June 1925, p. 4.

⁴³ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 2, p. 84.

⁴⁴ Li Renjie, *Jianshe*, pp. 1165-1166; Jinghu, *Jiangsheng rikan*, 11 February 1924.

violent methods. To a certain extent, he did not even insist upon the means advocated by the Marxist founding fathers. What Li wanted was to find a suitable way for China.

At the CCP's Founding Congress, Li Hanjun had noted that the contemporary world had witnessed both the Russian October Revolution and the revolution of the Social Democratic Party of Germany; the CCP should study these two events before drafting its own programme.⁴⁵ Li expressed the view that the CCP should first support the bourgeois democratic movement led by Sun Yat-sen, and Party members might become MPs and ally with the bourgeois democratic parties in Parliament to strive for democracy and civil liberties as well as to publicise the CCP's political views and improve working people's conditions through legislature.⁴⁶ In the report to the Comintern, largely drafted by Li Hanjun, he made his stand clear: since the state of ruling class could not be overthrown by a general strike or an uprising, and opportunities for uprisings were few and far between, the CCP had to make preparations in the meantime to take part in political activities to lead workers to fight for freedom of publication and assembly, and to improve their conditions; it was, therefore, necessary to take common actions with other democratic parties in the parliament to achieve partial success. Knowing the limitations of legal efforts, he further pointed out that it was futile to hope to build a new society within the old system; otherwise, people would entertain illusions about the old parliament and would not be willing to change the old system thoroughly.⁴⁷

Li Hanjun's scenario was rejected by most delegates as reformist, although it was quite balanced. Since most Chinese Communists believed Bolshevik-style revolution was the only way to advance to socialism and violent revolution was necessary to overthrow the dominant class, the CCP's first Platform and Resolution passed at the First Congress stood for an armed revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat without delay, and ruled out any democratic association and parliamentary action.

In fact, Li Hanjun knew that China had neither a strong force of industrial workers nor mature democratic institutions, so the CCP could not count on direct action by the working class, a general strike or on parliamentary actions, although he did not completely rule out such methods. Having taken China's circumstances into account,

⁴⁵ Chang Kuo-t'ao, vol. 1, p.144.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 144-145; Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 11; Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 286-287.

⁴⁷ 'The First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party', a report to the Comintern, in Saich, vol. 1, p. 206.

he believed that the priority was to transfer political power from the warlords, bureaucrats and capitalists to the working class, and thus clear the way for China's free development toward socialism.⁴⁸ This proposal, at first glance, was quite radical, and seems similar to the principle advocated by the Bolsheviks as well as by many Chinese Communists that the first step towards transforming China was to take political power, and that political revolution must precede social and economic revolution.

But there were some apparently small but nevertheless significant differences. In Chen Duxiu's view, a social revolution, despite the opposition of the majority of the people, could also be accomplished, for all successful revolutions in history, according to him, had always been the victory of the minority over the majority, and the Russian October Revolution had been but a movement of a minority.⁴⁹ Zhou Fohai, who was elected Acting General Secretary of the CCP's Central Bureau at the Party's First Congress, even wrote that all revolutions were started by small numbers of people, and not by the masses; a socialist revolution could be carried out in China without the proletariat and modern industry, for China could rely on the support from Soviet Russia.⁵⁰ Shi Cuntong, who later became the General Secretary of the SY, asserted that the Chinese socialist revolution should adopt the Russian way, which was to rely on a few enlightened persons to carry out revolution and seize the political power rather than waiting for the consciousness of the majority of the people.⁵¹

In contrast, Li Hanjun firmly believed that, 'without the populace, no revolution could be successful', and he wrote that the proletariat would undertake the task of transforming capitalism into socialism.⁵² In his view, the proletariat in their struggle against the capitalist class needed to persuade and convince the broad masses of progressive thinking in order to increase the numbers of progressive people and to win over the middle class and even the persons who had belonged to the exploiting class, as well as other working people, to join the revolution.⁵³ Although Li attached importance to the role of Marxist intellectuals in enlightening the proletariat and other

⁴⁸ Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *JW*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ 'Chen Duxiu san da Ou Shengbai shu' (Chen Duxiu's third answer to Ou Shengbai), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 29.

⁵⁰ Fohai, 'Geming dingyao daduoshu ren lai gan ma?' (Is a revolution necessarily by the majority of people?), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 5, 1 September 1921, *suiganlu*, pp. 2-3; Zhou Fohai, 'Shixing shehuizhuyi yu fazhan shiye', *XQN*, p. 10.

⁵¹ CT (Shi Cuntong's pen name), 'Women yao zenmeyang gan shehuigeming?' (How to carry out a social revolution?), *GCD*, no. 5, p. 19.

⁵² Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, pp. 83-84; vol. 2, p. 62.

⁵³ *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 47-48.

people with new thinking, he still believed that a socialist revolution would mainly depend on the actions of the proletariat with the support of the majority of the people.

Moreover, Li Hanjun knew that socialist revolution depends not only on the participation of the majority of people but also on economic conditions. He wrote that a social revolution implies ‘a fundamental change rather than mere a radical change’, and although a social revolution could be brought about through class struggle and human will, its fundamental driving force is, however, the change of productive and technological conditions; without these changes, social revolution would have no substantial basis and could not achieve any good result. He pointed out that after the establishment of the new social system, ‘economic conditions could not be changed by leaping forward’, and ‘could be but developed gradually’; only in doing so, can social transformation be successful. It would be absurd to imagine that a plan conceived by a great man to transform a society or to save mankind without considering economic conditions could succeed.⁵⁴

However, Li Hanjun said that Chinese Marxists could not wait for the achievement of a socialist system with folded arms, and should first establish a ‘new system’ within the bounds permitted by the productive forces. In his view, the ‘new system’ was one that could be used to clear away all obstructions to the development of industry and society and to create conditions leading to the socialist road.⁵⁵ It is quite certain that the “new system” he advocated was not tantamount to a socialist system itself, but was an interim system applicable to the transitional period from capitalism to socialism.

Having observed that under the existing economic structure, the small-scale peasant economy dominated agriculture while handicraft workshops and small-scale industry dominated manufacture, Li Hanjun suggested that, during the transition period, private ownership of tools by small capitalists and handicraftsmen should be allowed, as should private ownership of land by peasants as well as private trade by small retailers. Only big enterprises and surplus properties and surplus land owned by big capitalists and big landlords should be taken into public ownership. However, restrictions should be imposed on the exploitation of workers by small capitalists. As to distribution, a differentiation in the rates of pay for skilled and unskilled labour was

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 7-12; vol. 2, p. 11, p. 90.

⁵⁵ Hanjun, ‘Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?’, *JW*, p. 2; Hanjun, ‘Du Zhang Wentian’, *JW*, p. 4.

inevitable during this period. Since the new system would clear away obstacles to the development of industry, the material conditions for realising socialism would be established more quickly than under capitalism.⁵⁶

It is well worth noting that Li's plan whereby private and public ownership could co-exist in the transition period was quite similar to the policy of a mixed economy propounded by the CCP in its so-called 'New Democracy', designed to smooth the transition from capitalism to socialism after the CCP had assumed power.⁵⁷

As for other respects, Li Hanjun only said a few words. Since he stood for an equal chance for all, he advocated that universal education should be achieved and civil liberties should be assured under the new system. But, given working people's disadvantages, he specially stressed that working people and their children should have right to enjoy free education and the working people should be given freedom to express their ideas. Li thought only 'working people' should be given these rights, because, in his view, all 'parasites of society' – exploiters – should be wiped out. Further, he wrote that efforts should be made to disseminate socialist thought among the people, but the ideas harmful to the realisation of socialism should be eliminated.⁵⁸ Tragically, he might not have been aware that, once the last measure he suggested was put into practice it would lead to severe limitations on the freedom of thought and expression.

All the above measures, thought Li, could be adopted under the new system without waiting for the material conditions for realising socialism to mature. However, he knew that a 'complete socialist system could not be established until the economic conditions were in place'.⁵⁹ It is clear that the proposals Li delineated above applied to the transition period between capitalism and socialism, supposedly brief and temporary.

⁵⁶ Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *JW*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Cf. Mao Zedong, 'Xin minzhuzhuyi lun' (On New Democracy), 1940, in *Mao Zedong xuanji*, pp. 623-670; 'Muqian xingshi he women de renwu' (The present situation and our tasks), 1947, in *ibid.*, pp. 1139-1158. The original plan was that the transition period would last about fifteen years. However, the CCP declared in 1956 that socialist transformation had been completed, and the socialist system had been established in China. Cf. Hu Sheng (ed), *Zhongguo gongchandang de qishinian* [Seventy Years of the CCP], Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, Beijing, 1991, pp. 301-334. In 1958 Mao Zedong led 'the Great Leap Forward' in an attempt to speed up China's economic development.

⁵⁸ Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *JW*, p. 2; Li Hanjun, 'A speech at the Congress of Members of the Wuchang Women's Association', *Hankou Mingguo ribao*, 15 May 1927, p. 5; Li Renjie, 'Youdai xuesheng yu youdai laodongzhe de yiyi ji kefou', *JW*, p. 4; Han, *GCD*, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *JW*, p. 2.

The transition from capitalism to communism, on the other hand, was supposed to be lengthy and protracted.

7.4 *What Kind of Institutions Should Govern the Future Socialist Society?*

Li Hanjun was familiar with Marx's projection in "Critique of the Gotha Programme":

Between capitalist and communist society lies a period of revolutionary transformation from one to the other. There is a corresponding period of transition in the political sphere and in this period the state can only take the form of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.⁶⁰

The first draft of the CCP Programme, written by Li Hanjun, contains the formulations 'dictatorship of the workers and peasants' or 'dictatorship of the workers'.⁶¹ This is what he conceived as the nature and system of government after the proletariat assumes power. It seems that Li did not distinguish clearly between the transition to socialism and the first stage of socialism, especially in the political sphere, so the concept 'dictatorship of the proletariat' discussed here may cover both periods. On the surface, Li Hanjun's view of future political power had much in common with that of other Chinese Communists, but the implications of his understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat differed.

The term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' appeared only in his translation of passages from 'A Study of the Soviets' by Yamakawa Hitoshi.⁶² Li's choice of this article to introduce the Soviet system showed that he agreed to an extent with Yamakawa's understanding and explanation of the soviet system and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. This article described the Russian soviet as a recent embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, citing Lenin to that effect. According to it, soviets were firstly proletarian organisations that emerged spontaneously from class struggle, and their origins could be traced to the Owenite J. E. Smith's proposal of parliaments formed by representatives of all occupations, L. Blanc's Luxembourg Committee, the Paris Commune, and the Strike Committees that emerged from the 1905 Revolution in

⁶⁰ Jun, 'Laonong zhidu yanjiu' (A study of the system of the government of workers and peasants), *GCD*, no. 5, May 1921, p. 32. After making a careful comparison, I found that this article is the translation of selected passages from Yamakawa Hitoshi's 'Soviets no kenkyu' (A study of soviet).

⁶¹ Shi Cuntong recalled 'lao-nong zhuanzheng', while Li Da wrote 'laogong zhuanzheng' (*YDQH*, vol. 1, p. 36, p. 7).

⁶² Jun, *GCD*, p. 32.

Russia. Therefore, soviets were organised neither (at least initially) by the Bolsheviks nor in the light of Bolshevik theory, although Bolsheviks were the first to realise their historic significance as building blocks of the proletarian state. Soviet delegates were rooted in the workplaces, especially in industrial cities. Every soviet was constituted by the delegates elected by workers, peasants and soldiers; through the soviets, the working masses could participate in administration of the state. Therefore, Yamakawa Hitoshi pointed out, the soviet in Russia, like Paris Commune, was ‘a new model of the political organisation of proletarian state.’⁶³ According to another article Li Hanjun translated, in Soviet Russia even poor children in children’s new villages helped to govern the soviets they themselves had organised.⁶⁴ From these articles, Li Hanjun learned that the soviet was a form of the self-government of working people and ordinary people.

In ‘State and Revolution’, Lenin declared that the dictatorship of the proletariat would bring about a genuine democracy for the working people, and ‘the expansion of democracy’ to ‘an overwhelming majority of the population’.⁶⁵ The Bolsheviks described the soviet as a form of dictatorship of the proletariat and heir to the Paris Commune. In Marx’s view, the Paris Commune was the first model of dictatorship of the proletariat and represented ‘real self-government’ of the working class with ‘really democratic institutions’ whose members were elective, revocable, and responsible to working people.⁶⁶ One scholar thus pointed out: ‘The Paris Commune model is a non-authoritarian model. The only authority in the system is the purely democratic authority of a majority over a minority within a local or federal body.’⁶⁷ Li Hanjun also believed for a while that Russian soviets, like the Paris Commune, were institutions of self-administration and decentralisation.⁶⁸

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶⁴ L. Eyre, ‘Suweiai gongheguo chanfu he ying’er ji kexuejia’ (Women before and after childbirth, infants and scientists in the Soviet Republic), translated by Hanjun, *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1 October 1920, *Eluosi yanjiu* (Study of Russia), p. 3.

⁶⁵ *LCW*, vol. 25, p. 461-463.

⁶⁶ Marx, ‘Second Draft of *The Civil War in France*’, ‘The Civil War in France’ in *MECW*, vol. 22, p. 536, p. 334.

⁶⁷ E. Rapaport, ‘Anarchism and Authority in Marx’s Socialist Politics’, in *Karl Marx’s Social and Political Thought: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers*, Second Series, B. Jessop and R. Wheatley (eds), Routledge, London, 1999, vol. 12, p. 696.

⁶⁸ Li Hanjun once argued that the CCP should adopt the principle of the Constitution of Soviet Union, and did not need to centralise its organisation. See Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 29. In Dewey’s opinion, the Soviet Constitution adopted the essential elements of guild socialism and syndicalism. See Chow Tse-tsung, p. 229.

Considering that peasants made up most of the population in China as in Russia, Li Hanjun thought they should not be excluded from self-government. The reference to ‘dictatorship of the workers and peasants’ in his draft of the CCP’s Program and his retitling Yamakawa’s article as ‘A Study of the System of the Soviet of Workers and Peasants’ suggests he looked forward in the near future to rule by the majority of working people.

It is obvious that Li Hanjun’s and Yamakawa’s view of the Russian Soviets was influenced by the claims the Bolsheviks themselves made, which were more than a little rose-tinted. As a result, Li did not at the time equate soviets with the rule of the Bolshevik élite.

In fact the Bolsheviks defied democratic principles and procedures, and cast them off like a ‘soiled shirt’ when necessary.⁶⁹ In March 1919, Lenin said that the soviets were ‘in reality only organs of government for the workers by the most advanced stratum of the proletariat, but not by the working classes themselves.’⁷⁰ The ‘most advanced stratum of the proletariat’ meant in this context the Communist Party. In practice, the RCP Politburo and local Party committees tightly controlled central and local soviets.⁷¹ Lenin declared that ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat would not work except through the Communist Party’.⁷² Other Bolshevik leaders openly admitted that the dictatorship was assumed by the RCP and actually relied on the one-party dictatorship.⁷³ Lenin even said that sometimes the dictatorship of the proletariat could be exercised by individuals with thousands of workers in ‘unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader’.⁷⁴ The dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia turned out to be nothing more than the dictatorship of the Bolshevik élite. It more and more resorted to violence and coercion. As Lenin claimed, ‘The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any

⁶⁹ Lenin, ‘The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution’, 10 April 1917, in *LCW*, vol. 24, p. 88.

⁷⁰ Quoted from M. McCauley, *The Soviet Union since 1917*, Longman, London, 1981, p. 48.

⁷¹ Cf. J. Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1918, Documents and Materials*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1943, pp. 187-188; J. F. Hough and M. Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union Is Governed*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, p. 82.

⁷² Lenin, ‘Summing-up Speech on the Report of the CC of the RCP(B)’ at Tenth RCP(B) Congress, 9 March 1921, in *LCW*, vol. 32, p. 199.

⁷³ Degras (ed), vol. 1, pp.127-128.

⁷⁴ Lenin, ‘The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government’, April 1918, in *LCW*, vol. 27, p. 271.

laws.⁷⁵ At one point he even declared: ‘We recognise no freedom, no equality, no labour democracy if it conflicts with the cause of emancipating labour from the yoke of capital.’⁷⁶

Probably, such Bolsheviks’ words and deeds later awakened Li Hanjun’s suspicion of the Russian-style dictatorship of the proletariat and prompted him to change his previous view of it. At the First Congress of CCP, he said: ‘In Russia the Communist Party was dictatorial while the democratic system existed in Germany. The right and wrong of these systems had yet to be determined.’⁷⁷ He wanted to examine the situation in Soviet Russia and see whether the Bolsheviks’ dictatorship of the proletariat would suit China.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, most Chinese Communists entirely accepted the Bolshevik conception and practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Chen Duxiu and Li Da, persuaded by Lenin’s ‘dictatorship of the working class’, declared that democracy was bankrupt.⁷⁹ Cai Hesen believed that ‘world capitalism and democracy are nearing their doom’, and ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat is the unique way’ to transform society and that China should follow suit.⁸⁰ Several Chinese Communists realised that the dictatorship of the proletariat was not the rule of the working class but of the Party and a handful within the leadership. No longer believing that the government should be brought under the control of common people, Chen Duxiu started favouring the rule of the minority.⁸¹ He called the Chinese people ‘a plate of scattered sand and a bunch of idiots’ and believed that ‘it would be suicidal for the country to put such important responsibility on the shoulders of people who lack knowledge, ability and conscientiousness’; and that the decisions of the masses were the dangerous product of

⁷⁵ Lenin, ‘The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky’, November 1918, in *LCW*, vol. 28, p. 236.

⁷⁶ Lenin, ‘The Deception of the People with Slogans of Freedom and Equality’, 19 May 1919, in *LCW*, vol. 29, p. 376.

⁷⁷ ‘A Brief History of the Chinese Communist Party’, in *DCNSAC*, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Chang Kuo-t’ao, vol. 1, p.144; Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55.

⁷⁹ Chen Duxiu, ‘Tan zhengzhi’ (Talking about politics), *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 8-9; Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’, *XQN*, p. 13; Jiang Chun, ‘Shehui geming di shangque’, *GCD*, p. 4.

⁸⁰ ‘Cai Linbin to Mao Zedong’, 16 September 1920, in Lin Daizhao and Pan Guohua (eds), vol. 2, p. 117; Cai Hesen, ‘Zhongguo geming yundong yu guoji zhi guanxi’ (The revolutionary movement and its relationship with international world), *Xiangdao*, no. 23, 2 May 1923, p. 168.

⁸¹ Zhiyan (Chen Duxiu’s pen name), ‘Shandong wenti yu guomin juewu’ (Shandong issue and the citizens’ consciousness), *Meizhou pinglun*, no. 23, 26 May 1919, in *Chen Duxiu wenzhang xuanbian*, vol. 2, pp. 410-413.

mob emotions.⁸² For him, ‘the only chance’ was, therefore, to ‘hope that conscientious, learned and capable persons come together to establish a true state of “enlightened despotism” (*kaiming zhuanzhi*)’ and adopt a policy of ‘strict interventionism’.⁸³ Later, Chen learned from Zhang Shenfu that the dictatorship of the proletariat did not mean the dictatorship of the whole proletariat but implied the dictatorship of a small vanguard, which could be viewed as ‘enlightened despotism’.⁸⁴ In 1922 Chen stated that putting the dictatorship of the proletariat into practice required a Communist party as ‘the vanguard of the proletariat and the leader’.⁸⁵ Coming straight to the point, a Chinese Communist wrote that the dictatorship of the proletariat was actually ‘the dictatorship of the Communist Party - the revolutionary vanguard of the industrial proletariat’.⁸⁶

Some other Chinese Communists went further. For example, Xu Xinkai explicitly advocated the dictatorship of a few élites. He wrote:

Concerning China’s situation, the ordinary proletarian masses are so benighted that the dictatorship of the proletariat is particularly impossible. ... In the first period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, there can only be a dictatorship of “proletarian intellectuals” or “proletarians of the intelligentsia”.

Furthermore, he argued that ‘those few persons who exercise the dictatorship had better submit to the will of one or two persons.’⁸⁷ Shi Cuntong even proclaimed that he was ‘extremely in favour of dictatorship by one individual’. He wrote that in backward China, there was a ‘necessity for the dictatorship of a few persons, and under certain circumstances, there could be the possibility of a one-man dictatorship.’ In order to maintain such dictatorship, held Shi, the people need to sacrifice their personal freedom. Shi further assumed that the leaders of the dictatorship would ‘represent the interests of the proletariat’ and be ‘possessed of reliable moral quality’; that while being in power they would ‘dare not violate the will of the majority to pursue their

⁸² Chen Duxiu, ‘Bei zhi wushen gao lun’ (There is nothing particular in these ideas), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1 July 1921, Suiganlu, p. 3; ‘Chen Duxiu da Ou Shengbai de xin’ (Chen Duxiu’s reply to Ou Shengbai), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 6.

⁸³ Duxiu, ‘Zhongguo shi de wuzhengfuzhuyi’, *XQN*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Zhang Songnian, ‘Ying-Fa gongchandang — Zhongguo gaizao’ (The Communist Parties in Britain and France – China’s transformation), a letter to Chen Duxiu; Duxiu, ‘Reply to Shenfu’, *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 3, Tongxin, p. 3.

⁸⁵ ‘Chen Duxiu da Huang Lingshuang’ (Chen Duxiu’s reply to Huang Lingshuang), 1 July 1922, in *Chen Duxiu shuxinji*, p. 376.

⁸⁶ Li Bing, ‘Gongchandang xuanyan de houxu’ (The postscript of the Communist Manifesto), *Xianqu* [Pioneer], no. 3, 15 February 1922, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Xinkai, ‘Zailun gongchanzhuyi yu jierte shehuizhuyi’ (More comments on communism and guild socialism), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 6, 1 July 1922, pp. 46-47.

private ends' and would not become vicious persons.⁸⁸ These words indicate that such Communists saw only the effectiveness of the concentration of power in few hands; and totally ignored the possible negative changes in these leaders; let alone considered procedures for restraining would-be dictators in the future socialist society.

For these Chinese Communists, as for the Bolsheviks, the dictatorship of the proletariat was not the dictatorship of the majority, since they believed that the mass of working people had no qualifications to participate in the administration of state affairs; and the socialist transformation even does not need the approval of the majority. Citing Bukharin and Lenin, some Chinese Communists likened the dictatorship of the proletariat to an 'axe' and emphasised that the dictatorship must use an 'iron hand'.⁸⁹ This 'iron hand' would not be used only for uprooting capitalism but also for compelling and forcing industrial workers and other working people to observe discipline during socialist transformation. They therefore stressed that the dictatorship of the proletariat must resort to 'compulsory means' and 'coercive measures'.⁹⁰ These Communists claimed to be bringing freedom to the people, but the society they were trying to build would be harshly repressive and people were destined to be deprived of their freedom.

Unlike the preceding party members, Li Hanjun neither approved of nor advocated 'the dictatorship of a few élites' and harsh measures in the name of the proletarian dictatorship. He was critical of politics played by the few, and preferred educational methods to coercive enforcement.⁹¹ This may be attributed to his deep-rooted conviction that whatever the ideals and institutions 'there always ought to be progress from autocracy to liberty'.⁹² Li affirmed the progressive significance of republican and constitutional government, although he criticised British and American-style democracy as rule by the capitalist class. Acknowledging that democracy implies 'the

⁸⁸ CT, *GCD*, p. 29, pp. 31-32.

⁸⁹ Xuan, 'Ping Zhongguo de jierte shehuizhuyi' (On China's guild socialism), *Xianqu*, no. 3, 15 February 1922, p. 2; Xinkai, 'Zailun gongchanzhuyi yu jierte shehuizhuyi', *XQN*, p. 45; Wuxie (Zhou Fohai's pen name), 'Women weishenme zhuzhang gongchanzhuyi?' (Why we advocate Communism?), *GCD*, no. 4, 7 May 1921, p. 25.

⁹⁰ 'Duanyan', *GCD*, no. 4, p. 1; Chen Duxiu, 'Tan zhengzhi', *XQN*, p. 4; Chen Duxiu, 'Da Huang Lingshuang', in *Chen Duxiu shuxinji*, p. 376; Jiang Chun, 'Wuzhengfuzhuyi jiepou' (Dissection of anarchism), *GCD*, no. 4, p. 23; CT, *GCD*, pp. 19-20; Wuxie, 'Duoqu zhengquan' (Seizing political power), *GCD*, no. 5, p. 6.

⁹¹ Renjie, 'Shaoshuren zhengzhi zhi weixian' (The dangers of politics played by a few people), *JW*, 29 November and 9 December 1919; Hanjun, 'Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?', *JW*, p. 2.

⁹² Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, p. 16.

rule of the people by the people', he believed that socialism was inextricably linked with true democracy, and the values of justice, humanity, equality and peace as well as democracy can only be truly realised in a socialist society.⁹³

Autonomy is a value Li Hanjun especially appreciated. The Paris Commune, for him, was 'Paris Autonomy' and a 'Paris Autonomous Organisation'.⁹⁴ He used to exhibit a preference for various autonomous organisations, both in China and abroad. Sometimes, he even talked positively about the secret societies that appeared 'spontaneously' in the nether depths of Chinese society.⁹⁵ He once supported the movement for regional autonomy in China, and drew up a 'Draft Constitution of the Common People's Autonomy in Zhejiang Province' in 1922.⁹⁶ Observing the strike wave in the UK in 1919, he wrote that ordinary Britons showed a very good ability at organising and self-government, and predicted that ordinary people would maintain social order by themselves even if the ruling class collapsed.⁹⁷ A socialist government, in Li's view, would be one of workers' self-government. In the words of M. Marcy's booklet, which Li translated and introduced, the workers should elect their fellow workers 'to every possible office', put themselves or their co-workers into 'every government position' to make their laws and serve their fellow workers.⁹⁸ This was just 'the self-government of the producers' which Marx wrote about, and it would 'betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people', and would have nothing in common with the old centralised government with 'merely repressive organs' and 'authority usurping pre-eminence over society'.⁹⁹

Li Hanjun's attachment to self-government is related to his deep distrust of centralised bureaucratic authority and the rule by minority élites. He pointed out that China had for long been a 'state of officials', where officials were numerous and arranged in a complex hierarchy, in which lower officials were appointed by and

⁹³ Han, *GCD*, p.14, p. 20; Xianjin, 'Senhu zhujiaoshou wenti yu Riben yulun' (The issue concerning Associate Professor Morido Tasuku and public opinion in Japan), *XQPL*, no. 35, 1 February 1920, p. 4; Xianjin, 'Hei-bai de chongtu' (Conflicts between blacks and whites), *XQPL*, no.13, 31 August 1919, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Jinghu, *Jiangsheng rikan*, 11 February 1924; Jun, *GCD*, no. 5, p. 32.

⁹⁵ Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, pp. 28-29.

⁹⁶ This 'Draft Constitution' has not been found so far and its gist can only be seen in Shen Xuanlu's 'Zhejiang sheng pingmin zizhi xianfa shuomingshu' (Explanation of a draft constitution for the common people's autonomy in Zhejiang Province), *Zeren* [Responsibility], no. 1, 27 November 1922. Chen Duxiu once expressed that he opposed the autonomy of provinces in China. See his letter to Zhang Dongsun (17 September 1922), in *Chen Duxiu shuxinji*, p. 378.

⁹⁷ Xianjin, 'Duiyu Yingguo dabagong de ganxiang', *XQPL*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ This paragraph is in the end part of *Shop Talks on Economics*.

⁹⁹ Marx, 'Civil War in France', in *MECW*, vol. 22, pp. 332-333, p. 339.

indebted to higher levels. The centralised bureaucratic state had unlimited power to administer and interfere in nearly every matter, so ordinary people could do virtually nothing without official permission. Lower officials in their turn had to follow the instructions of higher authorities. Worse still, the bureaucratic apparatus tended to centre on their own interests and maintained itself by ‘sucking the blood and sweat’ of people at the bottom of society. As a result, the Chinese people could gain neither security nor benefits from these officials but only exploitation and repression. In order not to reduce or lose their own privileges, as Li saw, the Chinese bureaucratic authority feared people having any right to democratic election or self-government.¹⁰⁰

Li Hanjun tried to persuade the Chinese people to dispel the delusion that political governance and administration are the business of a few masters and politician and had nothing to do with ordinary people. He hoped that ordinary Chinese people would have more self-esteem instead of only respect for officials, and would know that ‘every person had a duty to the nation’ and could not give up their duty in order to prevent a few bureaucrats and warlords from committing outrages and to prevent politicians with wild ambitions from acting recklessly according to some personal scenario drawn up regardless of social realities. Only in this way, he believed, could people avoid the suffering and harm brought about by the mischief of governments.¹⁰¹ It is obvious that the ‘bureaucrats and warlords’ Li wrote about here referred to the rulers in the contemporary China, while the ‘politicians with wild ambitions’ perhaps referred to the leaders of the future socialist state.

As I have tried to show, Li Hanjun considered the CCP’s centralised apparatus conducive to Party leaders’ ‘individual dictatorship’, and the centralist power could be employed by some persons with wild or wicked ambitions to do evil, thus following the old autocratic path to ruin.¹⁰² Some defects in Party organisation, particularly the lack of democratic awareness and procedures, would also exist, according to him, with respect to state affairs.¹⁰³

Li Hanjun also realised that a person’s knowledge cannot be perfect. In ‘The Dangers of Politics Played by A Few People’, he put forward the idea that, because of the limitations on any one individual’s knowledge and capability, the politics

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ri Jin ketsu, *Kaizō*, p. 28; Li Renjie, *Jianshe*, p. 1151; Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, p. 111.

¹⁰¹ Hanjun, ‘Shehui kexue tekan fakan zhiqiu’, sequel, *JW*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰² Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰³ Hanjun, ‘Du Zhang Wentian’, *JW*, p. 4.

monopolised by the few were not reliable and might entail dangers; even rulers of conscience might be misled by people pursuing selfish interests.¹⁰⁴

Suffice it to say that Li Hanjun's view of the governing institutions in the future socialist society and 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' was quite different from other Chinese Communists. He distinctly realised the negative effects of the dictatorship of a few élites, and conceived a rough outline of the ideas that the authority of the state should be subject to popular control and supervision, and should at all times be accountable to the people. He hoped people should grasp their nation's destiny by participating in political affairs; and the governing institutions in the future would be democratic, autonomous, relatively small and locally rooted rather than centralist, bureaucratic and unwieldy. More noticeably, Li was perhaps the sole early Chinese Communist to spot the dangers of dictatorship by a handful Communist élites or single leader, which might happen in the future.

7.5 Li Hanjun's Vision of the Economic System of the Future Society

For many Chinese Communists, the basic economic tenet of socialism was that the means of production should be publicly owned. Chen Duxiu once wrote that the basis of the capitalist system is 'concentration of capital' and 'private ownership of property', while socialism can be realised by changing 'private ownership' into 'public ownership', for, in his view, 'the concentration of capital and the public ownership of property' is the quintessence of socialism.¹⁰⁵

Without exception, Li Hanjun was also convinced that it was necessary to transform private ownership of the means of production into public ownership. However, for him, socialism was more than a change of ownership. Further issues should also be considered, such as: What form or forms of public ownership should

¹⁰⁴ Renjie, 'Shaoshuren zhengzhi zhi weixian', *JW*, 29 November 1919, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Chen Duxiu, 'Guanyu shehuizhuyi wenti' (On the issues of socialism), 13 May 1923, in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuan* [Selected Works of Chen Duxiu], Shanghai renmin chubanshe, Shanghai, 1993, vol. 2, p. 465. Xu Guangshou in his 'Chen Duxiu dui kexue shehuizhuyi lilun de tansuo ji tedian' (Chen Duxiu's explorations of the theory of scientific socialism) claimed that these words of Chen Duxiu mastered the 'quintessence of socialism.' *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, no. 2, 2006, p. 76.

take? How should production be run and managed under public ownership? How should products be distributed? And so on.¹⁰⁶

In discussing the system of ownership of the means of production in a future socialist society, Li Hanjun used the term ‘commonly owned’ more frequently than ‘publicly owned’.¹⁰⁷ He mentioned ‘state-owned’ only in relation to the German Social Democratic Party, and once wrote that large enterprises should be placed under public ownership in the transition stage.¹⁰⁸ The ideal economic system for him was not state ownership but communal ownership in the form of producers’ cooperatives. An important principle in the CCP’s draft programme which Li drew up in 1920 was ‘Cooperative Production’.¹⁰⁹

Li Hanjun was familiar with cooperative ideas and practices before he drafted the programme. The cooperative movement came into prominence in Europe in the nineteenth century, and cooperative ideas were introduced into China in the early twentieth century as one of the schools of socialism. In 1919, cooperative societies appeared in China.¹¹⁰ After the October Revolution, the Soviet Government used cooperative societies, especially consumers’ cooperative societies, to serve the socialist economy.¹¹¹ Reports and articles on cooperative societies in Russia appeared in Chinese newspapers.¹¹² As a result, cooperatives became more attractive to progressive Chinese, including some Communists.¹¹³ It was said that Li Hanjun once

¹⁰⁶ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 12, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘Shehui kexue tekan fakan zhiq’, sequel, *JW*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Li Hanjun’s articles entitled ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, ‘Taipingyang huiyi ji women ying qu de taidu’, ‘Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?’, ‘Jin le bu le’.

¹⁰⁸ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 14, p. 7; Hanjun, ‘Women ruhe shi Zhongguo di hunluan gankuai zhongzhi?’, *JW*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Li Da, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 7; Shi Fuliang, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang chengli shiqi de jige wenti’, in *ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁰ Zhang Shuting, ‘Jianlun Zhongguo zaoqi hezuoyundong de lilun xuanchuan he chubu shijian’ (Brief comment on theoretical propagation and preliminary practice of the cooperative movement in China at the early period), *Lanzhou xuekan* [Academic Journal of Lanzhou], no. 6, 2005.

¹¹¹ In December 1917, Lenin issued the ‘The Draft Decree on the Consumers’ Communes’, ordering the ‘existing consumers’ cooperatives are to be hereby nationalised’ and that every Russian citizen should belong to a local consumers’ society. *LCW*, vol. 26, pp. 416-417.

¹¹² Some of them were provided by the Russian News Agency in China - Rosta and Dalta. For example, ‘Eguo laodong hezuoshe xiaoshi’ (A brief history of Russian production cooperatives) and ‘Yuandong Eguo hezuoshe qingkuang’ (The situation of the cooperatives in the Russian Far East) appeared in *Minguo ribao* in July 1920.

¹¹³ *Minguo Ribao*’s supplement *Pingmin* [The Common People] is a paper which specially discussed issue of cooperative movement. During 1920-1921, several intellectuals who later joined the CCP, such as Yu Shude, Li Zhong, Zhang Tingying often published their articles on cooperative movement in this paper. Cai Hesen in his letter to Mao Zedong (28 May 1920), suggested the New Citizens’ Society in Changsha to preach cooperative ideas (*YDQH*, vol. 1, p. 125).

set about organising cooperatives with other intellectuals in Shanghai.¹¹⁴ Around the summer of 1920, some intellectuals working for *Xingqi pinglun* seemed interested in industrial cooperatives and credit cooperatives.¹¹⁵

It is worth noting that Li Hanjun introduced cooperative ideas in ‘Labourers and “the International Movements”’, published in instalments in May and June of 1920. In it, Li wrote that cooperative production was one of three points which Marx stressed in his ‘Inaugural Address of the Working Men’s International Association’, and cited extracts from the address:

The cooperative factories raised by the unassisted efforts of a few bold “hands” ... have shown that production on a large scale, and in accord with the behests of modern science, may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands; ... and that, like slave labour, like serf labour, hired labour is but a transitory and inferior form, destined to disappear before associated labour,¹¹⁶

Li pointed out that the ‘key point’ of the resolutions adopted by the founding congress of the First International was ‘to convert social production into one large and harmonious system of free and co-operative labour’. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to ‘transfer the state power, from capitalists and landlords to the producers themselves.’ This passage actually came from Marx’s ‘Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council of the Geneva Congress’.¹¹⁷ Li went on to introduce some other Congresses’ resolutions concerning cooperative production, and wrote that the Third Congress resolved that public properties owned by society or the democratic state should be entrusted to labourers’ cooperatives as their means of production for conducting production under reasonable and fair conditions.

This article shows that Li Hanjun knew that ‘cooperative production’ was one of the fundamental principles of the First International’s programme, and that by June 1920 he was familiar with Marx’s teachings on it. It is quite likely that while drawing up the CCP’s draft programme, he consulted the above documents of the First International. So the ‘cooperative production’ in Li’s programme was perfectly in tune with Marxist thinking on this point.

¹¹⁴ *QGYZQY*, p. 598.

¹¹⁵ See Dai Jitao, ‘Chanye xiezuoshe fa cao’an ji liyou shu’ (The draft rules of cooperative industrial societies and their reasons), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 1; Yu Xiusong’s diary, 18 July 1920, *SGZY*, p. 313.

¹¹⁶ Hanjun, ‘Laodongzhe yu “guoji yundong”’, *XQPL*, no. 51, p. 1; The English translation is quoted from *MECW*, vol. 20, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Hanjun, *ibid.* The English translation is quoted from *MECW*, vol. 20, p. 190.

Yet Li Hanjun's proposal for 'cooperative production' was first objected by Li Da, and later was deleted by Chen Duxiu from the CCP's Programme.¹¹⁸ As a result, 'cooperative production' failed to become one of the Party's principles. Chen Duxiu, who mistook the system of 'cooperative society' for the cooperation between workers and capitalists, later declared: 'For developing industry in China, there are only two ways: state socialism or private capitalism. ... The cooperative doctrine will under no circumstances enable Chinese industry to attain its full development.'¹¹⁹

Li Hanjun and others in favour of cooperatives were even censured by B. Z. Shumiatsky, chief of the Comintern's Far Eastern Secretariat, as 'fellow travellers of the Chinese proletarian movement', instead of Communists.¹²⁰

Having removed all references to 'cooperative production', what remained in the CCP's economic programme? The CCP declared in the first issue of its organ that it would 'follow the Russian Communist Party to try new measures of production.'¹²¹ For the Chinese Communists, these 'new measures' were neither 'Workers' Control' and 'Factory Committees' of the early Soviet experience, nor the New Economic Policy adopted from 1921, but the economic centralism of 'War Communism' and later. They included the abolition of the free market, state ownership, centralised management, and unitary economic planning. These sorts of measures had been introduced to foreign Communist parties in several documents of the Comintern. For example, 'The Platform of the Communist International' adopted by the First Congress of the Comintern stated that in the economic sphere, the aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat was 'the greatest possible centralisation of the productive forces and the subordination of all production to a single plan', and its related tasks included 'the seizure of all the economic institutions of the capitalist state by bringing them under the control of proletarian state power'; the centralisation of large industrial and commercial enterprises and distribution organs; and 'their transformation into a single system'. Correspondingly, 'Soviet power must steadily build up a huge administrative apparatus and centralise its organisation.'¹²²

¹¹⁸ Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi', in *YDQH*, vol. 2, pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁹ Chen Duxiu, 'Wo de yijian' (My opinions), *XQN*, vol. 7, no. 6, 1 May 1920, p. 46; 'Chen Duxiu to Zhang Dongsun', 17 September 1922, in *Chen Duxiu shuxinji*, p. 377.

¹²⁰ *QGYZQY*, p. 598.

¹²¹ 'Duanyan', *GCD*, no. 1, p. 1.

¹²² This Platform mentions 'workers' management', however, what it underlies is the 'centralised organs for the management of production'. See Part 3 of the Platform, in A. Adler (ed), *Theses*,

Such type of economic measures was accepted by many Chinese Communists as those of ‘orthodox’ socialism. Chen Duxiu was quite explicit in stating that after the national revolution the Chinese Communists would prepare to adopt state socialism: to develop the economy through the big industrial and commercial enterprises established by central or local governments; to centralise the means of production by placing them in the hands of the state; to manage and regulate all production and exchange through a unitary public institution.¹²³ Li Dazhao once wrote that under socialism the state of the dictatorship of commoners should ‘first take mandatory measures to gather and centralise scattered capital in order to set up industry on a big scale.’¹²⁴ Other Chinese Communists agreed that state socialism was the only way for China to develop its economy, and some of them expressed the view that in the future socialist society all capital and industries should be controlled by the state; all production, exchange and, in some instances, distribution would be administered, planned, mediated, and coordinated by a unified apparatus.¹²⁵ Cai Hesen further proposed to ‘use the funds of international Communism to develop China’s industry.’¹²⁶

These Chinese Communists’ concept of state socialism derived mainly from the Bolsheviks. However, the influence of the Marxist founding fathers and their followers in countries other than Russia in this respect cannot be neglected, either. Li Da, deeply influenced by Takabatake Motoyuki’s ideas of state socialism, believed that the state would play a key role in the production of socialist as well as communist society.¹²⁷ In order to support this view, he cited *The Communist Manifesto*: ‘The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to

Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International, A. Holt and B. Holland (transl), Ink Links, London, 1980, pp. 42-44.

¹²³ Chen Duxiu, ‘Zao guo lun’ (On the creation of a new state), *Xiangdao*, no. 2, 20 September 1922, p. 10; Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’, *XQN*, p. 2. Chen sometimes wrote in other place that at the first stage state capitalism would be adopted, where the state need not monopolise all industrial and commercial enterprises and would not ban all private enterprises immediately. See ‘Chen Duxiu to Dongsun’, 17 September 1922, in *Chen Duxiu shuxinji*, p. 377.

¹²⁴ S. C. (Li Dazhao’s pen name), ‘Shehuizhuyi xia zhi shiye’ (Industry under socialism), 1921, in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 2, p. 446.

¹²⁵ ‘Duanyan’, *GCD*, no. 4, p. 1; Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’, *XQN*, p. 2; Jiang Chun, ‘Shehui geming di shangque’, *GCD*, p. 4; Jiang Chun, ‘Wuzhengfuzhuyi jiepou’, *GCD*, p. 23; Wuxie, ‘Women weishenme zhuzhang gongchanzhuyi?’ *GCD*, p. 27; Cuntong, ‘Makesi di gongchanzhuyi’ (Marxist Communism), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 3-4; Xinkai, ‘Gongchanzhuyi yu jierte shehuizhuyi’ (Communism and guild socialism), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 5, p. 4; Xuan, *Xianqu*, p. 1.

¹²⁶ Cai Hesen, ‘Zhongguo laodong yundong ying qu de fangzhen’ (The guiding principles the Chinese labour movement should adopt), *Xianqu*, no. 7, 1 May 1922, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Li Da translated Takabatake Motoyuki’s *Shakai mondai soulan* [An Overview of Social Problem], which lays the emphasis on the role of the state in the new society. Takabatake (1886-1928) was a famous Japanese socialist thinker, who was the translator of Marx’s *Capital* and the editor in chief of the Journal *Kokka shakaishugi* [National Socialism]. Cf. Knight, p. 121; Wang Jionghua, pp. 35-36.

centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, ... to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.’¹²⁸ For Marx and Engels as for Chen Duxiu, state socialism was temporary during the transition period, but Li Da seemed to extend it to communist society, as he claimed:

The communist organisations of production will be centralised, ... Communist principles hold that all production organisations of agriculture and industry should be run by the central government, or could be run by local governments according to different sorts of production units. ... All production units in all places must be subordinated to the central power.¹²⁹

Moreover, nearly all Chinese Communists who advocated state socialism accorded a relatively important role to the state in uprooting capitalism and speeding industrial development. They believed that these instant effects could only be brought about the force of the state, regardless of its side effects. Li Da’s remark struck home: securing production for use instead of profit was bound to resort to coercion.¹³⁰ These Chinese Communists thought that the socialist state had to resort to compulsory, coercive and mandatory means to force people to work, and that strict discipline should be applied in the production process, where labourers’ indiscipline, absenteeism, laziness, sabotage or strikes should be punished.¹³¹

Li Hanjun, on the other hand, wrote that if the stress were merely laid on production for the sake of increasing wealth and strengthening forces regardless of the interests of the people, a state of this sort would never be advantageous to ordinary people. In his view, the switch from private to public ownership was meant ‘to provide the means of production for anybody who intends to labour’ and ‘to give everyone an equal chance of work’, so that working hours could be reduced. This, said he, was ‘the fundamental meaning of socialism.’¹³²

Perhaps, the Chinese Communists who stood for state socialism were not aware of the dangers the concentration of economic power in the hands of the state. Some Communists contended that state socialism or even state capitalism would cause no harm, and that super state power was nothing to worry about, since the state was

¹²⁸ This quotation appeared in Li Da’s ‘Makesi pai shehuizhuyi’ (Marxist socialism), *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1 June 1921, p. 9.

¹²⁹ Jiang Chun, ‘Shehui geming di shangque’, *GCD*, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Li Da, ‘Makesi pai shehuizhuyi’, *XQN*, p. 7.

¹³¹ Cf. Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’; Wuxie, ‘Duoqu zhengquan’; Jiang Chun, ‘Wuzhengfuzhuyi jiepou’; ‘Shehui geming di shangque’; Chen Duxiu, ‘Da Huang Lingshuang’; ‘Chen Duxiu san da Ou Shengbai shu’; Cuntong, ‘Makesi di gongchanzhuyi’.

¹³² Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 12, p. 4.

merely an ‘abstraction’ and state leaders would not profit from production in the way capitalists did.¹³³ It seems that they made a fetish of socialist state and its leaders.

Engels advocated state ownership under socialism, as he wrote in ‘Principles of Communism’: ‘to concentrate all capital, all agriculture, all industry, all transport, and all exchange more and more in the hands of the State.’¹³⁴ However, he later criticised that ‘all interference by the state with free competition’ including nationalisation of branches of industry is a misrepresentation of socialism and that ‘this alleged socialism is nothing but feudal reaction ... a pretext for extortion, its secondary object being to turn as many proletarians as possible into officials and pensioners dependent on the state, and to organise, alongside the disciplined army of officials and military, a similar army of workers. Compulsory suffrage imposed by senior functionaries instead of by factory overseers.’ This, satirised Engels, would arrive at the conclusion that ‘the state = socialism’.¹³⁵

In contrast to most Chinese Communists, Li Hanjun never advocated state socialism. He knew the drawbacks of the concentration of economic power in the hands of the state, as he wrote that the anarcho-syndicalists of the USA and France held that if the state owned, administered and managed all production and distribution, ‘the state would replace the capitalists and become one big capitalist, whereas the working class would remain wage slaves without freedom; moreover, such a government would be prone to degenerate into a bureaucratic one, no different from that under the existing capitalist society’. What the anarcho-syndicalists maintained, as Li saw it, was the need to take possession of all production institutions, and to administrate and manage production and distribution by ‘free and associated labour organisations’.¹³⁶ This might be the reason why he was especially interested in the IWW in America and the CGT in France.

Li Hanjun never fully expounded his views on cooperative production, but he introduced the syndicalists’ campaign to keep the instruments of production in the hands of the workers organised in industrial unions and cooperatives.¹³⁷ ‘The

¹³³ Xinkai, ‘Gongchanzhuyi yu jierte shehuizhuyi’, *XQN*, p. 4; Xuan, *Xianqu*, p. 1.

¹³⁴ Engels, ‘Principles of Communism’, 1847, in *MECW*, vol. 6, p. 351. This work can be seen as the first draft of *The Communist Manifesto*.

¹³⁵ ‘F. Engels to E. Bernstein’, 12 March 1881, in *MECW*, vol. 46, p. 74.

¹³⁶ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 14, p. 5.

¹³⁷ Cf. Li’s related articles and translations on the Syndicalist organisations, including: ‘IWW de yange’ (The evolution of the IWW), *XQPL*, no. 24, 16 November 1919; ‘I.W.W gaiyao’, ‘Faguo “laodong zonglianhehui” huizhang’ (The Statutes of the French ‘Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)’), *XQN*,

Preamble to the IWW Constitution' translated by Li declared that workers should 'come together on the political as well as the industrial field, ... take possession of the means of production' and 'take hold of that which they produce by their labour through an economic organisation of the working class.' It also proposed to build a new society based on industrial unions after the collapse of capitalism.¹³⁸ This approach to social transformation was highly appreciated by Li as he considered that this would have 'an important bearing on mankind in material and spiritual fields', and constitute a 'trend' in the world.¹³⁹

Li Hanjun noticed minor differences between the CGT and the IWW: The CGT attached greater importance to workers' spontaneity on a local, communal basis and was inclined towards decentralisation; whereas the IWW worked to bring local unions under centralist control. Yet both opposed the concentration of economic power in the hands of the state and irresponsible bureaucracy.¹⁴⁰ He knew that the IWW had shortcomings: its methods were sometimes extreme and production units under IWW rule might pursue their own interests and harm consumers' interests. He was also aware that the IWW's centralised organisation might foster a bureaucracy of working class leaders. Therefore, Li did not agree with everything the IWW stood for. Sometimes he saw Guild Socialism's compromise proposals as a good solution to maintaining a balance between producers and consumers and between guilds and the state.¹⁴¹

In reality, syndicalists and guild socialists had something in common: both were suspicious of the bureaucratic tendencies of state socialism and opposed simply transferring industry from the capitalists to the state.¹⁴² Although many Chinese Communists believed that syndicalism and Guild Socialism had nothing in common with Marxism, Li Hanjun found that some of the principles which syndicalists stood for were similar to what Marxist founding fathers advocated: the most obvious similarity was the stress on producers' self-determination and self-government in

vol. 8, no. 4. In addition, Li also introduced and mentioned the IWW and CGT in several other articles and his speeches.

¹³⁸ The part of 'the Preamble to the IWW Constitution' and the revised Preamble can be seen in Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. 3, Part 2, pp. 800-801.

¹³⁹ Xianjin, 'I.W.W. de yange', *XQPL*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Hanjun, 'I.W.W. gaiyao', *XQPL*, p. 3. Cf. Cole, vol. 3, Part 2, pp. 469-470; pp. 491-493.

¹⁴¹ Li Hanjun, 'Shehuizhuyi di paibie', *JW*, no. 14, pp. 5-6; Hanjun, 'I.W.W. gaiyao', *XQPL*, p. 3.

¹⁴² Cf. H. Pelling (ed), *The Challenge of Socialism* (The British Political Tradition, Book 7), A & C Black Publishers, London, 1954, pp. 217-231.

industry, especially the ‘free and associated labour organisations’ advanced by the syndicalists.¹⁴³

‘Free and associated labour’ and workers’ was explicitly formulated by Marx himself, as he wrote the Paris Commune ‘wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production ... into mere instruments of free and associated labour.’¹⁴⁴ He once asked the working class ‘to free those wealth-producing powers from the infamous shackles of monopoly and subject them to the joint control of the producers’.¹⁴⁵ He considered ‘the superseding of the economical conditions of the slavery of labour’ would require ‘a new organisation of production’.¹⁴⁶ The new organisation of production, in the view of this author, may include ‘cooperative factories’, ‘cooperative enterprises’, ‘united cooperative societies’, ‘co-operative workmen societies’, ‘associations of workmen’, ‘association of free and equal producers’, as Marx had mentioned in several of his works. What Marx projected for the organisation of socialist production, according to E. Rapaport, was a ‘syndicalist model’.¹⁴⁷ It seems that Li’s view on the new production organisation was consistent with Marx’s.

Li Hanjun later knew more Marx’s remarks on cooperative production. In 1924, he quoted Marx’s *Capital* to the effect that with the centralisation of capital, ‘the cooperative form of the labour-process’ would develop on an ever-extending scale, together with

the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as means of production of combined, socialised labour, This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisition of the capitalist era: i.e., on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production.¹⁴⁸

Li further quoted the following paragraph from *Capital*: ‘Development of the productive forces of social labour ... unconsciously creates the material requirements of a higher mode of production’. According to Li, the ‘higher mode of production’

¹⁴³ Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, *JW*, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘Du Zhang Wentian’, *JW*, p. 4; Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 14, p. 5. Li also said so in a speech made in the end of 1920. See Bao Huiseng, ‘Gongchandang diyici’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 313.

¹⁴⁴ Marx, ‘The Civil War in France’, in *MECW*, vol. 22, p. 335.

¹⁴⁵ Marx, ‘Letter to the Labour Parliament, 1854’, quoted from P. Corrigan et al., *Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory - Bolshevism and its Critique*, MacMillan, London, 1978, p. 159.

¹⁴⁶ Marx, ‘The Civil War in France’, in *MECW*, vol. 22, p. 491.

¹⁴⁷ Rapaport, in Jessoph and Wheatley (eds), p. 689.

¹⁴⁸ Here, Li cited the whole section ‘Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation’ from *Capital*, vol. 1 in his *WSJC*, vol. 2, pp. 74-78. The English translation can be seen in *MECW*, vol. 35, pp. 748-750. The abbreviations are mine.

refers to ‘socialist [production] organisation’.¹⁴⁹ The higher and new mode of production, in his view, would be cooperative production, and the socialist production organisation would be workers’ cooperatives. He also considered cooperative production as a means to achieve social transformation.¹⁵⁰

Such ideas were precisely what Marx had suggested. He saw the cooperative factories of labourers themselves as ‘represent[ing] within the old form the first sprouts of the new’.¹⁵¹ Since cooperatives enable the associated labourers to use the means of production for the employment of their own labour, he wrote that ‘the antithesis between capital and labour is overcome within them’.¹⁵² Marx thought that the cooperative movement was ‘one of the transforming forces of the present society based upon class antagonism’, he thus recommended working men to ‘embark in cooperative production’, for this would attack the very ‘groundwork’ of the current economical system.¹⁵³ Moreover, Marx believed that ‘cooperative production’ with ‘united cooperative societies’ regulating national production on a common plan would be nothing else, but ‘Communism’.¹⁵⁴ Marx praised that the cooperative movement was the ‘great social experiments’, and predicted in a cooperative system the ‘associated producers’ could work ‘plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind, and a joyous heart’ under conditions ‘most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature’.¹⁵⁵

For Li as for Marx, cooperatives were seeds of the future within the present: a way to transform capitalist production and also a new, higher mode of production for post-capitalist society. It is clear that ‘cooperative production’ as proposed by Li Hanjun in 1920 was consonant with Marx’s thinking and an important principle of the labour and socialist movement.

Cooperative societies, along with socialist parties and trade unions, were ‘the three wings of the working-class movement’.¹⁵⁶ In ideal cooperatives, workers would hold

¹⁴⁹ Li Hanjun cited from *Capital*, vol. 3, ch.15, section 3, in *WSJC*, vol. 2, p. 80. The English translation can be seen in *MECW*, vol. 37, pp. 249-258.

¹⁵⁰ Li Da, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, in *MECW*, vol. 37, p. 438. There are some mistakes in this paragraph’s translation in the Chinese version of *Capital - Ziben lun* (translated by the Central compilation and translation bureau, Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 2004, p. 499).

¹⁵² Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, in *MECW*, vol. 37, p. 438.

¹⁵³ Marx, ‘Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council of the Geneva Congress’, in *MECW*, vol. 20, p. 190.

¹⁵⁴ ‘The Civil War in France’, in *MECW*, vol. 22, p. 335.

¹⁵⁵ Marx, ‘Inaugural Address of the Working Men’s International Association’, in *MECW*, vol. 20, p. 11; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, in *MECW*, vol. 37, p. 807.

¹⁵⁶ Cole, vol. 3, Part 2, p. 653.

equal shares, own the means of production and have full control over economic decisions. By taking over the economic work of society voluntarily, the cooperators would manage their own affairs autonomously with a minimum of interference from the State.¹⁵⁷ In such a way, the cooperatives also embody the values of spontaneity, self-government, participation, democracy and community. These were precisely the values Li Hanjun consistently stood for.

* * * * *

It is not hard to see from the above that the principal divergence of views on socialism between Li Hanjun and other CCP leaders still concerned questions of centralisation and decentralisation: in the political field, concentrating power in the hands of a centralist government, or emphasising self-government on a local, democratic basis; in the economic field, putting all economic institutions under the state, or workers' self-management in the form of cooperatives. It is therefore clear that Li Hanjun disagreed with the concentration of political power and the monopoly of economic institutions and activities by the state.

Marx was concerned not just about the alienation of labour in economic activity but also about the alienation of power in social activity in the form of the state. The emancipation of labour and of society was the chief goals he strove for, and there are interrelationships in achieving these goals. So it is necessary to carry out both economical reform and political transformation.

For Marx, the state – ‘the centralised and organised governmental power usurping to be the master instead of the servant of society’ was ‘a completely illusory community’ as well as ‘a new fetter’. Only in the ‘real community’, of freely combined individuals, could people ‘obtain their freedom in and through their association’. To change the relations of people to the state, Marx proposed abolishing the state hierarchy by reducing its functions and replacing it with ‘really democratic institutions’ based on ‘local municipal liberty’ and ‘the self-government of the producers’. Only in this way, according to him, ‘the reabsorption of the State power by society’ can be achieved.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ R. C. Williams, *The Cooperative Movement, Globalization from Below*, Ashgate Publishing, Hampshire & Burlington, 2007, p. 12; J. Elster, ‘Desirable, Why Are There So Few Cooperatives?’, in *Socialism*, E. F. Paul et al. (eds), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, pp. 99-100.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, p. 83; Marx, ‘First Draft of *The Civil War in France*’, in *MECW*, vol. 22, pp. 486-487.

An ideal society for Marx is a ‘society composed of associations of free and equal producers’.¹⁵⁹ Since political organisation systems have their roots in material production relationships, economic democracy embodied in producer cooperatives is regarded as ‘an essential component of political democracy’, therefore, Marx was in favour of a civil society organised as a system of producer cooperatives.¹⁶⁰ So, in Marx and Engels’ view, cooperatives were not only an economic institution but basic building blocks of the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹⁶¹

Li Hanjun’s ideas on the socialist society’s economic and political institutions coincided on many points with Marx’s, even though he may not study Marx’s thinking on cooperative labour in depth. Like Marx, Li attacked the centralist bureaucratic state, a ‘state of officials’ and blood-suckers. However, unlike Marx and many of his followers, Li had misgivings about the state of so-called proletarian rule and never advocated the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the state.

Although Li Hanjun believed that socialism as a body of policies originated from Marx’s basic theories, he never committed himself permanently to any single form of socialism. Li once stated that socialism was ‘a living thing and has latitude to develop’, a system that brought forth several forms of socialism in different countries, in accordance with their differing circumstances. Yet, with regard to what kind of socialist programme China should adopt, Li frankly admitted: ‘We do not know at present’, and added that it would be the outcome of Chinese creative effort.¹⁶² However, it is beyond doubt that the socialist programme he expected to see ought to be one suited to China’s conditions and should not violate the most fundamental socialist value commitments: democracy, freedom, and self-determination.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Marx, ‘The Nationalisation of the Land’, 1872, in *MECW*, vol. 23, p. 136.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. B. Jossa, ‘Marx, Marxism and the Cooperative Movement’, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, no. 29, 2005.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Marx, ‘Notes on Bakunin’s Book *Statehood and Anarchy*’, 1873, in *MECW*, vol. 24, p. 520; ‘Engels’ Amendments to the Programme of the North England Socialist Federation’, June 1887, in *MECW*, vol. 26, p. 619.

¹⁶² Hanjun, ‘Du Zhang Wentian’, *JW*, p. 4.

¹⁶³ On the fundamental socialist values, please see D. Little, ‘Socialist Morality: Towards A Political Philosophy for Democratic Socialism’, in Paul et al. (eds), pp. 1-24.

Conclusions

In the concluding chapter, I first sum up the main points of my study, including findings that have never been dealt with before or have been neglected by historians. Then I give a brief account of Li Hanjun's tragic fate, and discuss his character and thinking. In order to understand Li more deeply, I apply an ends-means framework to analyse his main concerns and motives. Lastly I offer an evaluation of Li Hanjun as an historical figure.

Section 1. Main Points and Findings

My research clarifies Li Hanjun's activities and ideas and corrects some distortions. It casts light on his personal history, and fills some important gaps in the early history of the CCP and the Chinese labour movement.

Chapter one describes Li's early life, his family background, his upbringing and his schooling. The education Li received in Japan broadened and deepened his knowledge, and allowed him to acquaint himself with socialist thinking and the socialist movement in Japan. My research shows that Li joined Sun Yat-sen's party in 1912. His early experiences helped shape his political inclinations and explain why he became interested in socialism and Marxism.

Chapter two shows how Li Hanjun participated in China's 'Enlightenment' in the May Fourth period. He formed a close relationship with Sun Yat-sen and some KMT socialists and became the *Xingqi pinglun* group's 'leading intellectual'. My analysis of his 'Transformation Must Be Total' reveals his attachment to the Lao-Zhuang philosophical tradition. Given this philosophical inclination, he can be said to have inherited the dialectical mode of thinking, a sceptical spirit, and a pronounced anti-authoritarianism, foreshadowing his later political orientation.

Chapter three demonstrates that Li Hanjun advocated the systematic study of Marxist theory. He translated several Marxist works, particularly on economics. Some of his translations have never been mentioned by other scholars. He expounded materialist conceptions of history from his own perspective and was the first to

introduce ‘dialectical materialism’ to China. Never a dogmatist, he did not treat Marxism as an inclusive doctrine, and his effort to introduce Marxism was always closely associated with introducing other socialist theories. He emphasised the integration of theory and practice. Because of his rich knowledge of Marxism, he was regarded as ‘one of China’s most learned Marxists’.¹

Chapter four shows that Li Hanjun played a crucial role in the initial stages of the Communist movement in China. An internationalist by conviction, he made wide contact with socialists and Communists from several European and East Asian countries, including Soviet Russian agents. Perhaps because Li was one of the Bolsheviks’ early contacts in China, he was regarded as a ‘Chinese Bolshevik’ as early as 1919. He worked with Soviet agents and Korean socialists on attempts to build a ‘Bolshevik-style organisation’ and to publish a magazine to propagate Bolshevism. These had a bearing on establishing the embryonic CCP and happened before Chen Duxiu’s arrival in Shanghai. So the establishment of the CCP was not a spontaneous action that Chinese radical intellectuals undertook independently but was, to a considerable extent, initiated and promoted by Soviet Russia and the Comintern.

This chapter indicates that Li Hanjun, as a member of Revoburo, a Comintern sub-bureau set up by Voitinsky, and as one of the leaders of the sponsoring group of the CCP, held a position second only to Chen Duxiu’s. He was charged with drafting the CCP’s first programme and was its acting general secretary. He made preparations for the CCP’s founding congress while Chen was in Guangzhou.

This study clarifies the arguments at the First Congress of the CCP and Li Hanjun’s own views. It shows that Li disagreed with attempts to introduce extreme leftist phrasemongering into the Party’s platform and resolutions: his proposals and views were mainly concerned with tactical issues, and accentuated what was feasible.

Chapter five refutes the charge that Li Hanjun was opposed to the labour movement and to the immediate establishment of trade unions. My examination of the facts proves that Li was deeply concerned about the Chinese workers’ suffering, and began writing essays to support and guide workers’ strikes, promote workers’ solidarity, and popularise knowledge about foreign labour movements as early as 1919. Around one third of his publications were chiefly concerned with labour issues or theories of labour emancipation.

¹ Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism*, p. 161.

Li was the first Communist leader in charge of the Party's work among labourers, and he set up a Labour Movement Committee. He started the first Chinese Communist publication devoted to reaching workers and became its editor-in-chief. He threw himself into directing strikes and organising trade unions, and became a leader of the Hubei Provincial Federation of Trades Unions. In guiding the labour movement, he sought to combine economic and political struggles, legal actions and revolutionary methods, and to integrate revolutionary intellectuals and manual labourers. He therefore deserved the title 'pioneer of the Chinese labour movement'.²

Chapter six makes clear that Li Hanjun's withdrawal from the CCP was due mainly to dissension between him and the CEC. The divergence of views concerned the Party's policies and tactics and some principles of organisation. Li questioned Bolshevik centralism and 'iron discipline' and opposed the CCP's adoption of these principles of organisation. He also disagreed with the Party's total reliance on Comintern financial aid and unconditional obedience to its orders, especially its 'bloc within' the KMT, a policy ordered by the Comintern. The personal conflicts between him and some CCP leaders, Chen Duxiu and Zhang Guotao in particular, also contributed to his expulsion.

Chapter seven shows that Li Hanjun's vision of socialism was quite different from that of other early Chinese Communists, who were prepared to follow the Russian route of state socialism and dictatorship by a Communist élite. He had doubts about the Russian experience.

Li once suggested that private and public ownership could co-exist in the transition from capitalism to socialism. The plan for a mixed economy Li conceived and proposed in 1922 could be said to presage similar economic policies propounded in the CCP's 'New Democracy' stage.

In his view, the governing institutions in a socialist society should be democratic and autonomous rather than centralist and bureaucratic. He also believed that production and distribution in a socialist society should be administered and managed by an association of free and equal producers instead of by the state and its officials, and he opposed an economic monopoly in the hands of the state. The ideal economic system for him was not state ownership but communal ownership in the form of producers' cooperatives.

² Tian Ziyu, *Li Hanjun*, p. 113.

In short, Li Hanjun was a person with lofty ideals who fought all his life for a better society and devoted himself to the cause of the emancipation of working people. He remained a revolutionary throughout his life.

Section 2. Li Hanjun's Tragic Fate

Between 1926 and 1927 Li Hanjun actively participated in China's Great Revolution in Wuhan. However, after the failure of this Revolution, in late 1927, he met a violent death at the age of thirty-seven. Given the political situation at that time, his fate seemed inevitable.

On 12 April 1927, Jiang Jieshi staged a *coup d'état* in Shanghai, massacred Communists, and established a national government in Nanjing several days later. Afterwards, similar incidents occurred in several other cities. Li Hanjun condemned Jiang's betrayal of the revolution. However, after the Wuhan Government's break with the CCP, he, as a KMT member, remained in Wuhan and participated in the reorganised Hubei Provincial Government.³ He and other KMT left-wingers in the Government like Zhan Dabei, Zhang Guo'en, Deng Chumin and Li Shucheng did their best to protect Communists and revolutionaries in Hubei against persecution, to support working people's rights, and to strike back against provocations by KMT reactionaries. Their actions incurred the reactionaries' hostility. He recognised the dangers he faced after Jiang Jieshi's *coup d'état* and declared that as revolutionaries, 'we should be ready to sacrifice ourselves at any time and any place.'⁴ Unfortunately, his expectation was realised.

On 14 November 1927, the Western Expedition Army, dispatched by the KMT's Nanjing Government, reached Wuhan and established a Provincial Commission. The Commission claimed that 'Hubei provincial power is controlled by the leftist Li Shucheng and the pro-Communists Li Hanjun and Zhan Dabei.'⁵ On the evening of December 17 the Wuhan Garrison Commander Hu Zongduo sent soldiers to arrest Li

³ According to the recollections of Dong Biwu, Deng Chumin and Li Bogang, the prominent Communists like Dong Biwu and Li Fuchun asked Li Hanjun, Zhan Dabei and Deng Chumin not to leave Wuhan and to remain there to work for the revolutionary cause and the CCP.

⁴ Li Hanjun, 'Women suishi suidi yaoyou xisheng de juexin' (We should be ready to sacrifice ourselves at any time and any place) — Speech at the memorial meeting held on 22 May 1927 to mourn the martyrs of Southern and Northern China, *Hankou minguo ribao*, 25 May 1927.

⁵ *Shuntian shibao* [Shuntian Times], 16 December 1927, p. 2; *Shen bao*, 3 December 1927.

Hanjun and Zhan Dabei in Hankou, and executed them two hours later. The following day, the Wuhan Garrison Command declared that Li Hanjun and Zhan Dabei had been shot as ‘flagrant leaders of the CCP in Hubei’.⁶ Some newspapers reported, before Li was killed, he behaved as ‘a firm and unyielding Communist’.⁷

Many people at the time believed that Hu Zongduo, known as ‘a ruthless butcher’, was responsible for killing Li Hanjun. Some say Hu’s concubine Zhang Xingzhong urged Hu to kill Li immediately, for Li had advocated women’s liberation and supported the student strike at Hubei Women’s Normal School, where Zhang was a student and a supporter of the conservative-minded school principal.⁸ In fact, Hu Zongduo carried out the killing on the orders of the KMT Special Central Committee in Nanjing, for Hu sent a telegram to Nanjing on December 18 reporting Li and Zhan’s execution.⁹ It was rumoured that the KMT feared that Li Hanjun and other Communists and left-wingers in Wuhan might respond to the Guangzhou Uprising staged by the Communists on 12 December 1927.¹⁰ Whatever the reason, in the eyes of KMT right-wingers and some conservative-minded people, Li had to be removed from the scene.

After Li Hanjun’s death, a CCP organ carried an article satirising him with biting sarcasm.¹¹ This is not surprising. When Li was still a CCP member, he was frequently rebuked by his comrades for being a heretic. After his withdrawal from the Party, some in the CY and the CCP believed that he had become ‘reactionary’. They also believed that he and Hu Egong were organising an ‘independent socialist party’ or ‘social democratic party’, which was prepared to adopt principles and tactics partly from the Third International and partly from the Second International.¹² This allegation is

⁶ *Shen bao*, 23 December 1927.

⁷ *Shuntian shibao*, 20 December 1927, p. 2.

⁸ Chen Duanben, ‘Oral Recollection of Li Hanjun’, interviewed by Li Danyang on 21 December 1981; Li Chunchu, ‘Hu Zongduo Tao Jun zai Hubei de tongzhi yu bengkuai’ (The rule of Hu Zongduo and Tao Jun in Hubei and its collapse), *Wuhan wenshi ziliao*, no. 1, 1983, p. 6.

⁹ Han. 8797, ‘Hu Zongduo zhi Zhongyang tebie weiyuanhui dian’ (Hu Zongduo’s telegram to the KMT Special Central Committee), 18 December 1927.

¹⁰ ‘Yizhou jian guoneiwai dashi shuping’ (Weekly review of major events in China and abroad), *Guowen zhoubao* [National News Weekly], 25 December 1927; ‘Middle South Bank’s Hankou branch’s letter to its headquarters in Shanghai’, 19 December 1927, kept in Wuhan Municipal Archives.

¹¹ Qi (Zheng Chaolin’s pen name), ‘Yuan zai wang ye Li Hanjun’ (A wrong accusation against Li Hanjun), *Buersaiweike* [Bolshevik], no. 11, 26 December 1927.

¹² ‘Huang Jing zhi tuan zhongyang xin’ (Huang Jing’s letter to the CEC of the CY), 15 October 1925, in *Hubei geming lishi wenjian huiji (1925-1926)*, p. 125; Cai Hesen, *Zhongyang dang’anguan congkan*, p. 26; Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 31.

untrue, but it shows they regarded Li as a democratic socialist of the sort found in Western countries.¹³

On the spectrum of political tendencies, Li Hanjun was just left of centre. For reactionary rulers and right-wingers, he was a radical revolutionary, whereas for the ultra-leftists, he was a right deviationist and even a counter-revolutionary. In the political and intellectual climate of China in 1920s, Li became someone with whom neither extreme rightists nor extreme leftists could be reconciled, and who was rejected by both the CCP and the KMT.¹⁴

Section 3. Comments on Li Hanjun's Character and Thinking

Li Hanjun was noted for his independent character, sceptical attitude and critical eye. He distrusted absolute authority and doubted dogmas. Such leanings reflected his natural disposition and derived from his earlier absorption of Lao-Zhuang philosophy.

While studying Marxism, Li Hanjun was especially interested in its 'dialectical mode of thinking'.¹⁵ Knowing that there are no absolute right or wrong views, and everything may have its positive and negative sides; that everything is in constant flux, and anything and anybody could turn into its or their opposite, he remarked:

In historical development, ... the oppressed class at first waged struggles for the sake of their existence and position; but later they might exclude and fight against new elements that threaten them, in order to maintain their own existence and power. So today's progressive elements might turn into tomorrow's conservative elements.¹⁶

Li Hanjun's dialectical mode of thinking helps explain why he often doubted authority, rejected Procrustean notions of the rigid pursuit of dogmas, and could see the damage that the CCP leaders' authoritarian tendencies might bring about and the dangers of the dictatorial system the Party intended to establish.

¹³ In fact, Li Hanjun did not intend to set up a party separate from the CCP, but instead set up the Society for the Study of Social Sciences, whose members included several members of the CCP and the SY. Li Bogang, 'Zishu' (Li Bogang's account of his life), edited by Chen Huihan, *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, no. 11, 1982, p. 10.

¹⁴ An old Communist, Wang Feiran, heard that Li Hanjun was killed by the CCP. Wang Feiran, 'Oral Recollection', recorded by Li Danyang on 18 June 1981 (unpublished).

¹⁵ Hanjun, 'Weiwu shiguan bushi shenme?', *JW*, 23 January 1921, p. 4.

¹⁶ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 2, p. 48.

Li Hanjun was conspicuous for his forthrightness and sincerity. He often told his students that a person should ‘be frank and candid with people’.¹⁷ He dared to raise questions and objections in the CCP, and refused to submit to unjust or wrong decisions and orders. He paid for his independence of mind and disobedience. His obstinate character was a factor in his expulsion from the Party.

Chen Duxiu was also an honest person with obstinate character, and later he also opposed the CCP’s CEC and the Comintern and was therefore expelled. But Chen’s mode of thinking was quite different from that of Li Hanjun. We have known that Li abhorred absolutism. However, Chen commonly thought in terms of absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. In early 1920 he suddenly shifted from favouring democracy and liberty to embracing Bolshevik centralism, dictatorship by a Party élite, and state socialism, and became a Bolshevik dogmatist for a while. Although in his final years he realised that Lenin’s dictatorship of the proletariat had brought about bad results and returned to his appreciation of democracy, his mode of thinking changed but little. For example, he declared in 1937: ‘I ... detest the Doctrine of the Mean (*zhongyong zhi dao*) absolutely, ... I am willing to be either extremely right or extremely wrong, but I would never want to be neither right nor wrong.’¹⁸ Several scholars have noted that Chen’s lack of a ‘subtle and sophisticated mind’, his ‘mode of thinking in terms of absolutes’ and his neglect of Marxism’s dialectical connection with other theories, such as liberalism and republicanism. They observe that Chen always considered and dealt with matters in an oversimplified way – ‘either this or that’, either ‘yes or no’.¹⁹

To affirm a thing completely or to negate a thing in all situations, without any allowances for different circumstances, was a sort of absolutism. Some other Chinese Communists also thought in this way. For example, when criticising Li Hanjun’s compromise, Xiao Chunü wrote: ‘Rather go without than have something incomplete. ... There should be no compromise in serving the cause of the

¹⁷ Zhao Chunshan, ‘Wushi Li Hanjun xiansheng jiangxue’ (On the lectures given by my teacher Mr Li Hanjun), in *Zhao Chunshan wenshi zhuzuoji* [Zhao Chunshan’s Writings on Culture and History] compiled and published by Dangyang shi zhengxie, Dangyang, 1993, p. 149; this is a part of Zhao Chunshan’s recollections ‘Guanyu Li Hanjun xiansheng’ (On my teacher Li Hanjun), 1 March 1981 (unpublished).

¹⁸ ‘Chen Duxiu to Chen Qichang’, 21 November 1937, in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuan*, vol. 3, p. 431; Chen Duxiu’s criticism of Bolshevism can be seen in *Chen Duxiu de zuihou jianjie* [Chen Duxiu’s Last Opinions – Essays and Letters], Hu Shi (ed), Ziyou Zhongguo chubanshe, Taipei, 1949, and *Chen Duxiu’s Last Articles and Letters, 1937-1942*, G. Benton (ed and transl), Curzon, Surrey, 1998.

¹⁹ Lin Yu-sheng, p. 63; Gao Like, p. 226; Zhu Yan, *Wannian Chen Duxiu* [Chen Duxiu in His Later Years], Renmin chubanshe, Beijing, 2006, p. 228.

revolution.²⁰ The Taiwan historian Chen Yongfa observed that after the birth of the CCP a tendency towards monism, intolerance and exclusiveness in ideology and organisation emerged.²¹ In fact, such ideas were already present in the minds of some radical intellectuals even before they became Communists.

While criticising absolutism, the Chinese scholar Yang Wei pointed out that in general, the Chinese lack scepticism, and that sceptics are likely to believe that ‘a right thing may contain faults and a wrong thing may be right in some respects, and this leads to a tolerance of pluralistic values.’²² Li Hanjun may not have been sufficiently tolerant of pluralistic *values*, yet he had a pluralistic notion of socialism and believed different revolutionary methods and forms of government and production could be adopted in a future socialist society. Li was one of the few early Chinese Communists who tended towards scepticism, relativism and pluralism, approaches that are of course generally inseparable.

Given his philosophical inclination, Li Hanjun also had a political approach: he was alert to the danger of the concentration of power and preferred its institutional dispersion. He repudiated Bolshevik centralism and iron discipline, and therefore opposed Party leaders using excessively centralist powers to intervene in the activities of subordinate organisations. He also insisted on the CCP’s independence and opposed its submission to Comintern control. Moreover, he predicted that Bolshevik centralism would lead to individual dictatorship by Party leaders and the abuse of power. He warned: ‘There was autocracy in China in the past. If the CCP adopts centralism, it will follow the old track to ruin.’²³ Unfortunately, things turned out exactly as he had foreseen after the CCP seized state power.

Some scholars recently suggested that Li Hanjun had a ‘prophetic awareness’.²⁴ In my opinion, his ‘prophetic awareness’ was mainly due to his philosophical and political approach and partly due to the heterogeneous sources he drew on. His ability to read foreign languages enabled him to derive nourishment from other socialist theories and to gain a wider outlook than most Chinese Communists. His pluralistic

²⁰ Xiao Chunü, ‘Letter to reporter’, *Jiangsheng rikan*, 16 November 1923.

²¹ Chen Yongfa, *Zhongguo gongchan geming qishinian* [Seventy Years of the Communist Revolution in China], Lianjing, Taipei, 1998, vol. 1, p. 67.

²² Yang Wei, ‘Huiyizhuyi he xiandai Zhongguo’.

²³ Cai Hesen, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, pp. 29-30.

²⁴ Ren Wuxiong, ‘Ping xuezhe xing gemingjia Li Hanjun’ (On Li Hanjun - a revolutionary and a scholar), *SGZY*, no. 6, December 2006, p. 445.

appreciation of various schools of socialist thought, including anarchism, inclined him to anti-authoritarianism.

The Chinese anarchists' critique of Bolshevism was quite sharp. They accused the Bolsheviks of employing state power to interfere with people materially and spiritually and of depriving people of happiness and freedom by means of their dictatorship, and said they were 'bound to turn people into slaves'. They pointed out that once at the helm of a state equipped with centralist power in the name of proletarian dictatorship, Communist leaders 'would not easily give up power', and become 'autocrat in the future'.²⁵ Li Hanjun probably knew of these critiques. According to Cai Hesun, Li's suspicion of Lenin's actions in Russia was due to his 'natural anarchist inclination'. Li Da even alleged that Li Hanjun had remained an anarchist after joining the CCP.²⁶

E. Rapaport observed:

In Marx's writing on socialist politics, there is an unsolved and unacknowledged ambivalence between anarchist and authoritarian elements. ... In Marx, we can find a far more powerful theoretical grounding for the anarchist critique of authoritarian socialism.

Yet, he found that Marx 'failed to see the possibility that post-capitalist authority relations might be destructive rather than benign.'²⁷ Dirlik rendered some ideas of the Chinese anarchists explicit: 'Revolution must in its progress create the institutions that contained, in embryo, the society of the future'; and

To the anarchists this revolutionary dialectic ruled out the utilisation of any means that contradicted the ultimate goals of the revolution, since bad means would further distort the social nature of individuals and lead them away from, not toward, the cherished goal of revolution.²⁸

In a certain sense, Li Hanjun's 'prophetic awareness' can be explained by his spiritual and political inclinations, including his 'natural anarchist inclination'.

²⁵ Cf. AF, 'Wei shenme fandui Buershiweike' (Why we oppose the Bolsheviks?), *Fendou* [Struggle], 30 April 1920; 'Zheng Xianzong to Chen Duxiu', *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 3, tongxun, p. 2; Taipu, 'Wuzhengfuzhuyi yu Zhongguo' (Anarchism and China), *Ziyou* [Freedom], no. 1, December 1920; 'Zhu Qianzhi to Duxiu', *XQN*, vol. 9, no. 3, tongxin, p. 4.

²⁶ Cai Hesun, 'Tigang', in *ZDBX*, p. 29; Li Da, 'Zhongguo gongchandang chengli shiqi de sixiang douzheng qingkuang' (On the ideological struggles during the period of the establishment of the CCP), 27 March 1959, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 52.

²⁷ Rapaport, in Jessoph and Wheatley (eds), p. 688, p. 694.

²⁸ Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, p. 182.

Section 4. Ends and Means

The main reason for Li Hanjun's 'prophetic awareness' was, in the final analysis, that he never deviated from the end he was pursuing. His deep concern was the emancipation of working people and the free development of human beings' personalities. Some examples follow.

In his writings, Li repeatedly emphasised that it was important to respect 'human dignity'. To him, in the society existing then, workers in factories were employed as machines or tools; many women were treated by men as tools for sex and reproduction; and students, especially those in women's schools, were considered as 'commodities'. Li therefore maintained that we should 'regard people as human beings'. He wrote: 'Workers are human beings', so why did they 'live dehumanised lives?' And 'Women are also human beings' with their own feelings, senses and abilities, so they should not be treated as men's private possessions and instruments; students too should be regarded as human beings, not as commodities.²⁹ The main object of his endeavour was to enable people become real human beings.

Li Hanjun knew that 'the meaning of the existence of humanity and the end of the existence of humanity are questions belonging to the field of philosophy.'³⁰ In I. Kant's opinion, rational being is an end in itself and has absolute worth. Human beings have dignity and must always to be considered as ends, never as means. Kant also said: 'Autonomy ... is the basis of the dignity of human and of every rational nature.'³¹ Kant's words might not have been known to Li Hanjun, but it is obvious that he valued human existence, human dignity and human autonomy highly and never regarded humans as means. He believed that only by transforming the social system under which working people were enslaved, controlled and dominated by others could

²⁹ Xianjin, 'Zuijin Shanghai de bagong fengchao', *XQPL*, p. 4; Xianjin, 'Zenmoyang jinhua?', *XQPL*, p. 3; Hanjun, 'Hunpu de shehuizhuyizhe', *XQPL*, p. 2; Ri Jinketsu, in *Kaizō*, p. 23; Li Renjie, 'Nannü jiefang' (The Emancipation of men and women), *XQPL*, no. 31, 1 January 1920, p. 6; Hanjun, 'Zhe Nüshi kaichu xuesheng de liyou!?' (Why Zhejiang Women's Normal School expelled students!?), *JW*, 6 March 1921, p. 4.

³⁰ Hanjun, 'Funü wenti de guanjian' (The crux of the women's issue), *JW*, 26 July 1921, p. 4.

³¹ See I. Kant, 'Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysics of Morals' in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by A. Zweig and edited by T. E. Hill and A. Zweig, Oxford University press, Oxford, 2002, pp. 208-245.

dehumanisation be abolished and a free environment for the development of personality and the rehabilitation of human dignity be achieved.³²

For Marx, the liberty and happiness of every human individual and the full development of every personality was the principal goal, and all else was merely a means to achieving it. In the 'General Rules and Administrative Regulations of the Working Men's International Association' written in 1864: Marx declared: '[T]he economical emancipation of the working classes is, ... the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means'. He also stressed: '[T]he struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties', and all societies and individuals adhering to the Association 'hold it the duty of a man to claim the rights of a man and a citizen, not only for himself, but for every man who does his duty. No rights without duties, no duties without rights.'³³

Marx implies here that while aiming for the emancipation of the working class, a revolutionary organisation should neither pursue its own privileges and monopolies, nor should it ignore the rights of the individuals who join the revolutionary organisation, as well as those of all citizens.

The objective conditions of the revolutionary struggles in some countries without a democratic tradition, such as Russia and China, forced Communists to organise semi-military, disciplined, centralist, and hierarchically ordered parties, and they treated party members as soldiers in combat, demanding their unquestioning discipline and blind obedience. They secured victory against the enemy, but usually at the cost of their members' and others' rights.

Li Hanjun repudiated centralism and iron discipline from the start. He feared that Communist Party leaders would use centralism and iron discipline to behave high-handedly and inhibit the rights and initiative of Party members. He therefore advocated a certain degree of autonomy for the Party's local branches. He also insisted on his right as a Party member to express his own opinion and his right as a citizen to

³² Translator's note 4 of 'Nüzi jianglai de diwei' (Women in the future), Hanjun translated from part of F. A. Bebel's *Der Sozialismus und die Freatt (sic)* [Women under Socialism], *XQN*, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 8; Li Renjie, 'Nannü jiefang', *XQPL*, p. 6.

³³ Quoted from G. M. Stekloff, *History of The First International*, Chapter 3, Martin Lawrence, London, 1928, viewed on 10 January 2010, <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/steklov/history-first-international>>. There is little difference between the editions of 1864 and of 1871. The latter can be seen in *MECW*, vol. 23, pp. 3-20.

choose his own life-style. Because of this, he was criticised by his comrades for his liberal temperament and individualistic and anarchist tendencies.³⁴

For Marx, political movements were a means to achieve the working classes' economic emancipation. But for some Chinese Communists, the pursuit of political power was paramount in itself. Chen Duxiu considered it a strategic error to place too much emphasis on the workers' economic struggle.³⁵ Under the banner of revolution, some Chinese Communists burned ordinary people's property and forced workers and peasants to take part in strikes and violent struggles regardless of their will and interests.³⁶

Bolshevik-style parties were prone to neglect or suppress people's individual rights and even their lives in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As a Polish philosopher, A. Schaff, observed of socialism in practice, there was 'the spreading of anti-individualistic tendencies ... in the wrong sense of denying the right to individuality.'³⁷ In Mao's China, people virtually lacked civic rights and could not choose their jobs, their place of residence, and sometimes even their partner in marriage; they were treated as nuts and bolts in the Party-controlled machine. Zhou Yang, in charge of the Culture Ministry, said 'that in advocating the return of man to himself they are actually advocating absolute individual freedom and asking the people who live under socialism to return to the human nature of bourgeois individualism.'³⁸ During the 'Cultural Revolution', the Chinese people were told to 'fight selfish ideas and personal considerations'.

In the 1920s, most Chinese Communists began advocating Soviet-style state socialism as a model for the socialist economic system: concentrating economic power in the hands of the state and employing compulsory, coercive and mandatory means

³⁴ 'Chen Duxiu's Report to the Third Party Congress', in Saich, vol. 2, p. 576; Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55; 'A Comrade's letter to Li Handjien' by Maring; Li Bogang, 'Huiyi Li Hanjun', *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, p. 3.

³⁵ *Zhongguo laodong tongmenghui yuekan* [China Labour Union Monthly], no. 3, 1 July 1922, Cited from Kwan, p. 34.

³⁶ Zeng Zhi, *Yige xingcun de gemingzhe — Zeng Zhi huiyilu* [A Revolutionary Survived – Zeng Zhi's Reminiscences], Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1998, Chapter 3; Wang Yongxi (ed), *Zhongguo gonghui shi* [A History of the Chinese Trade Unions], Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, Beijing, 1992, pp. 198-199.

³⁷ Schaff, p. 43.

³⁸ Zhou Yang, 'Fighting task of workers in philosophy and social science', *Peking Review*, 3 January 1964, quoted from B. I. Schwartz, *Communism and China, Ideology in Flux*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 174-175.

and strict discipline in the production process.³⁹ After the CCP won power, nearly all economic institutions and sources were monopolised by the state and nearly all production and distribution was controlled by the government. The Party directed all its efforts towards speeding up production and strengthening national defence. As a result, the ‘Great Leap Forward’ caused the deaths of tens of millions of people. This is an ironic echo of Marx’s criticism of Ricardo, ‘his unconcern about “human beings”, and his having an eye solely for the development of the productive forces, whatever the cost in human beings’.⁴⁰ Experience in many ‘socialist’ countries has shown that state socialism does not necessarily introduce a positive change in the situation of the workers, and sometimes may result in even greater alienation.

For Li Hanjun, switching from private to public ownership and increasing production was a means rather than an end, and developing production and science ought to benefit human life. In his view, shortening working hours was ‘the fundamental meaning of socialism’. The aim of socialism was to enable people to ‘enjoy security and happiness’, and become ‘all-round, complete persons’.⁴¹ In view of the fact that ‘subordinating labourers to enterprises monopolised by capitalists ruins human dignity and individual freedom’,⁴² he probably also realised that an economic monopoly of any sort would also ruin both. Because of this, Li Hanjun rejected the Soviet economic model. What he valued was producers’ autonomy in industry, and cooperative production by freely associated labour organisations.

Human emancipation and development was Li Hanjun’s ultimate aim, to which end all else, including political struggle and material production, was a mere means. His commitment to human dignity, freedom, and autonomous innovative activity never faltered.

Most pioneers of the Chinese Communist movement started out by cherishing humanistic ideals. However, as Chen Yan remarked, ‘in the process of turning these

³⁹ Cf. ‘Duanyan’, *GCD*, no. 4; Chen Duxiu, ‘Shehuizhuyi piping’; Wuxie, ‘Women weishenme zhuzhang gongchanzhuyi?’; Jiang Chun, ‘Wuzhengfu zhuyi jiepou’, and ‘Shehui geming di shangque’; Chen Duxiu, ‘Da Huang Lingshuang’; ‘Chen Duxiu san da Ou Shengbai shu’; Cuntong, ‘Makesi di gongchanzhuyi’.

⁴⁰ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, in *MECW*, vol. 37, p. 258.

⁴¹ Li Hanjun, ‘Shehuizhuyi di paibie’, *JW*, no. 12, p. 4; Hanjun, ‘Shehui kexue tekan fakan zhiqiu’, *JW*, p. 2; Liu Zigu, ‘Oral Recollections of Li Hanjun’.

⁴² Hanjun, ‘Laodongzhe yu “guoji yundong”’, *XQPL*, no. 51, p. 1.

ideals into a system, instrumentalism overwhelmed the humanistic principle, leading to totalitarianism'.⁴³

The historian Zhu Yan noted that Chen Duxiu attached importance to the idea of 'instrument'.⁴⁴ After comparing Chen Duxiu's and Li Dazhao's views of socialism, the philosopher Hu Jian wrote that Chen Duxiu considered human beings as tools of social progress and therefore stressed that under socialism people should be controlled and coerced by a dictatorship of the élite, and some civil liberties would be denied; whereas Li Dazhao thought that class struggle was merely a means to an end and believed that under rational socialism there would be individual freedom.⁴⁵ Li Dazhao once said that 'ergatocracy' (rule by the workers) still has the meaning of 'rule', and real ergatocracy and democracy, for him, would abolish any relationship between rulers and subjects, and 'any system that employs people as means.'⁴⁶

Like Li Dazhao, Li Hanjun considered that class struggle and proletarian dictatorship were means to an end, and he valued individual freedom and people's self-government. One of Chen's legacies to the CCP was, as Lee Feigon pointed out, 'the tendency within the party for an obscurantist élite vocabulary.'⁴⁷ Instrumental and utilitarian views like those of Chen Duxiu were quite common among the early Chinese Communists. They saw Bolshevism as a weapon of action that had proved effective in Russia, so they believed the Russian model was the sole one for the Chinese. Cai Hesen, who thought that Bolshevik success offered a shortcut for the Chinese, contended:

We have already had the Russian plan all worked out for us. It's all ready-made. ... Why should we go looking around for other types? Their whole scheme is all ready. It has been written out on paper for us to read, and they themselves are carrying it out in practice. Why should we waste our time on further studies?⁴⁸

Cai therefore held: 'It is necessary to organise a Communist Party whose principles and measures are identical with Russia's'; the Party's organisation should have an

⁴³ Chen Yan, 'Lixiang shi zenyang shiqu de?' (How ideals were lost?), *21 shiji pinglun* [21st Century Issues], no. 6, June 2001, pp. 143-148.

⁴⁴ Zhu Yan, p. 287.

⁴⁵ Hu Jian, 'Gongju lixing yihuo jiazhi lixing — Chen Duxiu yu Li Dazhao de shehuizhuyi guan zhi chayi' (Instrumental rationality or value rationality – On the difference between Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao's views of socialism), *Zhexue yanjiu* [Philosophical Researches], no. 4, 2006, pp. 22-26. Zhu Yan in his *Wannian Chen Duxiu* (p. 287) also noticed that Chen Duxiu once attached more importance to 'instrument'.

⁴⁶ Li Shouchang, 'Cong pingmin zhengzhi dao gongren zhengzhi' (From democracy to ergatocracy), December 1921, in *Li Dazhao wenji*, vol. 2, p. 504, p. 506.

⁴⁷ Lee Feigon, p. 234.

⁴⁸ Xiao Yu, *Mao Zedong yu wo* [Mao Zedong and I], Yuancheng wenhua tushu gongyingshe, Taipei, 1976, p. 64.

‘extreme concentration of power’ and ‘iron discipline’; and ‘must adopt the means employed by Russia, and the dictatorship of the proletariat is the sole way’. He reiterated: ‘It is not necessary for us to have a local and national colour’, and ‘all our movements must rely on the assistance of Russia.’⁴⁹ Partly because of Cai, Mao Zedong also believed that Russian Communism suited China best and was the only road to follow.⁵⁰

Li Hanjun believed at one point that the Russian Revolution was an experience from which Chinese revolutionaries could learn. However, he never considered Bolshevism to be the only correct doctrine, and he was aware of its detrimental effects. He was the first Chinese Communist to refuse to follow the Russian way blindly and unconditionally. He repeatedly stressed that socialists in different countries should develop their theories and methods in the light of their own circumstances and that the CCP’s political line should be determined according to its specific circumstances.⁵¹ Maring disagreed with Li’s opinion, remarking: ‘There are no grounds for considering that China should [follow a way] different from other countries.’⁵²

In Li Hanjun’s view, to achieve an end, it was not necessary to adhere rigidly to any given set of means; different and flexible means, including violent revolution, general strikes, economic struggle, peaceful reform, legal campaigning, political alliances, and even compromise could, if necessary, be adopted in the light of specific circumstances and concrete conditions. Adopting radical means regardless of actual circumstances and conditions and trying to leap forward to achieve a given end would invite disaster.⁵³ He often emphasised ‘possibility and feasibility’ in dealing with specific matters.⁵⁴ In some struggles, he used any available opportunity to improve workers’ conditions and promote their political consciousness, and adopted suitable and flexible tactics to win struggles. He often refused to take drastic action or make excessive demands if he thought that doing so would risk harming people’s interests and lives.

⁴⁹ ‘Cai Linbin to Mao Zedong’ (letters of 13 August 1920 and 16 September 1920), in Lin Daizhao and Pan Guohua (eds), pp. 106-107, pp. 114-115; Cai Hesen, *XQN*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Hsiao Yu, p. 81.

⁵¹ Hanjun, ‘Ziyou piping yu shehui wenti’, *JW*, p. 4; Zhang Guotao, *Bainian chao*, p. 55; Bao Huiseng’s several recollections.

⁵² ‘A Comrade’s letter to Li Handjen’, 25 June 1923.

⁵³ Hanjun, *WSJC*, vol. 1, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁴ Zhao Chunshan, in *Zhao Chunshan wenshi zhuzuoji*, p. 149.

Because of these opinions and actions, Li Hanjun often found himself isolated in the Party. In the eyes of those who believed Bolshevik methods were the only right ones, Li was a reformist, a right deviationist, a parliamentarist, a fence-sitter, an ‘Economist’, a ‘Legal Marxist’ (terms used by Lenin), and even a ‘counter-revolutionary’ and a ‘reactionary’.⁵⁵

Actually, Li Hanjun’s views on ends and means conformed with Marx’s. In Marx’s view, the economic emancipation of the working classes is the great end, to which political movements are a means. For pursuing the great end, he said: ‘[T]he worker will have to seize political supremacy to establish the new organization of labour’, and to ‘overthrow the old political system which sustains the old institutions.’ These actions as means in turn become ends at a certain stage in the struggle. ‘But’, Marx further stressed, ‘we by no means claimed that the means for achieving this goal were identical everywhere.’ In his opinion, the workers in certain countries can attain their goal by ‘peaceful means’.⁵⁶

For Marx as for Li Hanjun, to establish the ‘new organisation of labour’ and secure the working classes’ emancipation was an end, whereas proletarian revolution and dictatorship were means, whose forms could be various. However, this did not imply that Li Hanjun accepted the dictum that ‘the end justifies the means’ and was prepared to see the ultimate end, or any given end in any given phase of the struggle (for example, the capture of political power), achieved by foul means. He did not like the Bolsheviks’ harsh rule in Russia; and he disapproved of the CCP’s attempt to destroy the KMT by conspiratorial means during the Great Revolution.⁵⁷

To achieve the end of popular emancipation, Li Hanjun not only fought against the ‘dark forces’ such as warlords, bureaucrats, imperialist powers and capitalists who oppressed and exploited people in the existing system, but also resisted centralists and would-be dictators who might in future deprive people of their freedom. He always stood side by side with the weak against anybody and any authority likely to alienate their power. In a real sense, he can be called an oppositionist for life.

⁵⁵ Cf. Cai Hesun, ‘Tigang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 27; Li Lisan, ‘Dangshi baogao’, in *ZDBX*, p. 214; Pu Qingquan, in *Wenshi ziliao xuanji*, p. 33; Li Da, ‘Zhongguo gongchandang de faqi’, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 10; Chen Tanqiu, in *YDQH*, vol. 2, p. 286; Qu Qiubai, ‘Zhonggong dangshi gangyao dagang’, in *ZDBX*, p. 201; ‘Huang Jing zhi tuan zhongyang xin’, 15 October 1925, in *Hubei geming lishi wenjian huiji*, pp. 125-126.

⁵⁶ Marx, ‘On the Hague Congress’, 8 September 1872, in *MECW*, vol. 23, p. 255.

⁵⁷ Han. 12993.2.

Because of this stand, Li Hanjun received blows from reactionary rulers, KMT right wingers and left-leaning CCP doctrinaires. This, consequently, led first to his loss of Party membership and eventually to the loss of his life, a truly tragic fate.

Section 5. A Final Assessment

Some of Li Hanjun's thinking and behaviour could not transcend the limits of his circumstance and time, and thus bore the mark of it. For example, under the influence of the pan-labourism that prevailed during the May Fourth period, he believed that labourers would 'dominate all human existence'.⁵⁸ He exaggerated the importance of the proletariat in China, declaring that China 'started stepping into the era of proletarian revolution' in the May Fourth years.⁵⁹ Like many Chinese Communists, he wanted China to quicken its pace in order to catch up with the advanced countries, and to take the road to socialism despite the backwardness of Chinese industry. He sometimes believed that 'will' was the key to human evolution and that under certain conditions people could use willpower to transform the social system before a total change in the productive forces took place. These views, as Luk has pointed out, reflected 'strong voluntarist orientations of thought'.⁶⁰

It can be seen that some of Li Hanjun's ideas were similar to those of other Chinese Communists. In a sense, he helped mould CCP ideology and was to a certain extent responsible for China's radical revolution. Nevertheless, he was critical of core Bolshevik principles and advanced some practical tactics in labour struggles and political struggles. His theories were less doctrinally orthodox than those of other early Communists, and his actions were generally more moderate.

To be sure, if one judges Li Hanjun by today's views and standards, it is not hard to find some of his ideas that we might consider wrong or inappropriate. After the experience of totalitarian rule by the CCP, especially the catastrophes of the 'Cultural Revolution' and the Tian'anmen Square massacre in 1989, many Chinese have come to detest and reject the discourses of revolution and dictatorship, and some have even discarded Marxist theory, too. For them, the Communist Revolution brought nothing

⁵⁸ Hanjun, 'An open letter to a shop assistant', *Pingmin*, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Jinghu, *Jiangsheng rikan*, 11 February 1924.

⁶⁰ Luk, p. 47.

but suffering, and the CCP's founders can hardly shirk responsibility for this. The collapse of Communist regimes elsewhere in the world has further deepened the crisis of belief. These developments have helped bring the study of Communist movements to a new low. In view of this, Li Hanjun, as a Marxist and an important founder of the CCP, might no longer hold scholars' interest, let alone be the object of their studies. However, I believe that Li Hanjun's life and thinking, as well as his cause, are not without meaning as subjects of research. The Communist revolution that took place in China during the period of 1920s-40s had profound internal as well as external causes; and the changes it brought to China are fundamentally positive.

Although Li Hanjun's life was short, his role in modern Chinese history cannot be ignored and his contribution to popular emancipation is deserving of respect. Li was not a particularly original thinker, but some of his ideas have profound meaning for contemporary life, especially his commitment to humanity, freedom, democracy, and autonomy. He did not live to see the realisation in China of the socialism he had promoted, but his vision of people's self-government and cooperative production by the association of free and equal producers is still worth looking at and even putting into practice; his criticism of the CCP's centralism and of dictatorship by an élite and his prediction of the harm this would cause has a strong contemporary resonance, and continues to hold lessons for us now.

It is difficult in evaluating a person to reach an adequate and fair judgement. Historians' judgements are subject to trends and fashions, and different people will hold different views. However, Li Hanjun, as a person fighting to increase human happiness and social justice, and as a person endowed with a strong capacity for independent thought, critical attitudes, sincerity, and honesty would, one would hope, be regarded highly at any time and under any circumstances.

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