

The Concepts of Bolshevism and Radicalism in the May Fourth Movement Radicalization

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reconsider the concept of Bolshevism and its relation to the concept of radicalism during the May Fourth Movement period by looking at the writings on Bolshevism and radicalism in the May Fourth Movement journals. The relevance of different views on radicalism lies in their usages in making claims about possible and desirable set of ideas for the future course of China. Authors such as Chen Duxiu, who wanted to support the idea that China should follow Soviet Russian examples in its development, wanted to give the concept of Bolshevism positive meanings. What made these efforts difficult, was that in this context one of the names, namely *guòjīzhǔyì* (過激主義), which was used to refer to Bolshevism, was also used to refer to the concept of radicalism. This

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paper shows how many of the May Fourth Movement authors wanted to use alternative names without such negative connotations, such as the one that was based on the phonetics (布爾塞維克, *Bùěrsāiwéikè*) or semantics (Bolsheviks as 多數派, *Duōshùpài*, “the majority party”) of the original Russian version (большевики). Authors interested in Bolshevism saw the name *guòjīzhǔyì* as an attempt to denigrate Bolshevism. This paper also shows that neither Bolshevik nor anti-Bolshevik propaganda did not manipulate May Fourth Movement authors. They followed international discussion and were well aware that Bolshevism was a controversial issue abroad.

Keywords: Bolshevism, radicalism, May Fourth Movement, history of concepts

布爾什維克主義和激進主義的概念 在五四運動時期的激進化

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摘 要

本文通過分析五四運動刊物中有關布爾什維克主義和激進主義（過激主義）的文章，重新探討了五四運動期間布爾什維克主義這一概念及其與激進主義的關係。五四期間的作者對激進主義持不同觀點，原因在於這些觀點為他們所設想的中國未來道路的一系列理念提供支持。一些作者，如陳獨秀，為了支持中國發展應當追隨蘇聯模式這一主張，期望賦予布爾什維克主義以積極的含義。但這很難做到，因為當時過激主義這一名詞也被用來指布爾什維克主義。本文探討了五四運動作者中有多少人希望使用其它不含貶義的替代名詞，比如基於發音的「布爾塞維克」，或追隨俄語原文語義的「多數派」。對布爾什維克主義感興趣的作者認為過激主義這一名詞也有貶損布爾什維克主義的企圖。本文表明，五四運動的作者既未被布爾什維克也未被反布爾什維克的宣傳所操控，這些作者跟隨國際上對於布爾什維克主義的探討，並且非常清楚國外對於這一概念也存在爭議。

關鍵詞：布爾什維克主義、激進主義、五四運動、概念史

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May Fourth Radicalism

The May Fourth Movement period is probably the most thoroughly studied period in the early 20th century China. Many scholars have been writing about issues such as whether the movement should be seen as China's Enlightenment, China's Renaissance, China's Fin-de-siècle, or as something else.¹ In this paper, my purpose is not to become entangled with these debates on *ex-post-facto* classifications related to the "historical meanings" of this movement. My aim is, instead, to approach certain

¹ See for example Li Zehou (李澤厚), *Zhongguo xian dai si xiang shi lun* (中國現代思想史論) (Beijing: Dong fang chu ban she, 1987) (北京: 東方出版社, 1987年); Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: California UP, 1986); Yü Ying-shih, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment: A Historian's Reflections on the May Fourth Movement," Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Oldrich Kral ed., in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001); Sun Lung-kee, "The Other May Fourth: Twilight of the Old Order," in Chow Kai-Wing, Hon Tze-Ki and Ip Hung-Yok and Don C. Price, eds., *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: In Search of Chinese Modernity* (Lanham: Lexington, 2008).

aspects of the so-called radicalization of this movement by looking at the meanings that were given to the concepts of Bolshevism and radicalism in this particular context. The main focus of the article is on the concept of Bolshevism and the connecting points between Bolshevism and radicalism.² I am trying to avoid using ready-made definitions of these concepts in this presentation. By “radicalism” and “radicalization” during the May Fourth period (roughly 1917-1921) it is often referred to the spread of anarchism, socialism, and adoption of revolutionary Marxism. As it is well known, many of the central May Fourth figures, such as Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀, 1879-1942), Li Dazhao (李大釗, 1888-1927), Zhang Shenfu (張申府, 1893-1986) and Zhang Guotao (張國燾, 1897-1979) played key roles in the early years of the Chinese Communist Party that was officially established in July 1921. In this paper, my perspective to radicalism is limited to a specific theme: The concepts of Bolshevism and radicalism were closely interconnected because there were names³ in this context, namely *guòjīzhǔyì* (過激主義) and *jídūānzhǔyì* (極端主義)⁴, which

² Due to space limitations, I have decided to focus on the connection between Bolshevism and in radicalism this article. This means that the current article does not deal with themes such as anarchism, although it is clear that anarchism was an important element of early 20th century Chinese radical thought. For more about early 20th century anarchism, see for example Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture* (New York: Columbia UP, 1990); Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: California UP); Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005).

³ In this paper I do not equate words and names with concepts. “Name” and “word” are used as signifiers that are used to refer to concepts and ideas (signifieds). There can be many signifiers that are used to refer to the same signifieds and one signifier can be used to refer to many different signifieds.

⁴ *Jījīnzhǔyì* (激進主義), which is commonly used nowadays to refer to radicalism did not play a central role in the May Fourth debates on Bolshevism and radicalism.

were used to refer to both of these concepts. This is to say, Bolshevism was associated with radicalism and the distinction between the two concepts was occasionally unclear. *Guòjīzhǔyì* and *jíduānzhǔyì* were used to refer to thought and action that were seen to be dangerous and something that could threaten, in one way or another, “the stability of society”. On the other hand, these names were used to refer to the so-called majority faction (Bolshevik) of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party after its split into two competing factions (the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks) in the 1903 party congress. After the October Revolution of 1917, in which this majority faction took power in Russia, “Bolshevism” was also used to refer to Soviet Russian leadership in a more general sense.⁵

In the existing research, literature May Fourth Movement radicalism and Chinese radical thought have been discussed from various perspectives. In his article on the radicalization of China Yu Yingshih (余英時) writes that radicalization characterized the history of Chinese thought in the 20th century and that radicalization eventually led China to totalitarianism. According to Yu, it was especially social marginalization from center to the periphery of Chinese intellectuals since the late 19th century that resulted in more radical views. By radicalization, Yu does not only refer to revolutionary Marxism, and he also calls older non-Marxist authors such as Yan Fu (嚴復, 1854-1921) and Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858-1927) radicals. According to Yu, radicalism is always connected to new discoveries: radical changes are needed in order to realize ideas that are claimed to be groundbreaking and new.⁶ In his well-known book on the May Fourth Movement, Lin Yusheng

⁵ Officially, the party was renamed to Russian Communist Party in 1918 and in 1925 to All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

⁶ Yu Ying-shih, “The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century,” *Daedalus* 122, no. 2 (1993): 128, 142-146.

(林毓生) writes about “radical antitraditionalism”. Lin finds parallels between May Fourth antitraditionalism and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s: in both cases it was assumed that a change required radical rejection of the prevailing traditions of the Chinese past.⁷ Generally speaking, people associated with the May Fourth Movement held a critical attitude towards traditional Chinese society. In more concrete terms, it meant criticism of the traditional family institution that was suppressive towards youth and women: the youth was under the tight control of the elders and the women under the control of their fathers, brothers and husbands. It meant also criticism of Confucianism that was seen as a set of ideas that aimed at upholding the *status quo* and to repress individual creativity.

In the above examples by Yu and Lin, radicalism is used to denote a counter-force to conservatism and attempts to protect the supporting pillars of the traditional society. This has not been the only style of discussing the May Fourth radicalism. For instance, Edward Gu (顧昕) refers by radicalization to the spread of revolutionary Marxism in his article on the concept of democracy in the May Fourth context.⁸ What is radical and what is not being of course a matter of perspective. Different periods of time and different intellectual environments can involve numerous

⁷ Lin Yusheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1979). Also for instance Lu Jiaojide fines May Fourth radicalism in terms of radical attitude towards traditional culture. See Lu Jiaoji, “Ji jin yu wen he – guan yu liang zhong wen hua tai du de duan xiang,” in Ding Xiaoqiang and Zi Xu eds., *Wu si yu xian dai Zhongguo* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chu ban she, 1989) (盧教基：〈激進與溫和——關與兩種文化太度的斷想〉，丁曉強、徐梓編：《五四與現代中國》(太原：山西人民出版社，1989年))。

⁸ Edward X. Gu, “Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922),” *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 3 (2001).

versions of radical and moderate, which significantly differ from each other. If a scholar applies a particular definition of a concept, in this case radicalism, to a context in which this definition was unknown, the result of the scholarly exploration may end up in interpretations that are seriously misleading. In order to overcome this type of pitfalls, one should look at the definitions in the contexts within which the concepts were used. More contextual understandings of concepts can also help us to understand the struggles between competing versions of “reality” in particular conflict situations.

On Conflicting Usages of Concepts

Contradictory usages of concepts are related to contradictory versions of the world. These versions can be related to competing ideological complexes. According to Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, opposing parties seek to impose their own definitions of what counts as “truth” and “reality”. These battles are decisive moments in the battle for social control, and these battles are fundamental in the social construction on meanings.⁹ Related to battles on “truth” and “reality” there are always different versions of what is “possible” and “impossible”. When one is studying intellectual developments of a particular period, such as the May Fourth period, one should pay attention to these different versions of “possible”. One should try to understand what kinds of ideas were supported with certain versions of “possible”, and what kind of speech acts, rhetoric and argumentation were used to create and to uphold these versions. Definitions on the border line between radical and moderate,

⁹ Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 3-4, 121-123.

or radical and sensible, should also be seen as attempts to affect understandings of demarcation between possible and impossible.

Things and events do not carry meanings within them; the meanings are given to them through language use. That is, words are not used only to describe things; they are used to do things.¹⁰ Thus, Bolshevism was not self-evidently “radical” or “extreme” in the May Fourth context, but it could be associated with those meanings by doing things with words. In this paper, the focus is not in the “essence” of things; the purpose is not to look for answers for questions such as what is “radicalism” or what is “Bolshevism”. The focus is, conversely, in the politics of naming things; what kind of names were used to refer to Bolshevism, what type of features were connected to this concept and how the name “radicalism” was used in this context. Abstract “things”, such as Bolshevism, are not something *per se*, but they become something in particular contexts through various speech acts (spoken or written). This “becoming something” is not possible without the speech acts that are used to create meanings.

One possible strategy in attempts to improve our understanding on possible contemporary definitions is to look at dictionaries of the day. Dictionaries should by no means be treated as authoritative texts that could provide “real versions” of the meanings of words and concepts, but they can be seen as sources that can offer useful guidelines. They can, at least in some cases, remove suspicions concerning the danger of anachronism; it is possible to find answers from contemporary dictionaries if one ponders on questions such as “was this feature a part of the concept at that time, or was it only included later?” In *English and Chinese Standard Dictionary*

¹⁰ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: the William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (London: Oxford UP, 1965).

(英華大辭典) published in Shanghai in 1921 “radicalism” was defined as “the spirit or principles of a radical in state politics”. “Radical,” on the other hand, was given numerous meanings. It was, for example, told to mean “one who advocates radical reform or extreme changes of a democratic character in the state.” “Extremist” was told to be “a supporter of extreme doctrines or procedure.” In May Fourth journals the words, which were commonly used to refer to the concepts of radical and extreme, were *guòjī* (過激) and *jíduān* (極端). Both of them appeared in *English and Chinese Standard Dictionary* as corresponding words for radical and extreme. There were also many other words that were defined similarly in the dictionary. It seems that there was no clear distinction between radical and extreme.¹¹

Related to acts of naming things, the current paper also deals with translations. Translation is not, however, treated here as a process that is directed merely by a desire to find corresponding words between two languages in an objective manner. As Tejaswini Niranjana writes, translation is not just an inter lingual process, but an entire problematic. This problematic is related to different representations of reality that involves disruption, displacement and authorization.¹² Lydia Liu writes that the idea that equivalents exist between languages is “a common illusion.” Translations are not neutral and they involve political and ideological struggles.¹³ According to Liu, both monetary exchange

¹¹ Yan Huiqing, ed., *English and Chinese standard dictionary: small type edition* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1921), 367, 799. Obviously, this dictionary example should be understood only as an example, not as a universal definition; it is well possible that there were contradictory definitions in other dictionaries of the day.

¹² Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: California UP, 1992), 8-9.

¹³ Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and*

and linguistic translation depend on socially recognized equivalents. In monetary exchanges, one can use gold as a transmitter, whereas in linguistic translation this transmitter is often English language. According to Liu, exchange-value is to political economy what simile, metaphor, or synecdoche is to the linguistic realm of signification. In both cases, it is a matter of making equivalents out of non equivalents through a process of abstraction or translation.¹⁴ The “translations” dealt in the current paper took place in a context where Chinese intellectuals were writing about foreign political ideologies. These debates involved various foreign concepts that did not have established Chinese translations. Concepts, such as democracy, had various different Chinese translations that were used simultaneously. This was true also in the case of the concept of Bolshevism.

My purpose here is not to follow the style of writing about radicalism in which the borderline between radical and moderate is treated as something that was self-evident and fixed, or as something that we could “objectively” define in retrospect by analyzing the ideas and circumstances in this context. Although for many readers it might be inescapable that Bolshevism was radical, we should not take it for granted when we are trying to understand how these authors used words and concepts in that particular context. In the May Fourth context, there were different versions of what was radical and what was not. There was also no unanimity on the desirability of the Soviet Russian examples for China. There were different

Translated Modernity – China 1900-1937 (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995), 3, 26.

¹⁴ As Liu points out, already Marx wrote about similarities between monetary and linguistic exchanges in his *Grundrisse* [1857]. Lydia H. Liu, “The Question of Meaning Value in the Political Economy of the Sign,” in Lydia H. Liu ed., *Tokens of Exchange: the Problem of Translation in Global Transactions* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000), 21-24.

names that were used to refer to the concept of Bolshevism, and these names had different connotations. That is, different authors had different preferences in how to call Bolshevism and how to use the concept of radicalism.

Contemporary Depictions of Bolshevism

As the concept of Bolshevism was tightly connected to the October Revolution, it is necessary to take into consideration the reception and interpretations of this event in China. The news of the revolution in Russia spread quickly in China, but the information on the actual events was neither consistent nor adequate. It was unclear what were the motivations and aspirations of the new leadership. One of the first reports on the events appeared in *Minguo Ribào* (民國日報) in Shanghai in November 1917. According to the journal, the supporters of Bolshevism (極端主義 *Jiduanzhuyi*) had taken the power and the Kerensky Government had been overthrown. News about this event also appeared in other publications of the day, such as *Ribao* (日報), *Shenbao* (申報), *Laodong* (勞動) and *Morning Bell* (晨鐘報 *ChénzhōngBào*). The revolution was, for instance, called a social revolution (社會革命, *shèhuìgémìng*) that referred to attempts to create a more just and equal society.¹⁵ Although some of the early reactions in China were positive in tone, there were also skeptical

¹⁵ Sergei Tikhvinsky, “1919 nian wu si yun dong qian ye Eguo zheng zhi wen hua dui Zhongguo she hui ying xiang de ruo gan fang mian” in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, ed., *Wu si yun dong yu Zhongguo wen hua jian she* (Beijing: She hui ke xue wen xian chubanshe, 1989) (齊赫文斯基、謝爾蓋：〈1919年五四運動前夜俄國政治文化對中國社會影響的若干方面〉，中國社會科學院科研局編：《五四運動與中國文化建設》(北京：社會科學文獻出版社，1989年)), 1100-1102, 1109-1110.

voices. Among the ones who were willing to protect the traditional society, there was a hysterical fear of Bolshevism.¹⁶ The Beiyang government in China tried actively to suppress the spread of “Russian extremism” to China. Negative attitude towards Bolshevism among Chinese officials was partly related to the agreement between the Beiyang government (北洋政府) and Japan according to which China was to support Japan’s policies towards Russia.¹⁷

The first time when the October revolution and the Bolshevik government were connected with Marx in *New Youth* (新青年 *XīnQīngnián*), the most well-known May Fourth Movement journal, was one year after the revolution, in an article by Li Dazhao in November 1918:

The victory against German militarism is not a victory of the Allied Nations. It is especially not a victory of those warlords who wanted to participate in the war because of reasons related to their inner struggles, or those politicians who wanted it because of their opportunistic reasons. It is a victory of humanism, it is a victory of peaceful thought, it is a victory of the reason, it is a victory of freedom, it is a victory of democracy, it is a victory of socialism, it is a victory of Bolshevism, it is a victory of the red flag, it is a victory of the labor class, it is the victory of the new trend of the 20th century Their [Bolsheviks] ideology

¹⁶ Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1967), 208.

¹⁷ Sergei Tikhvinsky, “1919 nian wu si yun dong qian ye Eguo zheng zhi wen hua dui Zhongguo she hui ying xiang de ruoganfangmian” (齊赫文斯基、謝爾蓋：〈1919年五四運動前夜俄國政治文化對中國社會影響的若干方面〉), 1100-1102, 1109-1110. For more about Beiyang and the Beiyang-dominated elections of 1918, see Andrew Nathan, *Peking Politics, 1918-1923* (Berkeley: California UP, 1976), 57-74, 101-103.

is revolutionary socialism, their party is a revolutionary socialist party, they believe in German socialist economist Marx, their goal is to break the national boundaries that obstruct [the development of] socialism and to break the production system that benefits only the capitalists. Their war is the class war in which the world proletariat unites against the world capitalists.¹⁸

In the article Li Dazhao connected Bolshevism and Marxism with “the new trend of the 20th century” (二十世紀新潮流, *èrshíshìjìxīncháoliú*). Li also explained that the October Revolution and Bolshevism were relevant to the Chinese people because the Bolshevik struggle was not only a matter of domestic power struggle. Their struggle, the class struggle, was international in nature.

Chen Du-xiu, the editor of *New Youth* journal and the future leader of the CCP, was taken into custody in June 1919 after the May Fourth demonstrations. Li Da-zhao’s article on Bolshevism in the journal was used in accusations of radicalism of the *New Youth* journal. As Li himself wrote in *Weekly Critic* (每週評論, *MěizhōuPínglùn*), officials and some

¹⁸ 原文爲：「對於德國軍國主義勝利，不是聯合國的勝利，更不是我國走事內爭託名參戰的軍人和那投機取巧賣乘弄俏的政客的勝利，是人道主義的勝利，是平和思想的勝利，是公理的勝利，是自由的勝利，是民主的勝利，是社會主義的勝利，是 Bolshevism 的勝利，是赤旗的勝利，是世界勞工階級的勝利，是二十世紀新潮流的勝利。……他們的主義、就是革命的社會主義；他們的黨、就是革命的社會黨；他們是奉德國社會主義經濟學家馬克斯爲宗主的；他們的目的，在把現在爲社會主義的障礙的國家界限打破，把資本家獨佔利益的生產制度打破。……他們的戰爭，是階級戰爭，是合世界無產庶民對於世界資本家的戰爭。」Li Dazhao, Bolshevism de shengli (李大釗 Bolshevism 的勝利), *New Youth*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (November 1918). The article was accessed through the digital resources of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the University of Heidelberg. (December 1, 2011). http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zo/sinologie/digital_resources/. This database is refer red here after as HDB.

of the fellow authors of *New Youth* had criticized Li's article. According to Li, this particular article had been a contributory cause for Chen Duxiu's arrest.¹⁹ It was not only the concept of Bolshevism that was associated with illegal radicalism. In another article, Li pointed out that many publications were closed down because of their alleged "communist" (共產主義, *gòngchǎn zhǔyì*) agenda.²⁰ After his release in September 1919, Chen Duxiu moved the *New Youth* from Beijing back to more liberal Shanghai where the journal had originally been established in 1915. *Weekly Critic*, which was edited by Chen and Li, was closed down by the authorities in Beijing. The last issue of the journal appeared in August 1919. The *New Youth Society* that decided on the publication policies of *New Youth* broke down during the summer of 1920. Hu Shi (胡適, 1891-1962) and other authors holding critical attitudes towards socialism and Marxism left the journal at this point. After the split, the journal was more directly supporting Marxist and Bolshevist ideas such as class struggle and proletarian dictatorship.

What was Bolshevism, how "radical" it was, and how people were supposed to react to it was a set of questions that were asked in China, in Europe, in the United States and in numerous other places in the world. Chinese authors of the May Fourth period followed foreign discussions on the topic. Henry C. Emery's (1872-1924) article published in *Yale Review* in 1919 on Bolshevism was translated in *Citizen* (國民, *Guómín*) in

¹⁹ Li Dazhao, "Zai lun wen ti yu zhu yi" (李大釗：〈再論問題與主義〉). *Weekly Critic*, No. 35 (August 1919). HDB.

²⁰ Li Dazhao, "Gu chui Gong chan zhu yi," in *Zhong guo Li Da zhao yan jiu hui*, ed., *Li Dazhao quan ji*, Vol.3, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006) (李大釗：〈鼓吹共產主義〉，中國李大釗研究會編：《李大釗全集》(北京：北京人民出版社，2006)，第3卷)，91. The article was first published in *Xin Sheng huo* (新生活) in November 1919.

December 1919. Besides the translation, this article also included a brief commentary. The author, economist and one of the editors of the *Young China* (少年中國, *ShàoniánZhōngguó*) journal, Zhou Binglin (周炳琳, 1892-1963), wrote that most of the articles on Bolshevism he had read were focused in condemning Bolshevik ideology and underlining the necessity of resistance to this “ism” without any serious attempts to discuss and understand the meanings of Bolshevism. In this respect, Zhou saw Emery’s article as a positive exception. Emery was a professor of political economy at Yale. According to Emery’s definition, Bolshevism was “extreme Marxism”:

The economic program [of the Bolsheviks] is the extreme form of Marxian socialism a theory that has been discussed for two generations in thousands of volumes, so that we must assume it to be clear in outline for all intelligent readers. Its fundamental conception is, of course, a reorganization of society on such a basis that there shall be no private or individual property in land or any of the means of production, and no other form of income than that paid by the state for productive services rendered to the state. Therefore, there will be no rent, no profits, and no interest and also no wages in the sense of wages paid by one private individual to another. What is new and startling about the program of the Bolsheviks is that they do not predict this system as something to be brought about in a distant future by economic evolution, but that they propose to bring it about at once by force. And they not only propose to do it, they are actually trying it out. The Bolsheviks suppressed the Constituent Assembly and refused to refer the problem of their rule to a popular referendum. This

irritates good Americans who believe in democracy and universal suffrage. But the Bolsheviks abhor what we call democracy, and do not accept universal suffrage as the proper method of settling class affairs. The question whether they are favored by a “majority” is unimportant to them. There is no free election, no possibility of an anti-Bolshevik ticket. The reason is quite clear. To the Bolshevik a state of war exists. The proletarian class is out to take the power by force throughout the world.²¹

There were concerns on Bolshevism in Europe, in America and Asia. Zhou’s article demonstrates that the May Fourth authors were aware

²¹ 原文為：「這策略是極端的馬克思社會主義—討論了兩代成書幾千本的理論、姑且臆斷一般有智識的讀者都曉得他的大綱—底結晶。他的基本觀念是社會底、改造底手段是土地不得私有、一切生產的工具 (means) 不得私有、除國家對於為公而盡的生產勞務給予報酬外、沒有所得 (income)、所以沒有地代、沒有利潤、沒有利息—也沒有一個私人付給別個私人的賃銀。鮑爾錫維克派底策略新奇的地方在於他們不預期隨經濟的變遷這種改造將來終久要實現、而想用強力把他立刻做成功、不但想做、而且實地去做。……鮑爾錫維克派推倒民選議會、不肯讓國民大會過問他們的統治問題。這足以致信仰民主政治和普通選舉的美人底怒。然而要曉得他們厭惡吾們所謂『德謨克拉西』、不承認普通選舉是解決階級糾紛底適當方法、是否得大多數人底歡心、他們不問。……在鮑爾錫維克統治之下、沒有自由的選舉、不許有一張反對鮑爾錫維克政府底票。理由很明白。自鮑爾錫維克派看上去、戰爭狀況已存在、全世界底無產者階級已出來為握權的運動……。」Zhou Binglin, “Bao er xi wei ke zhu yi yan jiu” (周炳琳：〈鮑爾錫維克主義底研究〉), *Citizen*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (December 1919), HDB. The English version above is taken from Emery’s original article that was republished in the following year in a collection of articles on labor movements edited by Daniel Bloomfield. Henry C. Emery, “Under which King, Bezonian?” in Daniel Bloomfield, ed, *Selected Articles on Modern Industrial Movements*, (London: Pitman, 1920). Although the main arguments between the original article and Zhou’s translation are the same, one can find differences between the two versions. For instance, “democracy and universal suffrage” is translated in the Chinese version as 民主政治和普通選舉 that literally is “democratic politics and universal suffrage”. I did not, however, find any fundamental differences between the two versions.

of these concerns.²² Whether Bolshevism was posited in a positive or in a negative light should not be explained only through limited access to information: both versions were available for contemporary Chinese authors. In *New Tide* (新潮 *Xīn Cháo*), Guo Shaoyu (郭紹虞, 1893-1984) noted that it was difficult to estimate the reliability of all the negative information on Bolshevism as much of the information came from sources that held anti-Bolshevik attitudes.²³ Based on these examples, we can relatively safely conclude that those Chinese authors who started to propagate Bolshevism were probably not “controlled” by Bolshevik propaganda. Neither were those authors who opposed Bolshevism, “controlled” by anti-Bolshevik propaganda. Whether or not Bolshevism was to appear as a concept of positive or negative charge was a matter of active political struggle on words and concepts, not a matter of passive behavior or a matter of passive reactions to the “outside world”.

Radicalism and Bolshevism

“Radicalism” and “radical thought” were expressions that were used to signify ideas connected to reform. Whether particular reform oriented ideas were radical or moderate was a question that aroused discussion. Many May Fourth Movement authors held the view that Chinese officials and cultural conservatives were keen to name radical or extreme all ideas, journals and authors that could be seen as a potential threat factors

²² Li Dazhao’s article on Bolshevism also included references to Western discussions on Bolshevism. Li referred to Frederic Harrison’s and to Harold William’s articles published in *Fortnightly Review* and in *Times* respectively. Li Dazhao, *Bolshevism de shengli* (李大釗：〈Bolshevism 的勝利〉).

²³ GuoShaoyu. *Cong yi shu fa zhan shang qi tu she hui de gai zao* (郭紹虞：〈從藝術發展上企圖社會的改造〉), *New Tide*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (May 1920). HDB.

to the *status quo* and to the supremacy of existing power holders. This view was not upheld only by those who were associated with study groups on socialism. For instance, Hu Shi criticized the contemporary style of labeling reform minded authors radical, and the style of equating Bolshevism with radicalism without serious attempts to understand the ideology in question:

Nowadays in every country in the world there are ignorant people who “take their ears as their eyes” [believe what they hear without questioning]. When they hear the name “Bolshevism” they might just remember the name “radicalism” (過激主義) without any slightest understanding of what these abstract ideas are concretely representing. This causes panic and leads to arrests of “radicals”. This name “radical” can simply be placed over someone’s head. These kinds of abstract ‘isms’ used by ignorant people are the ones that I oppose as abstract names. And this is what I mean by the danger of “isms”.²⁴

²⁴ 原文爲：「現在世界各國有一班『把耳朵當眼睛』的妄人，耳朵裡聽見一個『布爾札維主義』的名詞，或只是記得一個『過激主義』的名詞、全不懂得這一個抽象名詞所代表的是什麼具體的主張，便大起恐慌，便出告示捉拿『過激黨』，便硬把『過激黨』三個字套在某人某人的頭上。這種妄人，腦筋裡的主義，便是我所攻擊的『抽象名詞』的主義。我所說的『主義的危險』、便是指這種危險。」Hu Shi, “Duo yan jiu xie wen ti, shao tan xie ‘zhuyi’.” (胡適：〈多研究些問題，少談些「主義」〉), *Weekly Critic*, No. 31 (July 1919), HDB. Bolshevism was translated as *Guòjīzhǔyì* in many of the contemporary articles. See for example Li Da, “Ma ke si pai she hui zhu yi” (李達：〈馬克思派社會主義〉), *New Youth*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 1921), HDB; Li Da, “Ma ke si huan yuan” (李達：〈馬克思還原〉), *New Youth*, Vol. 8, No. 5. (January 1921), HDB; Tian Han, “Shi ren yu lao dong wen ti” (田漢：〈詩人與勞動問題〉), *Young China*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (February 1920). HDB; Watkins, *Meiguojin de gong chan zhu yi* (Watkins, 美國急進的共產主義), *Young China*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (January 1921), HDB. Li Da (李達) himself did not wish to question the desirability of Bolshevism. In these examples he did, however,

Although Hu himself criticized abstract discussions “isms”, and hoped that reform minded journals would concentrate more on concrete questions, he called into question the style of rejecting Bolshevism without attempts to understand it. Hu himself had been accused of radicalism and this fact was probably connected to his annoyance of the prevailing usages of the concept of “radicalism”. According to Wang Runhua (王潤華), it was especially authors opposing the language reform that were keen to name Hu as a radical author.²⁵ Fear of the spread of radical and dangerous thought were also questioned by Zhang Shenfu who wrote in *New Youth* on the eve of the May fourth incident in 1919 that it was impossible to define what actually was dangerous thought (危險思想, *wēixiǎnsīxiǎng*) and radical thought (過激思想, *guòjī sīxiǎng*) and what was not. Zhang taught logic at the preparatory school for the Beijing University. Through his friendship with Li Dazhao, Zhang became interested in Marxism and historical materialism and he later joined the Chinese Communist Party.²⁶ Like Hu Shi, also Zhang saw the concept of radicalism as a tool that was used by the officials and by the existing elite to suppress reform minded journals. According to Zhang, all contemplation had the potential to change the existing state of affairs, thus the expression “dangerous thought”, and attempts to distinguish it from other types of thought, was not sensible.²⁷ Besides reform thought in a general sense, radicalism was also associated with attempts to organize workers. The economist Liu

refer to common contemporary style of equating radicalism with Bolshevism.

²⁵ Wang Runhua, *Zhong xi wen xue guan xi yan jiu* (Taipei: Dongda, 1978) (王潤華：〈中西文學關係研究〉(臺北：東大圖書公司，1978年)), 231-40.

²⁶ Vera Schwarcz, *Time for Telling Truth Is Running out, Conversations with Zhang Shenfu* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 32, 42-50.

²⁷ Zhang Shenfu. “Wei xian si xiang” (張申府：〈危險思想〉), *New Youth*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (May 1919), HDB.

Binglin (劉秉麟, 1891-1956) wrote in *New Youth* that the laissez-faire school (放任派, *fàngrènpài*) in economics called ‘radical’ all actions related to labor movement.²⁸ This is to say that according to Liu’s view, in some discussions any attempts to improve the living standards of the workers were called radical regardless of the methods that were applied in those attempts.

Despite the fact that many May Fourth authors held the view that the concept of radicalism was used often in a questionable style, there seemed to be widely spread view that Bolshevism really was radical, dangerous and something that was not necessarily relevant to China. This view was also related to foreign commentaries on Bolshevism in which, for instance, the “undemocratic” nature of Bolshevism was underlined.²⁹ Authors holding sympathies for Bolshevism were trying to challenge the threat discourse upheld by Beiyang government’s officials in which all different versions of socialism and anarchism were associated with chaos, danger and extremism. Thus, the question on different Chinese translations on Bolshevism was a question of appropriate intellectual agenda.

Li Dazhao’s article on the victory of Bolshevism was an early example of attempts to attach positive features to the concept. In this article, Li connected Bolshevism with freedom, pacifism and evolution. Li connected the victory of Bolshevism also with the victory of democracy. This did not, however, imply Western parliamentary institutions as Li explained that the Bolsheviks wanted to replace parliaments with workers’ councils (勞工聯合的會議, *láogōngliánhé de huìyì*).³⁰ Thus,

²⁸ Liu Binglin, *Lao dong wen ti shi xie shen me?* (劉秉麟：〈勞動問題是些什麼？〉), *New Youth*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (May 1920), HDB.

²⁹ See for instance Emery’s article above.

³⁰ Li Dazhao (李大釗), “Bolshevism de shengli” (Bolshevism 的勝利). These workers’ councils were also called “soviets”.

whether Bolshevism was seen as an anti-democratic or a pro-democratic ideology was a matter of conflicting definitions of democracy. Democracy and “spirit of democracy” in this particular context did not necessarily imply Western parliamentary institutions. In another article Li explicitly commented on the common style of equating the concepts of radicalism with the concept of Bolshevism. Li wrote that originally it was the “Japanese capitalists and militarists” (資本主義、軍國主義的日本人, *zīběn zhǔyì, jūnguó zhǔyì de Riběnrén*) who translated Bolshevism as 過激主義 *Guòjīzhǔyì* in order to depict Bolshevism in a negative light.³¹

Li Dazhao was not the only author who brought up the Japanese origins of translating Bolshevism as *Guòjīzhǔyì*, neither did this notion appear only in *Weekly Critic*. Dai Jitao(戴季陶, 1891-1949) was one of the Guomindang authors who were interested in Marxism during the May Fourth period. Dai was also one of the first authors who applied historical materialism to China.³² In the third issue of *Weekly Review*(星期評論, *XīngqīPínglùn*), Dai wrote that the names Bolshevik Party (*Guòjīpàì*) and Bolshevism (*Guòjīzhǔyì*) were names that aroused fear in China although most people did not have a slightest understanding of their meanings:

³¹ Li Dazhao, “Zai lun wen ti yu zhu yi” (李大釗：〈再論問題與主義〉).

³² Although Dai became a strong opponent of communism in the late 1920s, he was one of the early experts on Marxism in China. Dai was, for instance, a member of Chen Duxiu’s study group on Marxism in Shanghai before the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. Herman Mast and Arif Dirlik have both identified Dai Jitao’s article in Construction (建設) in September 1919 as the first attempt to apply historical materialism to China. Herman Mast, “Tai Chi-t’ao, Sunism and Marxism during the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai,” *Modern Asian Studies* 5, No. 3 (1971), 239; Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: the Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937* (Berkeley: California UP, 1978), 25; Tai Jitao, “Cong jing ji shang guan cha Zhongguo de luan yuan,” in *Jianshe*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: RenminChubanshe)(戴季陶：〈從經濟上觀察中國的亂源〉，建設編輯委員會編：《建設》(北京：北京人民出版社，1980年，第一卷)，345-363.

“Radical party” [Bolshevik party], “radicalism” [Bolshevism] -in China there are almost no official, politician, businessman, educator or gentleman who is not afraid of these two terms. Yet, there is no one who would understand what type of methods should be used to deal with them and there is no one who would study these methods. Danger, danger!

The term “radical faction” was originally a creation of faint-hearted Japanese people who were afraid of Bolshevism. After this term spread to China, faint-hearted Chinese people, who were afraid, started to use the term radical. This is the origin of the name Radical party [Bolshevik party]. In fact, Russians do not use the term Radical party. This term is neither used in England, France, United States, Germany, Austria or any other Western country.³³

In the article Dai did not praise Bolshevism and he did not support the idea that China should take Bolshevik Russia as a model for China. This is to say, Dai’s interest in historical materialism did not imply dedication to Bolshevism. Dai wanted, nevertheless, to underline the fact that the style

³³ 原文爲：「『過激黨』、『過激主義』，這兩個名詞，中國的『官吏』、『政客』、『商人』、『教育者』、『紳士』差不多沒有一個聽見不怕的。你沒有一個曉得應該用甚麼方法對付的。並且沒有一個去研究對付方法的。咳！危險呀危險！」「『過激派』這個名詞、本來是日本那些因爲怕『布爾色維克』、便生了『膽怯病』的人，製造出來的。傳到中國來以後、中國也有害『膽怯病』的人，也跟了用過激兩個字、這就是過激黨三個字發生的原因。其實俄國人並沒有自己叫過激黨。英法美意德奧和一切歐美各國、都沒叫他做『過激黨的』。」Tai Jitao, “Dui fu “buerseweike” de fang fa” (戴季陶：〈對付「布爾色維克」的方法〉), *Weekly Review*, No. 3 (June 1919). For *Weekly Review* articles I have used a photocopy version of the original journals, This re-edition was published in 1981 by Ren min Chu ban she, Xing qi Ping lun, 1920/1981, (Beijing: Ren min Chu ban she) (《星期評論》，北京：北京人民出版社，1920/1981年), This edition is referred hereafter as XQPL.

of translating Bolshevism as *Guòjīzhǔyì* was in no way a neutral style of discussing this foreign ideology. The name had been advisedly introduced by those people who wished to underline the dangerous and harmful character of this ideology and wished to avoid serious discussions on it. Dai explained that the original Russian name meant “majority faction” after the split in the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1903.³⁴

Obviously, for those authors who were interested in Bolshevism or held sympathy to this ideology, the name “majority party” was more convenient than “radical party”. Like Dai Jitao in *Weekly Review*, also Chen Duxiu in *New Youth* underlined that the style of using the name radicalism to refer to Bolshevism was overtly biased and advisedly created by those who wanted to downplay the attractiveness of the Bolshevik model. Chen explained that the original Russian name, Bolsheviks, referred to the majority faction (多數派 *duōshùpài*) whereas Mensheviks referred to the minority faction (少數派 *shǎoshùpài*) after the split of the party. Chen obviously wanted to distance the concept of Bolshevism away from the concept of radicalism:

Japanese have resolutely called Bolsheviks radicals. Together with capitalist governments of other countries they bitterly hate them. They all say that they (Bolsheviks) are disturbing the world peace. Do Bolsheviks actually disturb the world peace? They do not discuss about it right now. Those great powers who hate the Bolsheviks are invading the soil and rights of the weak and small countries every day. Is this disturbing the world peace? We do not discuss about it either right now Disturbing the world peace

³⁴ Tai Jitao, “Dui fu ‘buerseweike’ de fang fa” (戴季陶：〈對付「布爾色維克」的方法〉).

naturally is an enormous crime. Do Bolsheviks actually disturb the world peace? If we completely rely on facts, we do not need to defend or make accusations. From a detached point of view, I am afraid that it is precisely those gentlemen, who oppose Bolsheviks, who are disturbing the world peace!³⁵

According to Chen's own view, Japanese aggressive foreign politics and invasions were more significant threats to stability and peace than Bolshevism. Presumably, this was in fact a useful argument in this context as the Shandong question had seriously worsened the image of Japan among the Chinese readership. In other words, Chen's strategy in his attempts to distance the concept of Bolshevism away from the concept of radicalism was to point out targets, militarism and imperialism, that could be seen more harmful and dangerous to the future development of China than the Russian ideology in question.

The question "why Chinese people should be interested in Bolshevism" did not, at least in the early discussions on the topic, necessarily involve claims on the need and necessity of class struggle in China. This is to say, there were other features connected to the concept of Bolshevism that made possible to depict the ideology as a solution to questions that were stressed in May Fourth journals. Well before the introduction of the class struggle paradigm in this context, Chinese authors

³⁵ 原文為：「日本人硬叫 Bolsheviki 作過激派，和各國的政府資本案痛恨他，都是說他擾亂世界和平；Bolsheviki 是不是擾亂世界和平；暫且不去論他；痛恨 Bolsheviki 的各強國，天天在那裏侵略弱小國的土地利權，是不是擾亂世界和平……擾亂世界和平，自然是極大的罪惡，Bolsheviki 是不是擾亂世界和平，全靠事實證明，用不著我們，用不著我們辨護或攻擊；我們冷眼旁觀的，恐怕正是反對 Bolsheviki 的先生們出來擾亂世界和平！」Chen Duxiu, "Guoji pai yu shi jie he ping" (陳獨秀：〈過激派與世界和平〉), *New Youth*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (December 1919), HDB.

wrote extensively about the threats of imperialism and militarism. These discussions were related to the unsolved Shandong question between Japan and China, to the disappointments in the Paris Peace conference and to the fact that various foreign powers held special privileges and controlled areas on China's soil. Debate on the relevance of Bolshevism was tied to these issues. In his article on Bolshevism in *Citizen*, Fei Juetian (費覺天) depicted Bolshevism as an ideology that was essentially against imperialism. Fei attached numerous features to the concept of Bolshevism: it meant socialism, it opposed private ownership, it wanted to transform the existing economic system, it defended equality and it opposed imperialism (帝國主義, *dìguózhǔyì*) and economic invasions (經濟侵略, *jīngjìqīnlüè*). According to Fei, imperialism had its base in laissez-faire capitalism and the Bolsheviks wanted to overturn this base. Thus, if Bolshevism (布爾雪維克主義) was to be seen as a threat, it was to be seen as a threat to warlords (軍閥, *jūnfá*) and tycoons (財閥, *cáifá*), not to ordinary Chinese people.³⁶

As it is well known, neither of the names *Guòjǐpài* or *Duōshùpài* remained as standard translations of “Bolsheviks”. In later usages, the version that became commonplace was 布爾雪維克 *Bùěrxuěwéikè*. For instance, CCP's official party journal that was established in 1927 held this particular name. However, Chen Duxiu was by no means the only author in this context who preferred to use the name *Duōshùpài* and it could be used by authors who wanted avoid using *Guòjǐpài* and *Guòjǐzhǔ yì*.³⁷ It

³⁶ Fei Juetian, “Tai ping yang wen ti a!” (Buerxueweike wen ti a!)(費覺天：〈太平洋問題呵！(布爾雪維克問題呵！)〉), *Citizen*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (June 1920), HDB.

³⁷ The names majority party and minority party were probably not Chen's creations. These names had been used, for example, in *Eastern Miscellany* (東方雜誌) already in April 1918. See Timothy John Stanley, *Bolshevism and the*

seems that in articles, in which Bolshevism was depicted in a positive light, authors did not generally use the names *Guòjīpài* or *Guòjīzhǔyì*. It was also not uncommon in this context that various different versions of Bolshevism appeared in a same article. For instance, Li Dazhao used both *Duōshùpài* and *Bù'ěrsèwéikè* (布爾色維克) in his article on Russia that was published in March 1921.³⁸

The question whether Bolshevism was radical, dangerous and something that should be feared of was also a question of violence. For most people it was unclear, and not only in China, what had been the actual course of events in Soviet Russia during and after the October Revolution. Opponents of Bolshevism were eager to portray Bolsheviks as savages that were trying to eliminate all opposition by force. One journal that was advisedly created to portray Bolshevism in a positive light in China was the *Communist* (共產黨 *Gòngchǎndǎng*)³⁹, which started its publication activities in November 1920. The journal was organized by Chen Duxiu's study group on Marxism in Shanghai. Comintern (the Communist International established in Moscow in March 1919) established contacts with Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu during the spring of 1920.⁴⁰ Although it is impossible to measure the degree of Comintern's

Chinese Revolution: the Conceptual Origins of the Program of the Chinese Communist Party at the Time of Its First Congress, 1917-1921 (MA Thesis: University of British Columbia, 1981), 26-27.

³⁸ Li Dazhao, "E luo si ge ming zhi guo qu, xian zai ji jiang lai," in Zhongguo Li Da zhao yan jiu hui, ed., *Li Dazhaoquanji*, Vol. 3 (Beijing: Renminchubanshe, 2006) (李大釗：〈俄羅斯革命之過去，現在及將來〉，中國李大釗研究會編：《李大釗全集》第3卷(北京：北京人民出版社，2006年)，279-285. The article was first published in *Juewu* (覺悟) in March 1921.

³⁹ A word-to-word translation of the Chinese name would be "Communist Party". "Communist" was, however, the English name the journal used.

⁴⁰ Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 192-195.

direct influence on Chen, it seems probable that the correspondence of Chen with Comintern representative Grigori Voitinsky(1893-1956) strengthened Chen's positive view on Bolshevik government and Bolshevism in general.

In the first issue of *Communist*, Zhou Fohai (周佛海, 1897-1948) gave his explanation on Bolshevism. According to the article, Bolshevism supported collectivism, proletarian dictatorship and class struggle. Bolshevism did not mean anarchism or syndicalism; according to Zhou it was "true Marxism". Zhou's article referred to Western discussions on Bolshevism. In order to support his views, Zhou used William Bullitt's (1891-1967) report on Soviet Russia that had been translated into Chinese by Dai Jitao in February 1920.⁴¹ Bullitt was an American diplomat who later became the first U.S. ambassador to Soviet Union. Bullitt visited Soviet Russia before the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and he supported the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Soviet Russia. In his report on the visit, "The Bullitt Mission to Soviet Russia" [1919] Bullitt questioned the image according to which the wave of "Red terror" in Russia had resulted in horrifying numbers of lives lost. Bullitt compared the events in Russia to the events in Finland after the Finnish Civil War (January – May 1918) and concluded that the number of victims of Red Terror in Russia had been less shocking than the number of victims of White Terror in Finland where about 12,000 supporters of the losing side (Red Finland) of the war lost their lives. According to Bullitt, the number

⁴¹ Bullitt, William, "Lao nong zheng fu zhi xia de Eguo" (Bullitt, William: 〈勞農政府治下的俄國〉), *Weekly Review*, No. 39 (February 1920), XQPL. See also the original report in English. William C. Bullitt, *The Bullitt Mission to Russia*, Gutenberg eBook edition.

of victims of the Red Terror in Russia had been around 5000.⁴² The question on the severity of “red terror” was one of the key issues on the question of how dangerous and radical Bolshevism actually was. Zhou’s article in *Communist* shows us that it was possible to create different versions of “Western thought trends” that China was to follow. Arguments pro and contra Bolshevism were commonly reinforced with different Western pieces of writing that could act as authoritative texts and they were used to create specific versions of prevailing “world trends”.

Conclusion: On Different “Translations”

Although the concept of Bolshevism referred to Russian political thought and to a Russian political movement, the translations in the May Fourth context were not from Russian language. Usually, when these authors referred to foreign sources, they referred to ones written in English, French, German or Japanese. The question was not how to translate the Russian name *большевизм* into Chinese but how to translate the English name “Bolshevism” into Chinese. One of the most popular translations, namely *Guòjīzhǔyì* (過激主義) was borrowed from Japanese language. Unlike the well-known English version that was based on sound imitation, the Japanese version took distance to the original Russian name and associated Bolshevism with radicalism. Although a great part of the foreign literature that was used to study foreign ideologies in China was

⁴² Zhou Fohai, “Eguo gongchan zhengfu chengli san zhounian jinian” in *Zhongguo Gongchandang zaoqi kanwu huibian (san)*, Jiang Yasha, Jing Li and Chen Zhanqi, ed., (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suo wei fuzhi zhongxin) (周佛海：〈俄國共產政府成立三週年紀念〉，姜亞沙、經莉、陳湛綺編：《中國共產黨早期刊物彙編（三）》（北京：全國圖書館文獻縮微複製中心)), 310-322.

originally written in English, many books and articles came to China through Japan and through Japanese translations.⁴³

Translations for foreign concepts based on sound imitation have usually disappeared in Chinese language and, other versions have replaced them. This has happened for instance to *démóklāxī* (德謨克拉西, democracy). Zdenka Hermanova-Novotna, who has studied loan-words in Chinese, has noted that borrowing of words by imitation of the sounds is rather difficult in Chinese, and this method produces words that have no future.⁴⁴ In this respect, “Bolshevism” has been an exception.⁴⁵ As pointed out above, it was the phonetic translation of “Bolshevism” that prevailed in later usages. According to my findings, there were five different types of names that were commonly used to refer to Bolshevism.⁴⁶ First, the style that has been in the main focus in this paper: “Bolshevism as radicalism/extremism” in which Bolshevism was “translated” as *Guòjīzhǔyì* or as *Jidūānzhǔyì*. This version explicitly held strong negative connotations and was thus criticized by those who

⁴³ The majority of Chinese students studying abroad studied in Japan. By 1912 more than 35,000 Chinese students had studied in Japan, including a major part of the most important May Fourth Movement authors, such as Chen Duxiu. For more about Chinese students in Japan, see for example Chow Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement*, 26-31; Jerome Chen, *China and the West: Society and Culture 1815-1937* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), 152-153; Jerome Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China* (New York: Free Press, 1981), 141-142.

⁴⁴ Referred in Viviane Alleton, “Chinese Terminologies: on Preconceptions,” in *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge & Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*. Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung & Joachim Kurtz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 18.

⁴⁵ *Mǎkèsīzhǔyì* (馬克思主義, Marxism) is another similar translation based on sound imitation.

⁴⁶ This list does not claim to be exhaustive, but a list of the most common styles of referring to the concept of Bolshevism in this particular context.

held sympathy towards Soviet Russia. The second style was probably the most neutral one: “Bolshevism as Bolshevism, Bolshevik as Bolshevik”. This is, the English names were not translated at all and not transcribed into Chinese characters. For instance Li Dazhao occasionally used such versions in which “Bolshevism” and “Bolshevik” were written in Latin alphabet. Although this particular style seems, on the face of it, a neutral one, it can also be seen as one of strategies to disentangle Bolshevism from radicalism. In other words, it can be seen as a method to avoid using the names *Guòjīzhǔyì* and *Jidūānzhǔyì*. The *third* style of “translation”, which was based on the semantics of the original Russian name, was more clearly an attempt to use a name that could have also positive connotation: ‘Bolsheviks as the majority faction’ in which Bolsheviks was “translated” as *Duōshùpài*. According to this version, Bolsheviks were simply the majority faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party. It is noteworthy that *Duōshùpài* was used mostly in articles where Bolshevism was defended against criticism. The *fourth* version of Bolshevism was based on sound imitation; Bolshevik was transliterated as *Bùěrsǐwéikè*, *Bùěrsāiwéikè*, *Bùěrxuěwéikè* or various other phonetic versions. This version was close to the second version (Latin alphabet) as it can be seen as a more neutral translation than “radicalism” or “majority faction”. The characters in *Bùěrsǐwéikè* (布爾什維克) do not carry strong positive or negative connotations; many of those characters are typically used in similar transliterations. The fifth version of Bolshevism was *Láonóngzhǔyì* (勞農主義) that could be translated into English as a “doctrine of workers and peasants”. This version can be seen as an attempt to translate the concept, not the English name (Bolshevism) that was commonly used. In other words, this version referred directly to groups of people whose living standards this particular ideology was assumedly trying to improve.

It seems, however that this version was rarely used in early writings on Bolshevism in journals such as *New Youth* or *Weekly Critic*.⁴⁷

The fact that it was the fourth one of these versions that survived can be seen as an indication that negative depictions on Bolshevism were eventually on the losing side when more and more people became interested in Marxism, Leninism and Bolshevism in China in the 1920s and 1930s. Notwithstanding, it should not be seen as a one-way process; names and features of Bolshevism did not change “as a result” of intellectual developments, these conceptual struggles should also been as constituents in these developments. That is, in order to posit Bolshevism in a positive light in the first place, it was important that the names that were used to refer to this concept were not negatively loaded.

Paul Cohen has shown that one key problem in Western studies on Chinese history has been that intellectual developments and reforms have been portrayed only as results of “China’s response” to “Western impacts”. This model of explanation is simplistic and can tell only one side of the story. As Cohen points out, one should not talk about direct “responses” as foreign ideas could only be communicated through Chinese language and thought patterns, which inevitably changed the original ideas.⁴⁸ The perspective in this paper has been that we should not try to

⁴⁷ *Láonóngzhǔyì* was used, for example, by Zhang Dongsun in a debate on socialism between Chen Duxiu and Zhang. Chen Duxiu, Guan yu she hui zhu yi de tao lun (陳獨秀：〈關於社會主義的討論〉), *New Youth*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 1920). HDB.

⁴⁸ Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984). Although I have here focused on China, similar styles of writing about the non-West have appeared also elsewhere. As it is well known, Edward Said has dealt with epistemological issues in Western studies of Middle Eastern history and culture. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

identify specific “outside causes” for the radicalization of the May Fourth Movement without taking into consideration the conceptual contestations related to different interpretations of “outside events” and foreign ideas. These authors were well aware that there were different versions of the concept of radicalism and different authors used it for different purposes. They were also well aware that the meaning and desirability of Bolshevism was a controversial issue in the West. Even if it clearly seems, in retrospect, that Bolshevism was a very radical ideology, we should take into consideration the context in which these writings on radicalism and Bolshevism were produced. The examples of writings of Bolshevism in this paper indicate that Bolshevism was seen as an ideology that aimed at overthrowing the existing production structures that were based on private ownership of the means of production. On the other hand, we have very good reasons to think of the circumstances themselves as chaotic and radical: China was separated into different areas that were ruled by different warlords and their private armies; poverty and unemployment were widespread and foreign powers controlled various areas in China. It was probably not very difficult to portray Bolshevism as an ideology that offered to cure many of these ills; it was presented as an ideology that would put an end to imperialism, capitalism and militarism. All of these “enemies” had been criticized in the May Fourth context well before anyone defended the need of class struggle and dictatorship of the proletariat.

Although this paper has focused merely on the relation between Bolshevism and radicalism, there were of course many other “isms” that were associated with radicalism. Ideologies such as anarchism (無政府主義, *wúzhèngfǔzhǔyì*) or Marxism (馬克思主義, *Mǎkèsīzhǔyì*) had already established Chinese names, but the concept of radicalism was also

used to refer to the groups that advocated these sets of ideas. Radicalism was associated also with the whole new culture movement that criticized Chinese traditional society. Bolshevism, however, was a unique case in the sense that the controversy concerning the Chinese names used to refer to the concept was directly connected to the question of what was radical.

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