THE INITIAL FOUNDATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE CCP'S CONCEPT OF *JIEJI* 阶级 (CLASS) (1918–1926)

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"Class" is one of the most important but also the most confusing concepts in twentieth-century China. Its meaning is multi-layered: it emerged with the advent of modern society but carried on traditional ideas. It had an important place in Western socialist thought and was transmitted to China via Japanese translations, so it also possessed cross-cultural characteristics. The discourse on "class" saw its first wave of formation, dissemination, and popularity in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and it developed its local characteristics in the propaganda and the practice of revolution. This article intends to examine how "class," combined with the value of "labour," became a fashionable discourse in the 1920s, and how the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) understood and used the concept of "class" to gradually form a unique pattern of knowledge in the process of the National Revolution.

The modern concept of *jieji* 阶级 (class) was an import from the West, but it also had its traditional origins. In traditional Chinese, the word *jieji* emerged rather late and was rarely used.[1] Since the Han dynasty, the hierarchical structure of traditional society had mainly been formed by official "ranks" (*pin* 品) and "positions" (*wei* 位), often expressed by the terms *deng* 等 and *dengji* 等级 (the status in the official rank system of the bureaucracy). These terms indicated the political rank and position on a range from high to low, but only by implication the economic status of a person. Higher and lower positions were distinguished by strict political, legal, and social regulations as well as rules of etiquette. Of course, they were also manifest in the corresponding differences in consciousness and lifestyle.[2] Nonetheless, the traditional meaning of *jieji* referred to a hierarchical order in the political system, but not in the in the social realm.

1 For the origins of the word *jieji* and further research, see Wen 1991.

2 Max Weber, Qu Tongzu, and Philip Kuhn have all discussed the characteristics of the traditional Chinese ideas of social classification. Kuhn wrote explicitly that the idea of social hierarchy, in terms of human groups rather than points on a scale, had appeared only in the twentieth century. Occupational status distinctions, such as *simin* 四民, had had considerable influence. Politically, the distinction between rulers and ruled had always been clear: there had always been a lower class. Distinctions of wealth had only been loosely linked to other human characteristics and other systems of social differentiation. See Kuhn 1984 and Qu 1976.

The transition to the new meaning of "class" was sparked by the dissemination of the evolutionary view of history in China. The ideas associated with the new concept changed from "class system" (*jieji zhidu* 阶级制度) to "class oppression" (*jieji yapo* 阶级压迫), and then to "class struggle" (*jieji douzheng* 阶级斗争). These shifts also reflect the transition from the traditional social order to the modern idea of social equality, and from the political to the social and economic. The "class" concept as a framework of social knowledge initially formed and spread in the oppositional terms of *ladong jieji* 劳动阶级 ("working class") and *jisheng jieji* 寄生阶级 ("parasitic class").

1 The Rise of the "Working Class" and Social Dichotomies in the May Fourth Era

With the influx of socialist thought in the 1920s, the concept of "class" and the Marxist class theory behind it quickly gained popularity. The framework of "class" furthermore led to the spread of many new derivative concepts like "working class," which, in turn, was related to the value of labour.

The discovery of the value of labour was one of the key factors in the transformation to modern society. Hannah Arendt believed that the American colonial experience had led Westerners to the conviction that life on earth might be blessed with abundance instead of being cursed by scarcity. John Locke, Adam Smith, and others held that labour and toil were not the appanage of poverty, but, on the contrary, the source of all wealth. This gave modern revolutions the purpose of liberating society and became one of the ideological wellsprings of socialism.[3]

Anarchists were particularly prominent in expounding the value of labour. Their ideas were introduced in China in the early twentieth century, but they only exerted far-reaching influence during the May Fourth period.[4] Even though the Chinese revolutionaries at the beginning of the century were attracted by the anarchist view of labour, their focus was not on labour issues, but on the pursuit of equality by means of political revolution. When Sun Yat-sen presented his "Three Principles of the People," "People's Livelihood" (*minsheng zhuyi*) was not the most important one. Not until the political turmoil of the early years of the Republic of China, when the First World War brought new trends of

3 Arendt 1990, 22f.

4 Arif Dirlik has pointed to labour's important influence and sees it as one of the dividing issues between anarchist and Marxist class analyses. See Dirlik 1991, 186. The anarchist concept of labour, and its influence on Chinese Marxism, has been discussed in more detail by Liu 2014.

thought to China and Chinese industries had developed to a certain extent, did the attention of the intellectuals begin to shift to the social question. Around 1918, labour issues began to dominate the mainstream discourse.

Modern industry and commerce developed earliest in Shanghai and the city soon had a large number of labourers of all kinds. In the *Shenbao* 申报 issues of the early 1910s, most content regarding labourers could be found in the medical advertisements. Terms like *laodong gongren* 劳动工人, *laodongjia* 劳动家, *laodongzhe* 劳动者 (labourer, worker) or *laodong shehui* 劳动社会 (labour society) occasionally appeared in the news section, but only in the sense of objective descriptions. From 1918 onwards, their frequency increased, and until 1919 the volume of "labour" vocabulary expanded enormously. Terms like *laodong pingmin* 劳动平民 (labouring commoners), *laodong wenti* 劳动问题 (labour question), *laodong lianhe* 劳动联合, *laodong zuhe* 劳动组合 (labour union), *laodong xiehui* 劳动协会 (labour association), *laodong yundong* 劳动运动 (labour movement), *ladong dang* 劳动党 (labour party) and even *laodong jieji* 劳动阶级 (working class) and *laodong geming* 劳动革命 (labour revolution) began to appear. Most of these terms were still used only in foreign news sections. Subsequently, *laodong fa'an* 劳动法案 (labour laws), *laodong jiufen* 劳动纠纷 (labour disputes), *laodong lianhe* 劳动联合 (labour unions), and *laodong yundong* 劳动运动 (labour movement) became some of the main topics of foreign news.[5]

Thus, the value of labour was rediscovered in modern times, but there still was another key transition from "labour" to "working class," namely the discovery of "labour" as a collective entity and its becoming the main focus of public attention.[6]

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5 Data source: Ai Rusheng 爱如生, *Shenbao shujuku* 申报数据库 (*kehu duanban* 客户端版): Shanghai edition of *Shenbao* 1911–1926.

6 Japan acted as an important intermediary in the introduction of Western concepts to China. The vocabulary related to the "working class" is a case in point, as Wolfgang Lippert has brilliantly demonstrated: *laodongzhe* 劳动者 (labourer/worker) was used in early-twentieth-century China to refer to industrial wage workers. The Marxist term "Arbeiterklasse" (the working class) was translated as *laodong jieji*/*laogong jieji* 劳动阶级/劳工阶级. In the May Fourth period, however, these terms were widely used to refer to any kind of workers, not only industrial ones. At the same time, the traditional term *gongren* 工人 developed the meaning of "modern industrial worker" and gradually diverged from the concept of "working class"; see Lippert 1979. This article does not attempt to examine the history of this vocabulary or its dissemination as a whole, but focuses on the conceptual history of *laodong jieji* and the evolution of the social ideas behind it.

1.1 Calling Attention to "Sacred Labour"

When the First World War ended in 1918, China could count itself among the victors because of the labour corps it had sent abroad in support of Great Britain and France. The involvement of workers in the war naturally drew attention. A speech by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, the president of Peking University, in particular, made the slogan "labour is sacred" (*laogong shensheng* 劳工神圣) resound throughout the country. Discussions on labour issues surged.

However, many people noticed that the term *laogong*, used by Cai Yuanpei, was not the same as the "proletarian class" (*wuchan jieji* 无产阶级) in the unified discourse of the CCP:

> The labour we speak of is not the labour of metal workers, of carpenters, and so forth. The undertaking of all those who use their own labour power to benefit others is labour regardless of whether it is mental or manual. Farmers do the labour of cultivating, merchants do the labour of transporting, writers and inventors do educational labour. We are all labourers. We must all recognise the value of labour.[7]

At the other end of the spectrum were officials, politicians, military officers, businessmen, and rich heirs who enjoyed a luxurious and morally corrupt lifestyle. Cai labelled them as "parasitic groups" and set them in opposition to labour.

This position of Cai Yuanpei was close to anarchism. Cai had close contact with anarchists like Li Shizeng 李石曾, which apparently left some traces in his intellectual outlook. He often identified anarchist tendencies in traditional thought.[8] The kind of pan-labourism displayed by Cai during the May Fourth period was also closely related to the reception of Tolstoy and it had a great influence on Chinese scholars. It was essentially compatible with an anarchist utopia in which everyone was equal and everyone worked. However, at the time, the application of pan-laborism to China was problematic: did "sacred labour" include the intellectuals who advocated it?

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7 Cai Yuanpei 1918: 我说的劳工，不但是金工、木工等等，凡用自己的劳力作成有益他人的事业，不管他用的是体力，是智力，都是劳工。所以农是种植的工，商是转运的工，学校职员、著述家、发明家，是教育的工，我们都是劳工。我们要自己认识劳工的价值。Translation taken from Dirlik 1991, 192. Existing research generally affirms that Cai Yuanpei put forward this theory because of the contribution of Chinese workers to China's status as a "victorious country" in World War I. Some scholars believe that this theory was influenced by the October Revolution; others emphasize the influence of traditional people-oriented (*min ben*) thought. See Peng 1984, 183–184; Xu 1991; Li Yongchang 1996; Feng 2009.

8 Dirlik 1991, 66. Some even claim that Cai Yuanpei himself was an anarchist.

Cai Yuanpei's position was very clear: "teachers, writers and inventors are the workers in education; we are all workers." Chen Puxian 陈溥贤, famous for the earliest introduction of Marxism to China, also said: "What I call workers (*laodongzhe* 劳动者) does not only refer to those employing their bodies, but naturally also includes those working with their minds."[9] In 1920, the *Shenbao* weighed in on the hot topic of "sacred labour" with an issue on "The Meaning of Labour" (*Laodong de yiyi* 劳动的意义). The opening piece explained: "The word 'labour' (*laodong*) does not simply refer to physical work, but also includes mental work. Therefore, using one's physical strength for ploughing the fields is one kind of 'labour,' and using one's brain for writing might also be a kind of 'labour.'"[10] Shen Xuanlu 沈玄庐 equally thought that the categories of labour included "muscle labour" (*jinrou laogong* 筋肉劳工) and "spiritual labour" (*jingshen laogong* 精神劳工), and that they complemented each other in both individual and social life. Hence, he opposed "the denial of spiritual labour."[11]

In intellectual circles, "we the workers" was an easily accepted term. The anarchist utopian ideal specifically demanded that everyone perform equal labour, and it did not distinguish between physical and mental effort. But this also meant that all intellectuals who could not do physical labour were required to reform through labour. This led to a wave of work-and-study programs and a kind of "work-and-studyism" (*gongxue zhuyi*).

However, the "diligent work and frugal study" (*qingong jianxue* 勤工俭学) program in France and the "work-study mutual-aid groups" dissipated as quickly as they had sprung up among the younger students. Ultimately, these groups were merely small circles of intellectuals, aimed at self-reform, with no effect on society at large. As a contemporary observer noted:

> The general understanding of "labour" is still somewhat unsatisfactory. As long as people regard mental efforts as a kind of "labour," they are not fully consistent: Understood in this way, it cannot be of any help in the establishment of permanent world peace and in the solution of all kinds of urgent problems in the present society.[12]

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9 Yuan 1919: 我所说的劳动者，不是专指身的劳动者而言，心的劳动者当然也在这个范围以内。

10 Ying 1920: "劳动"两个字不是单指体力的工作，也是包括脑力的工作，所以凡用力耕田的就是"劳动"的一种，用脑做文章的也未始不是"劳动"。

11 Shen 1920.

12 Zhou Changxian 1920: 一般人对于"劳工"的解释，仍不免有令人不十分满意的地方。他们把劳心也看做"劳工"的一种，依旧是不彻底的办法：若果照这样解释，可以说对于世界永久和平的建设和现社会各种急待解决的问题的处置，仍然是没有什么贡献的。

This shows the most important flaw of equating physical and mental labour. In the author's view, any concept of labour which included mental work would, in fact, cement the traditional view: "those who labour with their minds govern others; those who labour with their strength are governed by others" (the classical formulation in the *Mengzi*). It could therefore play no role in any real effort to change the world.

People like Dai Jitao 戴季陶 even argued that farmers and craftsmen had not been despised in the past:

> Chinese people have always held that scholars, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants are of equal status. The productive enterprises of agriculture and handicraft were deemed even more important than commerce. People belonging to the class of farmers and craftsmen have always been regarded as noble. Even the state's legal system did not particularly disregard this class.[13]

His point was that there was not much modern industry in China, so that class differences could still be prevented. However, such arguments did not go well with the New Culture Movement's anti-traditional spirit and the ideas of social transformation after May Fourth. They were even less meaningful to the young people who wanted to change the world.

1.2 The Emergence of a "Working Class" Identified with Physical Labour

If the equation of mental and physical labor in "work-and-studyism" was unable to break free from the shackles of tradition, and if the self-reform efforts of small groups of intellectuals were bound to fail, which kind of movement would really be able to change the world? In the 1920, the intellectuals increasingly focused on the peasants and workers.

In the spirit of the New Culture Movement's opposition to traditional culture and social hierarchies, the traditional Confucian status distinctions of gentleman/commoner (*junzi*/*xiaoren*) and mental labour/physical labour were heavily criticised. Li Dazhao 李大钊 believed that, from the perspective of social and economic changes, the "Confucian classism" (*Kongzi de jieji zhuyi* 孔子的阶级主义) had become obsolete and that the new social and economic conditions had created a "working class" (*laogong jieji* 劳工阶级), which also stood for a new kind of social ethics:

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13 Dai 1919b: 中国人向来有一个士农工商一律平等的思想。农工这两个生产事业，尤其看得比商业重要。属于农工这阶级的人，向来也看得很高贵。就是在国家的法律制度上面，也并没有把那一个阶级特别看轻。

> The Chinese labour movement is also directed against the Confucian classism. The Confucian doctrines have always put the working class in the position of the governed and turned workers into victims of the ruling class. "If there were no gentlemen (*junzi*), there would be nobody to rule the common men. If there were no common men, there would be nobody to support the gentlemen." "Those who labour with their minds govern others; those who labour with their strength are governed by others." These statements are representative of the Confucian disdain of labour. The modern economic organisation has raised the self-awareness of the working class. To meet the new demands of society, the new ethics of "sacred labour" have emerged; they are an inevitable consequence of the new organisation of the economy.[14]

Already in 1919, Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 considered the strategy of raising class consciousness and launching labour unions. He proposed to break the deep-rooted traditional dichotomy of physical and mental labour by focussing on a "working class" that owned no property and exclusively relied on manual labour:

> What I now mean by "labourers" is people completely without property and wholly dependent on physical labour for their livelihood. In terms of occupation, they are the unpropertied carpenters, bricklayers, lacquerers, blacksmiths, coachmen, watermen, tailors, barbers, postmen, typographers, helpers, servants, shop assistants, waiters on the railway, handymen, and porters. In their totality, they form the propertyless working class.[15]

However, while physical labour now was given priority, the estrangement and the differences in the situation and group identity between intellectuals and manual workers became ever more pronounced. With the emergence of the concept of the "intellectual class" (*zhishi jieji* 智识阶级),[16] the tendency again to separate intellectual workers and physical labourers kept intensifying. At this point, the "working class" was no longer set

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14 Li Dazhao 1920: 中国的劳动运动也是打破孔子阶级主义的运动。孔派的学说，对于劳动的阶级，总是把他们放在被治者的地位，作治者阶级的牺牲。"无君子莫治野人，无野人莫养君子"。"劳心者治人，劳力者治于人"。这些话可以代表孔门贱视劳工的心理。现代的经济组织，促起劳工阶级的自觉，应合社会的新要求，就发生了"劳工神圣"的新伦理，这也是新经济组织上必然发生的构造。

15 Chen Duxiu 1919: 我现在所说的劳动界，是指绝对没有财产全靠劳力吃饭的人而言。就职业上说，是把那没有财产的木匠、泥水匠、漆匠、铁工、车夫、水夫、成衣、理发匠、邮差、印刷排字工、佣工、听差、店铺的伙计、铁路上的茶房、小工、搬运夫、合成一个无产的劳动阶级。

16 The hot debates around the term "intellectuals" (*zhishi fenzi*) during the culture fever of the 1980s also dealt with the history of the "intellectual class." Around 2000, the "intellectual

in opposition to the "property parasitism" (*caichan jisheng* 财产寄生) of bureaucratic and capitalist elites, but to the "intellectual parasitism" (*zhishi jisheng* 智识寄生) of an educated elite.

The ideal of work-and-studyism during the May Fourth period had already framed society as composed of the "intellectual class," the "working class," and the "bourgeois class," but the aim was to overcome this condition: "We must find aware people in all three classes and bring them closer to one another."[17] Zhang Dongsun 张东荪 also hoped "to bring the intellectual and the working classes together in a common movement;" he viewed their fusion as a trend among the labour movements after the World War I.[18] These were active attempts to bridge the gap between workers and intellectuals.

However, these attempts showed that it was not merely difficult to bring the "intellectual class" and the "working class" together; they revealed a deepening estrangement between the two, highlighting the paradoxical trend that the identity of the "intellectual class" was a hard sell among the educated youth. For example, in a debate tournament, during the May Fourth period, between Peking Normal College and Tsinghua University, the Normal College team argued for the position that "there should be no separate intellectual class in human society." When they lost the tournament, the Normal College students were greatly disappointed and thought that the verdict by Hu Shi 胡适 and other members of the jury was biased.[19] This demonstrates that the young students in general rejected the "intellectual class" identity.

The *Minguo ribao* 民国日报 supplement "Awakening" (*Juewu* 觉悟) mainly carried short articles in which young students or teachers expressed their opinions, reflecting the perceptions of the so-called "petty intellectuals" (*xiao zhishi fenzi* 小知识分子). Their discussions of labour and the working class signalled a shift in the general discourse. At first, many of the short pieces followed the precept of "labour is sacred," supported the value of labour, and paid attention to the life of workers. But before long someone asked: "Who is a worker? Who belongs to the intellectual class?" This educated youth tended

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class" again became a topic of academic research, see, for example, Xu 2005. Fang Weigui's work on conceptual history also touched on the "intellectual class," see Fang 2006, as did Zhang 2013, 244–245. However, these studies and rarely examine the "intellectual class" from the perspective of the structure of modern society. In the formation of the concept of "intellectual class," not only did the "intellectual" play a role, but so did the modification of the traditional social structure.

17 Wang Guangqi 1919: 要从这三种阶级里寻出有觉悟的人，使他们三个阶级的人，互相接近。

18 Zhang 1919.

19 Zhou Gucheng 1979.

to criticise the "parasitism" of the intellectual class and to praise the peasants as "more valuable."[20]

A few months later, in May 1920, Chen Duxiu repeated these arguments and intentionally inverted the traditional view. He not only praised the value of physical labour, but also set it above mental labour and turned the traditional dictum on its head: "those who labour with their strength govern others; those who labour with their minds are governed by others."[21]

Chen Duxiu understood the slogan of "sacred labour" as referring exclusively to physical labour, because "the food we eat, the houses we live in, and the clothes we wear are all produced by human labour; we cannot rely on natural raw materials alone. That is how important human labour is and why people speak of 'sacred labour.'"[22] His reasoning went beyond the Confucian conception, as he contrasted the poverty of those diligently labouring with the wealth of the lazy, and argued that those who did not work should not earn.[23] The contrast between the labouring poor and the idle rich led almost naturally to moral indignation.

Chen had given his speech in plain, easily comprehensible language, and it was included in an Anyuan Road and Mining Workers' School textbook, designed to raise awareness of the social dichotomy and encourage workers to revolt against it.[24] In its early days, the CCP promoted the socialist proletarian state among workers and labourers by pointing out it would "implement the law of 'no work, no food.'"[25] Chen Duxiu frequently struck the same chord, for example in his September 1920 article "On Politics" (*Tan zhengzhi* 谈政治), which marked the politicization of the *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年) magazine:

> The most unjust and most painful thing in every country in the world is none other than the small number of lazy consumer bourgeois who use the state, political, and legal institutions to their benefit, who suppress the majority of the hard-working and productive working class with the power of capital, and treat them worse than cattle, horses, and machines.[26]

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20 Guang 1919.

21 Chen Duxiu 1920c: 劳力者治人，劳心者治于人。

22 Chen Duxiu 1920d: 我们吃的粮食，住的房屋，穿的衣裳，都全是人工做出来的，单靠天然的原料是不行的。人工如此重要，所以有人说什么"劳工神圣"。Also published in *Xin qingnian* 8:16, 1.

23 Chen Duxiu 1920a.

24 Xiaoxue 1990.

25 Zhongguo 1981.

26 Chen Duxiu 1920f: 世界各国里面最不平最痛苦的事，不是别的，就是少数游惰

In Chen Duxiu's view, socialism's greatest value lay in expounding the unfair treatment of the workers; he held that promoting the labour movement was a moral duty. In the weekly *Labour World* (*Laodongjie* 劳动界), founded in August 1920 as a "publication for the common worker," Chen explained the meaning of the Chinese labour movement:

> First, it is not about making a fuss over new foreign trends of thought; second, it is not about talking big about socialism. But hopefully there will be a movement that will arouse our compassion for humankind and our affection for our compatriots, and that will rally everyone to stand with poor labourers and spare them the burden of suffering we ourselves are unable to bear.[27]

The basic value judgement of the early Marxist demanded that one not follow blindly the newest trend, but rather be a "kind-hearted scholar" (*you liangxin de xuezhe* 有良心的学者)[28] and show honest compassion and affection toward one's compatriots. "The value of a theory lies in the way it can relieve a society and an age of harmful ideas and institutions."[29] "Our literati class has absolutely no hope for reformation, while productive workers again suffer from unprecedented oppression. This is why we must bring in Marx's socialism."[30]

The simple moral indignation evoked by considering the plight of the "working class" raised people's critical awareness of the unfair distribution of wealth and labour within society. According to a series of commentaries on the meaning of "working class" in *New Youth*, all social groups not engaged in physical labour were earning without working. That is, members of the "intellectual class," warlords, bureaucrats, and playboys from rich families alike, all stood on the opposite side of labour. The "mental workers," who had still been included in the broad anarchist definition of labour, gradually lost their "sacred" status when compared to the harsh reality of the physical labourers, who were "treated

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的消费的资产阶级，利用国家，政治，法律等机关，把多数勤苦的生产的劳动阶级压在资本势力底下，当做牛马机器还不如。

27 Chen Duxiu 1920b: 一不是跟着外国底新思潮凑热闹，二不是高谈什么社会主义。不过希望有一种运动，好唤起我们对于人类底同情心，和对于同胞底感情，大家好来帮助贫苦的劳动者，使他们不至于受我们所不能受的苦恼。Also published in *Minguo ribao*, *Juewu* supplement 9:7 (1920), 2.

28 Chen Duxiu 1920e.

29 Chen Duxiu 1920f: 学说之所以可贵，不过为他能给救济一社会一时代弊害昭著的思想或制度。

30 Chen Duxiu 1920g: 我们士大夫阶级断然是没有革新希望的，生产劳动者又受了世界上无比的压迫，所以有输入马格斯社会主义底需要。

worse than beasts of burden." However, modern society's economy defied overly simplistic categorisations, so the pendulum kept swinging between the appreciation of economic functions and moral criticism.

1.3 The Split of the Reform Group: Who Belongs to the "Parasitic Class"?

In East as in West, the opposition to the unfair distribution of wealth and labour has a long history. The ancient song "Big Rat" (*Shuo shu* 硕鼠) from the *Book of Songs* metaphorically depicts a ruler who overtaxes the population, hoards food, encroaches upon others' possessions, and does not care about the people.[31] The rebellions in fourteenth-century Western Europe clearly distinguished between those who laboured and those who did not. The revolutionary propaganda in the eighteenth century equally criticised the exploitation of labourers by the privileged classes; François Noël Babeuf, in particular, emphasised this point. And the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his famous song "Men of England," likened the rich and idle to "drones" who made the poor "bees" toil for their benefit.[32]

In the 1920s, a group of intellectuals centred around the journal *Reform* (*Gaizao* 改造) put forward a different analysis of the concepts of "working class" and "parasitic class."[33] Already when the journal was founded in early 1919 under the title *Reconstruction* (*Jiefang yu gaizao* 解放与改造), an article clearly set out "How to Deal with the Class of 'Idle Eaters' of Our Country" (*Duidai wu guo "bu lao er shi" de jieji de banfa* 对待吾国"不劳而食"的阶级的办法). The author proposed an economic criterion of "partaking of profit" (*fen li* 分利) versus "generating profit" (*sheng li* 生利). He argued that it did not matter at all whether the labour was "physical" or "mental." What mattered was not only "a person's way of life" but "also the way of life of social groups. To put it simply, one has to lead a life of 'generating profit' rather than one of 'taking profit.'"[34] "Taking profit" or "generating profit" meant consuming or creating social and economic value. Compared to the traditional distinctions between mental and physical labour, and

31 *Shijing* 113, 202–3.

32 Shelley 1818.

33 This group included Liang Qichao, Zhang Junmai, Zhang Dongsun, Jiang Fangzhen, and others who all had returned from Japan and knew one another. In September 1919, they founded *Jiefang yu gaizao* (later renamed *Gaizao*) to help "transform the society" and create a "plan for the harmony of the whole" ("全体谐和的计划"). In December of the same year, Zhang Dongsun published "Why Must We Discuss Socialism" (*Women wei shenme yao jiang shehui zhuyi* 我们为甚么要讲社会主义), in which he advocated "simple socialism" (*hunpu de shehui zhuyi* 浑朴的社会主义).

34 Zong 1919.

between the working poor and the idle rich, such an understanding came closer to that of the classical British school of economics. Its standard to delineate a "class of idle eaters" differed markedly from the populist tendencies of Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhen, and others.

Not only did unemployed vagrants and idlers living on interest form a part of this "class of idle eaters," but so did even traditionally respected scholars, as well as merchants and shopkeepers who made legitimate profits. This class theory was more thorough than any past moral division, and it followed an "extremely straightforward approach." Of course, it was also utterly impractical. Furthermore, it suffered from an inherent contradiction in that it focused on the tension between humans and material goods—a tension that could not be resolved politically—rather than on relationships among humans themselves.

An article by Zhou Fohai 周佛海 in the same issue of *Reform* took a more viable direction. When discussing the causes and types of class struggle, Zhou referred to the class struggle in the history of Western Europe, emphasising the difference between dominating and being dominated, as well as the difference in material living conditions between the ruling class and the ruled. When he analysed China, however, Zhou denied that there was a struggle between "a middle class and an aristocratic class" (*zhongliu jieji he guizu jieji* 中流阶级和贵族阶级) or between "a working class and a bourgeois class": "The Chinese can be divided into two classes: one is the parasitic class and the other the self-sustaining class (*ziji jieji* 自给阶级)." By "parasitic class" he meant the warlords, politicians, children of wealthy families, and unemployed vagrants; the self-sustaining class consisted of those supporting themselves and living by their professions.[35]

Zhou Fohai's argumentation was very clear. China's real social deadweight was "the parasitic class of the militarists, bureaucrats and politicians." So, "if one wants to change society, one must first eliminate the obstacles. The parasitic class is such an obstacle, so it has to be eliminated first. To eliminate the parasitic class, it is necessary to unite with the self-sustaining class and together engage in a class struggle."[36]

The clear distinction between a "parasitic class" and a "self-sustaining class" gave a more critical orientation to the vague idea of "non-working class," without getting entangled in distinctions between mental and physical labour. Zhou's pugnacious argumentation was very popular among his fellows at *Reform*. Moreover, it was consistent with China's situation. His conclusion was close to the anarchist outlook, but strategically more intelligent. Liang Qichao 梁启超 continued to develop this way of thinking and, bringing the national conditions fully into play, managed to establish it firmly.

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35 Zhou Fohai 1919.

36 Zhou Fohai 1919: 要改造社会，必先除去障碍物。障碍物就是寄生阶级，所以不得不先除寄生阶级。要除寄生阶级，就要结合一个自给阶级，和他行阶级斗争。

In 1921, Zhang Dongsun proposed to postpone the development of socialism in order "to develop the industries," which drew criticism from Chen Duxiu and others.[37] Subsequently, Liang Qichao joined the debate on socialism and brought the analysis of social classes to a climax. He argued that, compared to Europe and the United States, China's social situation had created a unique division into the "employed" (*you ye* 有业) and the "unemployed" (*wu ye* 无业). "China's most pressing problem is how to transform the majority of the people into workers; [...] the question of having or not having property is secondary."[38]

On the basis of this analysis, Liang further analysed the concept of "class" and strongly opposed the confusion between "vagrant class" (*youmin jieji* 游民阶级) and "working class" (*laodong jieji*): "Although these terms seem to be similar, careful consideration shows that in reality there is a big difference." His article repeatedly emphasised the danger of the vagrant class and noted that "peasants and casual workers" (*nongmin sangong* 农民与散工) were not at all "working class."

> The term "working class" has a broad and a narrow meaning. The broad understanding naturally includes all peasants and casual workers. In the narrow sense, it refers specifically to those living on labour employed by the new kind of business organisation. The principal part of a social movement certainly must be formed by the working class in this narrow sense. In China, the workers in this narrow sense have not yet been able to become a class, which is why I call them classless.[39]

The analysis in this article already moved away from the social and economic categories of "employed" and "unemployed" toward a clearly targeted debate. In other words, Liang Qichao again drew attention to the political aim of propagating a socialist labour movement and unambiguously opposed it. This led Li Da 李达 to regard him as "the most

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37 In his doctoral thesis, Zhang Wentao noted the concept of "class" used by Liang Qichao at the end of the nineteenth century, but he only analysed the history of the word and its early and new meanings, and therefore could not go beyond pre-existing scholarship. Zhao Lidong and Deng Lilan both noticed Liang's division into the "employed" and the "unemployed," and refer to the 1920s' class debates. See Zhang 2013; Zhao 2002; Deng 2009, 16.

38 Liang Qichao 1921, 17: 中国目前最迫切之问题在如何而能使多数之人民得以变为劳动者 [...] 而有产无产，转成第二问题。

39 Liang Qichao 1921, 21–22: 劳动阶级一语，本含广狭二义。广义的解释，自然凡农民及散工悉含在内。狭义的解释，则专指在新式企业组织之下佣工为活的人。而社会运动之主体，必恃此狭义的劳动阶级。中国则此狭义的劳动者未能成为阶级，故谓之无阶级也。

powerful adversary." But Li Da was also unable to overcome the confusion between the concepts of "proletarian class" and "working class," and only disputed it on logical grounds: where there is industry, there must be workers. "The vagrants in China can be said to be unemployed workers."[40]

As Li Da said, Liang Qichao's "writings are representative for the opinion of some people and are well able to win their sympathy."[41] Peng Yihu 彭一湖, a student in Japan affiliated with the Constitutional Research Society and a former Tongmenghui member, also agreed that "factory workers" (*gongchang laodongzhe* 工场劳动者) did not include peasants, and gave a most negative assessment of the vagrant masses: they were unable to generate profit and could only take profit.[42] Chen Chengze 陈承泽 even held that "there are only two classes of people, vagrants and good people."[43] The vagrant class not only consisted of "rogues and ruffians making a living by harming others," but also of "people living the life of literati."[44] In contrast, the good people included "the professional farmers, workers, and merchants, as well as the scholars and technicians engaged in research and academics."[45]

Speaking of a "vagrant class" as an object of criticism pointed to another political problem, namely warlords and violence. The combination of the two problems—warlords in politics, and "vagrants" and "soldier-bandits" (*bingfei* 兵匪) in society—produced the new term: a "class with guns" (*you qiang jieji* 有枪阶级). Liang Qichao believed that China's crux at that moment was armed warlords and militarists, but not necessarily the question whether it had industry or not: "The one decisive problem for the survival of our country is having the class without guns facing a class with guns."[46] The "class with guns" comprised all strongmen who bullied the weak, from warlords at the top to soldier-bandits at the bottom.

Creating new terms in this manner doubtlessly fostered a specious argument. Liang was aware of that, as he reacted immediately to doubts about the intelligibility of the guns/no guns dichotomy:

> The reality we're facing actually looks like this: You can only blame the reality for not being understandable, but not my argument. Soldiers originally were citizens; a citizen

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40 Li Da 1921, 12: 中国的游民，都可以说是失业的劳动者。
41 Ibid.: [梁任公] 所作的文字很能代表一部分人的意见，很能博得一部分人的同情。
42 Peng Yihu 1919.
43 Chen Chengze 1920, 2–3: 止有游民和良民两种。
44 Ibid.: 专以扰害他人为生的流氓光棍 [...] 专门过士大夫的生活的人。
45 Chen Chengze 1920, 9: 有职业的农工商和专门从事研究学术的学者技术家。
46 Liang 1922: 我国目前生死关头，只有无枪阶级对有枪阶级一个问题。

> today can be a soldier tomorrow [...] What does this have to do with classes? However, if you give people who originally are not to be divided into classes two opposed labels, they will naturally turn into two classes [...] Naturally a big gap will open.[47]

Liang Qichao's article used the class discourse that was popular at the time to analyse the Chinese reality, reflecting the public dissatisfaction with the warlords. As a result, his quite humorous distinction between the "class with guns" and the "class without guns" circulated widely. In 1924, an editorial in the *Guowen zhoubao* 国闻周报 was titled "The Achievements of the Class with Guns," referring to the actions of the warlords and militarists.[48] In an article for the *Chenbao* 晨报, Jiang Menglin 蒋梦麟 also referred to them as "class with guns."[49] According to an observation in *Gongjin* 共进, a publication by Shaanxi students in Beijing, "The literati use over and over a stock of fashionable terms, such as 'class with guns,' 'class without guns,' 'intellectual class'... If you start looking at such an unreal situation with clear eyes, you will see that China nowadays is full of diversity; this really must be the most exciting chapter in the history of class struggle."[50]

From then on, the dichotomy of "employed" versus "unemployed" no longer expressed a pure moral indignation about "earning without working"; nor did it refer to the modern socioeconomic concept of productivity as opposed to parasitic rent-seeking. Instead, it became a political distinction. On the one hand, it combined the criticism of the political problem of the warlords and the social problem of the vagrants and soldier-bandits. On the other hand, it was used to criticise the promotion of labour movements and Bolshevism. General public opinion tended towards the former, while a part of the intellectual world had its reservations about the rising tide of labour movements.

So, was the "class with guns"—the "vagrants" and the "soldier-bandits" produced by the warlord society—synonymous with "drones"? This question was also addressed by the formerly-Marxist-leaning Dai Jitao and Zhu Zhixin 朱执信. Amid the general accusations aimed at the vagrants,[51] Zhu Zhixin stood up and pointed out that the labour

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47 Liang Qichao 1922: 眼面前事实的确如此，诸君只能怪事实不通，不能怪我的题目不通。原来兵士人民做的，今天是个民，明天就可以变成个兵 [...] 这其间有什么阶级呢？虽然，正因为本来不应分阶级的人，给他两个对待的名称，他自然会变成两个阶级 [...] 自然会划出一个大鸿沟来。

48 Yi 1924.

49 Jiang 1924.

50 Ha 1924, 1: 在文人的笔尖上，又时时带出时髦的"有枪阶级""无枪阶级""知识阶级"... 一大堆名词来。这样不实在的情形，如还用那一付看得大而又远的眼睛来看，仿佛中国今日的五花八门，真是阶级斗争的历史中最精彩的一章了。

51 Dai 1919a.

problem concerned not only the employed, but also the unemployed.[52] In Zhu Zhixin's view, the reason why "workers (including agricultural workers) would turn into rogues and bandits" was because they were economically oppressed by the capitalists. They should all have the same "right to life and the right to work." From the point of view of individual choices, it was not hard to see that rogues and bandits were common people trying to survive.[53] In response, Dai Jitao published the short poem "Lazy?" (*Landuo?* 懒惰?), in which a poor man defended himself: "I don't dare to be lazy. I want to work, but, alas, no one will hire me."[54]

Dai Jitao and Zhu Zhixin differentiated between, and further analysed, the perspectives of the individual and of the social structure. They spoke against simplistic moral judgements and holding the poor responsible for the failures of society. From the macro perspective of social structure, the "vagrants" presented a potential danger to society, but this did not mean that they were all "gluttonous, lazy ...[and] evil people." Setting aside social and economic reasons, blaming certain social groups, and resorting to moral criticism, no matter who the target was, had to be repugnant to any scientific socialist.

However, no matter how much thought was put into "changing the world," revolution ultimately had to be "done" by somebody. If the poor and unemployed were not "drones," who was the "parasitic class"?

After the founding of the CCP, the first thing the party did was establishing the Chinese Labour Secretariat (*Laodong zuhe shujibu* 劳动组合书记部). In 1922, after several major strikes by Hong Kong seamen and the Anyuan road and mining workers, the discourse of the "working class" (*gongren jieji* 工人阶级) and the "contradiction between capital and labour" (*laozi maodun* 劳资矛盾) gradually became mainstream. Even during the period of the Guomindang–Communist cooperation, the debate between the two parties focused on class struggle, based on the opposition between the working and the capitalist classes.

Meanwhile, the contributors to the *Gaizao* journal had not changed their position. When a movement started to come together during the National Revolution, Liang Qichao insisted on his reservations. When the popularity of the "class" discourse of the National Revolution reached its peak, Liang simply maintained his line of thinking and continued to speak of an "unemployed class" (*wuye jieji* 无业阶级), now directly targeting party members and students organising the workers and peasants.[55]

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52 Zhang Wentao also wrote on the discussion between these two, see Zhang 2013, 87.

53 Zhu 1920.

54 Dai 1920: 我不敢懒惰。可怜我要工作呵，又没有人雇我。

55 On Liang Qichao's attitude towards the National Revolution and the CCP's arguments, see

> Is there any class division in Chinese society? I do not dare to say. If you force me to say there is, then I would think that "proletarian class" and "bourgeois class" are not adequate terms; only "employed class" and "unemployed class" would be adequate terms. [...] Among these people, some have property and others do not; it is hard to make distinctions based on property ownership. [56]

Liang Qichao regarded party members and activists as part of the "unemployed class," and criticised them for not being able to represent the workers. "The people from the unemployed class are really thick-skinned and quick in their means, at any moment they can make themselves representatives of a part of the people. Louis XIV said 'I am the state;' they say 'I am the people.' They always make themselves stand for the most fashionable doctrine, and they rely on that doctrine to put food on their plates."[57] Liang Qichao concluded by upending the party slogan: "Today's movements in Europe and the United States mostly fly the banner of 'the proletarian class overthrowing the bourgeois class.' I believe this is not the right banner for China. Here it should read: 'the employed class overthrowing the unemployed class.'"[58]

Zheng Chaolin 郑超麟 responded to this with an orthodox Marxist critique, emphasising that the criterion for class differentiation was social production, and that Liang's analytical distinctions based on "property," "employment," or "guns" were utterly useless.[59] However, such scholarly debates, infused with theory and foreign vocabulary, were not useful to actual propaganda. It was rather the closeness of Liang's terminology to real contradictions that helped to popularise the "class" discourse in the early 1920s.

The concept of "working class" gained currency in the intellectual world by way of the value of "sacred labour," but it was always based on a dualistic model of social classes. While the "working class" became an object of reverence, its opponent was asymmetrical and ambivalent, be it the "bourgeois class," the "parasitic class," or the "intellectual class." Therefore, the early Communists reacted to the distinction between "mental labour" and "physical labour" by narrowing down the scope of the concept of "working class." They

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Zhang 2007, 182–187.

56 Liang Qichao 1925: 中国社会到底有阶级的分野没有呢？我其实不敢说，若勉强说有，则我以为有产阶级和无产阶级不成对待名词，只有有业阶级和无业阶级成对待名词 [...] 这些人也是或有产，或无产，很难就产上画出个分野来。

57 Liang Qichao 1925: 无业阶级的人脸皮真厚，手段也真麻利，他们随时可以自行充当其部分人民代表，路易十四世说"朕即国家"，他们说"我即国民"，他们随时可以把最时髦的主义顶在头上，靠主义做饭碗。

58 Ibid.: 欧美人今天的运动，大抵都打着"无产阶级打倒有产阶级"的旗号，这个旗号，我认为在中国不适用，应改写道："有业阶级打倒无业阶级"。

59 Zheng 1925.

ejected mental workers from the ranks of the "working class," and went so far as to include the "intellectual class" in its opposite. The *Gaizao* group accordingly expanded its distinction between the "working class" and the "parasitic class" to adapt to its discursive opponents at different times. Regardless of how the two sides interpreted the concepts, the value of "labour" and the binary view of society became firmly established in the 1920s.

2 The Formation of the Early CCP's Class Discourse Model in the 1920s

2.1 From an Economic to a Political Class Dichotomy of "Opposite Interests"

Li Dazhao was the first Communist to discuss Marx's concepts of "class" and "class struggle." In his view, Marx's "theory of class competition [was] closely related to his historical materialism," and both were inseparable from the economic.[60]

According to Li Dazhao, throughout Western history wars were essentially class wars over economic interests, "and later they turned into political competition and struggle for political power, until the economic structure built on this class antagonism itself advanced and a new kind of transformation occurred."[61] Based on this history of classes, Li summed up the Marxist definition of "class" based on political and economic characteristics:

> What Marx calls classes are the classes with opposing economic interests. It is the difference between the bourgeois class, which owns the means of production, such as land or capital, and the proletarian class, which has no means of production: one is subduing and plundering the other, while the other is being subdued and plundered. These two classes have manifested themselves in various forms at various times.[62]

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60 Zhao 2005: 他的阶级竞争说，与他的唯物史观有密切关系。One of the references for the early socialists were Kawakami Hajime's 河上肇 views on Marxism. However, the early Chinese Marxists did not simply accept them "without thinking," as can be seen in their application and dissemination of concepts.

61 Li Dazhao 1919: 后来更进而为政治的竞争，争政治的权力，直至那建在阶级对立上的经济的构造自己进化，发生了一种新变化为止。The research on Li Dazhao's thought in the 1920s focused on factors such as Japanese sources, economic historical materialism, populism, and the concept of mutual aid, see Meisner 1967; Goto 1999; Zhao 2005.

62 Li Dazhao 1919: 马克思所说的阶级，就是经济上利害相反的阶级，就是有土地或资本等生产手段的有产阶级，与没有土地或资本等生产手段的无产阶级的区

Li Dazhao was influenced by Japanese economists such as Kawakami Hajime 河上肇, which is why his general understanding of Marxism showed an economics bias.[63] But in order to explain wars and rivalries in ancient history, it was necessary to also refer to political realities, such as "oppression" and "plunder." In the context of China, these were the most suitable categories. Even though Li started by analysing the modern society and economy, his analysis already hinted at a broader argument, beyond a purely contemporaneous economic "oppression" and "plunder." Class antagonism, Li Dazhao claimed, was inevitable, "because a social group, based on the monopoly of the means of production, exploits the surplus labour and surplus value of others," and thus made the emergence of class consciousness and class competition inevitable.

At the same time, the CCP's adoption of "class" theory met with opposition mainly based on an economic understanding of the concept. Zhang Dongsun, for example, argued that the only way to save China was by "developing the industries" rather than engaging in "empty talk about -isms." Liang Qichao reasoned that Chinese industry was not developed enough to produce a working class, and thus any talk of class struggle was baseless. The once socialist-leaning scholar Zhang, who belonged to Liang's Research Clique, provoked a large debate on socialism, which became famous in the history of philosophy.[64]

In the course of this debate with Zhang Dongsun and others, the CCP strengthened the recognition of the class dichotomy, and particularly emphasised the political social relationship between "oppression" and "plunder." In response to the Research Clique's principal arguments that "in a country with no modern industry, socialism cannot develop" and that "it is obvious that, for now, there are no capitalists and no workers in

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别：一方是压服他人、掠夺他人的，一方是受人压服、被人掠夺的，这两种阶级在种种时代以种种形式表现出来。

63 Cf. Zhao 2005, 592–594; Goto 1999.

64 Liang Qichao 1921, 17. Chen Duxiu selected and compiled contributions to this debate in *Shehui zhuyi taolun ji* 社会主义讨论集 (*A Compendium of Discussions on Socialism*), published by the New Youth Press in 1921. There is copious research on this debate from the traditional perspective of revolutionary history. In recent years, scholars such as Zhao Lidong, Deng Lilan, and Zhang Wentao have all noticed the issue of "class" in the discussions on socialism in the 1920s, but they have examined it from the perspectives of intellectual and semantic history, to demonstrate the superiority of the CCP's class discourse. See Zhang 2013, 73–90; Zhao 2002, 76–78; Deng 2009, 16. For Zhang Dongsun's perspective on the debate, see Gao 2011, 306–376; Zuo 2009, 84–85. Dirlik has written on the 1920s' debates from the perspective of the CCP's own ideological unity and ideological construction: see Dirlik 1989, 217–245.

China," Zhou Fohai stated: if there is a bourgeois class, there must be a working class. "The working class is necessary, because it has to fight against the capitalist class."[65]

A similar debate sparked around the Chinese peasantry. In 1920, Zhang Dongsun argued in *Reform* that, just as the workers suffered very little from the hands of capitalists, the Chinese peasants did not suffer from the landlords. Most of the peasants had their own fields, and their tenancy conditions were not harsh.[66] In response, Zhou Fohai cited as counterexamples the Xiaoshan 萧山 landlords' tenancies and the military interventions into peasant associations to point out the antagonism between peasants and landlords, which he termed class struggle:

> What is class struggle? To put it simply: on one side, there is a class suffering under the current system who wishes to rise up and break that system; and on the other side, there is a class benefitting from the current system and striving to preserve it. Therefore, these two classes with conflicting interests are compelled to engage in all kinds of struggle.[67]

Zhou Fohai was also aware of Li Dazhao's reasoning on "opposing class interests" (*lihai xiangfan de jieji* 利害相反的阶级), but for the sake of his argument he eschewed the economic factors and concentrated on the social and politic antagonisms of "oppression," "exploitation," and "conflict." In Zhou's argumentation, the opposition between rich and poor, bourgeoisie and proletariat, essentially had little to do with the economic system or social history. It was not a tension between humans and (objective, natural, economic) material goods, but exclusively a conflict among humans. And this was the understanding of "class" that became widely used in the early CCP polemics and propaganda.

Li Hanjun 李汉俊 directly used the term "robber class" (*qiangdao jieji* 强盗阶级) to refer to the capitalists, because they "use state, law and morals as a fortress, knowledge as a weapon, and money as bullets. Under a clear sky and in bright sunlight, in plain sight, they plunder the commoners' property and exploit their blood and sweat."[68] In this way, he combined the negative images of political rulers, ideology and culture shapers, and capitalists. And he made clear that, as long as there was a ruling, suppressing, and exploiting upper class, a working class was needed to resist.

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65 Zhou Fohai 1921b: 劳动阶级之所以必要，是因为要他对抗资本阶级的。

66 Zhang Dongsun 1920, 32.

67 Zhou Fohai 1921a: 甚么叫阶级斗争？简单说：一方面在现制度下面受着困苦的阶级，欲起而打破现状；一方面因受现制度底利益的阶级而努力欲图保存现状；因此，这两个利害相冲突的阶级，就不得不起而行各种形式的斗争。

68 Li Hanjun 1920: 以国家、法律、道德为堡垒，以智识为武器，以金钱为弹丸，在青天白日之下，万目环视之中，掠夺平民财产，剥削平民血汗。

Shi Cuntong 施存统 likewise called for "arousing the consciousness of the fourth class and the underclass":

> All the poor, the workers, the tenants, the enslaved, the oppressed, and the plundered must gain "class consciousness," and realize that they are one class with exactly the same interests. They should unite into one large collective and fight against the robber class of the rich, the capitalists, the landlords, the enslavers, the oppressors, and the plunderers.[69]

In the most extreme description of the social dichotomy, the underclass was presented as perpetually oppressed and suffering hardship, with no way out. This was almost a self-evident mode of moral discourse. It was at the basis of all uprisings and revolutions throughout history, and the theory of Marxism would have made no difference. As Li Da explained, the millions of Parisians who took part in the French Revolution had not all studied Rousseau's writings, and the workers and soldiers fighting in the Russian Revolution were not all versed in Marxism:

> But they were subjected to the overwhelming economic and political oppression of their time, unable to either live or die. They wanted to end the oppression of the society, break the yoke of the government, and it was their fight for survival and freedom that turned them into revolutionaries. Thus, the ideas of Marx and Rousseau were in everyone's minds; Marx and Rousseau were only the first to set them out clearly.[70]

From this point of view, "how could there be no classes in Chinese society? 'The fields of the rich are endless, while the poor own nothing.'"[71] This made "clear the gap between the rich and poor classes in China."[72]

Regarding the hardships of the people at the bottom, it was nowhere more shocking than in modern China. Li Ji 李季 demonstrated the necessity of socialism by citing the woes of the Zhongxing Coal Mining Company's workers and the unbearable life of the

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69 Shi 1921, 30: 一切穷人，劳动者，佃户，被使役者，被压制者，被掠夺者，都要有"阶级的自觉"，觉悟自己是一个阶级，彼此利害完全相同，应该联合成一大团体，以与富人，资本家，地主，使役者，压制者，掠夺者——强盗阶级作战。

70 Jiang 1920: 他们不过是受了当时绝大的经济上政治上的压迫，他们求生不能求死不得，总想打破现社会的压迫，脱离现政府的铁锁，就是他们想求生存求自由方行革命的。所以卢梭马克思的思想，人人头脑中都有的，不过首先被他们两人道破罢了。

71 Li Ji 1921: 中国的社会中何以没有阶级呢？"富者田连阡陌，贫者土无立锥。"

72 Ibid.: 说明中国贫富两阶级的悬隔。

majority of Hunan's peasants: "In this period of industrial revolution, the misery suffered by the Chinese proletariat is even greater than that of the European, American, or Japanese proletariat. On the surface, the confrontation between the capitalists and the working class in China seems to be different than it is Europe, America, or Japan, but in fact it is not different at all."[73] On the contrary, "the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is becoming more and more obvious. The poverty of the proletariat increases at the same rate as the wealth of the bourgeoisie."[74] In addition, the plundering and the oppression by the militarists and robbers further aggravated the proletariat's situation. The conclusion naturally was that "the opportunity for social revolution has come."[75]

In practice, as long as the underclass felt oppressed, there were opportunities for propagating class antagonism and struggle. In 1921, the Beijing Communist Small Group (*Beijing gongchan zhuyi xiaozu* 北京共产主义小组) instructed its members on "how to make the workers and poor classes interested in politics, how to inculcate them with a rebellious spirit, to organise them, and to make them engage in revolutionary work."[76] Since Beijing was the political centre, "there [were] generally few entrepreneurs" and even fewer workers to target with propaganda. However, "the workers comprise many rickshaw drivers, about 50,000 to 60,000 people. Although they do not work for the capitalists, they still come from the underclass, and, in their work, they are in contact with the larger masses of the population, so we must seek practical measures to do active propaganda work among them."[77] Such practical propaganda measures included taking advantage of the feeling of being oppressed:

> Stepping on someone else's back is a common thing in Beijing. Foreigners insult the Chinese, military officials treat people rudely, passengers strike rickshaw drivers with whips or canes, and many other atrocities take place: I think, wherever something like

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73 Ibid.: 在这产业革命的时期内，中国无产阶级所受的悲惨，比欧美日本的无产阶级所受的还要大。中国劳动资本两阶级的对峙，在表面似乎与欧美日本不同，在实际上却无有不同的。

74 Ibid.: 无产阶级和有产阶级的对抗越发明显，无产阶级的贫困增大，有产阶级的财富增加。

75 Ibid.: 社会革命的机会到了。

76 *Beijing gongchan zhuyi* 1984: 怎样使工人和贫民阶级对政治感兴趣，怎样用暴动精神教育他们，组织他们，并使群众从事革命工作。

77 Ibid.: 工人中有许多人力车夫，计有五万到六万人。他们虽没有给资本家做工，可是他们来自下层，就其工作来说，又与广大居民阶层有接触，必须寻求向他们积极进行宣传工作的实际措施。

this happens, we should seize the opportunity to arouse the revolutionary spirit of the working class.[78]

Zhang Guotao 张国焘 and other Beijing party members organised a workers' school in Changxindian, which elicited high praise from Cai Hesen 蔡和森.[79] This was the school curriculum: "We constantly tell [the students] that they are plundered by the capitalist factory owners and are forced to live like cattle. We also introduce them to the history of foreign labour movements. We keep pointing out how important it is to organise and how to do it. We often offer reading and writing courses. At the same time, we teach [students] to get used to expressing their thoughts in writing, and we ask them to write reports on all the injustices that have happened in their daily lives or at the factories."[80]

Faced with the great social inequality, the educated elite had a certain degree of understanding and sympathy for the plight of the poor. When workers would go on strike in the early 1920s, it was often enough for the underclass to speak out about their misery to achieve an effect. When the Anyuan road and mining workers went on strike in 1922, they not only used traditional secret societies and ceremonies to increase their authority; they also evoked the spirit of "grievances to move people" (*ai er dong ren* 哀而动人) to take their complaints to the social elite.

As we have seen above, the social dichotomy was most often expressed as "opposing class interests." The influence of economic theory led Li Dazhao and others to understand the "interests" of the Marxist "class" as referring to "the means of production such as land or capital." However, in order to explain the historical pattern of "class struggle," it was necessary to propose that "class" relations be characterised by "oppression" and "plunder." These points were increasingly emphasised in the debate on the applicability of "class struggle" to China and in the propaganda to the masses of the lower classes. An economic base was not deemed necessary for class struggle, nor any prerequisite knowledge; the economic factors were reduced to a class antagonism of "opposing economic

78 *Beijing gongchan zhuyi* 1984, 3–4: 骑在别人头上是北京常见的事。外国人侮辱中国人，军官粗暴地对待老百姓，乘客用鞭子或手杖催赶人力车夫，以及其他等等暴行。我看不论什么地方，只要一发生这样的事情，我们就应当抓住时机，激发工人阶级的革命精神。

79 Cai Hesen 1984, 61.

80 *Beijing gongchan zhuyi* 1984, 6–7: 我们经常不断地向他们说，他们受资本家厂主掠夺，不得不过着牛马般的生活；其次，向他们介绍外国工人运动史。我们不断向他们指出组织起来的意义和方法。时常给他们讲课，教他们识字；同时，还教他们习惯于用文字来表达自己的思想，让他们写出关于家庭日常生活中和工厂里所发生的一切不公平事件的书面报告。

interests." The issue of class "in itself" and "for itself" was obscured. If interests alone were incommensurable, there had to be contradiction and a certain degree of antagonism. This antagonism could be seen as class antagonism and, thus, a manifestation of class struggle.

2.2 Class Division Patterns Derived from Rural Practice

In 1920, when the Second World Congress of the Comintern discussed the colonial issue, Lenin proposed that "peasant Soviets" and "Soviets of the exploited" could be deployed in pre-capitalist countries, and that it was the duty of Communist parties "to conduct propaganda in favour of peasants' Soviets or of working people's Soviets." Wherever conditions permitted, parties should at once attempt "to set up Soviets of the working people."[81] This opened new possibilities to apply the class theory to a predominantly agrarian society.

In April 1921, *The Communist* (*Gongchandang* 共产党), an organ of the CCP, began to pay attention to class issues in the countryside. One author examined the "classes within the peasantry itself" from an outside perspective and classified them into the following four categories: "landlords" (*tucaizhu* 土财主) who "do not work their own land"; "middle peasants" (*zhongdeng nongmin* 中等农民) who "work all the land they own themselves"; "low peasants" (*xiaji nongmin* 下级农民) who "work the land owned by others"; and "paupers" (*qiongguangdan* 穷光蛋) who "do not even have a square inch of land to work."[82]

It is worth noting that *tucaizhu* and *qiongguangdan* were terms coined by the local people themselves, while "middle peasants" and "lower-level peasants" were categories and denominations added from the outside. People easily, and often emotionally, noted the class difference between the "landlords" and the "paupers," so the terms were in common use. However, the *Communist* article author's perception of the structures differed clearly from the local people, as he said the "landlords" did "not work the land" but "just sat around and collected rent," so they "could not really be considered to be pure peasants." Instead, he coined the categories of "middle peasants" and "lower-level peasants," taking the stratification into upper, middle, lower, and lowest levels as self-evident.

This naturally formed hierarchical stratification was seen as the objective and inevitable basis for "class consciousness" and "class struggle," because the stratification of the people naturally led to the separation of group interests: "Sooner or later the day will come when

81 Lenin 1920.
82 *Gao Zhongguo de nongmin* 1920.

they realize it. The *struggle of class* [English in the original] is nothing but people from two groups with diverging interests, with the conflict of interests reaching the extreme... Whether you want it or not, with the driving force of diverging interests [class struggle] has to occur naturally."[83]

In a highly complex rural landscape, a concrete analysis demanded fine distinctions. However, after making fine distinctions, one had to come back to a dichotomy, as the polarization between two opposites was always the most powerful weapon. Therefore, after the division into various subgroups, the *Communist* author was willing to draw one great dividing line again: "The first and second kinds of life are well provided for, they are not in question. Our target are the third and fourth kinds of peasant, who make up the majority." Furthermore, he stated, "the life of the majority of peasants is very difficult." One had "to find a way to communicate with them"[84] from the outside. The propaganda aimed at the peasants had to question the fairness of private ownership and wealth distribution and fuel the opposition between the workers and the parasites.

In 1921, the Second Congress of the Young Communist International made a clearer declaration on rural class struggle: "The strata of the rural population that are receptive to Communist propaganda and organisation are, first, the agricultural proletarian class, the wage workers, the peasants, and the servants. [...] Next, the semi-proletarian class, and the landless peasants. [...] Last are the small peasants." [85]

> Capitalist society leaves these peasant strata exploited, oppressed, and impoverished. For the poor peasants, business owners, loan sharks, speculators, tax collectors, and army recruiters are embodiments of capitalism. Only by fighting, can the poor peasants escape the tyranny of their oppressors.[86]

When the CCP in its early days had to analyse the rural social structure, we can see that it naturally adopted the classical pattern of social stratification, which also was in line with

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83 *Gao Zhongguo de nongmin* 1920: 他们早晚总有从内部自己发现的一天。而阶级斗争（the struggle of class）也是两群利害不一致的人，到利害冲突，达了极点... 无论你愿意不愿意，他既然有了利害不一致这种原动力，是自然要发生的。

84 Ibid.: 第一二种底生活，是丰衣足食的，不是我们问题底目的物。我们底目的物，乃是占农民全数内面的大多数的第三四种农民。... 设法向他们宣传。

85 *Nongcun qingnian gongzuo de tigang*: 农村居民中可以接受共产主义宣传和组织的阶层，首先是农业无产阶级、雇佣工人、农民和仆役，[...] 其次是半无产阶级和少地的农民，[...] 最后还有小农。

86 Ibid.: 资本主义社会使这些农民阶层陷于受剥削、受压迫和贫困的境地。对贫苦农民来说，企业主、高利贷者、投机商人、征税者和招兵人就是资本主义的化身。贫民只有进行斗争才能摆脱压迫者的专横。

the observations made of actual society. However, once it came to the practical work of propaganda and mobilisation, the use of dichotomies proved more expedient.

In addition to binary models of social stratification, there existed another, trichotomic, model of understanding society. Aristotle was the first to describe a social trichotomy. He divided the citizens of every city-state into three classes, of which the middle class was the fundamental one, and the rich and the poor represented the two ends of the spectrum.[87] Another classic example of a trichotomic class division are the terms "Bürger" (burgher) and "Mittelstand" (middle class), used by Marx to refer to a middle stratum.[88] Contrary to Aristotle, Marx believed that the fundamental contradiction lay in the division into, and opposition between, two main classes, and that the middle class lacked persistence and stability, so it would eventually be absorbed into the dichotomous class opposition.

Chinese intellectuals have talked about "upper, middle, and lower society" (*shang, zhong, xia deng/liu shehui* 上、中、下等（流）社会) since the beginning of the twentieth century, and thereby expressed a trichotomous understanding of the social structure. Liang Qichao, in particular, paid attention to the "intermediate class," the trichotomous social structure, and its revolution.[89]

The trichotomy deployed by the CCP, however, was not intended to be a simplified distinction between upper, middle, and lower levels, but to anticipate a revolutionary attitude in accordance with the complexity of rural society. In a report to the Third World Congress of the Comintern in 1921, the CCP analysed the rural unification and struggle on the basis of a tripartite class division. In rural society, the first category consisted of small independent producers, or "peasants who own a small plot of land and make up the majority of the rural population." The second category covered "urban and rural proletarian consumers" (*chengxiang wuchan jieji xiaofeizhe* 城乡无产阶级消费者); and the third category consisted of "landlords and farm owners" (*dizhu he nongchangzhu* 地主和农场主). The first two were possible allies in the struggle, and all three together constituted the basic social classes of an agricultural country. The report also used a trichotomous model to analyse the other sectors of society: "Workers engaged in manual production can be divided into three categories: 1. small workshop owners; 2. craftsmen; 3. apprentices."[90] The potential allies and struggles in such divisions were not hard to see.

A 1922 declaration of the Second National Congress of the CCP specifically stated: "China's 300 million peasants are the decisive factor in the revolutionary movement. [...]

87 Aristotle1998, 158–159.

88 For a first analysis and its evolution, see Liu 2006.

89 Liang Qichao 1903. Also see the article by Kai Vogelsang in this issue.

90 Zhang 1921: 从事手工生产的工人可分为三类：1、小作坊主；2、工匠；3、学徒。

Now, the peasants can be further divided into three categories: (1) wealthy peasant landlords; (2) small independent farmers; (3) tenants and agricultural hired labourers. The first category accounts for the smallest minority, and the poverty of the second and third category accounts for 95 percent."[91] This tripartite division compressed the four categories mentioned above by merging and omitting the categories of *tucaizhu* and *qiongguangdan*, making the model neater and more systematic. In this form, the CCP's early class analysis of rural society entered the stage of active "application."

This unprecedented "application" needed more flexibility and freedom, so the early rural class analysis underwent a process of continuous adjustment. After 1923, following the instructions of the Comintern and the demands of the National Revolution, the CCP faced the specific problem of class division in rural society. Important texts on rural class analysis appeared successively during this period. As the CCP's analysis of rural society was a kind of internal observation from an outside perspective, it was characterised by distinct hierarchical classifications, the so-called "putting people into three, six, and nine categories" (*ren fen san liu jiu deng* 人分三六九等). This analysis represented a widely applicable pattern of knowledge.

In 1923, *Qianfeng* 前锋, another official CCP organ, published Chen Duxiu's systematic analysis of the peasant issue, which inherited the "three-six-nine" style of class analysis employed since 1921.[92] Chen divided the peasants into ten categories according to their economic status: big landlords (*da dizhu* 大地主), middle landlords (*zhong dizhu* 中地主), small landlords (*xiao dizhu* 小地主), landlord farmers (*zigengnong jian dizhu* 自耕农兼地主), land-holding employers (*zigengnong jian guzhu* 自耕农兼雇主), land-holding peasants (*zigeng nongmin* 自耕农民), land-holding peasants and tenants (*zigengnong jian diannong* 自耕农兼佃农), employing tenants (*diannong jian guzhu* 佃农兼雇主), tenants (*diannong* 佃农), and hired labourers (*gugong* 雇工). The first three categories covered "landlords who do not work their own land." The fourth and fifth categories were defined as follows:

> These two types of peasants do not only own land rights and are not obliged to pay rent to a landlord, but are also able to plunder the surplus labour of others in a capitalist manner. Their yield is not only enough to provide for their families and satisfy their

91 *Zhongguo Gongchandang di er ci* 1989, 113: 中国三万万的农民，乃是革命运动中的最大要素。[...] 近来农民更可分为三种界限：（一）富足的农民地主；（二）独立耕种的小农；（三）佃户和农业雇工。第一种占最少数，第二种第三两种的贫苦也占百分之九十五。

92 Chen Duxiu 1923b, here and below quoted from the 1954 reprint by Renmin chubanshe, pp. 51–57.

> farming needs, but also, at least in good years, they get a surplus which they can turn into the first step of capital accumulation. So these types of peasants should be classified as the middle class.[93]

Referring to land-holding peasants and land-holding peasants and tenants, Chen wrote:

> Although these two types of are not half-remunerated peasants and can fully reap the benefits of their labour, without the opportunity to plunder the labour force of others, it is difficult for them to obtain a surplus to accumulate even in good years. Only because of possessing full ownership of land rights, means of production, and produce should they be classified as petty bourgeoisie.[94]

Employing tenants and pure tenants constituted the "semi-proletarian class" (*ban wuchan jieji* 半无产阶级), which had two subcategories: (1) those without any rights to the land (*chuncui wu diqian zhe* 纯粹无地权者), and (2) those with partial land rights (*ban you diquan zhe* 半有地权者).

> These types of peasants are not only unable to plunder others but are themselves plundered by their landlords. They cannot reap the full benefits of their labour and are barely able to provide for their families and satisfy their farming needs in good years. In times of famine, they are in want of food and clothing, and their misery is only deepened by the landlords' rent demands. [...] Although these types of half-remunerated peasants do not own any land rights or only partial land rights, they still own the means of production and receive and manage part of the produce of their labour, so they should be classified as semi-proletariat.[95]

The hired labourers were the "agricultural proletariat" (*nongye de wuchan jieji* 农业的无产阶级): "As long as they are not unemployed, their livelihoods are more secure than

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93 Ibid.: 此二种农民，不独占有地土权，无向地主缴纳地租之义务，而且得用资本主义的方式，掠夺他人之剩余劳动，其生产物不仅供给一家生活及农作上的需要，并且，至少在丰年时可以获得盈余，变成初步积累的资本，是以此种农民应属之中产阶级。

94 Ibid.: 此二种农民，虽非半益农，得全收其劳动所得之利益，而无掠夺他人劳动力之机会，虽丰年亦难有多量之盈余以为积累；只以完全占有地土所有权，生产工具及生产物所有权，应属之小有产阶级。

95 Chen Duxiu 1923b: 此等农民既不能掠夺他人，又为地主所掠夺，不能全收劳其动所得之利益，丰年尚可勉强供给一家生活及农作上的需要，荒歉时则衣食且不足，又加以地主追缴租课，不胜其困苦。[...] 但此种半益农，虽不占有地权或只占有半地权，然仍占有生产工具及收得并管理其劳动所得之一部分生产物，故应属之半无产阶级。

those of tenant farmers. It is because they have no right to the land and, moreover, no right to the means of production or to receive and manage the product of their labour, that they are purely employed, and that only they, among all kinds of peasants, make up the proletarian class."[96]

In this "two-five-ten" system of Chen Duxiu's class analysis, the three main factors of categorisation were ownership of land and of the means of production, the distribution of the fruits of labour, and employment relationships. As a result, there were intersecting designations like "landlord and employer"; but the system still constituted a reasonable subdivision, with a hierarchical order at its core. It is worth noting that Chen's article adopted a macro-social perspective, citing extensive statistical data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. This differed markedly from the earlier socialist propaganda, which relied on personal observation and moral judgements. Chen's analytical report manifested the CCP's readiness to explore the issue.

At the same time, Chen's analysis had the clear purpose of mobilising the peasants for the National Revolution. A class dichotomy focused on the peasantry was therefore essential. The criterion of division was ownership of land rights, rather than wage labour, because this was in line with the commonly recognised distinction between landlords and peasants, and also made sense with regard to revolutionary power. Wage labour was common in the countryside, but peasants did speak of it as "help" (*bangmang* 帮忙) rather than "exploitation" (*boxue* 剥削). Moreover, employers were superior in numbers, while landowners were not. "The last three categories (employing tenants, tenants, and hired labourers) are all peasants without their own land. They account for about 40 percent of the total number of peasants in the country and should be more than 90 million people."[97] This was a number comparable to that of landowners. "The large majority of peasants are either land-holding peasants or tenants."[98] "The average portion of land owned by any kind of peasants is very small. At the moment, not only is there no tendency toward [land] concentration, but there is even a tendency toward further fragmentation."[99]

To mobilise the peasants, one naturally had to speak about their suffering. Chen's article mostly emphasised the "suffering of the ordinary peasants" (*yiban nongmin zhi tongku*

96 Ibid.: 倘不失业，其生活费反而较佃农稳固；惟其不但无地权，而且没有生产工具及收得并管理其劳动所得生产物之权，纯粹是被雇者，各种农民中，只有他们是无产阶级。

97 Chen Duxiu 1923b: 后三种（佃农兼雇主、佃农、雇工）都是无地的农民，在全国农民总数中约占百分之四十，人数当在九千万以上。

98 Ibid.: 最大多数之农民，非自耕农即佃农。

99 Ibid.: 各种农民所占地均甚少，此时不但无集中的倾向，而且有分小的倾向。

一般农民之痛苦). The import of foreign currency and bad politics solely led "peasants to become unemployed and turn into soldier-bandits." The suffering of the land-holding peasants was caused by "embezzlement by officials, extraordinary demands, and advance tax payments, which facilitated unbridled land tax increase, impossible for land-holding peasants to pay in times of poor harvest."[100] Tenants and hired labourers not only "were being harassed by soldier-bandits and hit by floods and droughts," but also had to deal with the competition of migrants, the harshness of landlords and employers, and, ultimately, the pain of exploitation by usury.

The solution proposed by Chen Duxiu was still aimed at "leading them to join the national movement." In addition to education and propaganda, special attention was paid to organisation and specific movements: organising farmer associations, village self-government offices (*xiang zizhi gongsuo* 乡自治公所), tenant associations, and hired labourer associations. Among them, the farmer association was the most important, because "the small peasants of China do not distinguish clearly between their different classes. Presently, all kinds of peasants in a village (land-holding peasants, tenants, and hired labourers) can unite into a single organisation, based on their common interests."[101] Obviously, Chen's strategy was to de-emphasise the class distinctions among the peasants and to eliminate the complicated employment relationships between land-holding peasants and tenants, in order to bring them together as one peasant class for the National Revolution.

Some researchers think that this article by Chen Duxiu influenced Mao Zedong's class analysis.[102] In fact, Chen's influence lay not so much in specific class divisions, but rather in bringing political strategies and hierarchical stratification models into social analysis. Mao's famous article "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society" (*Zhongguo shehui ge jieji de fenxi* 中国社会各阶级的分析) more clearly outlined the actual relationship between the social class division model and the National Revolution. Because of the mobilisation needs of the revolution, more and more attention was paid to the peasant issue. As it organized worker and peasant movements, the CCP kept bringing up the question of rural classes. The breakdown of the peasantry into various hierarchical stratifications carried over to Mao's division of classes. In early 1926, *The Chinese Peasant* (*Zhongguo nongmin* 中国农民) successively published two articles by Mao on class divi-

100 Ibid.: 官吏舞弊，额外需索，及预征钱粮，使地税无形增加，荒歉时自耕农无力缴纳地税。

101 Ibid.: 小农中国之农民，他们各阶级间无显明的分化，此时全乡村各种农民（自耕农、佃农、雇工）可就其共同利害之点，联合为一个组织。

102 Han 2005, 149.

sions from the village to the whole country. The articles were republished several times afterwards.[103]

> If you go to the countryside, no matter where, if you look carefully, you will always see the following eight different types of people: big landlords, small landlords, owner peasants, semi-owner peasants, half-remunerated peasants, poor peasants, farm labourers, craftsmen, and vagrants. These eight types of people form eight classes.[104]
>
> No matter in which country, it is natural to have three classes of people: upper class, middle class, and lower class. On detailed analysis, there are five classes: big bourgeoisie, middle bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, semi-proletariat, and proletariat.[105]

Hence, Mao also devised a class system of "three, five, and eight categories." His distinctions of eight types and three classes of people reflected classical hierarchical stratifications. His five classes, however, derived from Marxist class terminology. "In the countryside, the big landlords are the big bourgeoisie, the small landlords are the middle bourgeoisie, the owner peasants are the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-owner peasants are the semi-proletariat, and the farm labourers are the proletariat."[106]

Politically speaking, the big bourgeoisie wholly consisted of "appendages of the international bourgeoisie," "extreme counterrevolutionary groups," and "deadly enemies of the national revolutionary movement," and included the comprador class, big landlords, bureaucrats, warlords, and the reactionary segment of the intelligentsia. The middle bourgeoisie comprised the Chinese financial, industrial, and commercial classes, the small landlords, and the prominent intellectuals "who [were] inconsistent in their attitude towards the National Revolution"; the middle bourgeoisie was divided into a left wing and a right wing. The petty bourgeoisie included small traders, master craftsmen, and lower levels of the intelligentsia. Because of its size, the petty bourgeoisie "deserve[d] very close attention." It could be further subdivided into three categories depending on property ownership and revolutionary attitude. The semi-proletariat consisted of semi-owner peasants, half-remunerated peasants, poor peasants, craftsmen, shop assistants,

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103 Xi 2006.

104 Mao 1926a, 13: 你跑到农村中间去，无论你到甚么地方，只要你留心去看，你便看得见有下列八种不同的人：大地主、小地主、自耕农、半自耕农、半益农、贫农、雇农及手工业者、游民。这八种人分成八个阶级。

105 Mao 1926b, 1: 无论那［哪］一个国内，天造地设，都有三等人，上等，中等，下等。详细分析则有五等，大资产阶级，中产阶级，小资产阶级，半无产阶级，无产阶级。

106 Mao 1926b, 1–2: 拿农村说：大地主是大资产阶级，小地主是中产阶级，自耕农是小资产阶级，半自耕农是半无产阶级，雇农是无产阶级。

and pedlars. The members of the semi-proletariat could be "further subdivided based on their economic status into three categories: upper, middle, and lower." The proletariat included the industrial proletariat, menial workers, the agricultural proletariat, and the lumpenproletariat.[107]

Mao went on to analyse each group in detail. Although his class terminology was similar to Chen Duxiu's, he did not divide society into classes on the same basis. Mao attached more importance to the relationships of employment and exploitation, to the living conditions, and to each group's revolutionary potential. He also referred to means of production and property ownership. In his "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society," Mao laid out Chen Duxiu's tables with statistical data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce in three columns: class, number of people, and revolutionary attitude. This allowed him to make a clear distinction between "friends" and "enemies."[108] Moreover, the comparison between the numbers of friends and enemies made clear where revolutionary forces could be mobilised. The final distinction between friends and enemies delivered on the revolutionary strategy of creating a social dichotomy.

It is worth noting that Mao's class divisions in his *Chinese Peasant* article were an expansion of the class divisions of rural society; the "three, five, eight" model was obviously still present. In the extended application to the whole country's society, there was the trichotomous division into friends, enemies, and a "vacillating" middle party. Furthermore, there also was the division into the five classes of the big bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletariat, and the proletariat. The lowest level of analysis specifically dealt with the self-sufficient petty bourgeoisie of the shopkeepers and craftsmen, combining the categories of occupation, property ownership, social status, and revolutionary attitude.

Interestingly, Mao clearly labelled the five categories only vaguely sketched by Chen Duxiu: he divided the "bourgeoisie" into big, middle, and small, and the "proletariat" into semi- and full proletariat, thereby also designating five degrees of revolutionary attitude. This is reminiscent of the Likert scale in social psychology,[109] in which a five-level scale can help to distinguish and capture degrees of attitude. From this perspective, Mao was quite good at understanding the social psychology behind the class division strategy.

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107 Mao 1926b.

108 Mao 1926b, 12–13.

109 The Likert scale is one of the most widely used approaches to scale items on a certain range. It was developed by the American social psychologist Rensis Likert in 1932. The scale consists of a set of statements with which one can "strongly agree," "agree," "not necessarily agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree," labelled respectively 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. The total attitude score of each respondent is the sum of the scores of the answers to each question.

From the early dichotomies to the development of trichotomies, five-point scales, and various confounded classifications, the hierarchically ordered knowledge pattern was gradually enriched in the CCP's class discourse and fixed in a three-dimensional form of "three, five, eight." Only with such a stereotyped understanding of the social structure is it possible to make sense of the following statement by Mao Zedong: "The attitude of the various classes in China toward the national revolution is almost exactly the same as the attitude of the various classes in the European and Western capitalist countries toward the social revolution. It may seem strange, but in fact it is not."

3 The CCP's "Class" Division into Enemies and Friends in the Context of the National Revolution

Regardless of the communist ideal, as a revolutionary party the CCP also had to think in terms of political strategy. On its first national congress, the CCP proposed to oppose the warlords and considered uniting with other political forces as a matter of urgency.[110] Having been emphasised by the Comintern, this point was also reflected in "The Chinese Communist Party's Proposition on the Current Situation" (*Zhongguo Gongchandang duiyu shiju de zhuzhang* 中国共产党对于时局的主张) of June 1922. This proposition changed the party's original position, articulated the time of its founding, when the party said "it would adopt a policy of independence and attack against the other existing parties."[111] Instead, it now evaluated the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang, hereafter GMD) as "a relatively revolutionary democratic faction" (*bijiao shi geming de minzhupai* 比较是革命的民主派), and stated that "the Guomindang and other revolutionary democratic organizations, as well as revolutionary socialist groups, should be invited" to form a united front against the imperialist powers and warlords.[112] It was obvious that, with the party's revolutionary status and strategies in constant flux, the understanding and division of classes also had to enter a new stage of interaction with practice.

3.1 The Shift in the Analysis and Definition of the "Bourgeoisie"

The strategy of uniting with the bourgeoisie first required solving an ideological problem. The bourgeoisie's role in the current stage of the revolution had to be redefined and handled accordingly. In the actual planning, Chen Duxiu raised the "GMD question" independently from the "united front against imperialism." He did it for two reasons:

110 Ishikawa 2006, 274.
111 *Zhongguo Gongchandang di yi ge jueyi* 1921, 8.
112 *Zhongguo Gongchandang duiyu shiju de zhuzhang* 1922, 37, 45–46.

First, there was constant opposition in the CCP to joining the GMD during that period. Second, it took some time for real political issues to connect with the class discourse.[113]

In April 1923, *The Guide* (*Xiangdao* 向导) published Chen's article "The Revolution of the Bourgeoisie and the Revolutionary Bourgeoisie" (*Zichan jieji de geming yu geming de zichan jieji* 资产阶级的革命与革命的资产阶级), which became an important inspiration for analysis of, and thought on, class before the National Revolution.[114] Chen started out his argumentation with the evolution of society according to historical materialism. Since Western powers had spread to the East, China entered the "inevitable process of objective historical evolution." He explained the late Qing push for the revolution and the drafting of a constitution as a "semi-colonial democratic movement of the bourgeoisie," and attributed the failure of the 1911 Revolution to the underdeveloped economy and incomplete class differentiation. The main element of the "bourgeois democratic revolution" had been the "classless literati" (*fei jiejihua zhi shi* 非阶级化之士). Therefore, on the one hand, Chen emphasised the inevitability and the reality of classes, and, on the other hand, tried to base his explanations on the lack of class differentiation. Such a seemingly paradoxical analysis was the product of complex contradictions "in a society where the industries [were] as yet immature and the forces of the bourgeoisie not concentrated, which [was] especially the case in colonised and semi-colonised societies."[115]

To resolve this contradiction, Chen Duxiu proposed a very realistic method of class division. That is, he divided the bourgeoisie into three segments, based on their attitude towards revolution. The first segment was the revolutionary bourgeoisie, "such as overseas Chinese businessmen and part of the emerging industrial and commercial entrepreneurs along the Yangtze River, who are in favour of the revolution, because feudal warlords and international imperialism hinder the development of large-scale industry and com-

113 There is extensive literature on the political history of relations between the GMD and the CCP. Li Yunhan, in his early monograph, firmly took the GMD perspective and argued that the reorganisation and alliance with the CCP was an expedient measure to obtain help from the Soviet Union, but he did not recognise the acceptance of socialist ideas by Sun Yat-sen and parts of the GMD. Yang Kuisong's more recent book discusses in detail the tensions in their alliance and the evolution of the GMD's policy towards the CCP, also touching on the question of how their political struggle was related to the development of their respective ideologies. See Li Yunhan 1966; Yang 2008; Huang 2000; Wang 2004.

114 Chen Duxiu 1923c.

115 Chen Duxiu 1923c: 在产业幼稚资产阶级势力不集中的社会，尤其是在殖民地或半殖民地的社会。

merce."[116] The second segment was the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, "which has always relied on the favour of others and the use of national financial organs and the power of warlords and bureaucrats to create malformed commercial capital. It is dedicated to increasing its monetary wealth through treason, and naturally relies on warlords, bureaucrats, and imperialist powers to oppose the revolution. It can also be called the bureaucratic bourgeoisie."[117] The non-revolutionary bourgeoisie made up the third segment: "The scale of the businesses its members operate is extremely small; they have no intention of expanding and have no direct political demands. Therefore, they have always taken a neutral attitude toward the democratic revolution. Such small businessmen constitute the majority in petty-bourgeois Chinese society."[118]

Chen Duxiu believed that, in the past, the GMD had treated these three segments of the bourgeoisie as either "romantic leftists" or "compromising rightists." Now the "correct" attitude should be: "On the one hand, accommodate the revolutionary bourgeoisie and, on their behalf, take down all the warlords who hinder the development of commerce and industry and get rid of the international imperialists who help the warlords and also suppress Chinese industry and commerce. [...] On the other hand, we should also support the neutral petty bourgeoisie and guide them to the path of revolution, to increase the power of the revolution."[119] Only with the "counter-revolutionary bureaucratic bourgeoisie," there could absolutely be no compromise. In this way, Chen emphasised the revolutionary attitude as the criterion for the divisions of the bourgeoisie and transformed its irreducible and hard-to-resolve internal contradictions into different political tendencies, separate from the categories of social class analysis.

Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, who had just returned from Russia in early 1923, differed from Chen Duxiu's "new culture" style and his cautious conclusions. He spoke about the bourgeoisie and the revolution in a very theoretical manner, full of revolutionary rigidity, as

116 Ibid.: 因为封建军阀及国际帝国主义妨碍大现模的工商业发展而赞成革命，如中国海外侨商及长江新兴的工商业家之一部分。

117 Ibid.: 素来是依靠外人的恩惠及利用国家财政机关与军阀官僚势力，造成了畸形的商业资本，专以卖国行为增加他们货币的富，他们自然而然要依附军阀官僚及帝国主义的列强而反对革命，他们也可以叫做官僚的资产阶级。

118 Ibid.: 所营的工商业规模极小，没有扩大的企图，没有在政治上直接的需要，所以对于民主革命恒取消极的中立态度，这种小工商业家，在小资产阶级的中国社会居最大多数。

119 Chen Duxiu 1923c: 一方面容纳革命的资产阶级，为他们打倒妨碍工商业发展的一切军阀，并且为他们排除援助军阀而又压迫中国工商业的国际帝国主义者[...]一方面也应该提携中立的小资产阶级，引导他们上革命的路，增加革命的势力。

can be seen in his article "The Development of the Bourgeoisie in China" (*Zhongguo zhi zichan jieji de fazhan* 中国之资产阶级的发展).[120] Qu subdivided "the bourgeoisie" into "the big business class" (*dashang jieji* 大商阶级), "overseas Chinese businessmen" (*haiwai qiaoshang* 海外侨商), "small businessmen" (*xiaoshangren* 小商人), and "the emerging industrial class" (*xinxing gongye jieji* 新兴的工业阶级). The differences in their revolutionary attitudes stemmed from their respective stages of development. "The big business class [was] dependent on foreign capital and [was] often prone to compromise," yearning for a united political power to meet its economic needs. "Overseas Chinese businessmen [were] directly oppressed by foreign countries, so they [were] relatively revolutionary." Small businessmen and the emerging industrial class generally opposed imperialism, "though their abilities [were] too limited."

At the same time, Qu subdivided the "working class" into (1) railway workers, miners, textile workers, and seamen, who had already shown their ability to organise strikes; and (2) peasants, transport workers, and craftsmen. "The peasants live[d] in a society with a semi-natural economy," "obstructed and unstable." Qu specifically pointed out that peasants were not part of the "proletariat," and that the majority of the proletariat was made up of transport workers, including manual workers, porters, and small craftsmen. "The industrial proletariat is still very small and immature; most of them are not free from the harmful legacy of patriarchal social thinking."[121] Only the most oppressed among railway workers, miners, textile workers, and seamen put up the most resistance and were the easiest to organise. Overall, the working class was still weak at that stage; it had only just attained nationalist consciousness and was yet to unite with the bourgeoisie.

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120 Qu Weita [=Qiubai] 1923, here quoted from the Renmin chubanshe 1954 reprint, 23–39. Early Chinese research on Qu Qiubai's class analysis, of which Yang 1982 is representative, mainly wanted to prove the accuracy of his use of Marxist-Leninist terms to oppose imperialism. Li Zehou compared Mao Zedong's and Qu Qiubai's class analysis methods. He believed that Mao's analysis was based on field investigations and attentive to sources of income, expenditures, living standards, etc., while Qu focused on the "structural status in social production relations and production modes." Qu Qiubai represented a turn from Japanese sources of knowledge to Russian sources, and a turn from evolutionary theories to dialectical materialism. Regarding the issues of the leadership of the proletariat, the peasant movement, and the importance of an armed force, Qu marked a transition from Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao to Mao Zedong. Ma Xiao's master thesis expands on the conclusions of Li Zehou, Yang Kuisong, and others, stressing Qu's "incisiveness" (*jingpi* 精辟) and "rich foresight" (*fuyou yuanjian* 富有远见). Structurally, Qu Qiubai's thought from 1924 to 1926 is regarded as one consistent period. See Yang 1982; Li Zehou 2008; Ma 2009, 4.

121 Qu Weita [=Qiubai] 1923: 工业中的无产阶级很少很幼稚，大半不脱宗法社会思想的遗毒.

Coming from the Russian theoretical framework, Qu Qiubai based his class subdivisions on the scale and category of industries. He excelled at introducing new terms and definitions, which made it easy to integrate China into a dichotomous theoretical system. However, he could offer little help in guiding political strategy. Nonetheless, under the policies of the National Revolutionary League, Qu was one of the few leaders who clearly asserted the power of the Chinese working class.[122]

3.2 From Social Dichotomies to Identifying the Enemy

The use of the concept of "class" by the *Reform* authors, in particular their proposals of an "unemployed class" and a "class with guns," initiated a trend in class analysis that focused on highlighting social contradictions. During the period of the National Revolution, the demand for analysis of social contradictions increased sharply, which prompted a further generalisation of the concept of "class." Arguments pitching "the unarmed class against the armed class" and calls for "the common class to overthrow the warlord class"[123] were exactly in line with the revolution's goal of suppressing the warlords.

Small intellectuals and educated youth were the most important audience of, and participants in the propaganda and mobilization for the National Revolution.[124] A good example is the Society for Advancing Together (*Gongjin she* 共进社), founded in Beijing by educated youth from Shaanxi. They published their own journal, *Advancing Together* (*Gongjin* 共进). Influenced by early Communist publications and following the *Communist Manifesto*, *Advancing Together* presented "classes" as two historically opposed groups with "opposing interests." "The history of humanity is only a history of 'class struggle.'" Speaking of class consciousness, the authors noted:

> Let us, for now, call it "a sense of common interest." Although it is not entirely appropriate, it can be used to illustrate many difficulties in other areas. This sense of common interest must be achieved by a two-step effort; only then can class struggle succeed. The first effort is to understand that all who feel the need to fight against the evil forces have the same consciousness of common interest. The second effort is to nurture this consciousness of common interest to such an extent that it becomes the common consciousness of one universal class.[125]

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122 Tang Baolin even thinks that Qu Qiubai and Deng Zhongxia firmly believed in the power of the proletariat already in 1923, and that they criticised Chen Duxiu for his "rightist deviation," see Tang 2013, 348–356.

123 Fei 1922.

124 In recent years, many studies have taken note of these intellectual youths tending towards revolution, for example Li Zhiyu 2016; Tang 2017; Wang 2013.

125 Ha 1924: 姑且叫他为"共同利害的感觉"。虽然不大恰当，而可以藉以说明许多

The oppressed in China had not gained class consciousness yet, because the examination of classes in Chinese society was one-sided: the focus was on the "class with guns" and "warlord atrocities." "Concerning the plundered, however, there [was] only the miserable picture of not having enough power—or enough ability—to resist."[126]

For the Society for Advancing Together, the goal of the 1924 National Revolution was set; the important thing was to mobilise the remaining social groups. The propaganda of the Society for Advancing Together inherited the idea of "organising" various professions from the May Fourth period, but replaced the term "professions" with "classes." In its "A Countrywide Call to Every Social Class" (*Gao quanguo shehui ge jieji* 告全国社会各阶级), the Society addressed separately business people, peasants, workers, the intellectual class, as well as soldiers and lower-ranking officers. It spoke of their respective professions and hardships in life, so they would clearly recognise what was in the interest of society. In the end, all the professions were addressed together:

> Business people, peasants, workers, intellectuals, soldiers, and junior officers around the country! The warlords have become public enemies of our country. To defend ourselves, for the sake of our survival, for the sake of the country and society, we must all quickly unite and overthrow these despicable warlords and send delegates representing all the people in the country to form a well-organised national government.[127]

This was a typical propagandistic mobilisation effort, establishing a dichotomy between the warlords and the oppressed classes. Interestingly, the Society for Advancing Together itself was based on a shared local origin, and it pinned its hopes on the organisation and struggles of the local population, but without going against the dichotomous logic. The Society for Advancing Together "represent[ed] the interests of all oppressed classes in society"; it "pay[ed] particular attention to all classes in Shaanxi," hoping that "revolutionary action in this place [would] become ever richer and naturally merge into a countrywide revolutionary movement."[128] Therefore, the Society had to ally itself closely with

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他点上的困难。这共同利害的感觉，须有两步工夫做到，而后对于阶级斗争，才可操胜算。第一步工夫：首先感觉到有和恶势力斗争必须要的人，站在共同利害一样的意识上。第二步工夫：使此等共同利害的意识，增大到可以增大的程度，形成一普遍阶级的共同意识。

126 Ibid.: 而被掠夺方面，无充足势力以与之抗——或可简直说无充足资格——的惨象.

127 Xi 1924: 全国的商人农人工人智识阶级兵士下级军官们！军阀已成了我们全国国民的公敌，为自卫计，为生存计，为国家社会计，都非大家联合起来赶快推翻这可恶可恨的军阀，再由全国人民派代表组织良好的国民政府不可。

128 Ibid.: 地方的革命行动丰富起来，自然要汇合成为一个全国的国民革命运动.

the agricultural, commercial, working, and intellectual classes, and become "the crystallisation of segments of all classes in Shaanxi society."[129] Smaller demarcations between, for example, professions or provinces, here served to foster the two great demarcations for the National Revolution.

Similar propaganda messages were common in the mobilisation for the National Revolution. In 1925, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (*Zhonghua quanguo* zonggonghui 中华全国总工会) sent the following telegram to the labour unions in Hunan Province:

> China is suffering oppression at the hands of warlords and foreign imperial powers. The state is hardly a state; the people can barely survive. So the slogan of the National Revolution is "down with the warlords and imperialism." The true spirit of the National Revolution is built on the people as a whole. We bear this great responsibility and must unite with people from all walks of life in a common effort to complete the work of the National Revolution and alleviate the hardships of our people. Therefore, Guangdong is the origin of the revolution, having first established a federation of workers, peasants, merchants, students, and soldiers, working hard for the revolutionary cause, in strong solidarity, and with great force.[130]

In the National Revolution's propaganda, the class discourse broke with the dichotomous opposition of capital and labour. "All the classes," i.e., the different professional groups of workers, peasants, businesspeople, students, and soldiers, were to unite and together target the ruling class. So in order to single out the hostile forces, class analysis also became "one-sided." The division of society only focused on the warlords and imperialists as enemies, but blurred the class nature of other forces.

The CCP's approach after the Third National Congress was similar. Chen Duxiu's classic article "The Chinese National Revolution and the Classes of Society" (*Zhongguo guomin geming yu shehui ge jieji* 中国国民革命与社会各阶级), published in late 1923, emphasised the factor of semi-colonisation, which he used to explain the need for a national revolution transcending all classes. From the very beginning, Chen Duxiu labelled foreign imperialists and domestic warlords as the enemies of such a revolution. Below them, there was a "class of bourgeois and bureaucrats" (*guanliao zichan jieji* 官

129 Cai Zhende 1925: 陕西社会各阶级一部分的结晶体.

130 *Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui* 1925: 中国近日受列强帝国主义者与军阀两重压迫，国几不国，民不聊生，故国民革命之口号为"打倒军阀与帝国主义"，而国民革命之真精神，建筑于全民众之上，吾人负此重大责任，自不可不联合各界共同努力，以完成国民革命之工作，解除吾人倒悬疾苦。是以广东为革命策源地，首先创立联合工、农、商、学、兵界，努力革命事业，团结巩固，势力伟大。

僚资产阶级): "Their existence relie[d] on foreign powers (treason) and this country's aristocratic warlord governments, and they prosper[ed] by exploiting the state organs (theft)."[131] This class was counter-revolutionary and posed an obstacle to the development of the industrial and commercial classes. Therefore, it was clear who the enemies and their associates were.

What about the other social classes? The "industrial and commercial bourgeoisie in its infancy" (*gongshangye youzhi de zichan jieji* 工商业幼稚的资产阶级) did not have the heart for a revolution, but "their force is after all more concentrated than that of the peasants, and stronger than that of the workers."[132] In order to explain the necessity of uniting with the bourgeoisie, Chen Duxiu distinguished between the strength and the revolutionary attitude of lower, middle, and upper bourgeoisie. It is worth noting that he reasoned that the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie would "in the future be more inclined toward revolution."

As for the petty bourgeoisie, Chen mainly understood it as an intellectual class, which had no economic foundation. He believed their political ideas were unstable and that they had to be both praised and blamed for their role in the revolution. With regard to its revolutionary potential, he said the petty bourgeoisie often "transcended class nature" (more precisely, the petty bourgeoisie was "still classless") and had "subjective romantic ideas of revolution" or was "prone to revolution."[133]

The peasants were an equally complex class. Due to the lack of capitalisation in the countryside and the peasants' private-ownership mentality, Chen took a wait-and-see approach to their revolutionary role.

Only the working-class members were staunch revolutionaries, with their own special class interests: "Their material strength [was] naturally far lower than that of the bourgeoisie, but psychologically it [would be] often far easier to rally them to battle, because of the oppression they experience on a daily basis."[134] However, the naivety of the workers was the other side of the coin, so the participation and cooperation of all classes was necessary for the National Revolution.

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131 Chen Duxiu 1923a: 依赖外国势力（卖国）及本国贵族军阀政府，利用国家机关（盗国）而存在而发展的。

132 Ibid.: 力量究竟比农民集中，比工人雄厚。

133 Chen Duxiu 1923a: 他们常有"超越阶级性"（更准确地说"未阶级化"），"主观上浪漫的革命思想"或者说"易于倾向革命"。

134 Ibid.: 在物质上他的力量自然远不及资产阶级雄厚，而在心理上因为实际生活之压迫，往往易于促进他的决战态度。

Chen's article only identified the enemies of the revolution. The analysis of all other classes was limited to evaluating their strengths and revolutionary attitudes, but did not touch on economic factors such as property and relations of production. The article was full of uncertain political positions. It refined the analysis of the bourgeoisie, consistently paid attention to the intellectual class, and was cautious about the attitudes of peasants and workers, but it no longer rigidly emphasised the division and analysis of "classes."

Echoes of Chen's reservations about the force of the "labour movement" and the "working class" could be heard in the CCP debates on the issues of the national movement and the GMD during the party's Third National Congress, held in June 1923. The CCP issued a resolution which stated:

> The Chinese working class is still in its infancy. The consciousness of the majority of working people is still stuck in a patriarchal society, and there are strong apolitical tendencies. Only a minority of industrial workers already feels the need for a national movement, and even fewer can really understand communism or its organisation. Therefore, the labour movement has not yet been able to gain strength and become an independent social force. [...] Naturally, a strong Communist Party—a party of the masses—cannot emerge to meet the needs of the present revolution. Therefore, the Executive Committee of the Communist International decided that the Communist Party of China must cooperate with the Guomindang and that members of the Communist Party should join the Guomindang. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party also sees this need and abides by this resolution.[135]

Just when this decision on the CCP–GMD cooperation was made, the Comintern's instruction that "the proletariat must take leadership in the national revolution" reached China, causing the so-called problem of leadership.[136]

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135 *Guanyu guomin yundong* 1989, 146–148: 中国劳动阶级还在极幼稚时代，多数劳动群众之意识，还停顿在宗法社会，非政治的倾向非常之重，只有少数产业工人已感觉国民运动之必要，真能了解共产主义及共产党组织的更是少数。因此，工人运动尚未能强大起来，成功一个独立的社会势力 [...] 自然不能发生一个强大的共产党——一个大群众的党，以应目前革命之需要。因此，共产国际执行委员会议决中国共产党须与中国国民党合作，共产党党员应加入国民党。中国共产党中央执行委员会曾感此必要，遵行此议决。

136 Cf. Tang 2013, 348–357.

3.3 The Leadership of the Proletariat and the Definition of a Trichotomous Model

In 1924, Peng Shuzhi 彭述之 wrote an article entitled "Who Is the Leader of the Chinese National Revolution?" (*Shei shi Zhongguo guomin geming de lingdaozhe?* 谁是中国国民革命的领导者). He proposed that "in China's national revolution, only the Chinese working class deserves leadership, and none other is able to be the leader." Furthermore, he refuted two previously mentioned arguments by Chen Duxiu: first, that workers were still stuck in patriarchal society and had no class consciousness; second, that the worker's material strength was inferior to the bourgeoisie.[137]

Peng Shuzhi wanted to provoke a debate with Chen Duxiu, but Chen republished his article in *New Youth* and supported it with a new piece entitled "Lessons Learned from the National Movement of the Last 27 Years" (*Ershiqi nian yilai guomin yundong zhong suode de jiaoxun* 二十七年以来国民运动中所得的教训). He now recognised the preeminent position of the proletariat in the National Revolution:

> The general lesson the national movement has taught us for more than twenty years is that, among all social classes, only the lowest class—the proletariat—is the most uncompromisingly revolutionary, and a natural enemy of international capitalist imperialism. Not only is it the main force of the social revolutions in the capitalist-imperialist countries, but it is also needed as a battlefield leader in the national revolution in countries oppressed by capitalist-imperialists. The proletariat as a battlefield leader will urge all compromising allies—peasants, craftsmen, the revolutionary intellectual class, vagrant proletarians (soldiers and bandits), and small business owners—to uncompromisingly attack foreign imperialists and their running dogs—domestic warlords, bureaucrats, wealthy businessmen, bad gentry, big landlords and the counterrevolutionary intellectual class. Only then can we achieve the real goal of the National Revolution: national liberation.[138]

137 Peng Shuzhi 1924.

138 Chen Duxiu 1924, 22: 二十余年来国民运动给我们的总教训是，社会各阶级中，只有人类最后一阶级——无产阶级，是最不妥协的革命阶级，而且是国际资本帝国主义之天然对敌者；不但在资本帝国主义国家的社会革命他是主力军，即在被资本帝国主义压迫的国家之国民革命，也须他做一个督战者，督促一切带有妥协性的友军——农民、手工业者、革命的知识阶级、游民无产者（兵与会匪）及小商人，不妥协的向外国帝国主义者及其走狗——国内的军阀、官僚、富商、劣绅、大地主、反革命的知识阶级进攻，才能够达到国民革命之真正目的——民族解放。

Afterwards, the Fourth National Congress of the CCP, as instructed by the Comintern, decided that "all of China's social classes in the national movement tend towards the leadership of the proletariat." After analysing the economic situation of the big business and the comprador classes, the newly industrialised bourgeoisie and the peasantry, the CCP stated that "[f]rom the current status of the classes in China, it can be seen that the higher the class, the more compromising it is. As the most oppressed and the most cohesive class, the proletariat is the most revolutionary."[139]

In the resolutions of the Fourth National Congress, class analysis was simplified to a pattern of "upper-, middle-, and lower-class revolution" and the corresponding traits of "compromising, split in the middle, and revolutionary." Then, Chen Duxiu further broadened the discussion with his article "The Strength of the Workers in China's National Revolutionary Movement" (*Zhongguo guomin geming yundong zhong gongren de liliang* 中国国民革命运动中工人的力量):

> In semi-feudal and semi-capitalist China, three kinds of social forces coexist. The first is the warlords, because they wield the country's military and political power. The second is the bourgeoisie, because it holds the country's entire economic power and organises the propaganda organs. The third is the working class, because it represents the new productive force. It is full of collective and battle power, and the natural ally of the peasants. It goes without saying that the revolution is directed against the warlord class. The bourgeoisie includes three elements: "counter-revolutionary," "non-revolutionary," and "inclined to revolution." Only the working class is the most revolutionary class.[140]

This was the most typical tripartite model of social division. It differed from earlier trichotomies of "upper, middle, and lower society" (*shang, zhong, xia deng/liu shehui* 上、中、下等（流）社会) in that the three strata were defined by revolutionary attitude in the context of party politics, and the middle layer could be further divided into three different groups. This was also the most persistent trait in Chen Duxiu's repeated adjustments to his class analysis, from his division of the bourgeoisie into "revolutionary," "non-

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139 *Duiyu minzu geming yundong* 1925, 331–333: 由中国社会各阶级现状也可以看出越是上层阶级越富于妥协性。最受压迫而最有集合力的无产阶级是最有革命性的阶级。

140 Chen Duxiu 1925b: 半封建半资本制度的中国，他的社会势力，三种并存：第一是军阀的势力，因为他挟有全国的武装与政权；第二是资产阶级的势力，因为他挟有全国的经济权及组织宣传机关；第三是工人阶级的势力，因为他是新生产力的代表者，他是富于集合力及决战力者，他是天然的农民之同盟者。军阀不待说是被革命的阶级，资产阶级中包含着"反革命"、"非革命"、"倾向革命"三种分子，只有工人阶级是最革命的阶级。

revolutionary," and "counter-revolutionary,"[141] to his extension of the tripartite division based on revolutionary attitude to the whole of Chinese social forces after the Fourth National Congress in 1925. Since then, this tripartite model has been combined with the Comintern's terminology on the struggle between the "left" and the "right," resulting in the "strange terms" of "Leftist (leaning)" (*zuo pai (qing)* 左派（倾）), "Centrist" (*zhong pai* 中派), and "Rightist (leaning)" (*you pai (qing)* 右派（倾）).[142] This cognitive model permeated the National Revolution, in particular the understanding of the relationship between the Guomindang and the Communist Party, and it even became a part of the CCP's later class policies. The "Left" treasuring "revolution" created a kind of revolutionary culture.

4 "Repudiating Class Struggle" after 30 May

As a major turning point, the May Thirtieth Movement has always attracted much attention.[143] It was also a high point in the CCP's class discourse, especially its working-class discourse, even sparking a wave of opposition for some time to come. Qu Qiubai noted the shift in the discourse when he summed up the development of political culture in the first half of the 1920s:

> During the May Fourth period, everyone scrambled to talk about socialism. After 30 May, everyone scrambled to repudiate class struggle—from Beijing to Shanghai and Guangdong, from Peking University professor Dai Jitao to the so-called "Famous Leaders of the Restauration" Zeng [Qi], Zuo [Shunsheng], and Li [Huang] of the Nationalist Faction.[144]

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141 Chen Duxiu 1923c.

142 The expression "strange term" was used in *Qingdang shilu* (清党实录) to complain about the negative impact of the CCP's division of the GMD, see Wang 2010a, 73–75. Wang's book discusses several terms popular during the Northern Expedition.

143 Qu Qiubai and Zheng Chaolin both also saw 30 May as a major turning point, see Qu 1925, 1095–1097; Zheng 1986, 85. In the 1980s, Chinese researchers examined the basic thread of the May Thirtieth Movement from the perspective of revolutionary history, for example Fu 1985. Foreign researchers have focused more on their countries' diplomatic archives and examined the process and the significance of 30 May from the perspective of international politics. In recent years, attention has shifted more to the perspectives of social history and political culture history: see Wang 2006; Luo 2013; Ma 2017. On this turning point from the perspective of intellectual history, see Zhang 2004; Wang 2017.

144 Qu Qiubai 1926b: 五四时代，大家争着谈社会主义，五卅之后，大家争着辟阶级斗争——从北京、上海到广东，从北京大学教授、戴季陶到所谓"中兴名

But how come that "after May Thirtieth, everyone scrambled to repudiate class struggle"? From a Western perspective, the May Thirtieth Movement marked the beginning of the end of foreign rule over China and a sharp decline of Western authority.[145] The labels usually attached to the May Thirtieth Movement are "anti-imperialist" and "nationalist," so how could the "class" dimension become so important? According to Qu Qiubai, it had to do with the simultaneous development of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat in China, and "the process of vying for the leadership in the revolution and competing for international coalitions."[146] Some scholars believe that the May Thirtieth Movement proved the objectivity of class struggle, which made theorists of various political factions uneasy and led to Daijitao-ism and other challenges for the CCP.[147] This section intends to explain the reasons behind "the scramble to repudiate class struggle," which are grounded in the development of the CCP's class discourse and propaganda.

4.1 The Anti-Class Propaganda of the Nationalist Faction

The massacre on 30 May was a shock to Shanghai and the whole country. As Wang Yunwu 王云五 observed: "Since the 30 May incident, our government and people have been deeply indignant. Even the biggest political enemies have laid aside their differences and united against the foreigners."[148]

Such an atmosphere suited the propaganda of the Nationalist Faction (*guojia zhuyi pai* 国家主义派), also known as the Awakening Lion Faction (*Xingshi pai* 醒狮派). In the months after 30 May, the *Awakening Lion Weekly* "not only sold more than twenty thousand copies, but also received reactions from young university students from all major cities in the country. They not only submitted articles and expressed approval, but also sent representatives to Shanghai to ask about ways to organise themselves."[149] Several

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将"的曾左李国家主义派。Translator's note: The term "Famous Leaders of the Restauration" is a pun on the surnames of the three leaders of the Chinese Youth Party advocating the ideology of "Nationalism" (*guojia zhuyi*), which coincide with the surnames of Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang, and Li Hongzhang, the officials leading the Restauration and the self-strengthening efforts after the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860s.

145 Rigby 1980.

146 Qu Qiubai 1926b: 两阶级互争革命的指导权和国际上联盟军的争择之过程。

147 Teng 2007, 89. For representative scholarship on the May Thirtieth Movement from the traditional perspective of revolutionary history, see Fu 1985 and Ren 1985.

148 Wang Yunwu 1925, 1: 自五卅事件发生，我政府国民同深愤慨；甚至平时互相水火之政敌，亦舍弃意见，一致对外。

149 Li Huang 李璜: *Xuedunshi huiyi lu* (学钝室回忆录), quoted from Li Yibin 1982, 113: 不但畅销至二万份以上，而且南北各大都市的青年大学生纷纷响应，不只向《醒

nationalist organisations, such as the National Soul Society (*Guohun she* 国魂社) and the National Glory Society (*Guoguang she* 国光社) were established around the May Thirtieth Movement.[150]

The nationalist societies used the slogan "we stand united against foreigners" (*yizhi duiwai* 一致对外) in domestic propaganda aimed at the CCP's class theory. The Awakening Lion intellectuals jumped on the patriotic bandwagon to preach to the masses:

> While it is true that this is an era of "national revolution" in which one should be loyal to the "patriotic spirit" and "resist foreign powers," don't be led astray by the evil teachings of "Communism"![151]
>
> While it is true that this is an era of "revolution by the entire people," in which one should be loyal to the "revolutionary spirit" and "oust national traitors," don't be moved by vilification of "class struggle"![152]

This discourse attracted many followers from among the revolutionary youth. From their perspective, most of the donations to the May Thirtieth Movement came from the bourgeoisie. There was a clear contradiction if the workers, on the one hand, demanded money from the bourgeoisie to support their struggle against foreigners, but on the other hand waged class struggle against it. Therefore, a reader wrote to the *China Youth* journal (*Zhongguo qingnian* 中国青年): "During the war with foreign powers, it seems that the different classes within the country should unite to increase their fighting power."[153]

Yun Daiying 恽代英 replied: In order to see the real contradiction, one must move away from the bourgeoisie and focus on the reality of social inequality and on the "universal truth and humanity" (*gongli rendao* 公理人道) of the proletariat "demanding a better life." Furthermore, "the donations of the bourgeoisie are their duty to the country and not a favour to the workers. Even if the bourgeois give money, there is no reason why workers should be barred from asking them for a better life"—particularly since donations "are [made] fundamentally only for [the bourgeois'] own benefit."[154]

狮》投稿，表示赞成，而且有派代表来上海询问有无组织办法。Wang Qisheng has compared the CCP's *Xiangdao* and the Awakening Lion's *Xingshi* journals, which can be called rivals in ideological propaganda, see Wang 2010b, 89.

150 Zeng 2014, 28.

151 Zeng 1925, 1: 宜认定今日为"民族革命"时代，始终坚持"爱国精神"以"外抗强权"，勿为"共产主义"之邪说所惑！

152 Ibid.: 宜认定今日为"全民革命"时代，始终坚持"革命精神"以"内除国贼"，勿为"阶级斗争"之谰言所动！

153 Dai 1925: 当对外战争时，国内各阶级似应联络一致，以加厚战斗力。

154 Dai 1925: 资产阶级的捐款是对国家对义务，而不是对工人对恩惠，他们纵然出

Judging from the preceding statements, ordinary young people may have still not understood the revolutionary nature of the CCP's class discourse. What young readers took away was the idea of a generalised "class struggle" triggered by the opposing interests of capital and labour. However, the class contradiction and the class struggle that Yun Daiying talked about did not go both ways, but took place entirely on the side of the oppressed proletariat. This discrepancy in conceptual understandings turned into an ever-greater point of contention in subsequent debates.

4.2 CCP Propaganda and the High Tide of the "Working Class" Discourse

The CCP's evaluation of and propaganda around the May Thirtieth Movement constantly escalated, following the development of the situation and the uproar in public opinion. The 30 May Massacre immediately met with public outcry. On 6 June, *The Guide* published a special issue "Against Imperialism."[155] It set out the main propaganda points as follows: address your calls for unity mainly to the workers and peasants, but also include "all oppressed people"; distinguish between imperialist and friendly countries; do not trust the Duan Qirui 段祺瑞 government; do not trust calls for reconciliation; do not trust European and American warnings against "going red" (*chi hua* 赤化).[156] *China Youth* also published an article explaining the reasons for, and the meaning of, resistance to imperialism, calling on young students to assume their responsibility of agitating and organising the masses.[157]

In addition to opposing imperialism, Qu Qiubai called attention to the difference between domestic "compromisers" and "revolutionaries": "Although the compromisers appear to stand on the side of the people, in reality they are simply elements who betray the interests of the nation." He had in mind mainly diplomatic officials in the Duan government, as well as a small number of compradors and wealthy businessmen in the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce. The revolutionaries, in contrast, were the "true commoners" (*zhenzheng de pingmin* 真正的平民)—businessmen, students, workers, and so forth—who had to first come together and then unite the whole country.[158]

了钱没有理由禁止工人向他们提出改良自身生活的要求。

155 Anti-imperialist discourse was the most successful and important propaganda strategy of the CCP during the May Thirtieth Movement: Ma 2017, 88–105.

156 *Zhongguo Gongchandang wei fankang* 1925; Tang 1925; Qu Qiubai 1925a, 1095–1099.

157 Bi 1925.

158 Qu Qiubai 1925a: 妥协派虽然表面上似乎站在人民一方面，实际上简直是卖国背叛民族利益的份子。

This distinction between "compromisers" and "revolutionaries" further exacerbated "class" divisions, despite the increasing verbal attacks by the Awakening Lion faction. In July, *The Guide* issued the party declaration "To the Masses Who are Fighting for National Freedom" (*Gao cici wei minzu ziyou fendou de minzhong* 告此次为民族自由奋斗的民众). It explained that "class divisions within the movement are very clear," and that "China is actually divided into two camps": "On the one hand, there are the workers, students, middle and small businessmen, the so-called 'low-class Chinese', who really fight for the interests of the nation. The 'lowest' class—the workers—constitute the main force. On the other hand, there are the big businessmen, gentry, scholars, and warlords, the so-called 'high-class Chinese', who betray the interests of the nation. [...] The highest—the warlords—are the hangmen of imperialism."[159] Here, the two class camps were linked to the distinction between "higher-class Chinese" (*gaodeng huaren* 高等华人) and the masses of the lower classes in the daily life of the International Settlement.

In August 1925, the CCP used this to promote the working-class discourse in a high-profile manner, and took advantage of the factional fragmentation of the May Thirtieth Movement to prove the doctrine of class struggle. Xiao Chunü 萧楚女, for example, stated: "It is as clear as day that this is an extremely tense and worldwide 'class struggle.'"[160] On the enemy side, there were the foreign capitalist powers, such as Japan, and "the ruling class of China, the warlords on land and sea, who live[d] by plundering the common people"[161] : "They—the warlords, bureaucrats, politicians, celebrities, gentry, compradors, and educators—are in line with the imperialists who invaded China and oppress China."[162] Their opponents were "workers of the proletarian class; young students who not only care[d] about their own interests but also [felt] the inequality of the social system; all kinds of business associations that [were] dissatisfied with the big-business comprador class; and the shopkeepers who depend[ed] on the big merchants and suffer[ed] from capitalism's oppression."[163] Furthermore, there was the help of the

159 *Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongguo gongchan zhuyi* 1925, 1111: 一方面真为民族利益奋斗的，是工人学生中小商人等所谓"下等华人"，"最下等"的工人为主力军；别方面背叛民族利益的，是大商绅士学者军阀等所谓高等华人[...]最高等的军阀为帝国主义的刽子手。

160 Xiao 1925: 明明白白是一幅紧张无比的超国界的世界的"阶级斗争"。

161 Ibid.: 中国治者阶级，以掠夺中国平民为生活的海陆军阀。

162 Ibid.: 他们——军阀、官僚、政客、名流、绅士、买办、教职员——是和侵略中国，压迫中国的帝国主义站在一条线上的。

163 Xiao 1925: 无产阶级的工人，没有生活上利害之打算而感觉着社会制度之不平等的青年学生，不满意于大商买办阶级的各马路商界联合会，依赖于大商家为生而饱受资本主义之压迫的店员们。

proletariat and party organisations from other countries: the Third International, Russia, India, and North Korea.

Compared to the two "camps" mentioned above, Xiao's analysis singled out more parts of the centre that gravitated towards the revolution: the Labour and Socialist International "that [could not] but show sympathy," the social democratic parties of the petty bourgeoisie in other countries, the "yellow" Amsterdam International (Federation of Trade Unions), as well as poor small merchants, apprentices, soldiers, policemen, sailors, chauffeurs, carpenters, cobblers, and other craftsmen. This classification made use of the category of the so-called petty-bourgeois centrist.

Having drawn a clear line of demarcation between friends and enemies, Xiao attacked the Awakening Lion faction: "The truth is staring us right in the face. Across the ages and everywhere in the world, there have only been countries where classes fought one another over their own interests. There has never been a country in which 'all classes merged into one' and much less anything like the 'nationalism of all classes'!"[164]

In September, Qu Qiubai published a systematic evaluation of the May Thirtieth Movement and class struggle, which was more at the level of class discourse. He gave very detailed examples and directly concluded that the working class had assumed leadership in the Movement: "The anti-imperialist national revolution of 30 May was the first attack by the working class; [...] under the leadership of the working class in class struggle."[165]

Now the bourgeoisie had become the biggest obstacle to the national liberation movement. While the working class "interests [were] the same as the interests of the majority of the people in the country,"[166] this was not true of the big bourgeoisie, whose "interests [were] in conflict with the majority of the people." As for the centrists, "in this anti-imperialist movement even the fighting strength of the petty bourgeoisie [was] unstable, poorly organised, and very weak."[167] The imperialist forces took advantage of the weakness of the bourgeoisie to counterattack: "They use[d] the help of the warlords and the compromisers of the big bourgeoisie to destroy the movement of the working class."[168]

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164 Ibid.: 事实摆在鼻子尖上，亘古今中外，只有各阶级互相杀伐，各争自己阶级利益的国家，决没有"各阶级融和一致的国家"；更没有"各阶级的国家主义"！

165 Qu Qiubai 1925b: 五卅反帝国主义的国民革命，是工人阶级首先发难的 [...] 在工人阶级的阶级斗争之领导之下。

166 Ibid.: 利益与全国大多数民众的利益是相同的。

167 Qu Qiubai 1925b: 便是小资产阶级，在这反帝国主义运动里，也是动摇不定、组织不固，战斗力量非常薄弱。

168 Ibid.: 他们利用军阀的帮助，大资产阶级的妥协，来摧折工人阶级的运动。

As a result, the original anti-imperialist, national character of the May Thirtieth Movement was transformed and now included the need for class struggle. Coupled with resistance against foreign bourgeoisie, the National Revolution, in Qu Qiubai's view, turned into a "dual class struggle": "Within the national liberation movement, the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is also necessary; in fact, it is unavoidable."[169]

The original propaganda goal of the CCP was to oppose imperialism and, at the same time, to refute the European and American vilification of "going red." However, with the rise of patriotic and anti-classist views in public opinion, Qu Qiubai instinctively recognised the new divisions between friends and enemies splintering the May Thirtieth Movement, no longer into "two camps" but now into "three fronts." The CCP began to fight back with systematic class divisions and turned to class struggle as the main theme in its analysis of such an anti-imperialist national movement. When challenged by public opinion, the CCP unexpectedly found a way out by emphasizing the concept of the proletariat and the necessity of class struggle even in an international conflict. This objectively advanced the construction of the dialectical theory insisting on class struggle in a national revolution.

Class and nation are two overlapping dimensions of the Chinese revolutions in the twentieth century. The discourse of imperialism directly appealed to a nationalist consciousness. Under the banner of nationalism, the lines of conflict within society had to be redrawn in order to fit the new framework. Already in the early period of the National Revolution, the Guangzhou Merchants' Corps Uprising had triggered the CCP's evaluation of the bourgeoisie as counterrevolutionary.[170] In the May Thirtieth Movement, the combined narrative of nationalism and class contradictions returned on a larger scale. The movement was a climax and a turning point in the history of class struggle discourse.

4.3 The CCP and Dai Jitao on "Class Struggle"

Faced with the CCP's powerful "class struggle" discourse, Dai Jitao wanted to offer resistance on a theoretical level. His "Philosophical Foundation of Sun Yatsen-ism" (*Sun Wen zhuyi zhi zhexue de jichu* 孙文主义之哲学的基础) systematised the theory of the Three Principles of the People. Dai noted the theory's grounding in traditional thought; its deliberate rejection of foreign ideologies, such as those imported from the Soviet Union; and then returned to the issue of class struggle and national revolution. He reiterated Sun's argument that "The Principle of People's Livelihood is the goal reached in the form

169 Ibid.: 民族解放运动的内部，无产阶级对于资产阶级的阶级斗争亦是必不可少的，是事实上必不可免的.

170 Tsin 1991, 103–144; Fitzgerald 1998, 320.

of national revolution, in political construction work, and using the power of the state. Therefore, it advocates revolutionary dictatorship and the use of the revolutionary force of all classes to prevent the expansion of class forces and to gradually eliminate classes."[171] Moreover, "class antagonism is a disease of society, not its normal state."[172]

In another propaganda text, "National Revolution and the Guomindang" (*Guomin geming yu Zhongguo Guomindang* 国民革命与中国国民党), Dai attempted to reconstruct the GMD's revolutionary history and culture, to resolve conflicts and contradictions surrounding the CCP within the party, and to maintain ideological unity.[173] While there was a lot of talk about differences in doctrine and the struggle between parties, the core issue of the debate between the CCP and Dai Jitao was class struggle.

In his early years, Dai had leaned towards socialism, and he still used a broad concept of "class." He believed that "there clearly [were] two opposing classes" in China, and that a revolution must not break out because of class antagonism. He proposed to eliminate class antagonism, stating: "by no means can we wait with revolution until class antagonism has become completely obvious."[174]

In terms of political contradictions, Dai saw an "antagonism between the Chinese revolution and the counterrevolutionary forces." In terms of social contradictions, "there [was] an antagonism between the awakened (*juewuzhe* 觉悟者) and the unawakened, rather than a class antagonism." Furthermore, there were "the ruling class" and the "ruled class," the "capitalist class" and the "working class," the "landlord class" and the "peasant class."[175]

With regard to revolutionary methods, Dai hoped to use "benevolence" (*ren'ai* 仁爱) to reconcile class contradictions and then to "unite all classes in a national revolution": "On the one hand, the people of the ruling class must awaken to wage a revolution for the interests of the ruled. [...] On the other hand, the ruled class, the working class, and the peasant class must rise up and wage a revolution for their own interests."[176]

The starting point of Dai's argument was the Principle of People's Livelihood, but his conclusion was similar to the Awakening Lion's nationalist propaganda. Hence, Chen

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171 Dai 1927, 39–40: 民生主义是以国民革命的形式，在政治建设工作上，以国家的权力达实行的目的。所以主张革命专政，以各阶级的革命势力，阻止阶级势力的扩大，而渐进的消灭阶级。

172 Ibid.: 阶级的对立，是社会的病态，并不是社会的常态。

173 Dai 1925.

174 Dai 1927, 40–41: 更不能等到有了很清楚的两阶级对立才来革命。

175 Ibid.

176 Dai 1927, 40–41: 一方面是要治者阶级的人觉悟了为被治者阶级的利益来革命。[...] 一方面是要被治者阶级、劳动阶级、农民阶级也起来为自己的利益而革命。

Duxiu began his refutation by summing him up in the following way: "He only sees the need for national struggle, but not the need for class struggle."[177]

Was there a contradiction between the united front of all classes for national revolution and class struggle? Chen invoked the powerful weapon of dialectic theory: "From the point of view of formal logic, conducting national struggle and class struggle at the same time is a contradiction; but from the point of view of factual logic (that is, dialectical logic), all the truths in the world are contained in the ever-changing and contradictory facts."[178]

Chen went on to argue that, judging from the practical needs, the revolution depended on "the strength of a large swath of the revolutionary masses of the nation," that is, "the masses of the workers and peasants." "If we really support the interests of the worker and peasant masses in action, class struggle will naturally form."[179] Therefore, "it would be a great mistake [...] to obliterate the need for class struggle in order to fulfil the needs of the state and the nation. [...] This would not only obliterate the class interests, but also cause great losses to the national struggle."[180]

To arouse the "class consciousness" of the workers and peasants, it was enough for the CCP to make them realise the differences in class interests. And to mobilise them for class struggle and make them believe in the party, it was enough to provide them with "a specific vital interest," "because the masses will fight only for their specific vital interests and will only believe in a concrete party, rather than some kind of abstract doctrine."[181] This standpoint was certainly more practicable than Dai Jitao's emphasis on "the benevolent heart which will move the bourgeoisie to respect the interests of the worker and peasant masses."

Qu Qiubai made the same point in his rebuttal: "Actually, the Three Principles of the People for the National Revolution are very simple. The personally felt political and economic demands of the common worker and peasant masses do not need any kind of

177 Chen Duxiu 1925a: 只看见民族争斗的需要而不看见阶级争斗的需要。

178 Ibid.: 在形式逻辑上看起来，民族争斗和阶级争斗同时并行，乃是一个矛盾的现象；但在事实逻辑（即辩证逻辑）上看起来，世间一切真理，都包含在变动不居的矛盾事实之中。

179 Ibid.: 若当真在行动上拥护工农群众的利益，便自然要形成阶级争斗。

180 Ibid.: 若因为要完成国家和民族的需要，便抹杀阶级争斗的需要[...]那便是一个极大的错误。[...] 不但抹杀了阶级的利益，并且使民族争斗之进行要受极大的损失。

181 Chen Duxiu 1925a: 因为群众只有为具体的切身利益争斗而信仰某一政党，是不会为抽象的主义而信仰的。

orthodox tradition or foundation in philosophical thought."[182]

> The awakening of the Chinese worker and peasant masses is bound to lead to class struggle, and they must start fighting for improving their life right away. The Chinese workers and peasants cannot wait for Dai Jitao to activate the capitalist's and landlord's benevolence, and they cannot wait for the establishment of the Three Principles of the People, because they are already suffering from the oppression of landlords and capitalists.[183]

In Qu Qiubai's words, "class struggle" was the form of all revolutions. The contents of *minzu* (nationalism), *minquan* (people's power), and *minsheng* (people's livelihood) all had to undergo class struggle; they all relied on workers and peasants to produce "class awakening" (*jieji juewu* 阶级觉悟), so workers and peasants would unite and struggle against the real enemy. The universal applicability and validity of "class struggle" were seen in two regards. On the one hand, the oppression of the working people made it obvious that revolution was justified. On the other hand, because of their superior numbers and the urgent need driving them, the working people naturally became the main force of all revolutions. In this sense, the CCP class discourse transcended nationalism and the People's Livelihood Principle after 30 May.

4.4 The End of the Broad Class Concept? Qu Qiubai's Replies to Liang Mingzhi

Another challenger of class theory was Liang Mingzhi 梁明致. In contrast to Dai Jitao, Liang had no ambition of establishing a different theoretical framework. He wanted to invalidate class discourse as a whole, which made his attack more acute. The ensuing debate between Liang and Qu Qiubai presented an interesting analysis and extension of the class concept.[184]

Liang Mingzhi represented the educated youth inclined toward revolution, who had broadly accepted socialism and its popular, broad concepts of "class" and "class struggle": "Class struggle is a fact, not an ideal, and now we only need people to believe in it. [...]

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182 Qu Qiubai 2013: 其实国民革命的三民主义，只是很浅显，一般农工民众所切身感觉的政治经济要求，用不着什么道统，什么哲学思想做基础。

183 Ibid.: 中国工人农民的觉悟必然要实行阶级斗争，必然要现在就争自己生活的改善，不能等戴季陶诱发资本家地主的仁爱性能，不能等三民主义国家成立之后，中国的工人农民已经亲身受到中国资本家地主的压迫。

184 The debate started with Liang Mingzhi 1926a. Even though many scholars have analysed this debate, so far there is no detailed analysis of the "class" concept in it. See Zhao 2002, 79–82; Zhang 2013, 176–178; Wang 2011, 101–102.

Not merely must we not oppose it—we are not able to oppose it."[185] His concept of class was so broad that "overthrowing the warlords [was] also class struggle; it [was] a class struggle between the people of the whole country and the warlords."[186]

However, the broad concepts of class and class struggle conflicted with narrower understandings of the working class and the bourgeoisie, as well as with the idea of a dictatorship of the workers. Liang pointed out three contradictions. First, the dictatorship of the workers was a problem at the level of ideas, "since [such a dictatorship] aims to elevate one class and bring down all other classes. No matter whether the elevated class is the majority or the minority, it always violates the principle of equality."[187] Second, in the actual revolution, "we are all suffering from the scourge of warlords and live every day in the abyss of misery. So if we are to eliminate resentment and suspicion among all classes, apart from the warlords and their running dogs, and to stand together united against them, how can we still make internal distinctions among ourselves?"[188] Third, a broad concept of class was unable to explain the existence of internal contradictions.

Chen Duxiu's use of the concept of class was very broad early on, so he could hardly answer such questions. Qu Qiubai replied in his stead, and, first of all, made clear that an interpretation such as Liang Mingzhi's "had not yet understood what class really is." In a nutshell, Qu stated, "the class division of society is fundamentally due to the distribution of the means of production." In feudal society, landlords were the oppressor class and peasants the oppressed class, whereas in capitalist society, capitalists were the oppressor class and workers the oppressed class. Thus, "at any given point in time, a person belongs to only one class." A person's class membership was determined by his/her position in the distribution of the means of production. Unless the social economic system changed, class relations could not easily be altered.

One of the characteristics of the Marxist concept of class was that it adopted the perspective of the "progressive class," namely the proletariat. Qu Qiubai explained:

> The dictatorship of the proletariat serves to overthrow the oppression by a minority for the liberation of all humankind, or, at least, to urge society to progress. [...] Only by

185 Liang Mingzhi 1926b: 阶级争斗是一个事实，不是一个理想，现在才要人去信仰的。[...] 不惟不能反对，且不可反对。

186 Ibid.: 打倒军阀，亦是阶级争斗，即合全国国民与军阀阶级争斗。

187 Ibid.: 既然想抬高一个阶级，以压倒其他各阶级。无论那被抬高的阶级多数抑少数，总是违背平等原则。

188 Ibid.: 我们都正苦军阀之祸，日在水深火热之中，则除军阀及其走狗以外，大家就应该消去各阶级间的怨恶和猜忌，共同立在一战线上，与军阀作战，安可内部自行分裂?

> liberating the oppressed classes can humankind become equal. The dictatorship of the proletariat not only does not violate the principle of equality; it is the very condition that is necessary for the transition to a completely equal society.[189]

Qu did not completely deny the broad class definition coined by the educated youth, but used it to consolidate the consciousness of class struggle and to propagate the rationale of workers' and peasants' struggle: "Since you admit that China is now a society, that there are classes, that there are conflicts of interest, that there is class struggle, and that class struggle in China is a fact and not an ideal, how can you still argue for eliminating class resentment and suspicion between the Chinese workers and peasants and the landlords and capitalists?"[190] The contradiction between labour and capital could not be avoided even under the united front of the National Revolution. "When necessary, different classes with the same interests can still temporarily form a united front and jointly oppose another class."[191] "At the same time, the workers did not sell themselves to the capitalists, they did not forget the interests of their own class, and they did not give up the class struggle against the capitalists."[192]

However, it was right here that Liang Mingzhi felt justified in seeing a contradiction between the generalised "class unity" after 30 May and "class struggle" in a narrower sense.[193] This made him further question the exclusivity of the Marxist understanding of class. Invoking Western sociology, "which divides classes according to occupation, customs, or education," he argued that there was not just one single criterion of class division. Moreover, criteria were not uniform. While economists might distinguish between landlord, capitalist, and working classes, from the perspective of distribution they could also "further subdivide capitalists into entrepreneurs and rentiers."[194] "One could also divide those who do something for the whole society into employers, employed workers, independent producers, officials, and servants; this would be speaking in terms of

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189 Qu Qiubai 1926a: 无产阶级专政则是打倒少数人的压迫以解放全人类，至少亦是催促社会向前进步 [...] 被压迫者阶级的解放，人类才能平等。无产阶级专政不仅没有违背平等原则，而且正是过渡到完全平等社会的必要的条件。

190 Ibid.: 先生既然承认现在中国也是一个社会，也便有阶级，也便有利害冲突，也便有争斗，而中国的阶级争斗，也是事实不是理想，何以又能劝服中国工农和中国地主资本家间消去阶级间的怨恶和猜忌呢?

191 Ibid.: 必要时，利害有相同之点的几个阶级仍然可以暂时联合战线，共同反对别的阶级。

192 Ibid.: 同时劳动者并非自卖给资本家，他们并没有忘记了自阶级的利益，他们并没有放弃了向资本家的阶级争斗。

193 Liang Mingzhi 1926b.

194 Liang Mingzhi 1926b: 把资本家再折为企业家与放利者（Rentier）。

production."[195]

With specific regard to China, the author believed that "it [was] necessary to find more appropriate criteria based on the actual situation of the country's society and ... not stick to a single one." Even more specifically, he wrote that economic class relations could not cover the entirety of social relations.

After that, the debate increasingly focused on "the criterion of class division." Qu Qiubai explained that the Marxist criterion was possession of the means of production rather than property ownership, a misunderstanding resulting from mistranslation. Qu also determined that all other criteria of class division were wrong. However, he could not explain why the other criteria borrowed from Western sociology and economics were incorrect; he only gave examples of rather extreme and unqualified views on class by people such as Sun Chuanfang 孙传芳, and said that, "in the interest of the ruling class, [they] naturally [held] that there [were] no classes in society, or [came] up with many criteria to obfuscate the idea of classes."[196]

Looking at this debate as a whole, Qu Qiubai apparently hoped to accurately convey the Marxist viewpoint to the youth. Liang Mingzhi, in turn, intended to ground "class" and "class struggle" theory in reality, and wrote in his last reply: "When I began the discussion on class struggle with you, I simply wanted to clarify this issue theoretically and practically, so that everyone would have a clear idea of it. I wanted to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary disputes, which would affect the national revolution; and I did not want to speak for any class. Hence, I would also not exhort any class."[197] His counterarguments also served to bring out Qu Qiubai's standpoint more clearly.

The concept of class was not only complicated by alternative definitions in Western sociology, but also by the scope of its application. Even if Liang Mingzhi accepted Qu's definition of class based on the ownership of the means of productions, this definition was not easily applicable to rural China: "The means of production must be understood in modern terms. In other words, only if one refers to modern industry as means of production the issue arises."[198] Carpenters, blacksmiths, and other craftsmen in rural areas

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195 Ibid.: 又有将全社会能做事的人分为雇东、雇工、独立生产者、官吏、婢仆等者，此从生产上而言之也。

196 Qu Qiubai 1926a: 为统治阶级的利益，自然要说社会没有阶级，或者要说出许多标准以搅混阶级的观念。

197 Liang Mingzhi 1926c: 当初我提出阶级斗争来与先生讨论，纯然想从理论上实际上把这问题弄到清楚，为大家对他有个明了观念，免得生出许多误会，许多无谓的纠纷，而影响到国民革命；并非想为何阶级说话。故无所谓应该向什么阶级劝告不劝告。

198 Liang Mingzhi 1926c: 生产机关也要从其近世的意义解释，换言之，也要是指近

also had tools of production, but they could not be called "bourgeoisie." Since, "in China, eight or nine in ten people still work[ed] as craftspeople," the country was far from being a capitalist society divided into two classes.[199]

Liang Mingzhi not only problematized Marxist class theory and its application to China, but also elaborated on the social contradictions and resistance movements in Chinese history and contemporary reality, directly challenging the logic of the Communist revolution and the CCP's representation of the supposed "oppressed classes."

Liang believed that "only farm hands (hired for ploughing and planting), large tenants, and small landholding peasants [could] be counted as peasants; only small businessmen [could] be counted as businessmen. Students do not form a class of their own, because one only studies for a certain period of life. They do not add up to some kind of class, and much less to an 'oppressed class.'"[200] Nor did students form a "proletariat" in the European sense. Therefore, Liang concluded that "the CCP can only be said to be a party that represents the interests of the people without power and without money, but it cannot be said to represent the interests of the real proletariat."[201] There was no way to carry out a real proletarian Communist revolution.

Liang Mingzhi had clearly understood the Communist concept, but he thought it could not be applied to China. His intention was to have the CCP clarify its concept of class, to point out the contradiction in its broad use, and to deny the applicability of the concept narrowly understood. His criticism was very severe.

Facing such a challenge, Qu Qiubai only partially expanded his concept of class. First, he said that pre-modern economy also was a hotbed of class divisions. Different eras had different means of production, such as the land of the landlords, or craftsmen's saws, planers, hammers, and bellows. These means of production were what defined "oppressor class" and "oppressed class."

The second step in expanding the concept of class concerned its dichotomous form. As described before, the class dichotomy played an important role in arousing a grassroots spirit of resistance and raising class consciousness. However, the enumeration and analysis of classes necessary to its application to Chinese society had already been realised in the concrete analyses of Chen Duxiu and others. So, when the theoretician Qu was

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世产业的生产机关，才有问题。

199 Ibid.: 十之八九还是手工业生计的中国望尘莫及。

200 Ibid.: 农民只算农佣（即雇来耕种的）、大佃户、小自耕农，商人只算小商人，学生则不是一个阶级，学校读书，不过人生一段过程，算不得阶级，更算不得被压迫阶级。

201 Ibid.: 共产党，只能说是代表无权无钱的人之利益的党，不能说是只代表真正无产阶级的利益的党。

pressed on this issue, he had to give up the dichotomy and find a different way:

> Whether in words or in actions, the CCP had never simply divided China into those having property and those without; it had never thought of society as only consisting of two classes.[202]

Qu Qiubai turned to the "middle class" in Marxist theory for help, which set him apart from Chen Duxiu's and Mao Zedong's hierarchical stratifications. Just as in Marx's discussion of the "middle class" or the "petty bourgeoisie," Qu saw all social classification beyond the antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as secondary, complementary, and predicted they would eventually resolve into one of these two classes. This then was "the complexity of social class differentiation and the division of classes other than the fundamental classes."[203]

Referring to Liang Mingzhi's proposal of a "class with both power and money," Qu considered this (ironically termed) "theory of Chinese social classes" to be as misguided as Liang Qichao's generalised concept of a "class with guns." Zheng Chaolin, who was as well versed in Soviet-Russian theory as Qu Qiubai, had already refuted Liang in the *China Youth* journal: "Having 'guns' or not, having 'employment' or not, having 'property' or not, not only are these insufficient criteria for differentiating between classes, but they are also determined by the different roles of each class in production."[204] Both Qu and Zheng repeatedly emphasised that "the role in social production" was the only and fundamental criterion for the division of classes, and that all other criteria were superficial. Qu analysed in detail the roles in production played by the different classes in China, and concluded that money, power, and oppression were not sufficient criteria; however, paradoxically, when explaining why the national revolution could unite classes, he returned to the basis of "common interests."

Taken as a whole, the three exchanges published in *The Guide* were a response to the 1925 wave of "repudiating class struggle." Qu Qiubai introduced the unified Soviet concept of class based on "the role in social production" to counter the logical drawbacks of the broader conceptions of class, but ran into problems of applicability. At the same time, the popularity and widespread influence of the broad concepts of class kept Qu and other theoreticians from easily dismissing them.

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202 Qu Qiubai 1926c: 中国共产党在言论上在行动上从来未曾在中国做只有有产阶级和无产阶级。共产党也从来没曾把社会看做仅仅有二个阶级。

203 Ibid.: 社会阶级分化的复杂性及根本阶级外他种阶级的分野。

204 Zheng 1925: 有"枪"或无"枪"，有"业"或无"业"，有"产"或无"产"不仅不足为区分阶级的标准，而且自己受决定于各阶级在生产上作用的不同。

This debate highlighted the logical contradiction in the broad use of the concept of "class." When questioned, Qu Qiubai would take ever new routes to substantiating his arguments, which again shows how rich the class discourse had become. Despite all criticism, the broad concept of class equally showed great vitality. To be more precise, in the 1920s, the Chinese discourse on class already contained the main elements that it had developed in the West, and it had become a powerful and flexible theoretical system.

Conclusion

Under the influence of socialism during the May Fourth period, the value of "labour" was rediscovered, prompting the popularity of a new concept "working class." The parasitic/privileged/ruling groups, contrasted with the "working class," increasingly attracted moral criticism. Thus, the social class dichotomy arising from the discussions about the value of "labour" was firmly established in the 1920s.

In the early labour movement, the CCP inspired class consciousness based on the value of labour and the exploitation of hired labourers. Beginning with Li Dazhao, the early Chinese communists' understanding of the concept of "class" was based mainly on the historic confrontation between two social classes, as described in the *Communist Manifesto*, with a particular emphasis on opposing class interests. This typical dichotomous thinking, closely related to the spirit of resistance from earlier times, in fact only touched one aspect of Marx's complex understanding of "class." Following Lenin's interpretation, it was more suitable to a modern China in which persisted many characteristics of traditional society.

However, the complexity of China's rural society made it impossible to include a majority of peasants on the "working class"-side of the dichotomous framework. As a result, the early Communists creatively approached the issue by seeing rural society as composed of different strata. They came up with classifications of "three, six, and nine categories," for which they used the Marxist term "classes," but which in reality were hierarchically ordered models with multiple layers. At the same time, these classifications could be simplified as needed into trichotomous or dichotomous models, and thereby return to antagonistic oppositions of friends and enemies. This cognitive model of social stratification endured and became particularly prevalent during the National Revolution. Throughout the CCP's history, it became a typical way of dealing with social issues. In the 1920s, the "generalisation of class" was no longer limited to the concept itself, but also entered the field of social analysis, where it included a variety of social cognitive models and was to create a unified "Marxist" social theory.

In the practice of the National Revolution, the CCP first had to use the "class" discourse politically to identify friends and enemies. It constantly adjusted the definition of the "bourgeoisie," to which both the enemy/friend dichotomy and a tripartition into "left, middle, and right" was applied. The May Thirtieth Movement ushered another shift in the political and intellectual world. It originated as a response to the atrocities of imperialism and was conducive to nationalistic propaganda. However, under the attacks of the Awakening Lion Faction, the CCP propaganda turned to emphasise the distinction between domestic "compromisers" and "revolutionaries." It even spoke of class camps and underlined the important role of the working class in this struggle. Consequently, it was said that "after May Thirtieth, everybody repudiated class struggle." Dai Jitao, Liang Mingzhi, and others who understood Marxism but opposed "class struggle" produced arguments in these debates. They touched on the issues of the multiple meanings, the complexity, the contradictions, and the applicability of "class" in the Chinese context. Repeatedly put under pressure, CCP theorists always found new ways to answer to such criticisms.

The broad concept of "class" was also not abandoned, and even showed great vitality. The popular class discourse in China had early on moved beyond the Marxist concept and involved different kinds of social, economic, and political distinctions. It also related to practices of employment, oppression, exploitation, and their moral value. Thus, it created a powerful, rich, and flexible composite concept of class.

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