

After mourning for the dead, we must swear to get rid of meaningless suffering which blights our lives. We must do away with all the stupidity and tyranny which create and relish the sufferings of others.  
We must also swear to see to it that all mankind know true happiness.

July 1918

### 13.3 LI DAZHAO: *THE VICTORY OF BOLSHEVISM*, 1918

Li Dazhao (1889–1927) was one of the co-founders of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. He was a professor of philosophy and chief librarian at Peking University and an active participant in the New Culture Movement. In September 1918 he organized a “Marxist Research Society” and was one of the first Chinese intellectuals to hail the significance of the Bolshevik Revolution. The article translated here captures the spirit of Li Dazhao’s first forays into Marxist theory and is an artifact of the earliest period of Communism in China.

When Li wrote *Bolshevism de shengli* (The victory of Bolshevism) there was, as yet, no numerically significant Communist organization in China, and most theoretical works by Marx and his followers had yet to be translated into Chinese. It is worth noting as well, that this article predates the announcement in spring 1919 of the Versailles peace settlement and the subsequent May 4th Movement. In the fall of 1918, Li Dazhao was already skeptical of the significance of the Allied victory in Europe and critical of those who interpreted it as a victory for China.

“Victory! Victory! Victory to the Allies! Surrender! Surrender! The Germans have surrendered!” On the doors of homes everywhere hang national flags and people all over are crying out “Wansui” [Long live!] Voices and the colors all seem to be expressions of these words. Men and women from the Allied countries run back and forth on the streets celebrating their victory; soldiers of the Allied countries loudly sing their victory songs in the cities. Suddenly there is the sound of breaking glass as the store windows of German merchants are broken and of a crash as the monument to Von Ketteler is pulled down.<sup>2</sup> And these sounds mix together with the noise of happy celebration. It goes without saying that foreign nationals of the Allied powers resident in our

2. Clemens von Ketteler was the German minister in Peking at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. He was shot by a soldier on June 20, 1900, when he ventured out to attempt negotiations with the Boxers. After the rebellion, per provision of the Boxer Protocol, a marble memorial arch was built to commemorate his death.

country are exceedingly happy. Even people in our country who had little to do with the changing situation in the world have felt obliged to engage in obsequious displays of happiness as they take the joy and glory of others as their own. In academic circles there are lantern parades, politicians hold celebratory meetings, and generals who never led a single soldier in the year or so that China participated in the war, review parades of troops and are awe-inspiringly martial. Political hacks who once wrote histories of the European war which argued that Germany must inevitably win and who then turned around to declare war on Germany now claim all merit for themselves and print articles in newspapers that advertise their own activities and declaim those of others. Little people like us in the world can only follow along and join in the commotion, celebrating the victory and shouting *wansui*. This is the situation as the Allied victory has been celebrated recently in Peking.

However, let us carefully consider all of this from our standpoint as members of the world’s human race: In the final analysis, whose victory is this and who has really surrendered? Who has accomplished this task and who are we celebrating for? If we consider these questions, our generals who never led troops and yet flaunt their martial prowess and the shameless politicians who claim all merit for themselves, are truly disgraceful. It is also meaningless for the people of Allied countries to say that the war was a victory of Allied arms over the military forces of Germany. Their boasts and celebrations are totally meaningless for it is probable that their political hacks will soon share the same fate as German militarism.

In fact, the victory of Allied military strength over German military strength was not the true cause of the conclusion of this war; the real cause for victory was German socialism’s defeat of German militarism. The German people were not obliged to surrender by Allied armed force; in actuality, Germany’s emperor, warlords, and militarism were forced to surrender by the tide of world affairs. It was not the Allies who defeated German militarism but rather the spirit of the awakened people of Germany. The failure of German militarism was the failure of Germany’s Hohenzollern family (the German imperial family) and not the failure of the German people. As for the victory over German militarism, it was not the victory of the Allies and it certainly was not the victory of either the military men in our country who are scrambling to claim merit for their participation or the politicians who are opportunistically and cunningly promoting themselves. This was the victory of humanitarianism, pacifism, justice, freedom, democracy, and socialism. This was the victory of Bolshevism, the red flag, the working class of the world, and the victory of the new tide of the twentieth century. This accomplishment belongs not so much to Wilson and others as to Lenin, Kollontai, Leibknecht, Scheidemann, and Marx. This should not be a celebration merely for one country or a group within a certain country; rather, it should be a celebration of a new dawn for world mankind. It should be a celebration not of the victory of one side’s military forces over



style revolution. The crashing waves of revolution cannot be halted by today's capitalist governments because the mass movements of the twentieth century have brought together world humankind into one great mass. Each person within this great mass unconsciously follows the motion of the mass and all are pulled together into a great, irresistible social force. When this global force begins to rumble, the wind roars throughout the whole world, clouds surge, there is a pounding in the mountains, and valleys echo with the sound. In the face of this global, mass movement, historical remnants—such as emperors, noblemen, warlords, bureaucrats, militarism, capitalism—and all other things that obstruct the advance of this new movement will be crushed by the thunderous force. When confronted by this irresistible tide, these remnants of the past are like withered leagues facing the bitter autumn wind; one by one they will drop to the ground. On all sides one sees the victorious banners of Bolshevism and everywhere one hears the victorious songs of Bolshevism. Everyone says that the bells are ringing! The dawn of freedom is breaking! Just take a look at the world of the future, it is sure to be a world of red flags!

I said once: "History is the general psychological record of people. People's lives are closely connected and linked with one another like parts of a big mechanism. The future of an individual corresponds to the future of all of mankind. The portents revealed by one event are interrelated with portents of the entire world situation. The French Revolution of 1789 was not merely a sign of the changed mentality of the French. It was actually a sign of the general changing mentality of 19th century man. The Russian Revolution of 1917 is not only an obvious omen of the changing mentality of 20th century man." The Russian Revolution is the first fallen leaf [sic] that warns the world of the coming of autumn. Although the word Bolshevism was coined by Russians, its spirit is a spirit of enlightenment that every member of mankind can share. Therefore, the victory of Bolshevism is the victory of the new spirit of enlightenment that all mankind can share in the twentieth century.

### 13.4 AND 13.5 TWO LETTERS ON THE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM IN FRANCE

The Société Franco-Chinois d'Education was organized in 1915 by Cai Yuanpei and other Chinese living in Paris and Toulouse. The goal of the program was to enable large numbers of Chinese "work-study" students to pursue studies in France while paying a large part of their living costs through labor in French workshops and factories. About two thousand Chinese students, largely from Hunan and Sichuan, participated in the program in its earliest phases; a French language school was set up in

the other but a celebration of democracy and socialism's triumph over monarchy and militarism....

From the facts of what the "Bolsheviki" are doing, it is possible to see that their doctrine is revolutionary socialism and their party is a revolutionary socialist party. They honor the German socialist economist Marx as the founder of their doctrine. Their goal is to break down the national boundaries which today are the obstacle blocking socialism. They seek to destroy the monopoly capitalist system of production. The true cause of the war was the destruction of national boundaries because the expanded productive force of capitalism could not be contained by the national boundaries of today. The territories enclosed by national boundaries are too constricted to permit the development of productive force. Therefore, the capitalists depend on war to break down these boundaries and they want to create a global economic organization that will tie together all parts. Socialists agree with capitalists that international borders should be broken down, but the hope of capitalist governments is to give benefits to the middle classes of their countries. These governments depend on the global economic development of the capitalist class of the victorious countries of the world. They do not rely the humanistic and rational coordination and mutual help of the producers of the world. The victorious countries of this kind will because of this war advance and change in the future from powerful countries to imperialistic countries. The "Bolsheviki" observed this and cried out and announced that this war was the Czar's war, the Kaiser's war, a war of kings, a war of emperors, a war of capitalist governments, but not their war. Their war is class war. It is a war of the proletariat of the entire world against the capitalists of the world. Although they oppose war, they are not afraid of war. They believe that everyone, male or female, should work and that all workers should belong to a union. Every union should have a central governing council and such a council should be the basic organization for all the governments of the world. There will be no congresses, no parliaments, no presidents, no premiers, no cabinets, no legislative branches, and no rulers. Only councils of labor union will exist and they will decide everything. All industries will belong to the people working there; there will be no private ownership. The Bolsheviki will unite the proletariat of the entire world and use to the utmost their power and force of resistance to create a land of freedom and they will first create a democratic federation in Europe as the basis of a world federation. These are the new beliefs of the Bolsheviki and the new doctrine of world revolution in the twentieth century....

Up to now,.... there have been revolutions in Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bavaria, and there are rumors that revolutionary socialist parties are launching uprisings in Holland, Sweden, and Spain. The revolutionary situation in these countries is basically similar to that of Russia. Red flags are flying everywhere. Labor unions are being established one by one after another. It can be said that this is a Russian-style revolution or it can be said that this is a twentieth-century-



Paris and arrangements were made with the College de Montargis, south of Paris, to admit "work-study" students to its classes.

The letters below trace the involvement of young Hunanese leftists of the *Xinmin Xuehui* (New People's Study Association) with the "work-study" program. In 1918, members of this organization, including Mao Zedong and Cai Hesen, left Hunan for Peking where, stimulated by contacts with Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, and other leaders of the New Culture Movement and by the political activism that grew out of the May 4th student strikes, they began forming the nucleus of China's Communist Party.

In these early stages of study and organization, would-be Chinese Communists were eager to broaden their understanding of Marxism-Leninism. In 1919 and 1920, works by Kautsky, Lenin, and *The Communist Manifesto* itself appeared in Chinese translation, and a variety of interpretations of Marxism, appeared in the pages of *New Youth*, *Construction* (Jianshe zazhi),<sup>3</sup> and other journals.

Mao Zedong's letter to fellow *Xinmin xuehui* member Tao Yi illustrates the hunger for new ideas, for knowledge of the world, and for an understanding of the European left that obsessed the young intellectuals who constituted China's proto-Communist movement in the year before the party was actually formed. The first of Cai Hesen's two letters from France describes in a homely way the conditions "work-study" students found when they arrived in Montargis and is full of enthusiasm for the experience of study abroad.

#### 4 Mao Zedong: Letter from Peking, 1920

There is another important question and that is the question of "the allocation of these who will study abroad and those who will work [in China]." If we want to reach a kind of goal (reform), we must carefully consider the appropriate methods; one of these methods concerns the allocation of people involved. At a time like the present when it is difficult to find able people, we must be extremely economical in the use of talent. Otherwise, there will be overlaps, duplication, and waste. Some of our comrades in Paris are wildly dragging people off to France. It's a good thing to pull ordinary people off to study there; a mistake to take more comrades [of the New People's Society.] Our comrades should disperse to all parts of the world to carry out their investigations. People should go off to the ends of the earth but should not pile up together in a single place. The best thing would be for one person or several people to

<sup>3</sup>Jianshe Zazhi was a theoretical organ of the Guomindang. It published a number of articles on Marxism written by major figures in Sun Yat-sen's political movement.

take responsibility for opening a new front. Our "battle formations" should be opened up in all areas and on all fronts a vanguard should sent forth.

Our few dozen members came to know each other quite late and it hasn't been long since we've been acquainted. [The New People's Society was formed in April 1918.] Thus, we have not been able to study these questions thoroughly (or never studied them at all). As for me, I was always too muddle-headed to be of much use and I am not very learned. On this trip [Mao refers to his first journey from Changsha to Peking], I have observed many things, met quite a few people, and pondered some matters. I feel that these questions are all very much worth studying. Many people in various places, like myself, have not studied very deeply and, like me, are still slumbering in the dark. How one sighs to think of it! You are very far-sighted and a person with great goals and I wonder what you think of what I have just said? I guess that you have already been aware of this for some time.

What I just said is still empty; let's be more specific.

The members of the New People's Society and the members of the Morning Sun Society should frequently hold discussion meetings to discuss our mutual goals and the methods to reach these goals. Members going abroad or working ought to be allocated in an appropriate way and take some responsibility in order to make this a consciously organized activity. In terms of our end goals, we should have a prearranged plan: How will we open up a new front in that situation? How can we introduce and recruit new members? How can we create a new life for ourselves? It's like this for you and it's also like this for our friends Wei, Zhou, and Lao. Other comrades in Changsha or those who have left Changsha should also be like this. In the future, I too, also want to follow this rule.

Above, I have sketched out some rough ideas. Let me follow with some trivial notes.

Our member Zhang Guoji has already arranged to go to southeast Asia and I entirely agree that he should go. Xiao Zizhang and a dozen or so others in Shanghai have already arranged to go to France. That is also good. Peng Huang and some others organized a work-study mutual aid group in Shanghai. That is also a good thing. Peng Huang and I do not want to go to France but have arranged to go to Russia. He Shuheng wants to study in France. I have urged him not to go to France and said that it is better to study in Russia. My own plan is that I will leave here after a week for Shanghai. After things in Hunan have calmed down, I will return to Changsha. I want to work together with our comrades to form "Free Study Society" (or it could be named Self-Cultivation University). It is foreseen that in one or two years we will be able to have a clear, basic sense of old, new, foreign, and Chinese ideas, and will be able to use them as tools for investigations (otherwise you can't make such investigations). Then we organize a team to study in Russia and go to Russia



for work-study. As for women who want to go to Russia, there is no obstacle and I expect that Russian female comrades will especially welcome them. It would be possible to have a "Women's Work-Study Society in Russia" that could be modeled on the "Women's Work-Study in France." I am presently discussing this matter (studying in Russia) with Mr. Li Dazhao and others. I have heard that Mr. Tang Shoujun, the Fudan professor in Shanghai, the former president of the Institute of Commerce, also wants to go. Because of this matter, my mind is filled with joy and hope. Therefore, I have especially written to tell you. . . .

Mao Zedong

February, 1920, Beijing [Peking]

### 13.5 Cai Hesen: *Letter from France, 1920*

I have been away from you for more than three months. We are now living in two separate parts of the earth! I guess you are all still living in Changsha. We have been here in Montargis for just one month. We spent thirty-five days on the ship, two days in Marseille, and five days in Paris. . . . Montargis is a district of France located about two hundred kilometers from Paris. We live in the district capital. The school where I live is the local middle school (Li Shizeng, Cai Yupei, and Wang Jingwei all graduated from here). The school where mother and sister are living is the local girls' middle school. The two schools are about two or three hundred paces from one another and so we see each other everyday. Our tuition and boarding charges are extremely cheap. It costs four hundred francs each for the three months of preparatory study. One Chinese silver dollar can be exchanged in Paris for twenty francs at the Chinese-French Industrial Bank. Every month each of us spends slightly more than six Chinese dollars (which includes laundry and sundry other things). As we see it now, everyday life in France is not much different from life in China. It's enough for each of us to spend one franc a day on bread and one franc for vegetables and meat. Village life in France is even cheaper than in China; forty francs a month are enough to cover room and board.

We plan to stay in these two schools for three months. Then Xianxi will go to work in the beaucurd [*doufu*] factory and I will also go to a factory to work. Working conditions in the *doufu* factory are as follows: forty-eight hours of work a week, five days a week, therefore, nine hours of work per day. The wages depend on your output. The daily wages of the works range from six or seven francs to twenty francs. There are three types of work: 1. making dry cakes . . . ; 2. putting the beaucurd in tubes . . . ; and 3. putting the beaucurd to cardboard boxes.

On February 4th, we visited the *doufu* factory and we saw more than thirty French women workers and one Chinese woman worker (from Sichuan). Seven

or eight of them were thirteen or fourteen. The ages of the rest ranged from seventeen or eighteen to thirty or forty. All three types of work are non-skilled labor. The day we visited the factory, Xiang Jingyu [Cai's fiance and later his wife] and I had a discussion with the manager, Mr. Qi, and made an arrangement to go and work there.

Mr. Qi was very excited about the prospect of selling Chinese embroidery in France and so he asked the eight newcomers whether any of them could do embroidery. He also mentioned that if those who come here in the future know embroidery, he is willing to sell the goods. The Women's Work-Study Society in the future should depend on embroidery for its development. Therefore, we hope very much that sisters Ajie and Liangjie can come over as soon as possible. Ren Peidao from Xupu Girls' School will definitely come this summer. I think it would be best for the whole family to come to France. . . .

The Soci t  Franco-Chinoise d'Education bought a splendid big building in Paris. If it were in China it would cost at least fifty thousand Chinese dollars. But it cost only seventy thousand francs or so here and it can be paid for by installments for the next ten years. When I was in Shanghai, every one hundred Chinese dollars could be exchanged for twelve hundred francs. Afterwards, I heard that this amount could be exchanged for fifteen hundred francs. Now at the Chinese-French Industrial Bank, every one hundred Chinese dollars can be exchanged for more than two thousand francs. Therefore, when you bring money here in the future, don't exchange it in Shanghai. It's worth more in Paris. But the best currency is the silver dollar with Yuan Shikai's head on it. If Ajie gets two thousand dollars from her and comes to France, her money will be worth more than forty thousand francs and she can become a middle level capitalist.

The working situation here is generally quite good. Heavy labor pays more than twenty francs a day. Mechanics make twelve to thirty francs. Zhang Kundi now makes fourteen francs a day. If you exclude the money paid for food, he can save eleven to twelve francs a day. Every year he can save four thousand francs and when the value of the franc goes up in the future his savings will be more valuable. (When the franc is high the rate of exchange is two francs for one Chinese dollar.) If Brother Lu comes, he can do heavy labor or work as a mechanic. To do mechanical work takes three months of apprenticeship in the factory. During the period, the pay is eight to nine francs a day. If Liangjie can work things out with the land, father and Brother Qing can all come to France. The tailor in Buli village who once made the fur lined coat for me came to France last July. Now he has opened the Xiehe Restaurant in Paris and business is booming. If Brother Lu wants to come, there are many things opportunities like this.

We hope that Ajie, Liangjie, and Li Zefen, Liu Jingyu, and Hu Yicheng can all come with the second group. . . . When you come bring a lot of rice powder, dried vegetables, and dried meat. The bread served on the boat is not as delicious



as what you get in France. If you get seasick, don't worry because no one dies from seasickness. . . .

Hesen

Montargis, March 8, 1920

### 13.6 AND 13.7 THE NORTH CHINA FAMINE, 1920-1921

In 1920 and 1921 a famine devastated the agricultural economy of the entire north China plain, virtually the same area that had been struck by the massive drought and famine of 1876-1879 and little had been done since then to correct the underlying problems that had aggravated the social effects of the long dry spell of those years. Denuded hills, twisters of loessial dust, wrecked irrigation works, and rutted and impassable roads still bore testimony in 1920 to the patterns of overpopulation, land overuse, and governmental neglect that had help wreck the economy of the region forty years before.

In 1920 as in 1876, the crisis was precipitated by lack of rainfall before the fall harvest. In the already densely inhabited agricultural counties of the famine zone, where population often exceeded 1200 persons per square mile, almost all peasants were entirely dependent on the grain crop for their livelihood. Deprived of grain, they were driven to take the few desperate steps that were available to peasants when a crop failed: they bartered the valuable wooden parts of their houses or their livestock for food; they took loans at interest rates of 3-5% per month; and, when no other recourse was available, they sold their land at ruinous rates to still well-to-do families and land speculators. As natural conditions grew desperate in Zhili (Hebei), Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and part of Shandong, social and economic ills easily visible even in ordinary times were accentuated. The excerpts that follow were published originally in the report of the Peking United International Famine Relief Committee. During the north China famine, the Famine Relief Committee took direct charge over relief efforts in west Zhili (Hebei) and played a coordinating role in much of the rest of the disaster area. In 1920, many fewer lives were lost than in the 1876-1879 famine, but as the first excerpt on the "Severity of the Famine" shows, millions of peasants were nonetheless left starving and destitute. The second document, part of a guide for relief workers prepared by the famous educator Henry Fenn, warns of the pitfalls awaiting famine workers seeking to distribute free relief rice in the famished villages of north China. In this terrible landscape of destruction with its armies, destitute sufferers there were also, those who found devious means of manipulating the crisis for personal gain, as it is

possible to see if we read between the lines of Fenn's guide. Natural disasters in troubled times made the countryside a social tinder-box that could be set aflame by the slightest spark.

### 13.6 Report on the North China Famine, 1922

#### SEVERITY OF FAMINE

Much must be taken into consideration in discussing famine conditions in China. In the Western world, famine means something unusual—a most rare calamity. In semi-arid North China, it is a state more or less chronic. Thus in certain districts, like those about Tingchow or Shuntetu in Chihli, famine is almost a permanent condition and times of the most intense suffering are different from normal only in degree. There are no seven fat kine<sup>4</sup>—rather only seven lean kine and then seven a little more lean. The casual observer, going into such a district, is apt to say, "Oh, but this is almost the ordinary state." And so the report goes out that there is not famine and that we are but feeding beggars. On the other hand, someone not realizing the great resistance of the Chinese to hardship may go into the same district and jump to the conclusion that half the population is going to die, and propaganda for relief is started fully as undependable as the former report that there is no famine at all. Again one county may be fertile and prosperous owing to water supply, while its next neighbour is barren and destitute. For instance, a worker from the Shaho Chiao District states that there were no cases of severe privation in the immediate district but investigation of the outlying towns showed the people to be without any food other than bark and leaves. Thus no county can be taken as a clue to conditions in a province, nor even one or two villages as a standard of conditions in a county.

There is however no doubt that the famine of 1920-21 has been a real one. Workers in Shantung report intense privation. In Chanhwa County, 50 percent of the people in 250 villages were absolutely destitute. In Yucheng, the young crops died close to the earth in the fields which were as dry as the roads, and the starving poor were known to go out and dig up the wheat sprouts, still in the ground, in the fields of the more prosperous neighbors. In Lin Yi County, where throughout the last six years there had been but one year of good crops, there had been but one year of good crops, there were in the entire county, but a few pecks of grain and those been imported. Even chaff had been brought in from other regions. From the province of Zhili, similar reports are made. In the district about Shentetu 1/3 of a population of 1,093,000 were in direct need and there were 31,286 deaths from hunger and cold. In Tingshsein, the early

4. Plural of "cow" (archaic).